

# Shop workers face daily abuse

Up to half a million shop workers suffer verbal abuse every day, a report by the retail union Usdaw suggests



Udaw General Secretary John Hannett said: “Most shoppers would never think of physically assaulting a shop worker but many seem to think it is all right to scream the most disgusting abuse.

“Our members are saying enough is enough and they will no longer tolerate vile abuse as part of their daily working lives

The study found there was a 35% increase last year 2016 in swearing, sexist comments and other forms of verbal abuse from “out of control” shoppers.

Examples included a shop worker who was threatened when an item was not in stock and others who were abused for no apparent reason.

Researchers found that verbal attacks on staff were as damaging as physical abuse

## Depression

The union surveyed 500 workers and some said they suffered depression because of the level of abuse. Others gave up their jobs because of the constant stress.

Worryingly, almost a third did not bother reporting ugly incidents at work with most having little confidence in offenders being properly dealt with by police.

John Hannett says “It’s time for the government to act by providing stiffer penalties for those who assault workers; a simple stand-alone offence that is widely recognized and understood by the public, police, the judiciary and most importantly criminals”.

“Some customers seem to assume, wrongly that because someone works behind a counter they are either stupid or a target for rudeness and arrogance”.

“The old adage – the ‘customer is always right’ – is, frankly, arrant nonsense and only encourages people to be rude and abusive.”

“I’ve worked in retail for eight years and during that time I’ve been sworn at and talked down to by customers”

“On a daily basis customers think they can swear at you, be aggressive and be threatening.”



## Retail facts

- about 2.7 million people work in the retail sector
- 35% increase in verbal abuse
- 20,000 workers were physically abused last year
- Record numbers being signed off work with depression