Violent & Aggressive Behaviour in the Retail Workplace

The rising occurrence of violent and aggressive behaviour towards retail workers and the current uncoordinated response efforts to address the harm

2021 – Version 1.0

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Executive Summary

New Zealand's retail industry is a major employer, a vital part of the economy and a provider of essential services. However, along with other workplaces where there is high interaction with members of the public, the sector faces frequent events of violent and aggressive behaviour. There is strong evidence that the problem has become significantly worse since the start of the Covid-19 crisis. Violent and aggressive behaviour harms workers, retail businesses, communities and the New Zealand economy.

The true scale of the problem is currently difficult to determine because of inadequate reporting systems, and workers not reporting all incidents. Workers are especially likely to understate events if they believe nothing can or will be done in response.

Currently there is a lack of coordination amongst retailers, between retailers and other affected workplaces, as well as organisations that can play a role in addressing the problem. Rather than working together to solve a common problem, retailers tend to work independently, partly but not solely because of a culture of independence shaped by competitiveness and competition law. Many retailers lack the knowledge and resources to implement effective solutions based on proven practice. International evidence and reports from domestic retailers indicate there are significant benefits to be gained from collaboration, particularly on matters like knowledge-sharing, joint crime prevention strategies, staff training and public messaging.

We recommend an orchestrated approach focusing on the following four key areas. A key part will be worker participation:

1. **Working group sessions including:**

    a. Work with the network of stakeholders to share and communicate proven practices, identify short, medium and long term tactical tools and strategic solutions.

    b. Involvement of workers from a variety of retailers or other sector associations eg First Union.

    c. Work with a wider network of stakeholders including Industry, other Industry sectors, NZ Police, WorkSafe, MBIE, ACC to determine wider NZ solutions to reduce violent and aggressive behaviour.

2. **Reporting protocols/systems:**

    a. Review current reporting systems within New Zealand.

    b. Ensure better nationwide reporting of incidents and data collection so that we can properly understand the nature and scale of the problem and respond appropriately.

3. **Establish a document repository and develop supporting collateral:**

    a. Produce guides/playbooks presenting the various leading tools/solutions, and in what situations they can be used.

    b. Training programmes and tools to help effectively implement new solutions.

    c. Advice and sharing lessons as to most effective tools for different situations.

    d. Provide the above to SMEs free of charge.

4. **Investigate mainstream and social media campaigns including:**

    a. A campaign to raise awareness of the current problem amongst all affected stakeholders interested parties, highlighting the rise in violent and aggressive behaviour, the current lack of coordination and the benefits of working together;

    b. A campaign to engage with and seek commitment from stakeholders to work together, including other sector associations and Government bodies;

    c. Involvement of workers to communicate their stories.

Methodology

Our process for researching and preparing this paper has included the following:

- A focused selection of meetings and interviews with key stakeholders across a number of sectors within New Zealand:

    - National retailers (representing groceries, department stores, petrol, etc)

    - Government agencies

    - Healthcare representatives

    - Transport

    - Unions

- A review of data and insights on violent and aggressive behaviour in the retail workplace in New Zealand and selected other territories;

- A review of approaches to addressing violent and aggressive behaviour in the workplace in New Zealand and selected other territories.

Context

What do we mean by violent and aggressive behaviour?

For the purposes of this paper, "violent and aggressive behaviour" is defined as hostile, intimidating, or threatening language or actions by a member of the public in a workplace. It includes, for example, verbal harassment, abuse or yelling, threats, spitting or intentionally coughing on someone, swearing, demeaning language, gendered violence and physical assault. In this paper we are not looking at conflict between employees. Nor are we focused on shoplifting by itself; however, confronting a suspected shoplifter frequently leads to violent and aggressive behaviour.

Although the focus of this paper is violent and aggressive behaviour by members of the public physically present in the workplace, we note that workers can also be subject to abuse, harassment and demeaning language by phone, email or online. These forms of aggression also require solutions and should be considered under a comprehensive programme to address violent and aggressive behaviour. Many of these solutions cross between physical and non physical situations. This paper does not cover the dimension of staff on staff violent and aggressive behaviour.

What is the impact of violent and aggressive behaviour in the workplace?

Violent and aggressive behaviour has significant consequences for workers, retail organisations and the broader New Zealand economy. These include worker anxiety, poor mental health, physical injury or illness, sick leave and absenteeism, low staff morale, increased staff turnover, negative customer experience, higher insurance premiums, reduced productivity and revenues, interference with essential services, and ultimately, economic costs locally and nationally.

The importance of the retail sector to New Zealand

The retail industry is a vital part of New Zealand's economy. The sector includes supermarkets, petrol stations, hardware stores, pharmacies, electronics and home appliance stores, dairies, department stores, clothing stores, and many more. During Covid-19 lockdowns the industry provides essential services to everyone in the country. It contributed over **$13 billion to GDP** in 2019. The retail sector employs about 200,000 people accounting for 9.6% of all New Zealand's jobs, spread over almost 28,000 retail businesses according to **Retail NZ's sector overview**. Furthermore, retail employs a relatively high number of women, youth, older workers and ethnic minorities – groups that may be more vulnerable to violent and aggressive behaviour.

Although our primary focus in this paper is retail, other sectors – such as healthcare and emergency services, Govt departments, public transport, and education – face very similar problems with violent and aggressive behaviour, and there are opportunities to learn from each other and coordinate solutions.

Counteracting violent and aggressive behaviour

The root causes of violent and aggressive behaviour include complex social, psychological and economic issues, and clearly are not feasible for the retail industry to solve.

The measures that retailers can take are more limited to reducing the risk of violent and aggressive behaviour, protecting workers and customers in the event of an incident, and providing proper responses after events. Accordingly, there is no single tool to address violent and aggressive behaviour in the workplace. Effective management involves developing good policies, culture, work processes and workspace design; implementing appropriate security technologies; training staff; and collaborating with other organisations and the community. Our aim is not to present a detailed review of the range of solutions here, but to highlight that addressing the issue requires a systemic and coordinated approach.

To develop such an approach, it is helpful to consider different frameworks for classifying solutions to violent and aggressive behaviour in the workplace. One framework is the chronological relationship between the solution and the violent or aggressive incident:

1. Prior to incident (preventative solutions)
2. During an incident (immediate responses)
3. Post incident (longer term response/support and reviews).

A second way to classify solutions is by:

1. Systems - eg. management policies, customer service, incident reporting
2. People – eg. sufficient staff numbers and capabilities, training
3. Workplace - eg. building/workplace design including lighting, physical barriers, secure areas, CCTV systems and the overall working environment.

Effectively addressing violent and aggressive behaviour in the workplace involves solutions taking both these frameworks into account.

High Levels of Violent and Aggressive Behaviour

New Zealand

Violent and aggressive behaviour has been a distressing reality for frontline retail workers for many years. Unfortunately, there is a lack of data in New Zealand to clearly define the scale of the problem and trends. The latest national estimate is from the **2017 Retail Crime Survey** led by University of Otago and Retail NZ which found there were almost 10,000 incidents of violent and aggressive behaviour towards staff or other customers that year. However, even aside from high profile examples such as the Dunedin Countdown stabbing in May 2021, there is evidence that the problem has been getting worse. There are reports in particular of a significant increase in violent and aggressive behaviour coinciding with the Covid-19 pandemic.

An online system called 'Auror' provides a Retail Crime Intelligence Platform that helps stores report retail crime, and is used by the police. Auror is the platform for enterprise retailers focused on reducing loss, preventing crime, and improving store safety. Auror's platform is not used universally by New Zealand retailers, but covers about 80% of "enterprise" retailers including all major supermarket brands, all major petrol station brands, all major hardware brands and the largest general wholesalers - more than 1,500 stores in total. Auror has shared some high-level violent and aggressive data from their platform comparing the year to May 2021 with the previous twelve months. The Auror platform records, amongst other things, "serious events" (assault, robbery or burglary) and "serious behaviours" (aggressive, physically abusive, or weapons carried). The information provided is compelling evidence of a significant increase in these sorts of events and behaviours:

- Assaults, robberies and burglaries have doubled in the last 12 months
- More than 1 in 10 stores in NZ will experience an assault, robbery or burglary each month
- There has been an 11% increase in "serious behaviours" (aggressive or physically abusive behaviour, or brandishing a weapon) in the year to May 2021. For the grocery sector, there was a 19% increase.

An internal survey by a major New Zealand retailer revealed that eight out of ten of its stores reported incidences of verbal assault in 2020. Approximately 40% of stores reported physical assaults, 7% involving a weapon.

Statements from senior executives at leading retailers in June 2020 underline the problem:

"There has been an increase in the volume and severity of violent behaviour in the last 12 months"

"We have noted an anecdotal increase in the nature and number of aggressive interactions in our stores"

Reports from store managers and workers in 2020 include:

"Checkout line rage, car park incidents when busy, threatened multiple times with physical violence including threatened with a hammer"

"We have had customers displaying personalities they have never displayed before and we believe this is Covid related."

"A lot more shoplifting per day, and a lot more aggressive behavior."

"Personally I'd say I've had more physical altercations in the last year than the previous six combined"

"Shoppers are getting more and more impatient, abusive and aggressive. One small dissatisfaction would lead to a full on explosion of nasty language and abusive behaviour."

"[We would like] signage... advising customers that if they are rude/aggressive etc, they won't be served. This sort of behaviour will not be tolerated. Signage along the lines of – treat us with respect and kindness, while we do our best to serve you. Team members are left in tears by these people, us small store owners are under considerable pressure and stress, without having to deal with crying staff members too.

Staff need tools or information on how to cope with what is happening in their home life as well as dealing with work stress. They have partners who have lost their jobs and incomes. We have all worked through Covid, and are exhausted. It's very hard to be customer focused when everyday is full of "Karens"....and their husbands.

Once upon a time it would be the occasional oddball person in the community who has a gripe, now it's anyone and everyone."

A First Union survey of its members across various retail chains, in the wake of the May 2021 stabbing at the Dunedin Countdown revealed that 70% of respondents had suffered customer assaults, abuse or aggression. The survey report summarises worker experiences of these events as follows:

"Experiences included being yelled at and verbal aggression, being spat on, being punched, dealing from customers with bad attitudes, having false accusations made against them, abusive comments and racist comments, being sworn at, being screamed at."

Following an incident of aggression, abuse or assault, the survey found that only 2 out of 5 workers received the support they needed.

First Union, Retail safety in Aotearoa: Collated results from 2020 and 2021 retail worker surveys, July 2021

Analysis by a large multi national general goods retailer clearly shows the increase in "Customer Threatening Situations" (CTS) as well as a breakdown of types of violent and aggressive behaviour in its New Zealand stores from fiscal year 2019 to fiscal year 2020:

NZ CTS by Period (FY2019 to YTD FY2021)
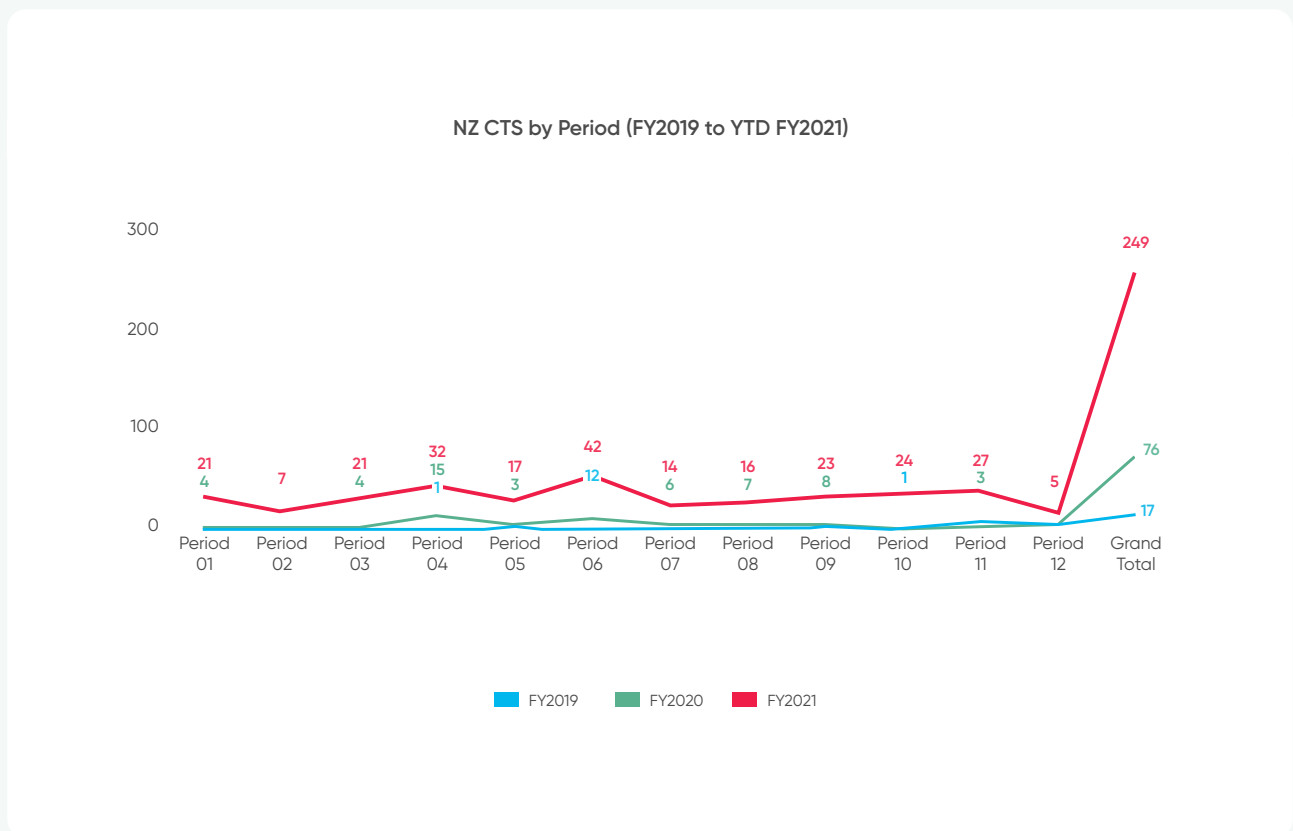
NZ causes of CTS FY2019 to YTD FY2021
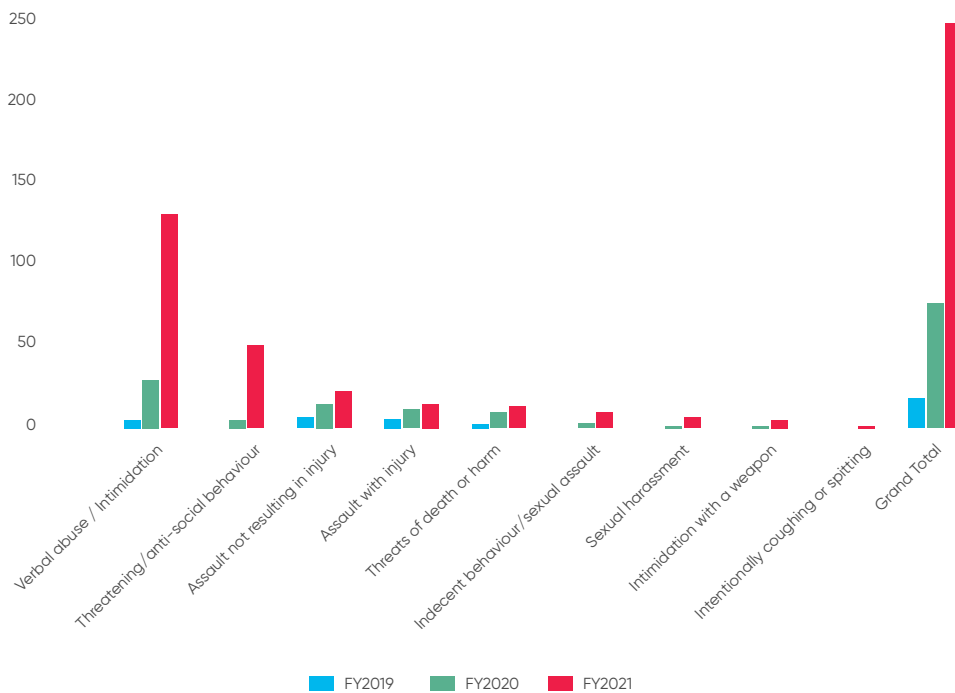
These findings are strong evidence of a significant and growing problem. However, reliable data confirming the true scale of the problem across the entire sector at a national level is lacking for several reasons:

• Workers may not report incidents to management especially if they believe nothing can or will be done.

• Most cases are not reported to the police: the 2017 Retail Crime Survey found that only 33% of violent and aggressive behaviour was reported.

• Systems and technologies to collect and report data nationally are not present in many stores, and those that do may not currently be fit for purpose.

In countries with similar cultures to New Zealand, there is more substantive evidence of the problem and trends, underlining that the issue is not isolated to New Zealand.

United Kingdom

"At least 424 violent or abusive incidents were reported every day in the year to April 2019, up by almost a tenth on the previous 12 months, according to recent figures from trade association BRC [British Retail Consortium]. This compares to the year ending April 2018, when the BRC found that 115 staff were injured every day by unprovoked attacks."

Retail Gazette, **How can retailers prevent crime against shopworkers?**, June 2020

The Association of Convenience Stores' 2021 Crime Report, shows that over the previous year there have been over 1.2 million incidents of verbal abuse, and around 40,000 incidents of violence against people working in convenience stores. Of these, more than a quarter involved a weapon, such as a knife, hammer, axe, or syringe. Two-thirds of retailers (65%) had experienced Covid-related threats, with the most common causes of abuse being: reminding customers to wear face coverings, reminding customers of social distancing measures and queueing outside stores.

Association of Convenience Stores, **2021 Crime Report**, March 2021

Australia

A National Retail Association survey published in 2020 revealed that:

- 85% of retail workers experienced verbal abuse while attempting to prevent theft.
- 41% experienced physical abuse while trying to prevent theft.
- 78% feel that verbal and/or physical abuse targeted at retailers and retail staff is increasing.

National Retail Association, **Health and Wellbeing of Australian Retail Workers**, Sept 2020.

The Current Situation

A range of approaches being pursued independently

New Zealand retailers have independently implemented a range of measures and technologies to address violent and aggressive behaviour. An internal survey by a NZ retailer of its stores in January 2021 reveals some of the tools being used:[1]

Table 1: Tools for Managing Aggressive Behaviour - Internal Survey by NZ Retailer

Tool	Percentage of stores using
Issuing trespass notices	84%
Training personnel to manage violent and aggressive behaviour	81%
Calling police	63%
Auror - retail crime reporting and analysis software	62%
Corporate operational guidelines, presentations and training materials	48%
In store security personnel (employees or contractors)	39%
Written standard operating procedures/security protocols	23%
License plate recognition technology	5%
Facial recognition technology	3%

Although the majority of stores provided staff training, 90% of the training was run internally rather than using external experts.

Less than half the stores using Auror entered most events in the system on a daily basis. Comments about Auror from this retailer including reasons for non-use varied:

"We do not use regularly because nothing happens with the incident's raised"

"Have not been trained in or had time to follow up on"

"We don't put all verbal incidents on here. We put all thefts and violence. It's a really good system."

"Teams don't have the time - very time consuming"

"Don't know much about it, and don't see how it is going to help a stand alone store?"

"Everyone should use, awesome system to log jobs and develop a relationship with your local police station"

"Auror is time consuming so we don't use. Dealing with an incident takes enough time without spending another 15 minutes at a computer to document it."

One store commented that **it would be very helpful to use Auror to monitor all local events, not just their own.**

Only 56% of stores agreed they had the right amount of support to use Auror effectively.

When asked about response times when police were called, again there were a range of answers. Some stores reported that police responses were very quick and effective, others that they were unable to respond at all. Many stores believed that these events are generally not a police priority.

These findings suggest that even within one organisation, there is a need for greater knowledge sharing and coordination to ensure all retail stores are equipped with the right information and solutions, and know how to use tools effectively.

We are working for you - to make your workplace safer and to ensure you get home safely to your family at the end of your shift

Looking beyond the specific examples highlighted in the above survey, our research has identified a range of tools being used in New Zealand and internationally as summarised below:

Table 2: Tools for Addressing Violent and Aggressive Behaviour in the Workplace

Preventative Solutions	Immediate response	Post-Incident Responses
Systems Clearly communicated policies, processes, codes of conduct		
Training (including training on policies and systems)		
eg. understanding causes of aggression; customer service training; complaints procedures	eg. de-escalation; dealing with abusive, violent customers; armed robbery response	eg. post incident support and care, impact it can have on staff (esp. for managers and supervisors)
Networking with local businesses and other stakeholders		
Crime prevention strategies/ initiatives	Alerts to network	Event reporting/knowledge sharing
Other Tools		
Work systems and service to minimise stress - eg. waiting times/adequate staffing, clear complaints/refunds procedures	Physical barriers, screens	Team debriefing
Environment design to minimise stress temperature control, noise, natural and adequate light levels	Fog cannons	Trauma-crisis counselling
Media campaigns to create awareness, change attitudes/ behaviours	Duress/panic alarms	Long-term victim support
Signs communicating that violent and aggressive behaviour will not be tolerated	Safe retreat areas	Incident reporting procedures and technology
Signs notifying security measures to deter offenders	PPE (eg. protection vests, face shields)	Security systems review
Surveillance/detection tools: eg. mirrors, entry beepers, CCTV, lighting, body cameras, counter cameras, metal detectors, facial recognition, licence plate recognition, concealed microphones, alert systems (real time notification of staff)		
Additional personnel -additional regular staff/team members -security personnel: static or mobile; covert or uniformed		

Key: highlighted tools are examples of administrative controls only

The importance of having more than one control measure to manage a particular hazard, and the need for different tools for different situations is widely supported – see for example NHS Scotland, **Managing Workplace Violence in a Retail Setting**, 2017.

Our enquiries highlighted some tools and capabilities retailers would particularly like to have to address violent and aggressive behaviour. These include:

- Sharing solutions, knowledge and data within the industry for example:
  - For training
  - On trends in violent and aggressive behaviour events
  - Information about individuals

- Joint retail crime prevention strategy with the police
- Industry network operations centre (NOC)
- Public media campaign involving a range of sectors including retail, health and public service

> **"We want a campaign to illustrate the impact that violent and aggressive behaviour is having not only on our frontline staff, but our communities and society in general"**

Public messaging is being used with some effectiveness internationally. For instance, WorkSafe Victoria recently relaunched a 2017 campaign which focused on the healthcare industry, extending their "it's never ok" message into other industry sectors to demonstrate the full spectrum of violence and aggression Victorian workers are faced with every day. The campaign aims to put the audience in the shoes of workers to drive empathy and understanding, and ultimately prompt reflection on their own behaviour.

And in December 2017, the SDA – an Australian trade union – launched the No One Deserves A Serve (NODAS) campaign to create awareness about retail and fast food workers facing constant abusive and violent behaviour from customers at work. **SDA surveys** showed that one fifth of Australians noticed the campaign with 85% saying it raises an important issue and 9 in 10 agree that it's never acceptable to abuse workers. Almost 50% of workers reported they have seen positive results in the workplace due to the NODAS campaign.

In the United Kingdom the **#ShopKind campaign** was launched by a coalition of large retailers, the Home Office and Crimestoppers. The campaign aims to build positivity and encourage kindness to both shop workers and consumers in stores. As well as being backed by the Home Office, the campaign is supported by major high street retailers, independent shopkeepers, and the shopworkers' union Usdaw.

Addressing the problem requires a systemic, coordinated approach

As can be seen from our **summary of tools in Table 1**, there is an extensive and complex range of approaches and solutions available. To be effective, retailers need to coordinate these tools as part of a systemic approach. Many individual retailers lack the knowledge and resources to do this by themselves.

"If you are a small retail business you may not have the resources in staff or money to implement sophisticated management systems aimed at reducing violence. The length of time open, the unsociable and long hours worked, the small numbers of staff and the fact that staff will not necessarily all be present at any particular time in the shop, will all pose problems for the prevention and control of violence.... There may be the potential to set up and maintain local co-operative crime prevention schemes with some of the larger retailers in your area. Such schemes can help to circulate practical advice on well-established strategies and successful measures."

Health and Safety Executive UK, **Preventing violence to retail staff**, 1995

Many employers struggle with training all employees due to the cost of covering positions of workers attending training. This problem has been reported in the Canadian healthcare context:

"Healthcare employers have difficulty training all workers due to staffing shortages to cover staff positions for workers attending training. To facilitate training on a limited budget, technology can be leveraged, such as training delivered on a mobile phone application that's available 24 hours per day, seven days a week."

CSA Group (Canadian Standards Association), **Preventing Violence and Harassment in Canadian Workplaces**, 2019

Lack of coordinated response and knowledge-sharing

Our interviews highlight that there is currently little concerted effort amongst New Zealand retailers to work together to address violent and aggressive behaviour, let alone coordination with other organisations affected by the problem, or other stakeholders that have a role to play in addressing the problem. The following are statements of senior executives at leading New Zealand retailers:

> "Other than sharing with other parties within our own sector, no [we are not coordinating with others]. However, hopefully this is the start, as we would rather be part of a movement than running alone."
>
> "I would say we are sharing [some information] with others, however would not classify this as coordinating - this is a topic we need to discuss and improve on."
>
> "It's ad-hoc and based on sharing once an activity has been trialed or implemented. Not actual coordinating."

In the below stakeholder map, we have highlighted some of the types of organisations we believe are affected by violent and aggressive behaviour or have a role to play in addressing the issue.

Chart 1: Stakeholder Map
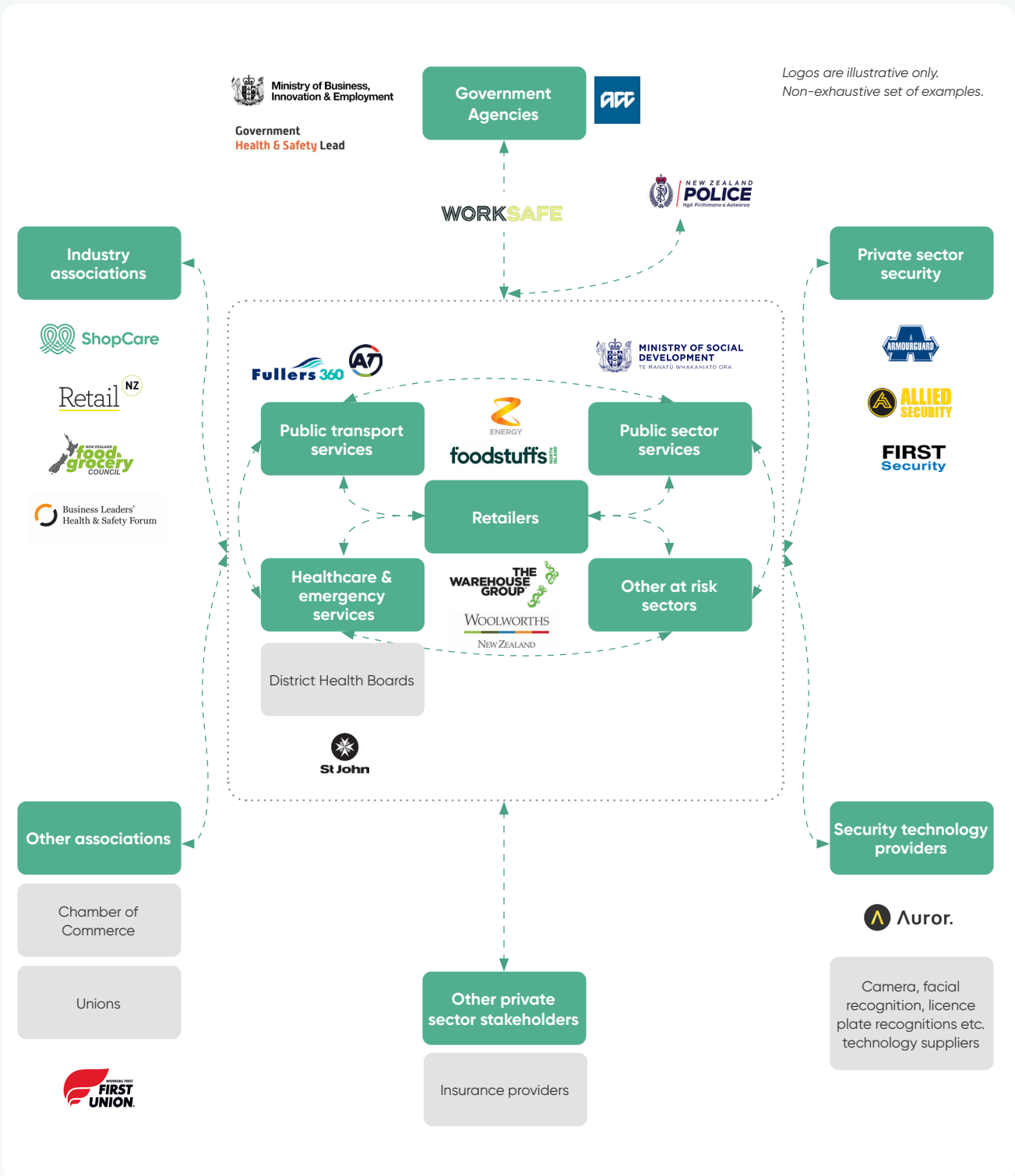
Why are stakeholders acting independently?

Violent and aggressive behaviour is increasingly a topic of conversation at senior management and board meetings across a variety of sectors. Critical risk reviews are leading to a number of similar solutions being implemented, trialed and documented independently.

The reasons retailers and other workplaces are working independently include:

1. To date, no sector/industry association has taken the lead to adopt a more collaborative and coordinated approach; ShopCare would like to remedy this situation.

2. In the retail sector there are historical competitive concerns, and risk of liability from collusion; organisations are wary about working together and timely communication with differing leadership teams within a number of different organisations

3. Differing customer and team interaction solutions; From Banking to Healthcare to Retail to Public travel

4. Perceived time and management pressures to resolve and implement controls from a regulatory perspective

5. Capacity and/or Capability issues within Health and Safety teams

We Need a Coordinated Approach

The lack of coordination amongst stakeholders, and having retailers working on solutions independently, has few - if any - benefits, and several significant disadvantages. Working together is likely to help everyone and harm no one.

One significant failure of the current lack of coordination is that proven practices are not being fully shared amongst all affected parties - while some organisations are managing, at least in certain areas, others are exposed and at risk. Many organisations lack the knowledge or resources to implement effective systems independently, especially smaller businesses. But even larger retailers can benefit from sharing knowledge and lessons with each other, and working with other sectors like healthcare, and stakeholders with expertise and specialist knowledge such as WorkSafe, New Zealand Police, security companies, unions, Retail NZ and other industry associations.

There are notable international examples of, and recommendations for, collaborative networks to address violent and aggressive behaviour, and other crimes and offences in the workplace:

The National Retail Crime Steering Group (UK)

The National Retail Crime Steering Group, co-chaired by the BRC (British Retail Consortium) and Home Office Minister for Crime and Policing, brings together retailers, government officials, police, and trade associations to work together to combat retail crime, especially crimes of violence against shop workers.

Retailers Against Crime (RAC) (UK)

"We provide tailored services aimed at protecting member profits and maintaining a safe environment for retail staff and customers. Our main objective is to prevent prolific, organised and traveling offenders from entering and impacting on member premises. Our customised training programmes assist staff in detecting and deterring crime.

Our specialised staff analyse offenders, identify their methods, their associates and locations targeted. This enables us to forewarn our members who can then detect and deter crime before it happens. RAC identify over 30% of previously unknown suspects, often resulting in prosecution.

We work together with crime partnerships and police forces across the UK sharing relevant intelligence on traveling offenders and organised crime groups."

Retailers Against Crime

UN recommendations on Cooperation/partnerships

Cooperation/partnerships should be an integral part of effective crime prevention, given the wide-ranging nature of the causes of crime and the skills and responsibilities required to address them. This includes partnerships working across ministries and between authorities, community organizations, nongovernmental organizations, the business sector and private citizens.

United Nations: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, **Compendium of United Nations standards and norms in crime prevention and criminal justice**, 2007

The Australian National Retail Association (NRA) recommended: "[there should be] greater collaboration between government departments, industry and law enforcement is needed. Retailers have an important role to play in complimenting the work done by Police such as identification of suspicious behaviour and potentially dangerous situations."

National Retail Association, **Health and Wellbeing of Australian Retail Workers**, 2020

"Networking could also provide a means of support for small retailers who are victims of serious violent incidents. It helps to prevent isolation and encourages the network to work together in improving the crime rate. Large retailers will also be in a good position to set standards and help those businesses which may have fewer resources and less information available to them. Crime and violent incidents against small businesses become rapidly known around the locality, and are often used to judge what the area is like to live and work in."

Health and Safety Executive UK, **Preventing violence to retail staff**, 1995

"Small retail businesses experience high robbery and violent crime rates leading to injury and death. Workplace violence prevention programs (WVPP) based on Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design reduce this risk, but low small business participation limits their effectiveness. Recent dissemination models of occupational safety and health information recommend collaborating with an intermediary organization to engage small businesses."

American Journal of Industrial Medicine, **How to engage small retail businesses in workplace violence prevention**, 2015

"Businesses with small staff numbers that work long hours may find it difficult to devote time and energy to crime prevention. Involving these businesses will require a great deal of outreach, such as frequent visits to pass on information and to remind staff of their importance to the success of the partnership.

Some businesses have concerns about working with other businesses, particularly their competitors. Research indicates that this hesitancy can be overcome once it becomes clear that the benefits of crime prevention outweigh the risks of cooperation."

Center for Problem-Oriented Policing, Arizona State University, **Partnering With Businesses To Address Public Safety Problems**, 2006

Benefits of coordinated (national standard) approach: "Overall, stakeholders are in support of a national standard for the following reasons:

- Clarity about what a workplace violence and harassment program should include;

- Improved consistency and harmonization across the country;

- Credibility, thus better adoption;

- Encourages buy-in from management;

- Sparks conversation about the need for national data sets and the interconnectedness of patient and staff safety; and

- Would help establish a health and safety culture. "

CSA Group (Canadian Standards Association), [Preventing Violence and Harassment in Canadian Workplaces](#), 2019

Here in NZ, police have worked with Greater East Tamaki Business Association ([GETBA](#)) on crime prevention strategies and developed support materials such as:

- Commercial Crime Prevention Checklist

- A series of short video clips on effective crime prevention techniques

New Zealand retailers we interviewed see the value and benefits of working together:

"It's very important [for the industry to work together] - there is a lot of good work being done that should be shared…. We need a coordinated approach with a single retail NZ crime strategy"

"[Industry collaboration would help with] understanding the current trends within NZ and standing together against this risk to our teams' personal safety."

"Need other sectors to be included in working together for practical solutions [to issues like] impairment, crime, racial tension, abuse"

"[Collaboration] has to involve all parties to improve the outcome for our frontline team: NZ Police, Retail (FGC and wider) and Government Agencies"

Conclusions and Recommendations

The retail industry is a vital part of New Zealand's economy and its importance as a provider of essential services has been highlighted during the Covid-19 pandemic. Violent and aggressive behaviour has been a very concerning part of retail - and other - workplaces for many years, but there is evidence that it has become significantly worse during the crisis. This behaviour has a serious impact on workers, retail businesses, communities and the broader New Zealand economy.

To understand the true scale of violent and aggressive behaviour in the workplace, we need to ensure there are proper reporting systems, and ensure that workers are encouraged to report incidents. We cannot expect to properly address the problem if we are unable to accurately monitor and report events.

Currently there is little coordination between retailers - not amongst themselves, nor with other affected workplaces or with organisations that can play a role in addressing violent and aggressive behaviour. International evidence, and reports from New Zealand retailers themselves, suggest there are significant benefits to be gained from collaboration, cooperation and coordination, particularly on matters like knowledge-sharing, joint crime prevention strategies, staff training and public messaging.

We recommend the following work programme facilitated by ShopCare:

1. **Working group sessions including:**
    a. Work with the network of stakeholders to share and communicate proven practices, identify short, medium and long term tactical tools and strategic solutions
    b. Involvement of workers from a variety of retailers or other sector associations eg First Union
    c. Work with a wider network of stakeholders including Industry, other Industry sectors, NZ Police, WorkSafe, MBIE, ACC to determine wider NZ solutions to reduce violent and aggressive behaviour

2. **Reporting protocols/systems:**
    a. Review current reporting systems within New Zealand
    b. Ensure better nationwide reporting of incidents and data collection so that we can properly understand the nature and scale of the problem and respond appropriately

3. **Establish a document repository and develop supporting collateral:**
    a. Produce guides/playbooks presenting the various leading tools/solutions, and in what situations they can be used
    b. Training programmes and tools to help effectively implement new solutions
    c. Advice and sharing lessons as to most effective tools for different situations
    d. Provide the above to SMEs free of charge.

4. **Investigate mainstream and social media campaigns including:**
    a. A campaign to raise awareness of the current problem amongst all affected stakeholders/ interested parties, highlighting the rise in violent and aggressive behaviour, the current lack of coordination and the benefits of working together;
    b. A campaign to engage with and seek commitment from stakeholders to work together, including other sector associations and Government bodies;
    c. Involvement of workers to communicate their stories

Appendix:

About ShopCare

Transforming health, safety and wellbeing outcomes for the New Zealand retail sector and its supply chain.

Supporting a workforce of over 230,000 Kiwis.

ShopCare provides guidance, training, and collective expertise to help the entire retail ecosystem create healthier, happier, and safer working environments for all kaimahi/workers.

We provide free resources for retailers and supply chain companies of all sizes, from sole operators right through to large retail chains.

Our four pillars that underpin the work we do:

COLLABORATION	DATA-DRIVEN	ACTIVATION	CAPABILITY
Transform the way we engage with our stakeholders & sector partners	Become the HSW data leader for our sector	Activate the sector to prioritise and collaborate on system-wide challenges	Develop new capabilities to solve systemic HSW challenges in our sector

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