



# Preventing work place violence in the public sector

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An evaluation of selected prevention  
measures from the perspective of staff and  
heads of institutions

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Deutsches Forschungsinstitut  
für öffentliche Verwaltung  
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## 1. Objective of the overview

For years, media coverage has focused on the increase in violence against public sector employees; the subject is also receiving more and more attention in scientific literature. However, no comprehensive statistics on attacks on public service staff have been available to date, nor has any systematic overview of practical experience with approaches to curbing such violence. The Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community therefore commissioned the German Research Institute for Public Administration (FÖV) to investigate the phenomenon of violence against public service staff in order to obtain an overview of the extent of such violence and to establish a scientific basis for developing sustainable and nuanced strategies for dealing with this violence. The study focused on violent attacks on public service employees carried out by persons not employed in the public service; the study did not look at the phenomenon of violence between co-workers in the public service. The study defined violence in terms of seven criminal offences: criminal offences against sexual self-determination, criminal insult, threat, (attempted) bodily harm and (attempted) murder.

As part of the study, a literature review was first prepared to provide an overview of the current state of research on the phenomenon of violence against public service staff in Germany as well as an overview of strategies, measures and initiatives to prevent violence. In addition, staff and heads of institutions in various sectors (municipal agencies for public order (Ordnungsämter), professional fire brigades and rescue services, the justice system, the correctional system, schools and higher education institutions, labour and social services administration, and municipal offices rendering administrative services for the public (Bürgerämter)) across Germany were asked to respond to questions concerning, among other things, violent attacks that had been reported or experienced, and the costs and benefits of various prevention measures.<sup>1</sup>

This document presents a summary of the main findings of the two surveys on the various prevention measures, from the perspective both of heads of institutions and of staff in each sector. The document also provides information on prevention measures from the literature review.

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<sup>1</sup> A detailed presentation of the results of the literature review and of the surveys can be found in the full version of the reports.

## 2. Fundamental aspects of occupational health and safety

The legal obligation to prevent violence in the workplace is based above all on the Social Code Book VII (*Sozialgesetzbuch VII*) and the Occupational Safety and Health Act (*Arbeitsschutzgesetz, ArbSchG*). That Act requires employers to organise working conditions in such a way that identified hazards to life and health are avoided as much as possible (for example, through the safe design of the structural conditions, the equipment with ergonomic, stable and suitable furniture, the design of the work processes and the selection of suitable work equipment). Protecting employees against violent attacks in the workplace is therefore part of this obligation.

Since violence in the workplace is a work-related health hazard, the accident insurance institutions are also responsible for prevention issues. For example, occupational accident insurers provide support for their member institutions in the form of extensive prevention services (such as de-escalation training, advising on security strategies, and guides and brochures on various topics). They also conduct studies and participate in analyses (for example, the “abba” project on workloads and risks at employment offices). As an important actor in the field of prevention, the institute for labour and health (IAG) of the umbrella association of the accident insurance institutions for the industrial and public sectors (DGUV, German Social Accident Insurance) offers a broad range of prevention services.

For the development of prevention measures in the course of the preparation of a precautionary concept, the so-called TOP scheme is suitable. This model is based on section 4 of the Occupational Safety and Health Act and indicates the order in which the measures to be developed should be taken: **t**echnical/structural, **o**rganisational, and **p**ersonal measures. According to this hierarchy of measures, personal measures are generally of secondary importance, but they nonetheless play an important role in violence prevention.

The specific circumstances of the particular organisation must be kept in mind when implementing prevention measures. A record should be kept when measures are taken in order to be able to modify them if necessary. It is also important to assess the effectiveness of the measures chosen.

In occupational health and safety, two prevention approaches can be distinguished in principle: behavioural prevention (*Verhaltensprävention*) and situation-related prevention (*Verhältnisprävention*). The first approach is aimed at promoting healthy behaviours among employees (for example, by organising health fairs or offering de-escalation training), while the second approach focuses on creating the necessary conditions for employee health and safety (for example, by organising the workplace and work processes accordingly).

Occupational prevention which concentrates mainly on measures related to employee behaviour (such as de-escalation training) thus transfer the responsibility for health to the individual employees are usually insufficient. Instead, measures from both approaches to prevention are needed.

### 3. Prevention measures: An overview

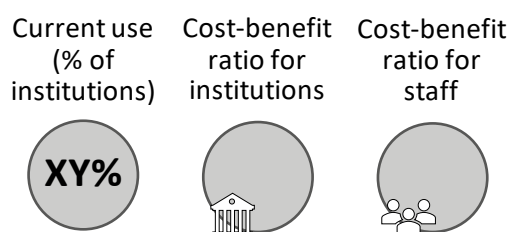
In order to provide a better overview, this document presents a summary of the main results of the literature review and the two surveys that were conducted. This summary only includes those measures which are relevant for many employment sectors or which are widely used. The summary presents results for no more than the following eight sectors:

- » Fire brigades and rescue services
- » Municipal agencies for public order (Ordnungsämter)
- » Court bailiffs
- » The correctional system
- » Justice system
- » The labour and social services administration
- » Municipal offices rendering administrative services for the public (Bürgerämter)
- » Higher education institutions

This summary does not present the results of measures if less than 30 institutions or respondents from a particular sector provided information about the measure.

The graphics presenting the survey results for each measure and sector show the percentage of institutions using the measure and the costs and benefits from the perspective of heads of institutions and staff. Figure 1 shows how the survey results are presented:

» **Figure 1: Presentation of the results of the surveys on prevention measures**

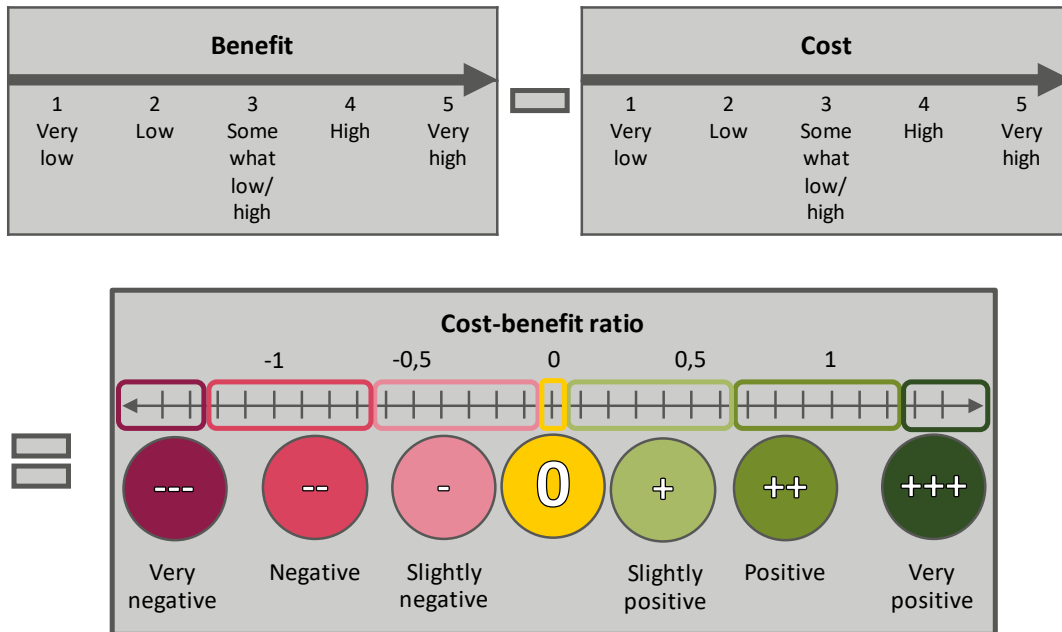


The first number (“Current use”) indicates the percentage of institutions in a particular sector surveyed which responded that they currently use the prevention measure. The cost-benefit ratio is obtained from the difference between the evaluated benefit and the evaluated cost of a measure. The numerical ratio for institutions and employees is represented in the categories shown in Figure 2, ranging from “---” (very negative) to “+++” (very positive). This ratio shows how institutions and employees assess the costs and benefits in relation to each other, but it is not a direct indication of the effectiveness of a measure.

Measures that are rated as especially effective are also referred to in the text.



» Figure 2: Calculating cost-benefit ratios for prevention measures based on the survey results



### 3.1. Technical and structural measures

#### 3.1.1. Structural measures

Structural measures can help to protect employees from violent attacks. Such measures may include escape routes and sufficient lighting in parking areas and hallways and at building entrances. Structural measures are also a way to create a pleasant atmosphere for citizens, for example with clean and attractive waiting rooms and play areas for children, thereby reducing the risk of violence. Individual structural measures in administrative buildings are described in more detail below.

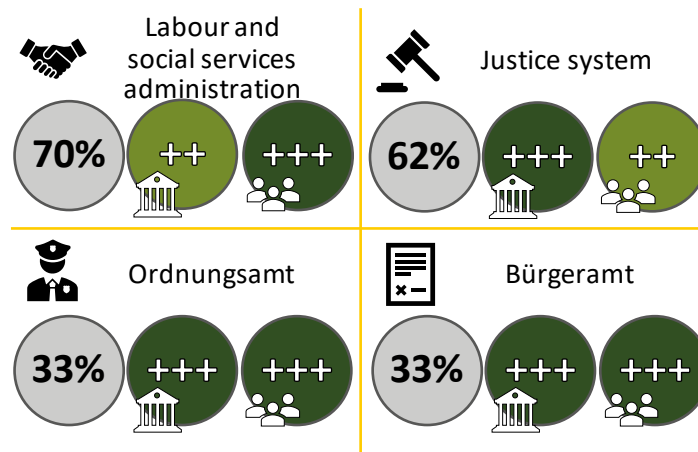
##### 3.1.1.1. Emergency exits/open doors and escape routes

In administrative buildings, escape routes and emergency exits/open doors can be used. Creating a secondary escape route for employees is one possible structural measure to protect employees in critical situations. Escape routes and open doors can help employees in escalation and threat scenarios to escape the situation. In the case of public-intensive activities, the “second escape route” to the neighbouring office has proven itself, especially in individual workplaces. It is important for fire escape routes to serve in case of threat situations as well. Escape routes must not be blocked, and it may be necessary to ensure that the placement of desks and chairs allows rapid access to the escape route. And sufficient signage of escape routes is also important.

Escape routes and emergency exits/open doors are most widely used in the labour and social services administration (70%) and in the justice system (62%), while this measure is found in only about one-third of Ordnungsämter and Bürgerämter. The cost-benefit

ratio of escape routes is ranked as very positive by most institutions and employees; only the labour and social services administration and employees in the justice system ranked the cost-benefit ratio as positive.

» **Figure 3: Use and cost-benefit ratios of emergency exits/open doors and escape routes from the perspective of institutions and employees**

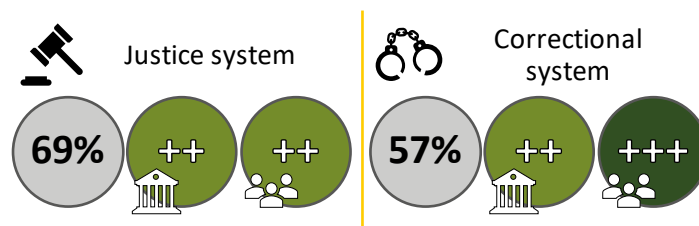


### 3.1.1.2. Secure entry systems

Secure entry systems can be used to control access to a building. For example, such systems can check who enters an administrative building.

Secure entry systems are more widely used in the justice system (69%) than in correctional facilities (57%). Most of the cost-benefit ratios in both sectors are positive; employees in correctional facilities ranked the measure as very positive. Institutions and employees in the justice system both ranked the benefits of the measure as very high. Secure entry systems are therefore regarded in the justice system as very effective in preventing violence but are also associated with significant costs.

» **Figure 4: Use and cost-benefit ratios of secure entry systems from the perspective of institutions and employees**



### 3.1.2. Technical measures

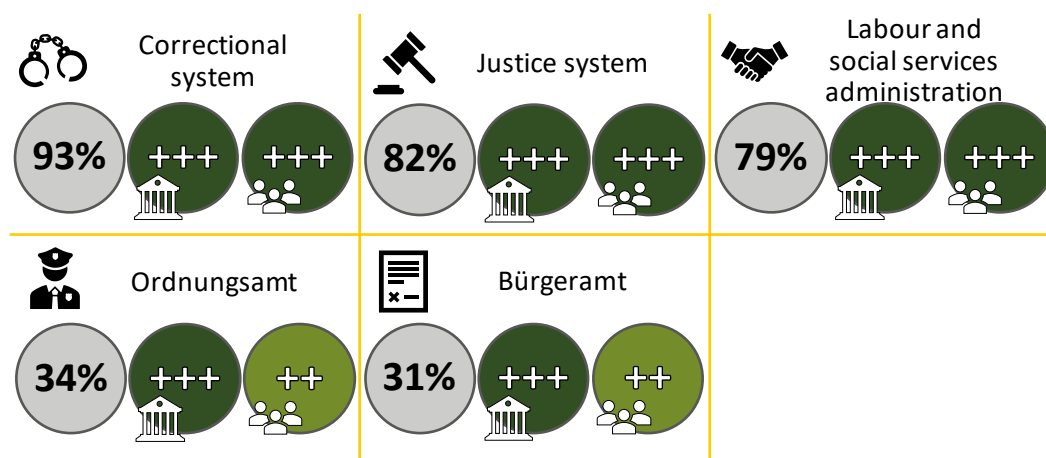
Technical prevention measures include alarms/emergency call systems and surveillance systems (e.g. video surveillance, access control systems).

### 3.1.2.1. Alarm systems

Alarm systems include mobile and stationary systems (e.g. emergency call buttons, alarm software, pocket alarms, personal self-defence alarms, emergency call systems for lone workers, pagers and emergency buttons on two-way radios). Such devices and systems are intended to enable employees to call for help in an emergency. They can alert nearby co-workers in an emergency by means of acoustic or visual signals, software-supported systems with key combinations, an icon displayed on computer monitors or emergency buttons. Due to the way they function, alarm systems are typically more suitable for use in offices rather than in the field. Stationary alarm systems can be used in the event of verbal aggression (insults), inappropriate behaviour (property damage) and forms of physical violence. However, for employees who work outside the office (rescue workers), handheld two-way radios which are able to send an emergency alert to a rescue coordination centre are recommended.

The various employment sectors use alarm systems to differing degrees: they are widely used in the correctional system (93%), the justice system (82%) and the labour and social services administration (79%), but they are found less often in Ordnungsämter (34%) and Bürgerämter (31%). The cost-benefit ratios for institutions in all employment sectors are very positive. The same is true for employees in the correctional system, the justice system and the labour and social services administration, while the cost-benefit ratios for employees in Ordnungsämter and Bürgerämter are positive. In the correctional system, institutions and employees both ranked the benefits as very high.

» **Figure 5. Use and cost-benefit ratios of alarm systems (e.g. emergency call buttons, alarm software, personal self-defence alarms, emergency call systems for lone workers) from the perspective of institutions and employees**



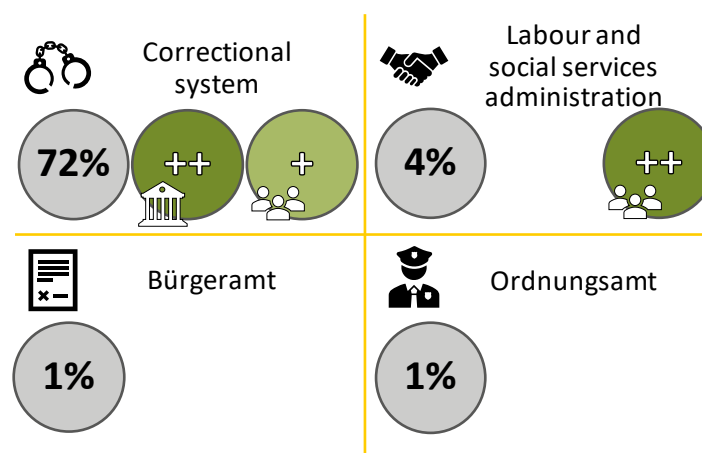
### 3.1.2.2. Video surveillance

To conduct video surveillance, cameras may be permanently installed at a particular site or in a room, or they may be affixed to a vehicle or worn by an employee for mobile use. Video surveillance is usually intended to have a deterrent and de-escalating effect and to increase perceived security. Purchasing and installing video cameras requires an

investment of both time and money. The use of video surveillance is also controversial for reasons of privacy protection and effectiveness. For example, opponents argue that video surveillance acts as a deterrent only against planned violence, not impulsive violence. They also doubt whether it can prevent attacks, especially those caused by reactive aggression. In the correctional system, video surveillance is thought likely to have relocation effects (such as a possible increase in violence among inmates and in illegal activities in areas without video surveillance), and some believe that negative, dysfunctional effects are impossible to rule out, since the awareness of being under surveillance could increase stress and dissatisfaction.

Video surveillance is used by 72% of institutions in the correctional system and hardly found in other employment sectors. What is notable about this information is that, despite intensive discussion, video surveillance is hardly used inside office buildings. For institutions in the correctional system and for employees in the labour and social services administration, video surveillance has a positive cost-benefit ratio. For employees in the correctional system, the cost-benefit ratio is slightly positive.

» **Figure 6: Use and cost-benefit ratios of (indoor) video surveillance from the perspective of institutions and employees**



### 3.1.3. Equipment

Self-protection measures may include equipment (such as protective clothing and work mobile phones) and weapons, which are mainly used in the field. In the correctional system, these measures may also be used indoors.

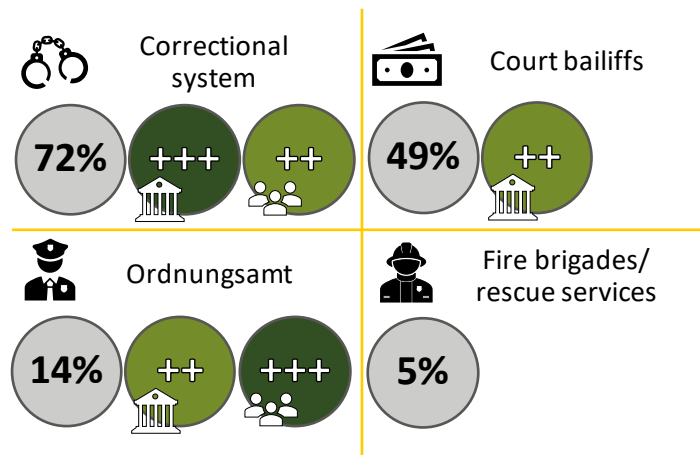
#### 3.1.3.1. Protective vests

Protective vests offer passive protection against physical violence. They are mainly used by the police in law enforcement, which is a sector not considered in this study. Purchasing protective vests is very expensive, and it may take a long time to equip employees. Providing rescue workers with protective vests is the subject of contentious debate and is therefore rarely carried out in practice. Such vests are intended to protect employees, but they may give a negative impression and be viewed as a provocation,

thereby escalating the situation in the first place. Protective vests also restrict employees' movement in rescue operations and may lead to a false sense of security.

Protective vests are deployed to varying degrees in the different employment sectors: they are often found in the correctional system (72%), sometimes used by court bailiffs (49%), and hardly used in Ordnungsämter (14%) or by fire brigades and rescue services (5%). For institutions in the correctional system, the cost-benefit ratio is very positive, and positive for court bailiffs and Ordnungsämter. The cost-benefit ratio for employees in the correctional system is positive as well, while for employees of Ordnungsämter it is very positive.

» **Figure 7: Use and cost-benefit ratios of protective vests from the perspective of institutions and employees**

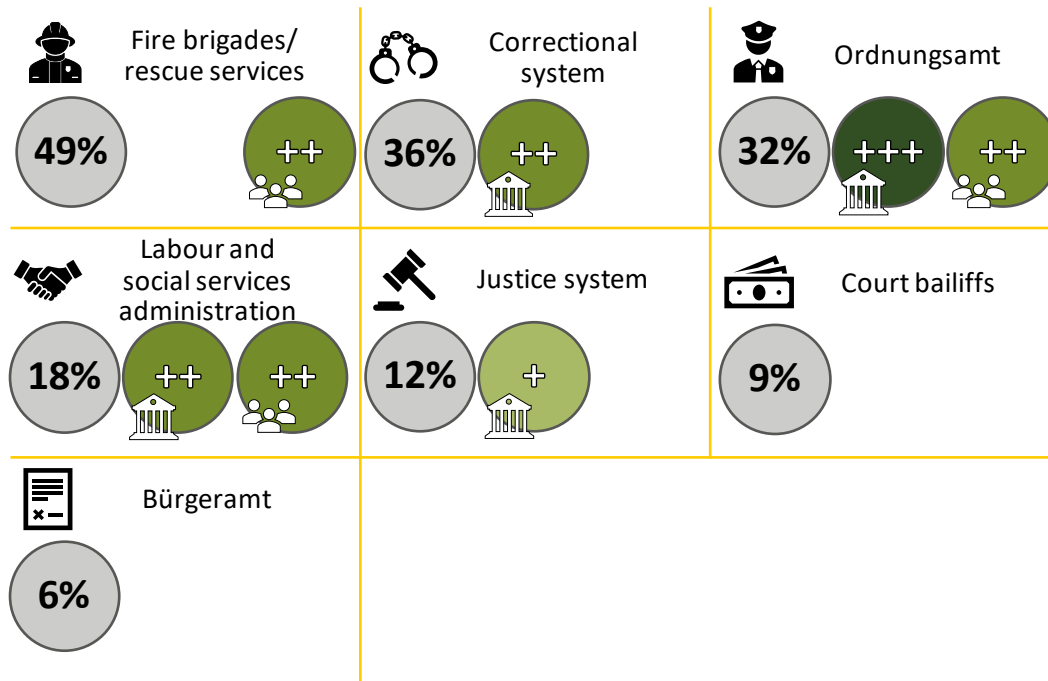


### 3.1.3.2. Work mobile phones

Work mobile phones that can also serve as a mobile alarm system can be used to call for help in emergency situations.

The use of such mobile telephones varies between the employment sectors: they are used by 49% of fire brigades and rescue services. They are less widely used in the correctional system (36%), in Ordnungsämter (32%) and in the labour and social services administration (18%). They are hardly used in the justice system (12%), by court bailiffs (9%) or in Bürgerämter (6%). For institutions and employees in most of the employment sectors surveyed, the cost-benefit ratio is positive. The only exceptions are the Ordnungsämter, with a very positive cost-benefit ratio, and the justice system institutions, with a slightly positive cost-benefit ratio.

» Figure 8: Use and cost-benefit ratios of work mobile telephones from the perspective of institutions and employees

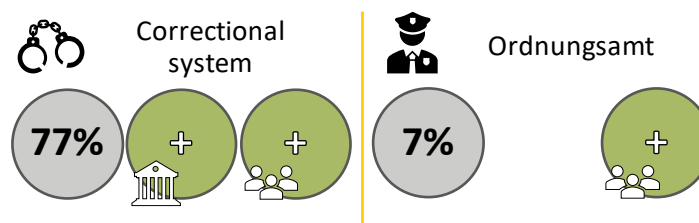


### 3.1.3.3. Weapons

Unlike protective vests, weapons are an active means of protection with a deterrent effect. They mainly serve to protect employees against potential attacks and are intended to enable them to defend themselves in case of danger. However, openly carrying a weapon may be viewed as provocation and may therefore tend to escalate rather than de-escalate the situation. Police batons are considered blunt weapons. Equipment for the purpose of active self-defence includes irritant spray devices, which are intended to have a deterrent effect.

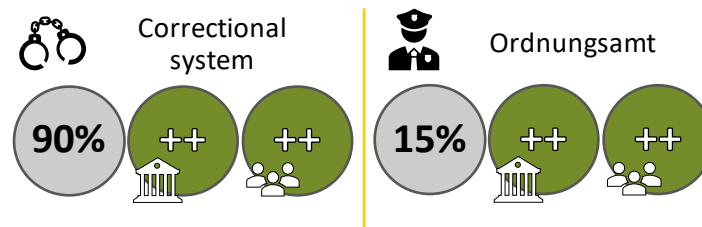
Batons are much more widely used in the correctional system (77%) than in Ordnungsämter (7%), although the cost-benefit ratio is slightly positive for both.

» Figure 9: Use and cost-benefit ratios of batons from the perspective of institutions and employees



Like batons, irritant spray devices are much more widely used in the correctional system (90%) than in Ordnungsämter (15%). They are also more widely used than batons. The cost-benefit ratio is positive in both cases.

» Figure 10: Use and cost-benefit ratios of irritant spray devices from the perspective of institutions and employees



### 3.2. Organisational measures

Organisational measures often provide the framework for the specific structural, technical and personnel-related measures. They are aimed at many different aspects. Such measures may have to do with defining work processes, reporting channels, behaviours and responsibilities, external support and cooperation, risk assessments and action based on them, or institutionalisation by means of organisation guidelines and strategies. Preventive organisational measures are aimed at better preparation and greater certainty about how to act during and after threat situations, and at minimising risk factors. This also includes a declaration of principle against violence, in which a zero tolerance for aggression and violence, the protection of employees, the care of those affected, the prosecution of crimes and the documentation of incidents are stipulated. Policy statements of this kind make the attitude of the management visible and comprehensible to all employees.

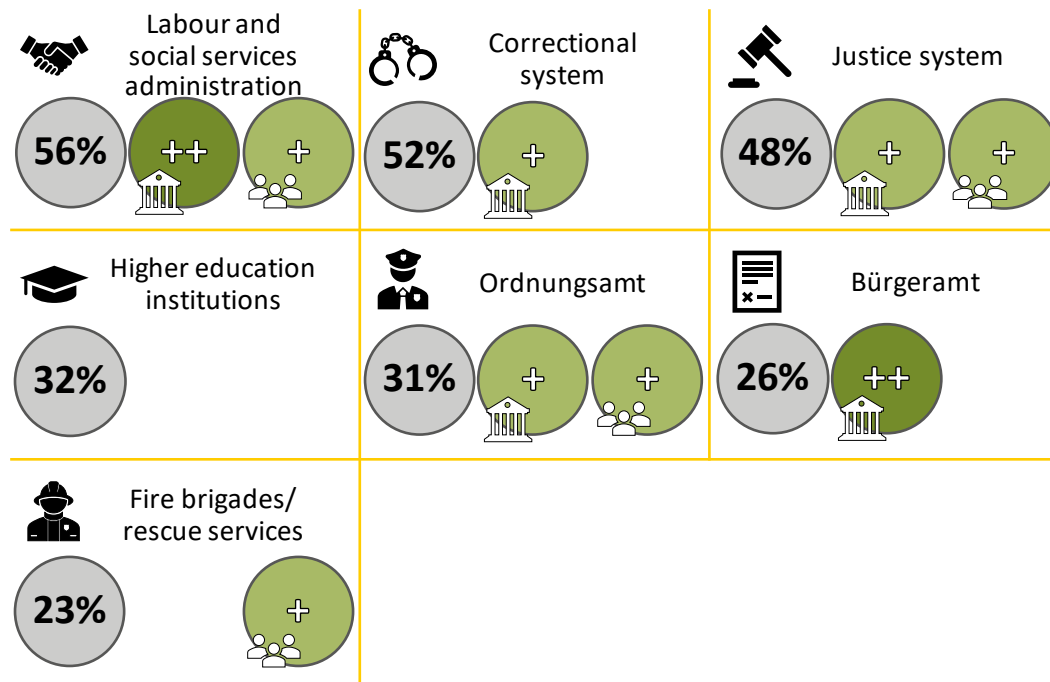
#### 3.2.1. Risk assessments

According to section 5 of the Occupational Safety and Health Act, every employer is obligated to assess risks to their workers arising from working conditions or activities, regardless of the number of workers they employ. The data necessary to assess risks are collected as part of an inspection of the workplace/workstation. The amount of time and effort needed for such an inspection depends on the size of the institution and the risks faced by the institution and its employees. Outside experts may be called in if necessary. Risk assessments are useful in many ways. They fulfil the legal obligations of occupational safety and health, and experts can point out possible risks on site and increase employee awareness of possible consequences for their health. Furthermore, it is possible to identify potential accident hazards, potential hazards in dealing with citizens, stress factors in the execution of the activities and the resulting potential health hazards. Likewise, in the context of a risk assessment, it can be checked whether the rescue routes of the official fire protection meet the requirements of various threat scenarios. The results of the assessment should be documented and discussed to enable an overall assessment. Based on this assessment, improvements can then be made.

About half of the institutions of the labour and social services administration (56%), of the correctional system (52%) and the justice system (48%) conduct risk assessments. About one-third of higher education administrations and Ordnungsämter stated that they used risk assessments. About one-quarter of the Bürgerämter, fire brigades and rescue services surveyed responded that they conducted risk assessments. In the majority of cases, the cost-

benefit ratio is slightly positive. For institutions of the labour and social services administration and for Bürgerämter, the cost-benefit ratio is positive.

» **Figure 11: Use and cost-benefit ratios of the systematic identification and assessment of risks to employees associated with their work, from the perspective of institutions and employees**



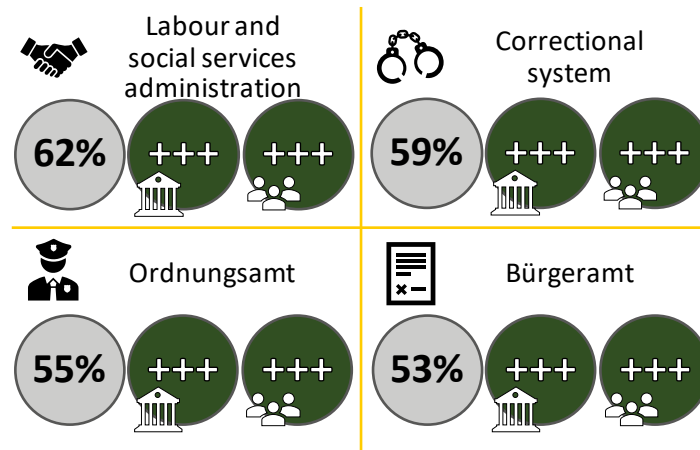
### 3.2.2. Backup from co-workers

If it is clear in advance that an appointment with a client is likely to have potential for conflict, special precautions should be taken. Difficult meetings should be conducted by more than one employee, if possible, and should never be held outside of regular working hours. It can therefore be helpful to conduct such meetings in a neutral conference room, rather than the employee's own office, and with the support of a second co-worker. It should also be obvious that the employee is not alone (for example, by leaving open the door to a neighbouring office). Co-workers could also agree on specific code words to call for help.

Some institutions already require backup from co-workers when dealing with difficult clients. This is practised most of all in the labour and social services administration (62%), but also in the correctional system (59%), Ordnungsämter (55%) and Bürgerämter (53%). The cost-benefit ratios in these sectors are very positive. All of these institutions rate the benefits as very high, and employees too, especially in the correctional system, rate the benefits of this measure as high or very high. Obtaining backup from co-workers is therefore seen as very effective overall and as very positive in relation to its cost.



» Figure 12: Use and cost-benefit ratios of backup from co-workers when dealing with difficult clients, from the perspective of institutions and employees

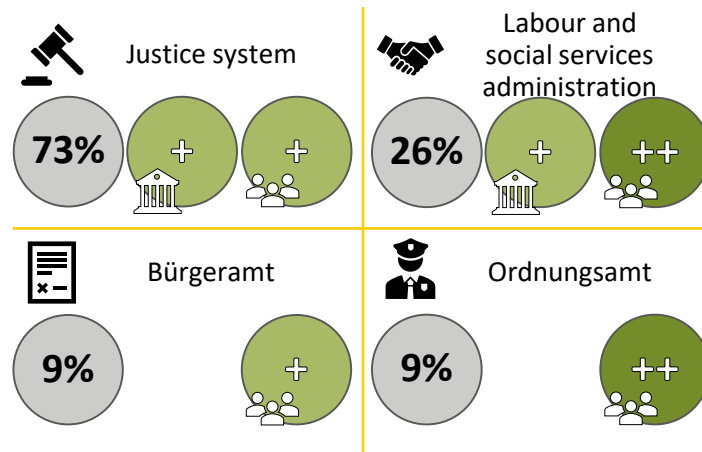


### 3.2.3. Access control and security services

In some parts of the public administration, uncontrolled public access to the workplace constitutes a serious risk. Effective access management can make sure that unauthorised persons cannot enter areas other than those designated for the public. One form of access management is security checks at the building entrance. These can make sure that visitors do not bring any weapons, pepper spray or dangerous tools into the building.

The use of entrance security checks varies widely among the employment sectors: whereas some 73% of institutions in the justice system use such checks, only 26% of institutions in the labour and social services administration and only 9% of Ordnungsämter and 9% of Bürgerämter do. With the exception of the employees of the labour and social administration as well as the Ordnungsämter (positive ratio), the majority of cost-benefit ratios is only slightly positive from the point of view of the authorities and employees. The slightly positive cost-benefit ratios result from the fact that the costs of entrance security checks are also regarded as high.

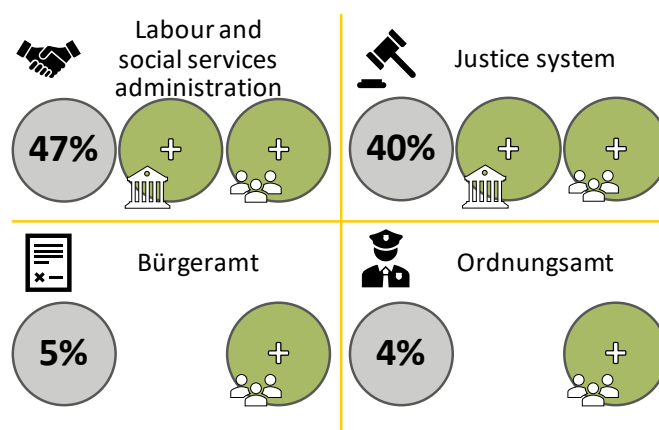
» Figure 13: Use and cost-benefit ratios of entrance security checks from the perspective of institutions and employees



Employing a security service is another way for institutions that deal with the public to manage violent situations. The security service can be informed in advance of appointments that are likely to be difficult, especially those that take place in one-person offices (e.g. in the social services administration). The security service can also be called on when issuing and enforcing bans on entering the premises, because the subjects of such bans can typically be expected to resist them.

Institutions of the labour and social services administration (47%) and the justice system (40%) make greater use of security services than Bürgerämter (5%) or Ordnungsämter (4%). The cost-benefit ratio is slightly positive in all cases. Institutions rate the benefit of security services as high (very effective), although their cost is high as well, which results in cost-benefit ratios that are only slightly positive.

» Figure 14: Use and cost-benefit ratios of security services from the perspective of institutions and employees

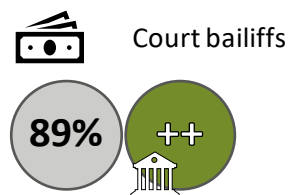


#### 3.2.4. Exchange and cooperation with the police

In various situations, it can be useful and necessary to call for outside assistance with prevention. Cooperation with the police is particularly important in this context. The police can be called in not only in response to a specific attack (emergency call, filing criminal charges); they can also help with prevention. For example, the local police can be consulted when developing emergency plans. Employees who work in the field have the option of involving the police in the framework of administrative assistance if a client is known to be violent and conflict is likely. In this way, potential risks in the field can be avoided; for example, the police may provide administrative assistance when enforcing search warrants.

Police assistance with potentially dangerous assignments is widely used by court bailiffs (89%), which is also reflected in the positive cost-benefit ratio of these institutions. The benefit rating court bailiffs gave this measure was the highest benefit rating of all the measures considered.

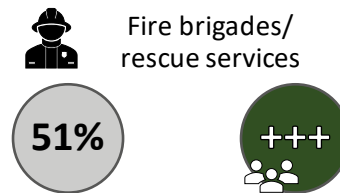
» Figure 15: Use and cost-benefit ratio of police assistance with potentially dangerous assignments from the perspective of institutions



One option for dealing with conflict situations is for first responders such as police and rescue services personnel to communicate with each other. If the situation is out of control, emergency services personnel should withdraw and have the police secure the site. However, this may not always be possible in the event of a large-scale emergency resulting from terrorist attack or a mass shooting. Appropriate operational techniques must be developed for such situations. Rescue services personnel often feel insufficiently informed about police operational tactics and methods when they are working at the same site. Various studies and guides therefore recommend more dialogue and joint training, including for routine operations, to improve coordination between police and rescue services personnel on joint operations.

Fifty-one per cent of fire brigades and rescue services are in contact with the police when responding to an emergency. For employees, the cost-benefit ratio is very positive.

» Figure 16: Use and cost-benefit ratio of information-sharing with the police when responding to an emergency, from the perspective of employees

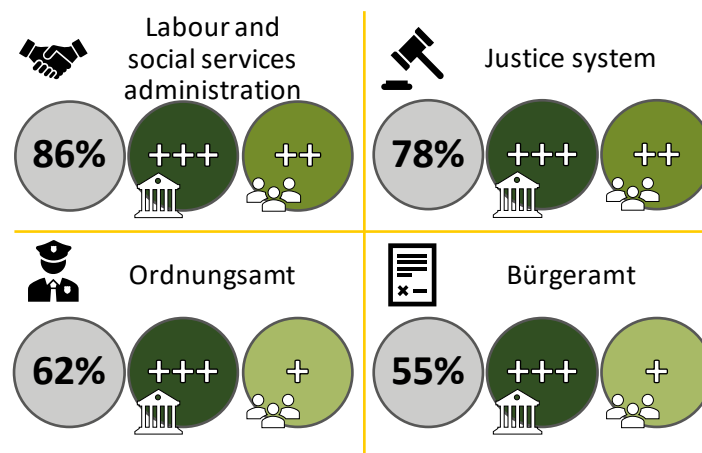


### 3.2.5. Exclusion orders

Depending on the severity of an incident, it may be necessary to insist that a client leaves an employee's office. An exclusion order banning the person from entering the premises may also be appropriate in order to prevent (repeated) escalation. Exclusion orders may help to protect against both physical and verbal violence by preventing potential offenders from entering the building. The subject of the exclusion order can typically be expected to resist its enforcement, so employees should not attempt to deal with the situation themselves but should rather seek the assistance of the security service or the police.

The option of issuing an exclusion order for individuals who behave inappropriately is used most widely in the labour and social services administration (86%) and the justice system (78%). It is also widely used in Ordnungsämter (62%) and Bürgerämter (55%). The cost-benefit ratio varies more widely than that of other measures: for all institutions, the cost-benefit ratio was very positive. By contrast, for employees in the labour and social services administration and the justice system, the cost-benefit ratio was positive, and for employees of Ordnungsämter and Bürgerämter only slightly positive.

» Figure 17: Use and cost-benefit ratios of issuing exclusion orders for individuals who behave inappropriately, from the perspective of institutions and employees

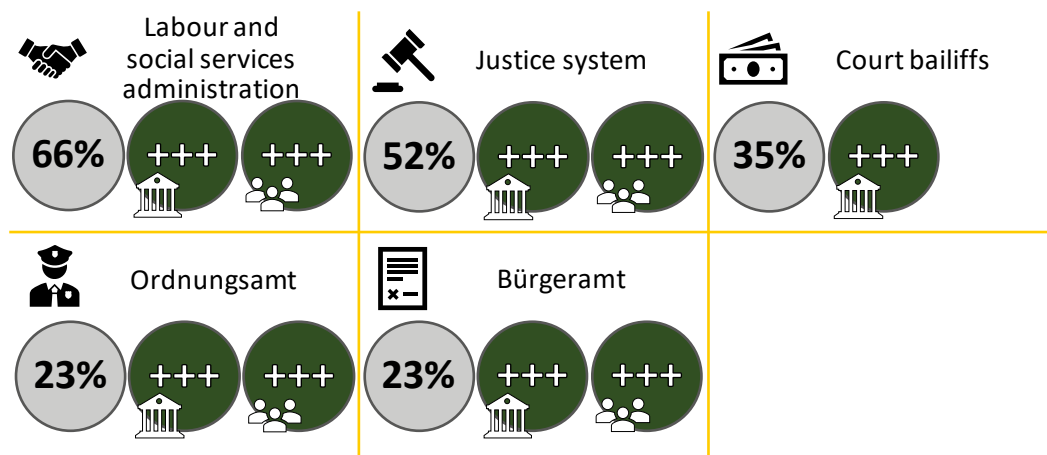


### 3.2.6. Safety-conscious office furnishings

Employees should regularly be made aware that office supplies and equipment may be used against them as weapons; employees should be encouraged to pay attention to their own safety in their work environment. With safety-conscious office furnishings, employees can do their part to increase safety in the workplace. Safety-conscious office furnishings can protect employees against physical violence and verbal threats. Office supplies (hole punches, scissors, staplers, vases, framed pictures) should be out of visitors' reach and kept in desk drawers so they cannot be used as projectiles. To prevent possible threats in employees' personal sphere, no photos of friends or family members should be displayed on employees' desks. Visitors should be seated in employees' direct field of vision so that employees can see any abrupt and rapid movements and react to them. For meetings with difficult clients, square tables should be used which help keep clients on their side of the table. To ensure a professional level of advising, physical distance from advisees should be maintained, for example by using moveable monitors. It is also necessary to ensure that escape routes are not blocked and can be reached quickly.

Safety-conscious office furnishings are relatively widely used in the labour and social services administration (66%) and the justice system (52%). They play a smaller role for court bailiffs (35%) and in Ordnungsämter and Bürgerämter (each 23%). The cost-benefit ratios in all the sectors considered are very positive.

» Figure 18: Use and cost-benefit ratios of safety-conscious office furnishings (e.g. no potential weapons within reach), from the perspective of institutions and employees



### 3.3. Personnel-related measures

Personnel-related prevention measures are aimed at the behaviour of individual employees (behavioural prevention). Employers are required by law to provide their employees with regular instruction on issues of occupational health and safety. Regular instruction, training and advanced training should enable employees to recall the learned behaviours and react appropriately in critical situations. Instruction can teach employees how to deal with difficult clients, for example, or what to do during and after a violent incident. It can also teach employees about very practical things such as escape routes at work. However, employees themselves are obligated to make sure their work environment is safe. They should therefore be made aware of possible risks and encouraged to create safe working conditions. In some areas, personnel-related measures can also apply to other target groups (such as potential perpetrators). These measures include prevention programmes for school pupils to strengthen their social skills (e.g. with behavioural training, violence management and social learning) and anti-aggression training for inmates of correctional facilities.

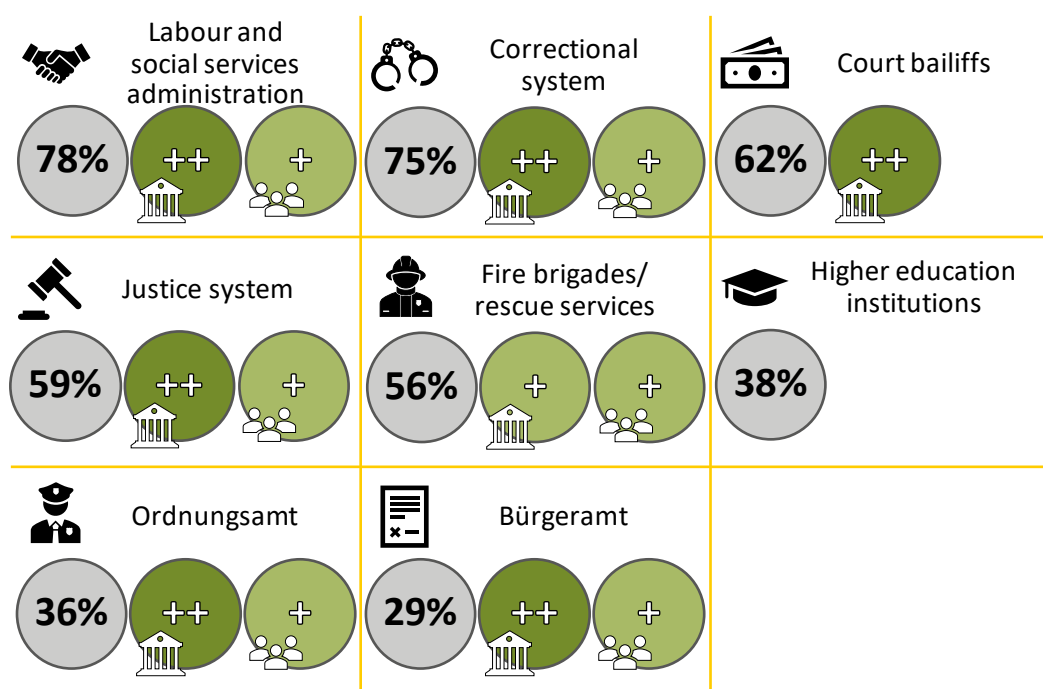
#### 3.3.1. De-escalation/communication training

De-escalation and communication training is intended above all to prevent verbal and physical violence by teaching techniques for non-violent and de-escalating communication and for encouraging communication (e.g. maintaining eye contact when speaking and listening, maintaining body posture open to the communication partner, conveying a sense of self-confidence). Such training is designed in particular for employees who deal with the public, whether in the office or in the field. Training covers among other things being aware of one's own behaviour in conflict situations; reflecting on one's own attitudes and values; acknowledging their significance in dealing with conflicts, threats and violence; de-escalation strategies and recommendations for non-violent behaviour in conflict and threat situations; and strengthening social skills and self-awareness. De-escalation strategies are effective above all in situations when there is a risk that anger will set off a spiral of escalation. Such strategies are less effective for dealing with violent attacks that are either planned or entirely unexpected. This is also true when dealing with aggressive people who are under the influence of alcohol or experiencing an acute psychological emergency. Language barriers also make communicative de-escalation more difficult. The way de-escalation works depends on various factors. As a result, it is not possible to recommend general de-escalation strategies due to the large number of possible alternatives for action.

De-escalation and communication training is one of the most widely used measures. It is most often used in the labour and social services administration (78%) and the correctional system (75%). Many court bailiffs (62%) apply such training, and it is used relatively often in the justice system (59%) and by fire brigades and rescue services (56%) as well.

It is less often applied in higher education institutions (38%), Ordnungsämter (36%) and Bürgerämter (29%). For most institutions, the cost-benefit ratio is positive; for employees, it is slightly positive. Fire brigades and rescue services are an exception: for both institutions and employees in this sector, such training has only a slightly positive cost-benefit ratio.

» **Figure 19: Use and cost-benefit ratios of de-escalation/communication training from the perspective of institutions and employees**



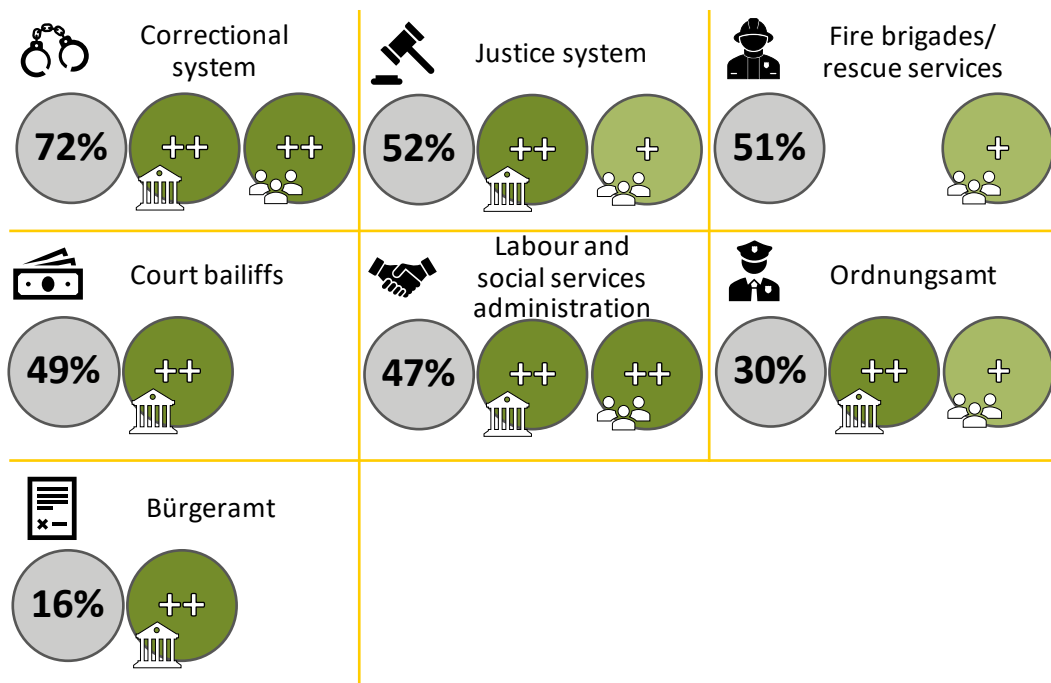
### 3.3.2. Personal safety training

In personal safety training, employees learn practical techniques for protecting themselves in conflict situations. Practising a series of steps is intended to make the process intuitive. In a threat situation or when facing a possible attack, it is always advisable to protect oneself first (self-protection). Personal safety training is intended to teach employees what action to take to protect themselves against physical violence (bodily injury) or other harm. Personal safety training is especially relevant for employees working in the field, as they may be confronted with unexpected situations. In such situations, employees should remain calm and should not panic. They should not touch the person who is threatening them and should not turn their back on the person. Employees should attempt to flee to safety if this does not make the situation even more dangerous. If it is not possible to flee, they should set off an alarm. Investigating the situation or apprehending the attacker should not be attempted until one's personal safety is no longer threatened.

Personal safety training should teach employees to recognise dangers as well as their own strengths and weaknesses and to develop a self-protection strategy, i.e. a plan of action to follow in crisis situations.

Personal safety training is used in many different areas. It is most widely used in the correctional system (72%). It is also relatively widespread in the justice system (52%), among fire brigades and rescue services (51%), court bailiffs (49%) and in the labour and social services administration (47%). About one-third of Ordnungsämter (30%) and 16% of Bürgerämter responded that they use personal safety training. In most cases, the cost-benefit ratio is positive. Exceptions are employees in the justice system, fire brigades and rescue services and Ordnungsämter, for whom the cost-benefit ratio is only slightly positive.

» Figure 20: Use and cost-benefit ratios of personal safety training from the perspective of institutions and employees



### 3.3.3. Self-defence training

Self-defence courses are intended to help employees in the event of physical assault and altercations. Self-defence techniques are a physical training measure. It is important to note that employees cannot be assumed to master the self-defence techniques after a single training course. Self-defence training for rescue services personnel tends to be controversial, as they cannot be expected to take an active part in physical altercations. Whereas the DGUV advises against self-defence, some guides to self-protection recommend self-defence techniques that are not harmful to patients.

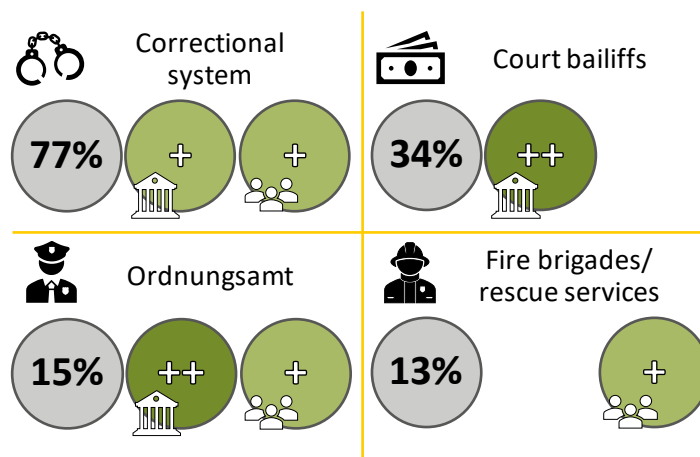
Self-defence training is used to differing degrees in the various employment



sectors. Such training is often used in the correctional system (77%) and less often by court bailiffs (34%), Ordnungsämter (15%), and fire brigades and rescue services (13%).

In most cases, the cost-benefit ratio is only slightly positive. The cost-benefit ratio is positive for court bailiffs and Ordnungsämter.

» Figure 21: Use and cost-benefit ratios of self-defence training from the perspective of institutions and employees

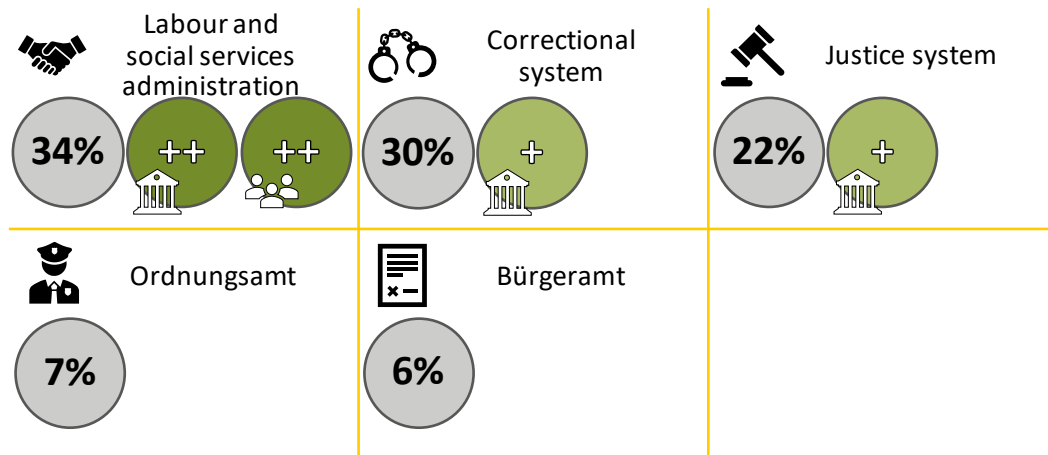


#### 3.3.4. Regularly conducted emergency drills

Regularly occurring emergency drills are for example evacuation drills that are regularly carried out to increase employees' ability to act in emergencies and to identify any shortcomings in the organisation of security measures. The procedures defined in the emergency plans are practised at regular intervals, with the involvement of police and fire brigades as appropriate. The various participants need special preparation for their tasks in emergency situations. Important topics include knowledge of the operational strategies of emergency services personnel, of escape routes, first-aid facilities, the location of assembly areas, and of how to contact and share information with emergency responders.

Overall, regularly occurring emergency drills are less widely used. They are used most in the labour and social services administration (34%) and in the correctional system (30%). They are used even less often in the justice system (22%), Ordnungsämter (7%) and Bürgerämter (6%). The cost-benefit ratio is positive both for institutions and for employees in the labour and social services administration but only slightly positive for institutions in the correctional system and the justice system.

» Figure 22: Use and cost-benefit ratios of regularly occurring emergency drills from the perspective of institutions and employees



## 4. Conclusion

In summary, two overarching points are evident. First, the prevalence of the individual prevention measures varies greatly. As different as the working contexts are in different areas of public service employment, so too is the spread of different preventive measures. Second, *all* of the prevention measures presented here – all of which are recommended in various guidelines – were given positive ratings to the extent that they are already being used. Overall, heads of institutions and employees therefore found that the usefulness of the measures outweighed the costs of implementing them.

Within the category of *structural/technical prevention* measures, the surveys showed that alarm systems are most widespread. They are used in five of the eight employment sectors surveyed. In the correctional system, they are used almost everywhere (93%), and they are also widely used in the justice system (83%) and the labour and social services administration (79%). Work mobile phones are used in seven of the eight sectors surveyed, but to a more limited extent, ranging from 6% (Bürgerämter) to 49% (fire brigades and rescue services). The correctional system is the sector in which structural and technical measures are most widely used. Along with the alarm systems already mentioned, the following are also widely used in the correctional system: irritant spray devices (90%), batons (77%), protective vests (72%) and secure entry systems (57%). These measures are a response to the specific situation of the correctional system, where the potential for conflict can generally be expected to be high. However, it is possible to install structural and technical systems within the controlled environment of a correctional facility, which is not the case when work is performed in the field, for example. Among the structural and technical measures, those found by survey respondents across all sectors to have the best cost-benefit ratio were alarm systems, emergency exits and open doors, and escape routes.

The measure that received the lowest positive ratings – although they were still positive – was the use of batons, presumably because they can contribute to escalation.

The respondents' evaluation of *organisational prevention measures* showed clearly that cooperation with the police (89%) was the most widespread of any prevention measure in this category in one employment sector – in this case, court bailiffs. Risk assessments are conducted in seven of the eight employment sectors surveyed; their use ranges from 23% (fire brigades and rescue services) to 56% (labour and social services administration). It is astonishing that risk assessments have a comparatively low degree of dissemination, although the authorities are legally obliged to carry them out and to implement their results. Staff and heads of institutions also rated their relative costs and benefits less positively than those of other measures. The policies of banning specific individuals from the premises (ranging from 55% of Bürgerämter to 86% of the labour and social services administration) and

getting backup from co-workers in serious cases (between 53% and 62% in the labour and social services administration, correctional facilities, Ordnungsämter and Bürgerämter) are widespread. Banning individuals from the premises was the measure for which the survey of institutions and the survey of staff differed most greatly in respondents' assessment of the relative costs and benefits. While the institutions gave this measure a very positive rating, the staff evaluated it only as slightly positive (Ordnungsämter and Bürgerämter) to positive (labour and social services administration and the justice system). Backup from co-workers and safety-conscious office furnishings received the best ratings overall: for employees and heads of institutions in all employment sectors, both measures had very positive cost-benefit ratios.

Of the *personnel-related measures*, de-escalation and communication training are the most widespread. They are used in all employment sectors surveyed, ranging from 29% of Bürgerämter to 78% of the labour and social services administration. Although these measures are so widespread and frequently recommended in various guidelines, de-escalation and communication training received relatively poor (albeit still positive) ratings. It is notable that in almost all employment sectors, the institutions rated the benefits of this measure more positively relative to its costs than the employees did. However, the evaluation of the trainings is certainly related to their specific design, for which no more precise statements are possible in the context of this comparative overview study. Personal safety training is also quite widespread (ranging from 16% to 72% in seven different employment sectors). Here, the cost-benefit ratio is assessed more positively