



ANNUAL REPORT

2024

“I am pleased and inspired by what you and your organization does for seasonal workers and workers in the UK in general. I will always support you and if you or the organization need help from me, I am always ready to help.”



CONTENTS

- 04** Executive summary
- 09** 2024 – a year in review
- 10** Our work
- 13** What we do
- 14** Outreach work
- 15** Building worker power and solidarity
- 20** Policy work
- 23** Direct support and advocacy
- 48** Our memberships and partnerships
- 48** Sharing our work and priorities for change
- 49** Media engagement
- 50** Conclusion: looking forward to 2025



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Worker Support Centre (WSC) prevents labour exploitation in high-risk labour sectors. We directly support and advocate for isolated and marginalised workers in Scotland. We are an independent, worker-centred charity with staff- and board-level representation of people with lived experience of the issues faced by those on whose behalf we work.

This Annual Report shares our work with seasonal agricultural workers on the UK Seasonal Worker visa (SWV). Throughout the year, we received enquiries from workers across the UK. We pursue cases on behalf of workers in Scotland and refer workers in other parts of the UK to partner organisations.

Our focussed Early Exploitation Prevention Model is unique in the UK for the following reasons:

- **Pro-active outreach and casework support is led by people with lived experience of the issues faced by workers.**
- **Our unique “Worker Power” programme increases worker voice in both workplaces and policy spaces.**
- **We work intensively to improve enforcement to identify abuse and exploitation and support isolated workers.**
- **Both our in-depth casework and worker power work inform policy change outcomes.**

Summary of 2024 data from direct support and advocacy work

697



WSC supported 697 individuals with 271 cases and 432 enquiries,¹ conducted 11 outreach clinics, and achieved resolution or partial resolution in two thirds of cases.

↑72%



We saw a 72% increase in demand for our service in 2024 from the previous year (405 individuals supported in 2023). In July 2024 alone, we supported 158 individuals.



The main nationalities of those assisted were Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Tajik and Uzbek.

We conducted 5 Worker Power workshops with 58 workers to identify with workers both good and poor practice in the sector, and their priorities for change.



↑14.5%



We saw a significant increase in the proportion of women supported, from 7% in 2023 to 14.5% in 2024. However, the majority of those supported were men (56%), with the remainder undeclared.

19



We made 19 reports to enforcement bodies on behalf of individuals or grouped cases involving a total of 101 individuals.

1. See [Annex 1](#) for Methodology

SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES RAISED BY WORKERS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY CHANGE

Restriction of movement – access to transfers

The most common issue raised by 357 workers related to transfers from one farm to another. 117 workers did not know how to request a transfer. 152 had been refused a transfer. 56 had tried to request a transfer but had received no response.

To the UK Government:

- Review the SWV for the risks of exploitation it presents, particularly the impact of highly restricted movement.
- Review data on transfer requests and refusals to better understand and address why significant numbers of transfers are being refused.
- Clarify the guidance to sponsors on transfers, underlining the importance of transfers in worker safeguarding.
- Establish an independent transfer mechanism, separate to the Scheme Operators to enable workers to raise transfer requests with an independent body.

To industry:

- Scheme Operators should ensure transfer pathways are clear, open and transparent for workers, including sharing information with workers on why transfers are refused and permitting appeal.

Non-payment of wages

Workers' payslips are often confusing, making it hard to assess whether National Living Wage (NLW) has been paid. 99 workers raised issues related to pay. 54 workers reported non-payment for work. 17 workers reported non-continuous employment during their time in the UK, contrary to the SWV requirement of 32 hours pay for each week workers are in the UK. 7 workers contacted WSC regarding holiday pay being used to top up hours. 74 workers consider the hours of work provided to be insufficient, as they had expected to work and earn more.

To the UK Government:

- Task HMRC with investigating the non-payment of wages for seasonal agricultural workers.
- Establish standard requirements for hours to be outlined in relation to pay slips and for pay slips to feature contact details for independent worker support services that can assist with understanding payment of wages.
- Ensure the new Fair Work Agency prioritises pay and ensures where there is non-payment of wages money can be swiftly recovered and paid.

To industry:

- Scheme Operators should request a standard pay slip format across all farms to ensure consistency.

SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES RAISED BY WORKERS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY CHANGE

Dismissals

145 individuals raised dismissal-related issues. These include: 34 workers who were dismissed for poor performance. 20 workers reported receiving threats of dismissal or penalties related to productivity. 6 workers were dismissed after having sought a transfer to another farm. 19 workers were dismissed after having raised a complaint.

To the UK Government:

- Ensure dismissal rights apply to workers on the SWV so that dismissal is not used as a threat to coerce workers into excessive working patterns.
- Ensure temporary migration programmes with fixed term short contracts must have their own probation periods in line with the length of contract offered.
- Ensure proof that the ACAS Code of Practice on disciplinary and grievance procedures is followed in dismissal proceedings.

To industry:

- Farms should follow the ACAS Code of Practice on disciplinary and grievance procedures during dismissal proceedings.

Health and Safety

47 workers raised health and safety concerns, including lack of equipment or sanitary facilities. 10 raised issues related to accessing healthcare and 10 workers reported injuries, including 2 that were life altering. 3 of these workers were referred to personal injury lawyers.

To the UK Government:

- Call on the Health and Safety Executive to review specific risks to seasonal agricultural workers and to advance a pro-active inspection and awareness campaign to raise standards.

To the Scottish and UK Governments:

- Conduct a public awareness campaign with GP practices and health boards to raise awareness of the health entitlements of workers on the SWV and the isolated and high-risk nature of work.

To industry:

- Scheme Operators should share accurate information about access to healthcare at point of recruitment.
- Farms should support workers to register with local GP practices and ensure designated first aider staff are able to respond promptly in case of worker injury.

SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES RAISED BY WORKERS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY CHANGE

Living conditions – poor housing

113 workers raised issues related to accommodation, the majority (100) related to poor living conditions. This included damp, black mould, cold and draughts, holes, broken and stained furniture, and overcrowding. 11 workers reported being asked to pay additional charges on top of accommodation fees for heating and fuel.

To the Scottish and UK Governments:

- Amend housing legislation to clarify the local authority duty to inspect seasonal worker accommodation and the relevant standards to be applied.
- Clarify the legal status of occupants of seasonal worker accommodation.

To the Scottish Government:

- Issue Local Authority-specific guidance accompanying the Agricultural Wages Order clarifying types of accommodation and occupancy rates to which the maximum charge of £9.99 per day applies.

Poor treatment

68 workers raised poor treatment as an issue, encompassing harassment or verbal abuse. This included 18 who reported facing discrimination.

To the UK Government:

- Review the SWV to understand the ways in which it impacts the power imbalance between workers and employers.
- Ensure pro-active inspections through the new Fair Work Agency provide for safe reporting and engagement with workers away from colleagues, supervisors and farm management.

To the Scottish Government:

- Ensure that agricultural wages inspectors are trained in trauma informed responses and work with interpreters to enable engagement with workers who may have faced ongoing threats or abuse.

Shortened contracts

26 workers sought WSC support as their contracts had been terminated due to lack of work on farms.

To UK Government:

- Review the model of setting a quota for SWVs and instead connect the quota to work available.

2024 – A YEAR IN REVIEW

2024 was a busy and productive year for the Worker Support Centre (WSC). We became a charity in March and grew our Board, appointing members with skills and expertise spanning research, governance, law, project management, casework, reporting, and communications.

We consolidated our operations, developing our policies and procedures. We also improved our outreach offer to workers to ensure strong responsiveness to their needs.

We grew our team to a part-time Peer Engagement Officer, Finance Officer and Executive Director and a full-time Outreach Caseworker and Operations Manager.






We greatly widened our reach, strengthened trust and built significant relationships with workers. This resulted in a steep increase in contacts from workers, up 72% from 2023.

We made policy progress on issues from housing to pay through significant engagement with both the Scottish and UK governments. We worked closely with enforcement authorities to strengthen their engagement with isolated and marginalised workers.

In 2024, WSC joined new national and international networks, including the Global Alliance against Traffic in Women (GAATW) and the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI).

Finally, we diversified our funding sources, contributing to our sustainability.

To support our work, consider making a donation, sharing our report widely, and following us on social media.

 [worker support centre](https://www.facebook.com/worker-support-centre)
 [@workersupportcentr](https://www.instagram.com/workersupportcentr)
 [@workersupportc.bsky.social](https://twitter.com/workersupportc.bsky.social)
 [@workersupportcentr](https://www.threads.net/@workersupportcentr)
 [worker support centre](https://www.linkedin.com/company/worker-support-centre)



OUR WORK

The Worker Support Centre (WSC) prevents labour exploitation in high-risk labour sectors. We support and advocate for isolated and marginalised workers in Scotland. We work to increase representation in work and policy spaces and ensure workers' lived experiences inform policy development. We are unique in our model and approach, and alone in taking this work forward in Scotland. To learn more about our work, visit www.workersupportcentre.org.uk.

OUR HUMAN TRAFFICKING EARLY PREVENTION MODEL

WSC works to prevent human trafficking for forced labour by acting to reduce the risks of exploitation for those we support. WSC's abuse and exploitation Early Prevention Model spans the following areas:

1. Support

Meeting people's basic needs through our direct service provision.

2. Literacy

Developing worker understanding of their rights and entitlements through worker education sessions.

3. Power

Building worker power and influence in all spheres by supporting workers to claim and create spaces for change.

4. Deterrence

Improving pro-active, risk-based and complaints-driven enforcement responses.

5. Influence

Advancing worker-led prevention approaches in policy.

In 2023 and 2024, WSC applied this model to our work with seasonal agricultural workers on the Seasonal Worker visa (SWV) who faced a high risk of exploitation.²

The prioritisation of our cases is closely connected to risks articulated in the International Labour Organization (ILO) forced labour indicators,³ including abuse of vulnerability, restriction of movement, isolation, intimidation and threats, and abusive working and living conditions.⁴ The risks to workers are increased in:

- **Labour sectors where workers have limited power or representation, and abuses are left unaddressed.**
- **Supply chains characterised by extensive outsourcing, irresponsible practices, concentrated power, and poor governance.⁵**
- **Immigration systems that are highly restrictive of workers' movement, prevent integration and limit access to services.⁶**

Our model involves people with lived experience of such issues in all aspects of our work and at all levels of the organisation.

2. DLME 2021. UK Labour Market Enforcement Strategy 2020-21.

3. <https://www.ilo.org/publications/hard-see-harder-count-survey-guidelines-estimate-forced-labour-adults-and-0>

4. For example see <https://labourexploitation.org/publications/assessment-of-the-risks-of-human-trafficking-for-forced-labour-on-the-uk-seasonal-workers-pilot/#:~:text=Drawing%20on%20primary%20data%20collected-,deception%20about%20the%20nature%20of>

5. See LeBaron, G. 2021 The role of supply chains in the global business of forced labour. *Journal of Supply Chain Management*, 57 (2). pp. 29-42. ISSN 1523-2409

6. Scottish Government 2023 Safeguarding workers on temporary migration programmes.

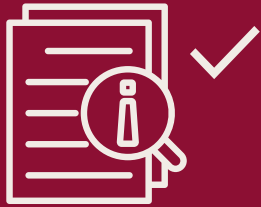


SEASONAL AGRICULTURAL WORK

The Seasonal Worker visa (SWV) is valid for 6 months in horticulture (including fruit, vegetable and flower farms) and 2.5 months in poultry. On this visa, workers are sponsored by one of 6 licensed Scheme Operators and employed by a farm.

Migrant workers on the SWV are tied to a single visa sponsor, restricting worker movement. They are often geographically isolated and socially marginalised, which makes them dependent on their employer not only for their job security but also for essential needs such as access to healthcare, housing, transport and food. They have no recourse to public funds and very low unionisation rates, meaning there is limited worker representation in workplaces and policy discourse.

Our 2024 key achievements



Support

Provided advice, support and information to 697 individuals.

Conducted 11 in-person outreach clinics.

2/3 of cases achieved resolution or partial resolution.



Literacy

5 participatory Worker Power workshops with 58 seasonal agricultural workers.



Power

1 conference with seasonal agricultural workers, government and a United Nations Special Rapporteur.

1 meeting between an MSP and seasonal agricultural workers.



Deterrence

19 reports to enforcement authorities.

Anonymous reports from cases in 2024 on behalf of 101 seasonal agricultural workers.

10 meetings with enforcement bodies to discuss reporting mechanisms and approaches.



Influence

15 meetings with Government officials.

3 meetings with Scottish Government Ministers.

17 meetings with Members of UK and Scottish Parliaments.

8 policy briefings and submissions produced to influence key legislation and policy, including on housing, agriculture, employment rights and enforcement.

1 housing enquiry commenced by Scottish Government following WSC advocacy.

What we do

Outreach

We conduct intensive outreach in places that are trusted by workers, raising awareness of our services and ensuring that even very isolated migrant workers hear of WSC, know how to contact us and are aware of the support we offer. Our staff draw on their expertise and experience of seasonal agricultural work to develop and adapt our outreach activities to the needs of workers, coupled with a deep understanding of the issues that workers raise. We are trusted as an independent worker-centred service that works alongside those we support.

Direct support and advocacy

Workers contact WSC for advice, support and information on a wide variety of matters, as outlined further below. In most cases, workers reach out to WSC directly to seek support and guidance on issues they experience. Issues workers report are supported by documentation and evidence. We are guided by workers in how we understand their experiences and in what actions we take, ensuring workers are provided with all the information necessary to make an informed choice as to next steps. Our support includes mediation with Scheme Operators or farms, translation and support completing forms, information and assistance with escalation of cases to labour market enforcement, and where required, referrals to employment, immigration or personal injury solicitors and/or other specialist organisations.

Building worker power and solidarity

We create spaces for worker discussion on experiences, individual and collective, positive and negative, and priorities for change. We work to develop mechanisms to engage workers directly in self-representation in workplaces and in policy spaces, engaging directly with decision makers on their own terms. This work enables us to tackle those issues that cannot be addressed through direct support and to seek to address the structures driving labour abuse and exploitation. Our organisational structure includes representation of those with lived experience of the issues on which we work at all levels.

Policy work

Workers' experiences directly inform our policy work. We support workers to create spaces for the changes they seek. We conduct policy work at both Scottish and UK levels to bring about long-term change. All our policy work is closely linked and responsive to the issues workers raise during our casework, outreach and worker power activities.

Outreach work

We conduct intensive in-person outreach in North-East Scotland as well as online outreach through social media. Between April and September 2024, we held 11 in-person outreach clinics: 2 in Fife, 4 in Angus, 1 in Aberdeen, 2 in Dundee and 2 in Perth & Kinross.

This year, we have continued establishing and strengthening connections with community groups and civil society organisations. We have translated all our outreach materials and forms into the main languages spoken by workers and made them accessible to workers on mobile devices.

This year we developed a pre-departure information flyer in partnership with Work Rights Centre and Oasis Kyrgyzstan to inform workers of their rights and provide contacts of support organisation ahead of engaging in the recruitment process.

Workers who achieved positive outcomes from engaging with WSC shared information about the centre that led to a significant increase in awareness and interest in our service. Workers have expressed interest in supporting WSC's outreach work going forward and continuing to be involved in our work.



Building worker power and solidarity

In 2024, WSC conducted 5 participatory workshops with 58 seasonal agricultural workers through our 'Worker Power' project. These sessions, one of which also included direct engagement with an MSP, were opportunities to discuss good and bad experiences and to start the process of establishing some worker-led standards for the sector.

We set out the initial standards discussed with workers below, including their experiences that inform such standards. In 2025, WSC is conducting further sessions with workers to refine and develop standards to inform industry and government.



WORKER POWER PROJECT – WORKER-LED STANDARDS: FIRST REFLECTIONS

Health and Safety

Measures taken to reduce risk of falls, injuries, or broken limbs through farm infrastructure and equipment:

- Good experiences: matting in polytunnels, table-top fruit, clear manoeuvrable polytunnels, functional trolleys provided to each worker.
- Bad experiences: trolleys in poor state of repair, tensions between workers in absence of trolleys or equipment unusable.

Comfortable rest spaces for workers near fields:

- Good experiences: chairs, tables, covered areas for breaks and lunch.
- Bad experiences: dirty, wet and muddy lunch areas with no chairs or tables.

Toilets and washing facilities at fields:

- Bad experiences: no toilets, water or sanitiser by fields.

Facilitated access to healthcare for workers:

- Bad experiences: healthcare registration inaccessible, workers unaware of rights to access healthcare.

Sickness rest and support provided to workers:

- Bad experiences: no sick pay provided, pressure to return to work after injury.



WORKER POWER PROJECT – WORKER-LED STANDARDS: FIRST REFLECTIONS

Treatment

Responsive, respectful and open communication channels on farm:

- Good experiences: workers spoken to by name (rather than number), trusting relationship between supervisors and workers.
- Bad experiences: ongoing threats of dismissal, workers' views ignored, last minute work shift communication, no contract provided.

Workers supported to do the work to the best of their ability:

- Good experiences: sufficient training to do the job, friendly atmosphere including, for example, music for workers.
- Bad experiences: penalties for not meeting targets, including withdrawal of work or transport to caravans.

Hours and pay

Workers paid for hours worked:

- Good experiences: Workers paid the Agricultural Minimum Wage for each hour worked.
- Bad experiences: Workers not paid for time spent working, including travel on site, preparation, breaks, workers not paid overtime, workers not paid for induction.

Equal pay for equal work:

- Bad experiences: EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) and UK workers being paid extra for working on a Saturday, while workers on the SWV are not.

Toilets and washing facilities at fields:

- Bad experiences: no toilets, water or sanitiser by fields.

Holidays taken with worker consent:

- Bad experiences: workers not being permitted to choose when they take holiday.

WORKER POWER PROJECT

– WORKER-LED STANDARDS:

FIRST REFLECTIONS

Living conditions

In a good state of repair including:

- Clean, dry, insulated.
- Functional sanitary facilities within the caravan.
- One room per worker minimum.
- Space for belongings and dressing.
- Services included in daily accommodation charge.
- Heating available when required.
- Sufficient fridge space for occupants.

Caravan standards:

- Good experiences: good state of repair, heating when required, no additional service fees, space for storage, space for personal tasks.
- Bad experiences: shared metal containers not designed as living space, shared over-subscribed sanitary facilities, fees and threats related to caravan cleanliness, insufficient fridge space for number of workers.

Scheme Operators

Responsive and open communication between Scheme Operator and workers:

- Bad experiences: no Scheme Operator response to calls and messages from workers, confusion about when to book flights to come to the UK costing workers money in change fees.

Accessible and transparent transfer process:

- Bad experiences: workers told to go home or remain on farm in response to transfer request, lack of information on how to request a transfer, workers reporting being barred from transfers by farms because they are viewed as good pickers.

Strong safeguarding and confidentiality processes:

- Bad experiences: workers' personal details shared against their wishes.

Facility for workers to change Scheme Operator

An independent body to oversee Scheme Operators' practice

NB WSC has shared information with workers about both the UKVI Compliance Teams and GLAA. However, workers often report feeling that these systems are not working. This is an important area to explore further in relation to a new Fair Work Agency.



GROUND-BREAKING MEETING BETWEEN WORKERS AND DECISION MAKERS

In Autumn 2024, WSC held a ground-breaking meeting in partnership with seasonal agricultural workers and the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery (UNSR CFS) to consider how to safeguard workers on tied and temporary migration programmes. This meeting was part of our 'Worker Power' work and connected to our participatory workshops and broader engagement with workers, it is one of many in which WSC has supported workers to connect their priorities and experiences to decisions made about their lives.

This meeting took place in Glasgow in Autumn 2024, convening 60 attendees and for the first time in the UK bringing current workers on the UK SWV together with people with power to influence their lives. While workers joined anonymously and under the Chatham House rule, they shared openly about the UK Seasonal Worker visa, worker representation, tied-worker accommodation and access to justice. Workers themselves provided evidence and analysis and were joined on panels by government officials, academics, lawyers, trade unionists, NGOs, and national human rights institutions. Thoughts and findings from the day are outlined in the [Conference Outcome Report](#), which is available in both [English](#) and [Russian](#). In [a film shot at the event](#), non-worker attendees share why this meeting was so important.

Policy work

Our policy work connects directly with workers' most pressing issues. It aims to identify solutions that are worker-led and worker-centred. It is based on regular engagement with staff with lived experience of the issues on which we work and workers on the SWV alongside analysis of information gathered through our ongoing casework and Worker Power project. Policy priorities in 2024 have included:

Housing standards

This has been a major policy area for WSC and focus of amendments to the Scottish Agriculture and Rural Communities Bill that progressed through the Scottish Parliament in 2024. Workers on the SWV across the UK are almost all housed in employer-provided accommodation, mainly caravans or metal containers with charges set at up to £9.99 per day in the Agricultural Wages Order (AWO, Scotland) and HMRC rules (UK). As shown below, workers report a range of housing problems to WSC spanning quality, cost, safety and lack of security. Yet WSC has identified that seasonal worker accommodation falls outside standards and enforcement regimes.

WSC briefed MSPs on this issue during the Scottish Agriculture and Rural Communities Bill. Contributing to debates at each stage, we met the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands to discuss this issue. We joined Richard Leonard, MSP to meet the Minister for Housing and Cabinet





Secretary for Rural Affairs along with officials for a task-oriented meeting on how to address the issue. At this meeting, Ministers proposed a housing scoping study to inform next steps for Scottish Government regulation and legislation in this area.

Briefing on Seasonal Agricultural Worker Accommodation

Clear pay and hours information

Large numbers of workers reported confusion related to their payslips in 2024. Some workers documented hours and activities and identified underpayment of hours. WSC raised payslips and clear reporting on hours and pay with a range of stakeholders during 2024. We have shared a dossier of evidence on this issue with Defra officials, the Director of Labour Market Enforcement and the Low Pay Commission. As part of the Seasonal Worker Interest Group we have called for an HMRC inquiry into pay and pay reporting in the seasonal agricultural sector.

Fair Work Agency

The UK Government has proposed a new Fair Work Agency to bring together the Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate, the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority, and HMRC National Minimum Wage functions. In 2023-24, WSC met all relevant enforcement authorities to discuss how their work impacts isolated and marginalised workers. We have worked with some authorities to improve reporting mechanisms and facilitate improved migrant worker-centred inspection and enforcement. This has informed our policy work, including a submission to the UK Parliament Employment Rights Bill Committee and to the Office of the Director of Labour Market Enforcement focussed on worker-centred enforcement through the proposed Fair Work Agency. WSC's extensive engagement with enforcement bodies on behalf of workers at risk of exploitation has informed the development of some core principles for effective labour market enforcement to prevent

exploitation. We have advocated for a new Fair Work Agency to be **accessible, trusted, worker-centred, and resourced.**

Briefing on a Fair Work Agency

Submission to the Director of Labour Market Enforcement, Responding to the open call for evidence to inform the DLME Labour Market Enforcement Strategy 2025-2026

Mid-Year Report

WSC released its mid-year report in August, sharing key issues workers were experiencing as a basis for seeking immediate improvements during the 2024 season.

Mid-Year Report, January-July 2024

Seasonal Worker Interest Group (SWIG)

The SWIG is comprised of nine charities and trade unions, namely WSC, Focus on Labour Exploitation (FLEX), Work Rights Centre (WoRC), the Anti-Trafficking and Labour Exploitation Unit (ATLEU), Anti-Slavery International, FairSquare, the Trades Union Congress, Unite the Union and the Landworkers' Alliance. In 2024, WSC continued to facilitate SWIG engagement with the Department for Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), including bi-monthly meetings. Key areas pursued during this time include housing, pay and payslips, transfers, Scheme Operator license revocation, and safe reporting. Together with SWIG, WSC has helped draft a range of communications directed to UK parliamentarians, UK Government and government expert advisors. These include the following:

Protecting workers on the UK's Seasonal Worker scheme: a call to action for next government

NGOs call for the UK's Seasonal Worker Visa scheme to be overhauled as scheme operator loses licence



Direct support and advocacy

Workers contact WSC in a variety of ways: through social media, our support line (0800 058 1633), via our [website](#) or through our support@workersupportcentre.org.uk email address. WSC provides the following person-centred support:

- Provision of information.
- Advice and assistance with escalation of issues to Scheme Operators.
- Signposting or referral to other organisations.
- Referral to lawyers.
- Advice and assistance with escalation of issues to enforcement bodies.
- Anonymous reporting to enforcement bodies.

Our direct support to workers is complemented by ongoing engagement with:

- Scheme Operators and wider industry actors to ensure effective communication.
- Enforcement bodies to facilitate risk-targeted inspections that safeguard workers' anonymity and needs.
- Law centres to defend and advance workers' rights.
- Civil society organisations to ensure other specialist needs are met



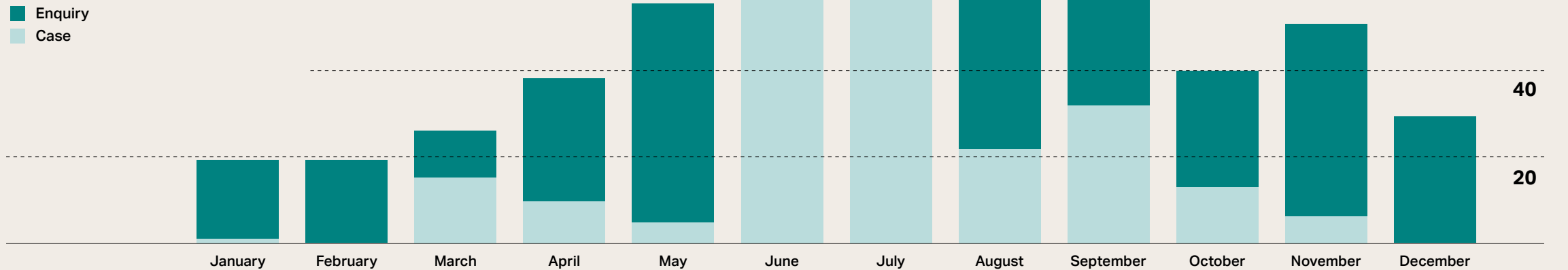


Between January and December 2024, WSC provided advice, support and information to 697 individuals with 271 cases and 432 enquiries. To view the methodology underpinning the data analysis below, please see Annex 1.

DATA FROM OUR CASEWORK

Cases and Enquiries January–December 2024

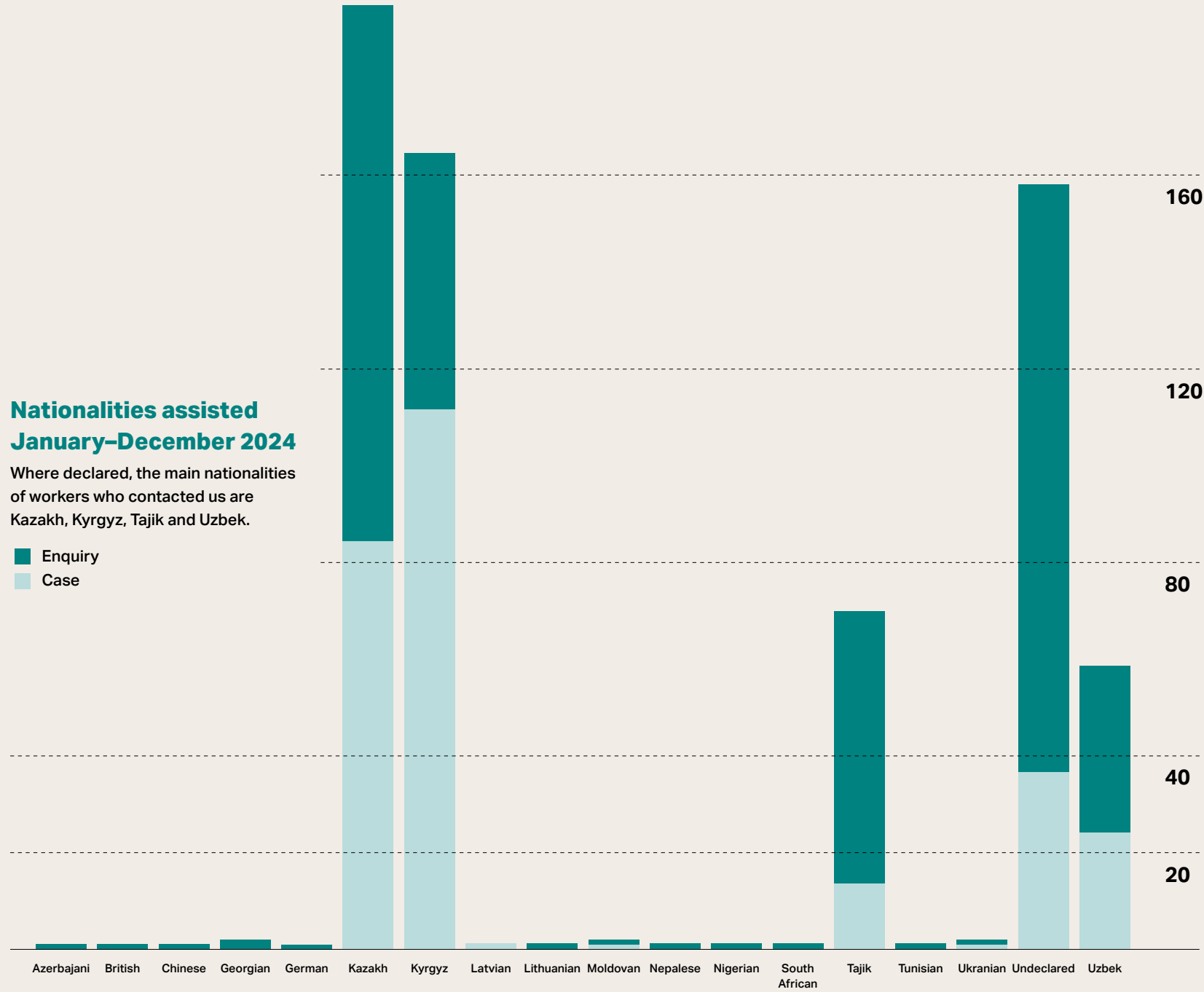
The demand for WSC's service closely follows the main periods of activity in the seasonal agricultural sector, including significant contact between June and September.



Nationalities assisted January–December 2024

Where declared, the main nationalities of workers who contacted us are Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Tajik and Uzbek.

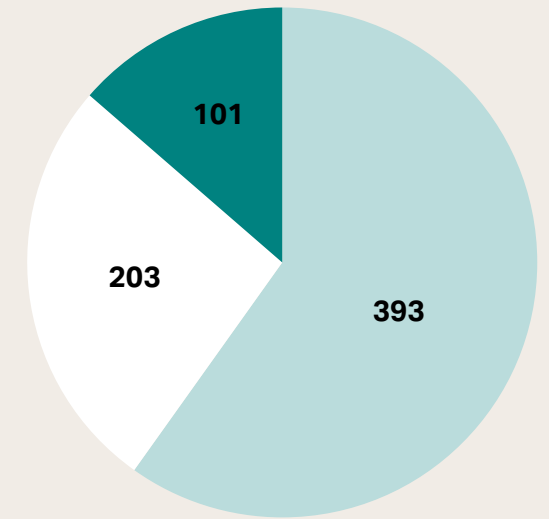
- Enquiry
- Case



Individuals assisted by gender January–December 2024

Where gender was declared, the majority of workers that contacted WSC were men. However, we saw a significant increase in contact with women workers, from 7% of overall contacts in 2023 to 14.5% in 2024.

- Men
- Women
- Undeclared



KEY ISSUES REPORTED TO WSC

Key issues raised by workers in 2024 spanned a wide range of areas, including:

- **Restriction of movement: a significant increase in workers reporting barriers to workplace transfers.**
- **Non-payment of wages: workers documented evidence of non-payment for hours worked, including lack of pay for non-picking time.**
- **Threats and repercussions: workers reported penalties for raising complaints, productivity, and discrimination or verbal abuse.**
- **Health and safety: workers reported failing equipment or lack of personal protective equipment (PPE), lack of training, and increased severe (life changing) injuries.**

Below we outline the key issues experienced by workers, WSC's key findings, and what workers think about these issues. We then set out recommendations for policy change in relation to each issue.

1. Restriction of movement: transfers

Workers are not entitled to change employer or workplace of their own initiative. Transfers are the sole mechanism within the SWV that enable workers to leave difficult or high-risk employment. The Home Office SWV Guidance provides that transfer requests should be made to Scheme Operators (SO), and SOs must “**not normally refuse requests from participating workers**”.⁷ Defra’s last survey of workers on the SWV found 29.7% of workers requesting a transfer did not receive one.⁸ WSC data shows significant numbers of workers have transfers refused and reveals for the first time a very high number of workers unable to access the transfer process at all.

Key findings from WSC work in 2024

- Many workers reported transfers as their only solution to problems faced on farms. Most workers WSC supported expressed a fear of reporting the issues they face, including reporting issues to farms, Scheme Operators or enforcement authorities.
- Of the workers supported on this issue, many were unaware how to request a transfer, some had requested a transfer and not received a response, and most had been refused transfers by their Scheme Operators. When WSC intervened in the latter, Scheme Operator gave the following reasons for refusing transfers: lack of alternative

7. See Home Office 2025 Workers and Temporary Workers: guidance for sponsors Sponsor a Seasonal Worker <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67658554ff2c870561bde990/Sponsor-a-Seasonal-Worker-01-25-v1.0.pdf>

8. Defra 2024 Seasonal Workers Survey Results 2023. Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/seasonal-workers-pilot-review/seasonal-workers-survey-results-2023#:~:text=The%20seasonal%20workers%20survey%20is,run%20each%20year%20since%202019>

9. <https://workersupportcentre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/MidYearReport.pdf>

What the Home Office guidance on transfers says:

If the worker wishes to change employer

*‘You **must establish a clear employer transfer pathway**, including transparent criteria for making a transfer request and a process for considering such requests. This should be communicated to workers before they start to work on the farm.*

*You **must not normally refuse requests from participating workers to change employers**. Participating workers **can change employers if they wish and must normally be allowed to do so**, unless there are **significant reasons not to** permit this (for example, their visa will imminently expire and the duration of the necessary training requirements would make such a move impractical).’*

“We repeatedly raised issues on our farm but no action was taken so we had to transfer to another place.”

“I’m happy to get a transfer from [name of farm]. At this farm [where the worker was transferred to] we’re treated like people. With such human attitude I’m happy to do the work with the best speed and quality.”

workplaces, worker productivity questions, the short period to the end of a workers' contract, or disbelief in the workers' reasons for seeking a transfer.

- WSC prioritises support to workers to access transfers when welfare issues are faced, including unsafe living conditions, health and safety-hazards, non-payment of wages, threats, or poor treatment.
- Given the considerable impact on workers' lives, WSC is concerned at significant levels of transfer refusals, the confusion around access to transfers and the lack of evidence or justification provided to workers for transfer refusals.

WSC data summary

WSC saw a significant increase in workers seeking support to access transfers in 2024. Transfer queries represented 51% of our cases and enquiries, versus 15.5% in 2023.

Overall, 357 workers (115 enquiries and 242 cases) raised issues related to transfers. The most common issues were:

- **117** workers (80 cases and 37 enquiries) sought advice and information as they were not aware of how to request a transfer.
- **11** workers we supported were penalised for requesting a transfer. Penalisation included being kept out of work or dismissed.
- **152** workers (115 cases and 37 enquiries) sought help when their transfer requests were refused.
- **56** workers (24 cases and 32 enquiries) tried to request a transfer but sought help when they reported not receiving a response from their SO.
- **6** workers reported being dismissed after having made a transfer request.

Recommendations

WSC believes that the ability of workers to move to alternative places of work is an essential safeguard against exploitation. We therefore make the following recommendations.

To the UK Government:

- Review the SWV for the risks of exploitation it presents, particularly the impact of highly restricted movement.
- Review data on transfer requests and refusals to better understand and address why significant numbers of transfers are being refused.
- Clarify the guidance to sponsors on transfers, underlining the importance of transfers in worker safeguarding.
- Establish an independent transfer mechanism, separate to the Scheme Operators, to enable workers to raise transfer requests with an independent body.

To industry:

- Ensure transfer pathways are clear, open and transparent for workers, including sharing information with workers on why transfers are refused and permitting appeal.

WSC Actions

- WSC has requested that all Scheme Operators simplify and clarify their transfer processes and reported on one example of good practice from the Scheme Operator Hops in our 2024 Mid-Year Report.⁹
- WSC has sought to develop better understanding of the reasons for transfer refusals, which are often unclear to workers.



CASE STUDY 1

Two workers contacted a WSC Outreach Caseworker because they were very worried about their contract coming to an end as there was very little work on the farm, despite them having more than two months left on their visa. The farm and supervisors had told workers that work was coming to an end earlier than expected. There were many issues at the farm. These included poor housing, with caravans very old, in bad state of repair and cold. A further issue was pay, as workers had not been paid for some hours worked. However, the workers did not want to raise complaints but sought help to access a transfer to a “good farm”.

WSC’s Outreach Caseworker explained that a transfer can only be provided by the Scheme Operator. The workers had already requested a transfer through their Scheme Operator, approximately a month before contacting WSC, and had not received a response.

WSC’s Outreach Caseworker advised the workers to email the Scheme Operator directly to ask for an update. More than a week later the workers received a message from the farm explaining that work would be finishing earlier than expected and that there were limited transfers available, advising them to get in touch with their Scheme Operator or arrange their flight back home.

As the workers had not yet received a response to their emails, WSC contacted the Scheme Operator to ask whether the workers could be offered a transfer so they could work the remainder of their visa. The Scheme Operator eventually offered the workers a transfer to another farm.

2. Pay and hours: non-payment of wages and productivity expectations

Seasonal agricultural workers' hours must be paid at the National Living Wage (England) or Agricultural Minimum Wage (Scotland) rate of £11.44 per hour (see below section).

In 2024, WSC received evidence across a range of farms of non-payment of wages for hours worked. Many payslips shown to WSC detailed products picked rather than hours worked, making it very hard to understand hourly pay.

Workers report to WSC being required to pick a certain amount of product within a certain amount of time, which is referred to as 'targets' or 'productivity targets'.¹⁰

Many workers report not being made aware of productivity target systems that exist on farms before they come to the UK. Many workers face disciplinary consequences, including threats of dismissal and dismissal for failing to meet productivity targets.

Many workers consider the hours of work provided to be insufficient, as they had expected to work and earn more.

Key findings from WSC work in 2024

- WSC saw extensive evidence from workers of payslips that were both confusing and seemed to omit all hours worked. Many workers reported, and evidenced with payslips, non-payment for time outside

What the Home Office guidance says on pay and hours:

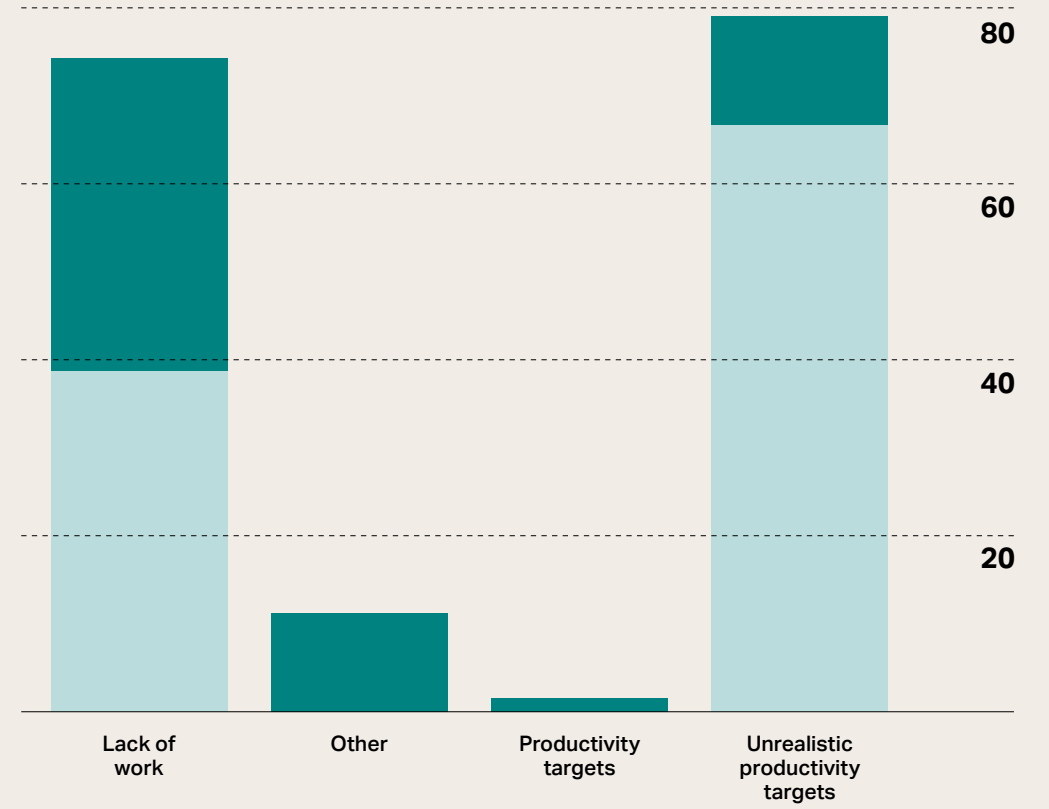
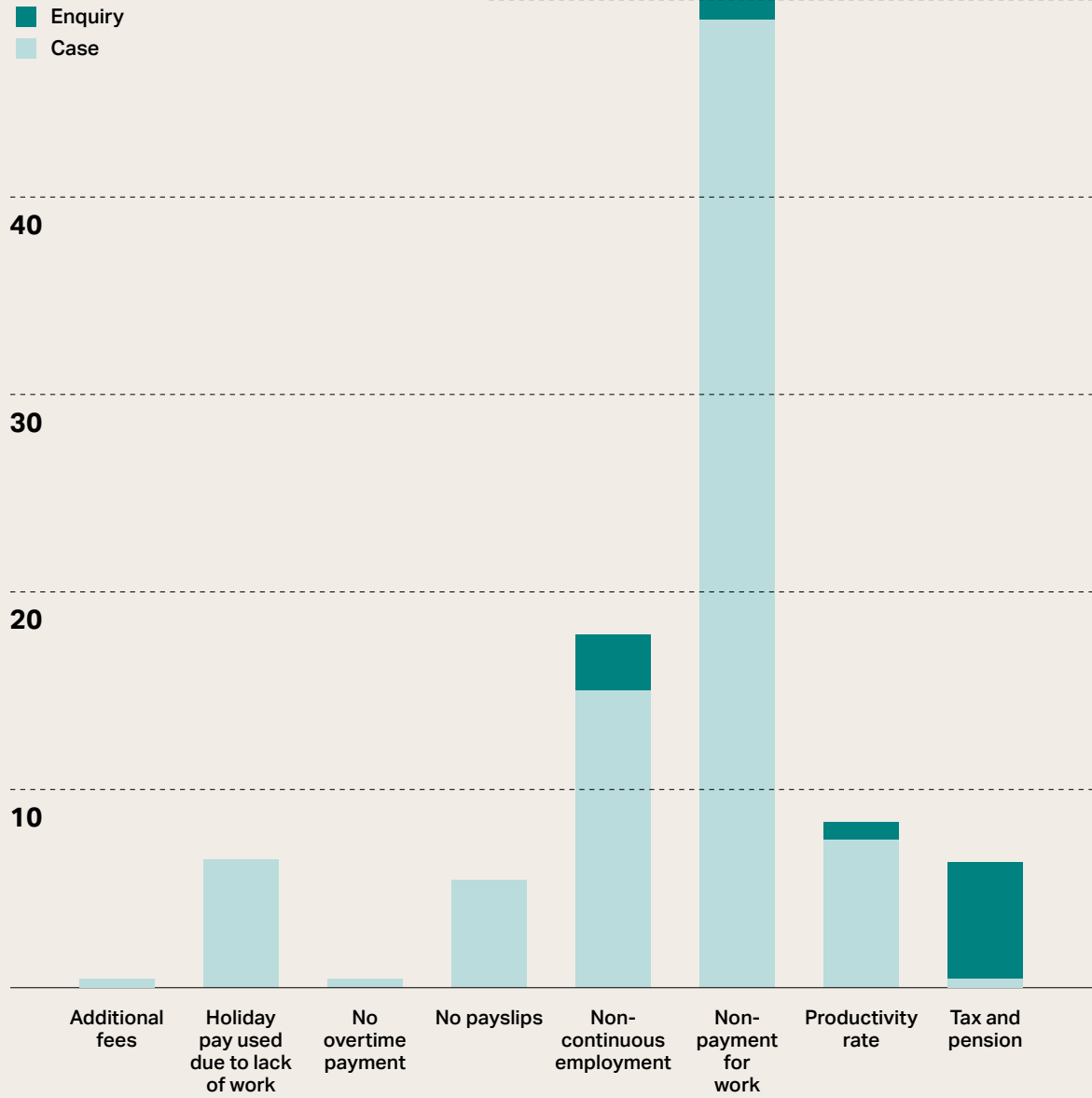
*For workers sponsored to work in the horticulture sector or poultry sector [...] you must confirm they will receive at least **32 hours of paid employment each week** and be paid at least **£11.44 for each hour worked**.*

“The farm owners do not treat us very well. They calculate the working hours according to their convenience.”

“At the farm, the counting is different. When you arrive at the field, work hours begin only when the actual work is begun, and time in between counts as a break, meaning you need to spend 10-13 hours at work to achieve 8 hours of pay.”

10. A powerful account of how picking targets work on farms and the consequences for not meeting these targets was shared by Jean-Pierre Du Toit in his article on Open Democracy.

Pay issues reported January–December 2024



Issues related to lack of work and productivity targets January–December 2024

■ Enquiry
■ Case

picking, including: travel between fields; travel to or from fields to employer premises such as packhouses; time spent in team meetings; and “rest breaks” which had work-related requirements associated.

- In a small number of cases, workers made a direct complaint related to non-payment of wages to His Majesty’s Revenue and Customs (HMRC) or Agricultural Wages Enforcement Team (AWET). To ensure workers’ anonymity, the actual number is not disclosed.

WSC data summary

- **99** workers (84 cases and 15 enquiries) contacted the WSC with issues related to pay.
- **54** workers (49 cases and 5 enquiries) reported non-payment for work.
- **79** workers (66 cases and 13 enquiries) raised concerns about the productivity/picking targets they were expected to meet, reporting they were unachievable, especially when there was little crop to pick or where they were expected to meet similar targets to very experienced workers having just arrived on the farm.
- **7** workers reported holiday pay being used to top up hours to artificially meet the 32 hours requirement (see box).
- **17** workers (14 cases and 3 enquiries) were not given continuous employment throughout their stay in the UK and were therefore not provided or paid for 32 hours for every week they are in the UK.
- **74** workers (39 cases and 35 enquiries) raised concerns about the hours of work provided as they had expected to work more than the minimum guaranteed hours and therefore earn more

Recommendations

Given the numerous barriers to workers reporting and the improvements required to enable and facilitate further worker engagement with labour market enforcement, it is critical that the Fair Work Agency makes this issue a priority.

WSC has shared evidence of payslips, confusion and non-payment of wages with the Director of Labour Market Enforcement and Low Pay Commission. Together with members of the Seasonal Worker Interest Group we have requested an HMRC investigation into this matter.

To the UK Government:

- Task HMRC with investigating the non-payment of wages for seasonal agricultural workers.
- Establish standard requirements for hours to be outlined in relation to pay slips and for pay slips to feature contact details for independent worker support services that can assist with understanding payment of wages.
- Ensure the new Fair Work Agency prioritises pay and ensures where there is non-payment of wages money can be swiftly recovered and paid.

To industry:

- Scheme Operators should request a standard pay slip format across all farms to ensure consistency.

WSC Actions

- Where workers consented, breaches of employment law or the SWV guidance were escalated to the Scheme Operator, lawyers, and/or enforcement authorities. Resolution for some is still pending.
- In most cases, workers just wanted to change farm and WSC supported them to seek a transfer to another farm.

3. Dismissals

Workers on the seasonal worker visa are not covered by most dismissal rights, which apply after two years of continuous employment. This is despite many workers returning to work in the UK each year.

While the ACAS Code of Practice on disciplinary and grievance procedures includes a process for investigation of any discipline cases against a worker, and for providing information on that investigation to workers alongside worker representation, this is not always applied. Workers are non-unionised and are therefore rarely represented in dismissal cases.

The widespread lack of effective voice in the sector, which sees extremely low unionisation rates, allows for unequitable and unfair treatment of workers to take place unchallenged.

Without the freedom to move to an alternative place of employment (whether to another farm or in another sector), a dismissal means that workers are required to return to their country unless provided with a transfer.

Dismissals have catastrophic consequences on workers' livelihoods. Workers greatly fear dismissal because of the need to repay debts incurred to come to the UK and the impact on their changes of future work during the season or in future seasons.

“We picked strawberries with our bare hands for speed and had wounds and scratches on our fingers. [...] We had very heavy trolleys with 6 trays in each trolley and we were set targets within a certain timeframe. Those who didn't hit the targets were sent to their caravan.”

Key findings from WSC work in 2024

- Fear of dismissal is widespread on farms, where workers are regularly exposed to direct workplace threats or penalised for not picking enough.
- Workers are predominantly dismissed based on poor performance, i.e. not meeting productivity/picking targets.
- WSC found workers reporting dismissal being used as a penalty in response to workers causing problems, including requesting transfers to alternative farms and raising complaints on farms.
- Contrary to the ACAS Code of Practice on disciplinary and grievance procedures, WSC found workers had not received sufficient information or representation before dismissals.

WSC data summary

145 workers (111 cases and 34 enquiries) raised dismissal-related issues.

These include:

- **34** workers (24 cases and 10 enquiries) who were dismissed for poor performance, i.e. not meeting productivity targets.
- **20** workers (16 cases and 4 enquiries) reported receiving threats of dismissal or penalties related to productivity.
- **6** workers (5 cases and 1 enquiry) were dismissed after having sought a transfer to another farm.
- **19** workers (17 cases and 2 enquiries) were dismissed after having raised a complaint.

Penalisation includes having their workday cut short by being sent back to their caravans or being issued warning letters (32 individuals – 22 cases and 10 enquiries).

Recommendations

Given the SWV is only valid for six months, workers will never qualify for most dismissal rights, which currently apply after two years of service.

To the UK Government:

The Employment Rights Bill should ensure temporary workers are protected by dismissal rights by:

- Ensuring dismissal rights apply to workers on the SWV so that dismissal is not used as a threat to coerce workers into excessive working patterns.
- Ensuring temporary migration programmes with fixed term short contracts must have their own probation periods in line with the length of contract offered.
- Ensuring proof that the ACAS Code of Practice on disciplinary and grievance procedures is followed in dismissal proceedings.

To industry:

- Farms should follow the ACAS Code of Practice on disciplinary and grievance procedures during dismissal proceedings.

WSC Actions

- Requested investigation reports on behalf of workers and informed workers of their right to appeal decisions.
- Formed a partnership with a law school to enable workers to be supported by a legal representative in employment-related matters.



CASE STUDY 2

“We are a family couple. We left our 5 children at home and came here with the hope to make money to pay our debts, but we were dismissed two weeks ago.”

The couple were dismissed for not being able to meet very high productivity targets. They waited for 10 days before they were offered a transfer and they only signed a contract a week after they had arrived at the new farm. The couple were provided information in relation to appealing their dismissal and escalating the issues experienced to enforcement or lawyers, but preferred not to do so due to concerns this would jeopardise their future employment opportunities

4. Health and safety

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) deems agriculture, forestry and fishing the riskiest industry sector.¹¹ Yet in 2024, HSE ceased routine farm safety inspections.¹²

WSC finds particular risks to workers arise from the limited time for training or where training has not been understood, where personal protective equipment (PPE) for high-risk tasks is not supplied, and from the very limited access to primary healthcare for workers on the SWV. This is despite primary and secondary healthcare being available for free in Scotland for all workers on the National Health Service (NHS).

Key findings from WSC work in 2024

- WSC is concerned by the number of workers who experienced injuries in workplaces, in some cases with access to medical assistance delayed for several days. We have found that some workers report worryingly limited training from employers, and no PPE provision, with some workers reporting being asked to buy necessary PPE from their employers.
- The most common issue raised by workers in relation to injury was the unsuitability of equipment provided or the lack of suitable equipment to carry out their workplace tasks. Workers also reported a lack of toilet or hand washing facilities on fields, leaving them concerned about the relationship between worker and food safety.

“There were many rabbit holes in the polytunnels, many workers had accidents and nothing was done.”

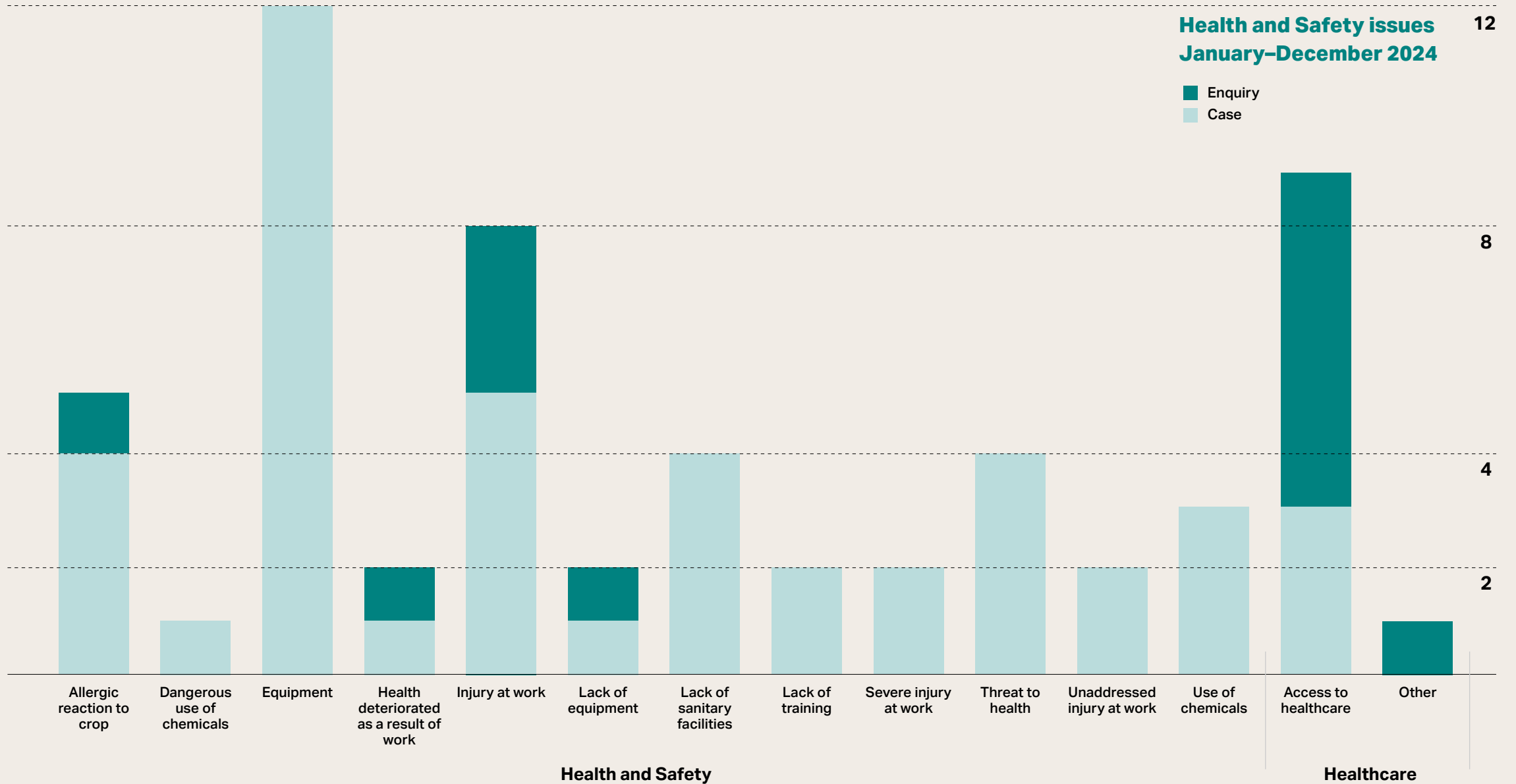
“There is only 1 toilet for 60 people in the field, and you have to walk approximately 500 metres one way and lose work time, or queue all the lunch break. Also there’s often no water to wash our hands in the field.”

11. See: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/agriculture/hsagriculture.htm>

12. See <https://www.nfuonline.com/updates-and-information/nfu-responds-to-hse-decision-to-stop-inspections/>

Health and Safety issues January–December 2024

■ Enquiry
■ Case



WSC data summary

- **47** workers (41 cases and 6 enquiries) raised health and safety concerns.
- **10** workers (3 cases and 7 enquiries) raised issues related to accessing healthcare, despite primary and secondary healthcare being free to all workers in Scotland.
- **10** workers reported injuries, including 2 that were life altering. 2 of these workers were delayed medical assistance for a period of days and 3 workers were referred to personal injury lawyers.
- **14** workers (13 cases and 1 enquiry) reported unsuitable or absent equipment to carry out their workplace tasks.

Lack of handwashing and toilet facilities in fields was raised by 4 workers who raised concerns that their whole work team were unable to meet basic health and safety standards due to the lack of provisions.

- **9** workers enquired about access to healthcare.

Recommendations

WSC is deeply concerned about the health and safety risks to seasonal workers following a high rate of severe injury in 2024.

To the UK Government:

- Call on the Health and Safety Executive to review specific risks to seasonal agricultural workers and to advance a pro-active inspection and awareness campaign to raise standards.

To the Scottish and UK Governments:

- Conduct a public awareness campaign with GP practices and health boards to raise awareness of the health entitlements of workers on the SWV and the isolated and high-risk nature of work.

To industry:

- Scheme Operators should share accurate information about access to healthcare at point of recruitment.
- Farms should support workers to register with local GP practices and ensure designated first aider staff are able to respond promptly in case of worker injury.

WSC Actions

- 3 workers were referred to personal injury lawyers and our staff continued to support workers who had cases open from the previous year.
- Relevant health and safety concerns were reported to the Health and Safety Executive, which resulted in inspections or intelligence for future inspections.
- WSC shared correspondence and awareness-raising tools with GP practices in some rural areas of Scotland to start to build understanding of the presence of seasonal agricultural workers, the risks they face, barriers to accessing healthcare, and their registration needs.

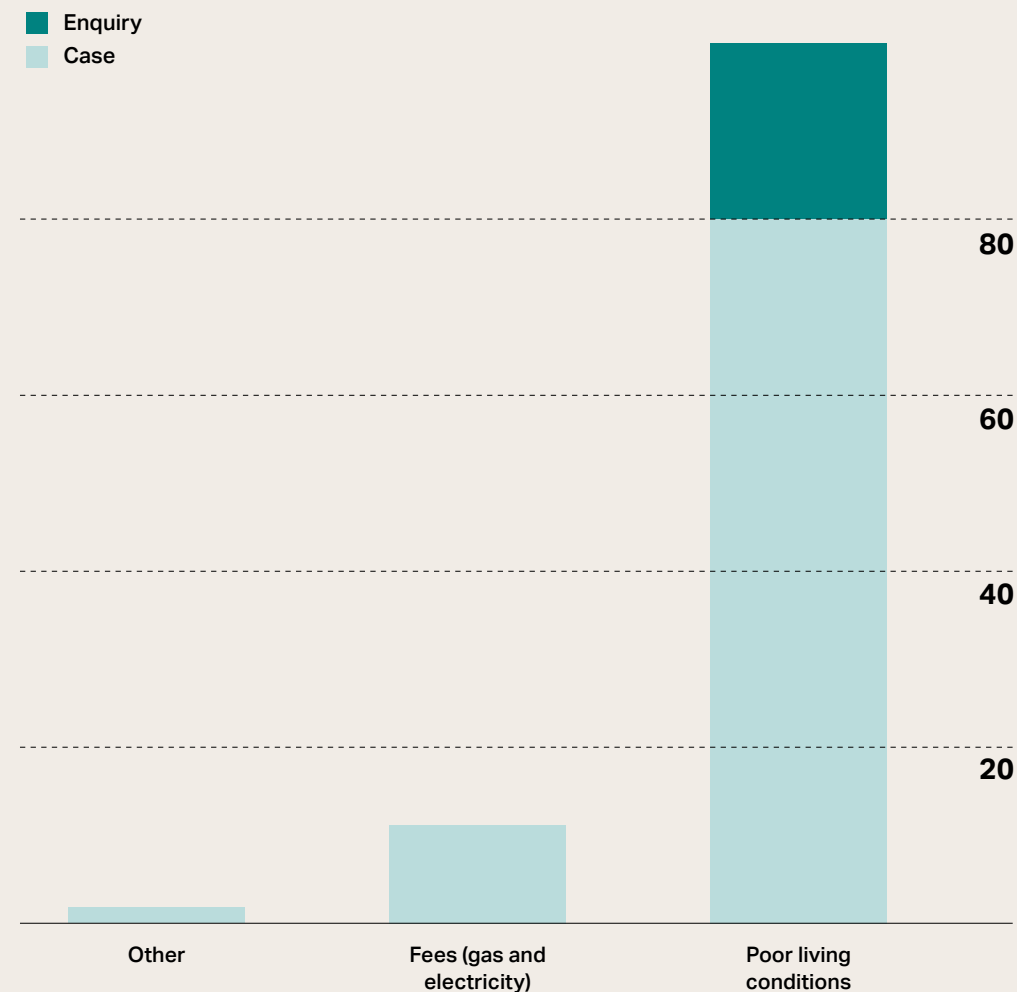
5. Living conditions – poor housing

Workers contribute a considerable proportion of their pay in accommodation deductions, with the cost of a caravan shared by six people reaching up to £1800 per month. At average rates of accommodation costs, this can reach 20% of average income. However, WSC has established that there are no standards related to seasonal agricultural worker tied accommodation.¹³ Nor is workers' status in relation to accommodation clear – whether tenants, occupants or other. There is currently no government body tasked with routinely inspecting workers' accommodation.

Key findings from WSC work in 2024

The majority of cases and enquiries related to poor living conditions. Most workers reported being housed in caravans on farms, and some in metal cabins. WSC was shown evidence by workers of severe mould and damp in caravans, holes in ceilings and walls, overcrowding of facilities including workers sharing sofas in living spaces as beds and of poorly insulated metal boxes. Workers reported the impact this housing had on their physical health – particularly with beds below standard single sizes, or in very poorly insulated, wet and cold spaces – and mental health – particularly with over subscribed shared facilities meaning workers needed to get up very early to queue for showers or toilets before long hard shifts.

Accommodation issues reported January–December 2024



13. See <https://workersupportcentre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Seasonal-Agricultural-Worker-Accommodation-3-1.pdf>

WSC data summary

- **113** individuals (93 cases and 20 enquiries) raised issues related to accommodation.
- **100** workers (80 cases and 20 enquiries) raised poor living conditions, including damp, black mould, cold and draughts, holes, broken and stained furniture, and overcrowding.
- **11** workers raised requirements to pay additional charges for gas and electricity on top of the £9.99 per day maximum accommodation payment.

“My suggestion would be to pay attention to the accommodation so that people feel comfortable and are treated as humans – so that we don’t feel ourselves being treated as slaves.”

“We don’t have caravans but containers, which are cold, humid and mouldy. Everyone is constantly getting a bad cold because it’s very expensive to use electric heaters.”

Recommendations

WSC is calling on the Scottish and UK Governments to address gaps in legislation and oversight.

To the Scottish and UK Governments:

- Amend housing legislation to clarify the local authority duty to inspect seasonal worker accommodation and the relevant standards to be applied.
- Clarify the legal status of occupants of seasonal worker accommodation.

To the Scottish Government:

- Issue Local Authority-specific guidance accompanying the Agricultural Wages Order clarifying types of accommodation and occupancy rates to which the maximum charge of £9.99 per day applies.

WSC Actions

- In 2024, WSC reported particularly poor accommodation to enforcement authorities. WSC will continue to work with authorities to seek means by which they can use existing powers to inspect and require improvements to particularly egregious examples of accommodation.



CASE STUDY 3

A group of workers complained about poor accommodation including lack of insulation and cold, excessive mould, lack of hot water and holes and leaks into bedrooms, on to carpets and mattresses. They reported asking their employer to be moved to caravans of a better standard on the same farm but having their request denied. They alleged discrimination, that one type of caravan was designated to workers on the SWV and a better type for EUSS workers.

6. Poor treatment

A small but important number of contacts to WSC related to worker treatment on farms. Of particular concern was reported discrimination against workers.

Key findings from WSC work in 2024

Workers reported harassment, verbal abuse and poor treatment in workplaces, and being treated less favourably than resident workers or workers with more permanent status on the grounds of race, nationality or immigration status. In some cases, workers reported being told to go home if they didn't like their treatment or conditions.

WSC data summary

- **68** workers (50 cases and 18 enquiries) raised poor treatment as an issue.
- **18** workers (13 cases and 5 enquiries) directly mentioned experiencing discrimination.

Recommendations

All workers should be treated with respect and dignity:

To the UK Government:

- Review the SWV to understand the ways in which it impacts the power imbalance between workers and employers.
- Ensure pro-active inspections through the new Fair Work Agency provide for safe reporting and engagement with workers away from colleagues, supervisors and farm management.

To the Scottish Government:

- Ensure that agricultural wages inspectors are trained in trauma informed responses and work with interpreters to enable engagement with workers who may have faced ongoing threats or abuse.

“People are happy to work for money, but they need to be treated like humans.”

“We were taught at school that British people love their traditions. I couldn't imagine that they still keep the tradition of treating people like slaves.”

7. Shortened contracts

The SWV quota appears to incentivise over-recruitment of workers, meaning many workers who arrive late in the season find themselves on very short contracts.

26 workers (17 cases and 9 enquiries) sought WSC support as their contracts had been terminated due to lack of work on farms. Workers' expectations are to work for the whole length or majority of the visa to, as a minimum, repay the debts incurred to come to the UK. Many of the workers we supported were not provided with additional employment and had to return home.

“The agency [Scheme Operator] refused to provide a new placement, as they said there are no placements available at this time of the year and I agreed on a short term contract so I have nothing to be frustrated about, but my visa is still valid for another 3 months and I wish I could use this time to work in the UK.”

Recommendations

To the UK Government:

- Review the model of setting a quota for SWVs and instead connect the quota to work available.



8. Issues experienced by women on the SWV

Women's experience of the SWV is poorly documented, and it is unclear how many migrant women are filling seasonal agricultural roles as UK Government immigration data is not disaggregated by gender. However, research conducted for the Scottish Government in 2023 estimates the proportion of women on the visa has risen to 30%.¹⁴

Women represented 14.5% of workers who contacted WSC, a significant increase from last year, where 7% of overall contacts in 2023 were from women.

WSC's casework data and information shared by women during women-only and mixed Worker Power and engagement sessions highlights key barriers and risks experienced by women workers.

The key issues experienced by women mirror the issues outlined in this report. However, women also describe the gender specific impact of issues and increased risks to women, including of sexual and gender-based violence. The following women-specific issues have been raised:

Living conditions

- Safety, security and privacy concerns: mixed gender caravans create particular safety fears and loss of privacy amongst women if sharing with unknown men. Unlockable doors on bedrooms or caravans also lead to safety fears

14. See <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/research-and-analysis/2023/04/seasonal-migrant-workers-scottish-agriculture/documents/seasonal-migrant-workers-scottish-agriculture/seasonal-migrant-workers-scottish-agriculture/govscot%3Adocument/seasonal-migrant-workers-scottish-agriculture.pdf>

Health and safety

- Impact of unsuitable equipment on women: for example where unsuitable equipment requires dragging through muddy fields, causing bruises and injuries especially to women workers.
- Women facing pregnancy discrimination and risk: pregnant women facing discrimination and being exposed to dangerous chemicals.

Treatment

- Isolation and safety: women reported the impact of being left stranded on the fields without access to transport to return to their accommodation, which caused significant safety fears.
- Absence of reporting channels for harassment: Women workers gave examples of reporting harassment and being told to resolve matters themselves or risk being dismissed.

Recommendations

All workers should be treated with respect and dignity:

To the UK Government:

- Review the job and occupation codes on the SWV to ensure there are roles that women can carry out on this visa if they become pregnant.
- Add gender specific requirements to the Guidance for Sponsors including in relation to the provision of sanitary facilities, single sex accommodation and on farm reporting mechanisms for sexual harassment, abuse and violence.

WSC Actions

- WSC has initiated women only Worker Power sessions during 2024 to better understand gender specific issues faced by seasonal agricultural women workers.

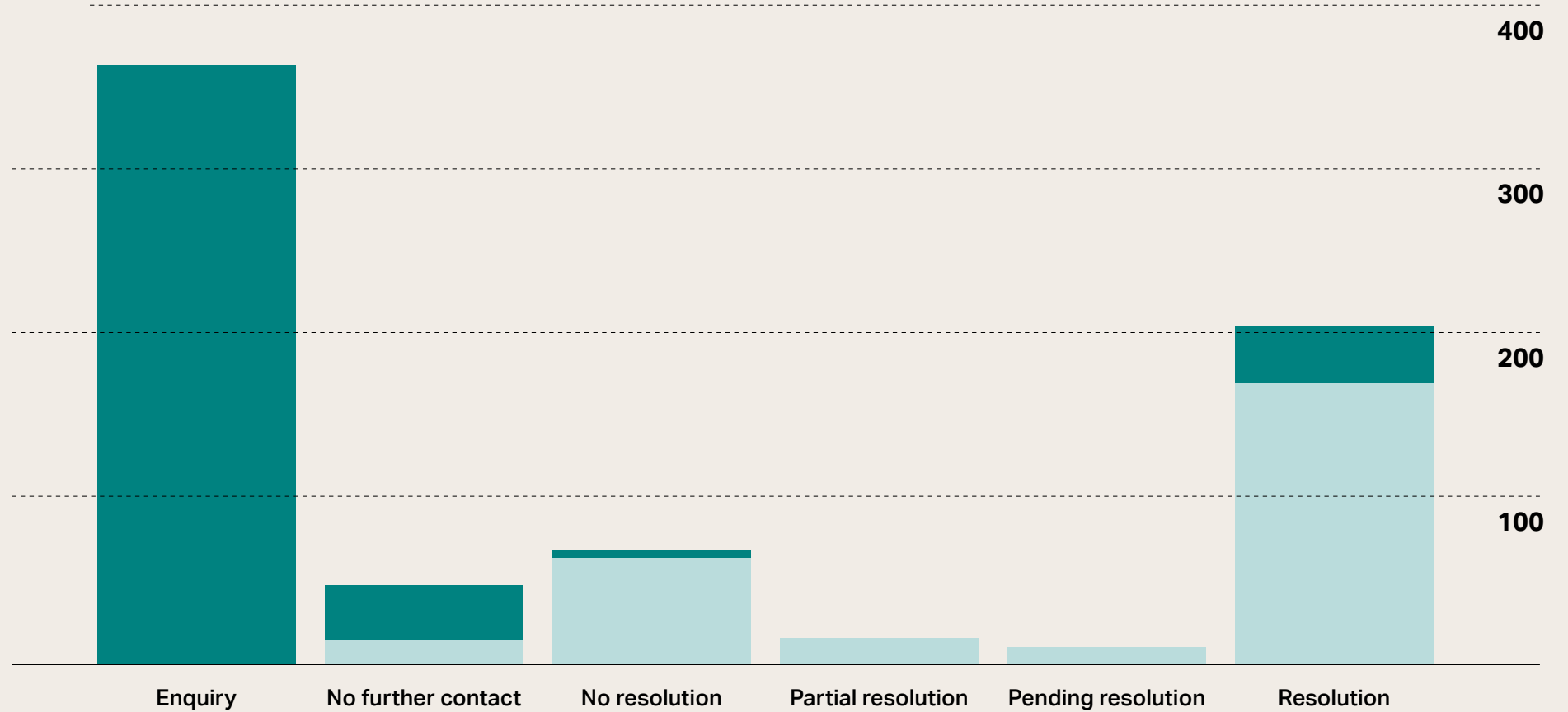
Outcome of cases and enquiries January–December 2024

WSC achieved resolution in just under two thirds of all cases advanced, and over two thirds at least partial and full resolution.

■ Enquiry
■ Case

A case/enquiry is considered 'resolved' in relation to the primary issue for which the worker sought support.

This is an increase from 2023, where some resolution was achieved in over half of all cases. Where no resolution has been possible, or people have not wanted to proceed, we have worked to understand the reasons for this and evidence has informed policy engagement that has highlighted the barriers workers face to resolution and how to tackle them



ENFORCEMENT & BARRIERS TO ACCESSING JUSTICE

Workers face multiple barriers to accessing justice, including fear of repercussions, lack of understanding of legal rights, lack of native language services and information, the short-term nature of the visa, difficulties accessing the legal aid system, and the insecurity of immigration status. Current reporting mechanisms are not tailored to the needs of at-risk workers.

In 2024, WSC provided information to 68 workers about their right to raise a complaint with enforcement bodies in relation to significant issues they had raised or were experiencing. Of these 68 workers, only 2 workers submitted a complaint. One additional worker initially agreed to submit a complaint but subsequently decided to withdraw from the process. 9 workers agreed to seek advice and representation from immigration, personal injury and/or employment lawyers.

For this reason, in 2024 Worker Support Centre worked closely with enforcement authorities to seek means of reporting issues experienced by workers anonymously.

In 2024, WSC either directly made or supported workers to make 19 individual reports to the following enforcement bodies: Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority, Agricultural Wages Enforcement Team, HMRC, Health and Safety Executive, and a Local Authority. The majority of these reports outlined issues that had been raised by several workers on farms employing workers on the Seasonal Worker visa in 2023 and 2024 and were reported to enforcement agencies anonymously. Our anonymous reports from cases in 2024 were on behalf of 101 individuals.

Other reports were direct complaints from individual workers which were submitted to the relevant body with the support of the WSC.

Reports to enforcement bodies included the following issues raised by workers:

- **Pay-related issues: non-payment for working hours, non-payment of overtime, denial of holiday pay and sick pay, not receiving the mandated 32 hours of work.**
- **Fees: additional fees for facilities.**
- **Health and safety: lack of or poor state of repair of equipment, lack of/inadequate sanitary facilities or sheltered areas for breaks, unaddressed injuries, high-risk, unsafe farm infrastructure, and lack of protective clothing.**
- **Working conditions: poor treatment by farm supervisors and management, verbal abuse, and discrimination on the basis of nationality.**
- **Accommodation: poor state of repair, crowded, unhygienic, and gaps with regards to seasonal worker temporary accommodation, which falls outside existing standards and enforcement regimes.**
- **Dismissal-related matters: warning letters/fear of dismissal used as a threat to increase productivity, unrealistic productivity targets, and dismissals citing low productivity with lack of process.**
- **Dependence on employers: penalisation for requesting a transfer**

Memberships and Partnerships

This year WSC joined:

- GAATW
- ETI
- Poverty Alliance
- Living Wage
- Human Rights Consortium Scotland

We are also members of:

- Advice UK
- Seasonal Worker Interest Group

WSC also started working with the GO Justice Centre at the University of Glasgow to launch two new opportunities for law students.

We have established partnerships with a Law Clinic for the provision of ongoing advice on employment-related matters and direct referral of workers who need additional support, and with a personal injury law firm to reduce barriers to accessing legal advice for work-related injuries.

We are working on a project in partnership with Landworkers Alliance which will promote decent working conditions for migrant farmworkers in UK agriculture.

Sharing our work and priorities for change

We were invited to speak at a wide range of key stakeholder events, including:

- the Scottish Food Coalition Annual Conference
- the Ethical Food Network Annual Meeting
- the GO Falkland farming conference
- a panel discussion on tied-visas organised by Amnesty International Canada and the Association for the Rights of Household and Farm Workers

The Director of Labour Market Enforcement: Annual Strategy 2024 to 2025 refers to WSC as providing valuable support to workers in seasonal agriculture.

The International Labour Organization cited our work in a report on cross-border access to justice for migrant workers.¹⁵

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Contemporary forms of Slavery cited our work in his report on worker representation.¹⁶

15. ILO 2024 [Justice across borders: Access to justice for migrant workers through cross border litigation](#), P. 61

16. UNSR 2024 [Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery including its causes and consequences, Tomoya Obokata to the UN General Assembly](#), P.9

Media engagement

WSC has engaged with journalists from the BBC, the Guardian, ITV, the Grocer and the Bureau of Investigative Journalism in this period and has been featured in the following articles:

The Grocer, "[Seasonal Workers barred from UK entry after Scheme Operator ban](#)", 22 August 2024.

The Grocer, "[Confusion for seasonal workers due to lack of government guidance](#)", 13 August 2024.

The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, "[We sacrificed everything we had': seasonal workers left without jobs after home office decision](#)", 24 August 2024.

ITN, "[Seasonal workers on British farms being given 'unhealthy and dangerous' accommodation](#)", September 2024.

The Guardian, "[Number of seasonal workers seeking help after being sacked by UK farms doubles in past year](#)", September 2024.

The Guardian, "['Targets are unrealistic': sacked fruit picker tells of treatment on Kent farm](#)", September 2024.

The Grocer, "[Number of migrant workers seeking help after leaving UK farms doubles in past year](#)", September 2024.

The Grocer, "[Many growers intend to walk away from 'unworkable' ethical audit](#)", September 2024.

Open Democracy - Beyond Trafficking and Slavery,

"[Seasonal worker visas are tying migrants into exploitation](#)", Caroline Robinson, October 2024.

Open Democracy - Beyond Trafficking and Slavery, "[Seasonal worker visa puts migrants at risk on UK farms](#)" Valeria Ragni, October 2024.

Open Democracy - Beyond Trafficking and Slavery, "[Did Brexit unleash new suffering on UK farms?](#)", Margarita Permonaite, November 2024.

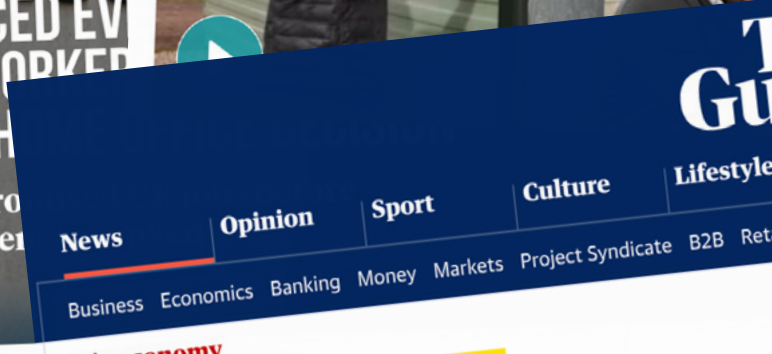
Open Democracy - Beyond Trafficking and Slavery, "[Why I quit being a migrant farm worker in the UK](#)", Jean Pierre Du Toit.

International Labour Organization, "[Justice Across Borders](#)", October 2024

The Grocer, "[Why the UK seasonal labour worker scheme still isn't working](#)", December 2024

The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, "[Seasonal workers find no hope in employment tribunals](#)", November 2024

THE BUREAU OF INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM



CONCLUSIONS: LOOKING FORWARD TO 2025

This has been a busy year for our small team, with plenty to be proud of. We pay testament to those workers who have contributed time and expertise to try and improve conditions for all workers in seasonal agriculture.






In 2025, we will continue building worker power in agriculture and develop worker-led standards in the sector. We are expanding our approach to engage migrant care workers to better understand how to achieve Fair Work standards. We will increase our policy impact, including by ensuring the needs of isolated and marginalised workers are central to a new Fair Work Agency. We are in the process of recruiting for three additional roles to support and deliver this work.

Our team will continue to strengthen and develop new partnerships with lawyers and support organisations across the UK alongside greater engagement with industry to advance meaningful change for workers.

We will also launch our new website, which we hope will help our communications become even more accessible and open to those we support.

We look forward to the challenges 2025 brings!

To support our work, consider making a donation, sharing our report widely, and following us on social media.

 [worker support centre](#)
 [@workersupportcent](#)
 [@workersupportc.bsky.social](#)
 [@workersupportcentr](#)
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METHODOLOGY

Enquiries are simple requests for information or signposting, or a desire on the part of individuals to share information with no requirement for WSC action.

Cases require more action from WSC staff, such as support with translation or completion of forms, mediation with farms or Scheme Operators, or escalation to enforcement authorities.

6 individuals contacted the WSC at different times raising issues not connected to their previous contact. These cases and/or enquiries were logged separately.

The data in the report comes from our Advice Pro case management database, where we log demographic details of people who have contacted us, the issues raised and evidentiary documentation provided in line with our data collection policies.

It is important to highlight that most often workers experience several issues rather than a single one. Most often workers will seek our help to understand and tackle their most pressing issue(s) while further problems persist, and even more workers are too fearful to come forward at all. The data is broken down by issue and the number of workers who have reported that specific issue.



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