FSP violations report Q1/2 19/20

Introduction

This report gives a short overview over all incidents reported at Wikimedia events in the first two quarters of the fiscal year 2019/2020 to the Trust and Safety Team of the Wikimedia Foundation. Incidents analyzed in this report include direct violations of Friendly Space Policy (FSP) as well as other safety related issues at events, including medical or criminal issues. They are analysed in this report by type of incident, severity and the event they occurred at.

This report also lists Trust and Safety related incidents not directly linked to the events they were reported at. Those are not sorted further, as they are analyzed elsewhere, but added for information of workflows regarding incident reporting at events. Some of those reports are related to ongoing investigations, but most were about issues Trust and Safety would not have heard about otherwise. Incidents where Trust & Safety reached out to community members themselves are not included in this report, as they are covered under a different workflow.

It should be noted that this report may not provide an accurate representation of *all* the FSP violations that may have taken place during in person events for the aforementioned timeframe, as often incidents at events go unreported, especially those with a low level of severity. Also some reports of incidents reach Foundation staff with a considerable delay. Incidents get reported to volunteer bodies like the Code of Conduct Committee or volunteer organizers who sometimes take several weeks or months until they in turn report to the Wikimedia Foundation.
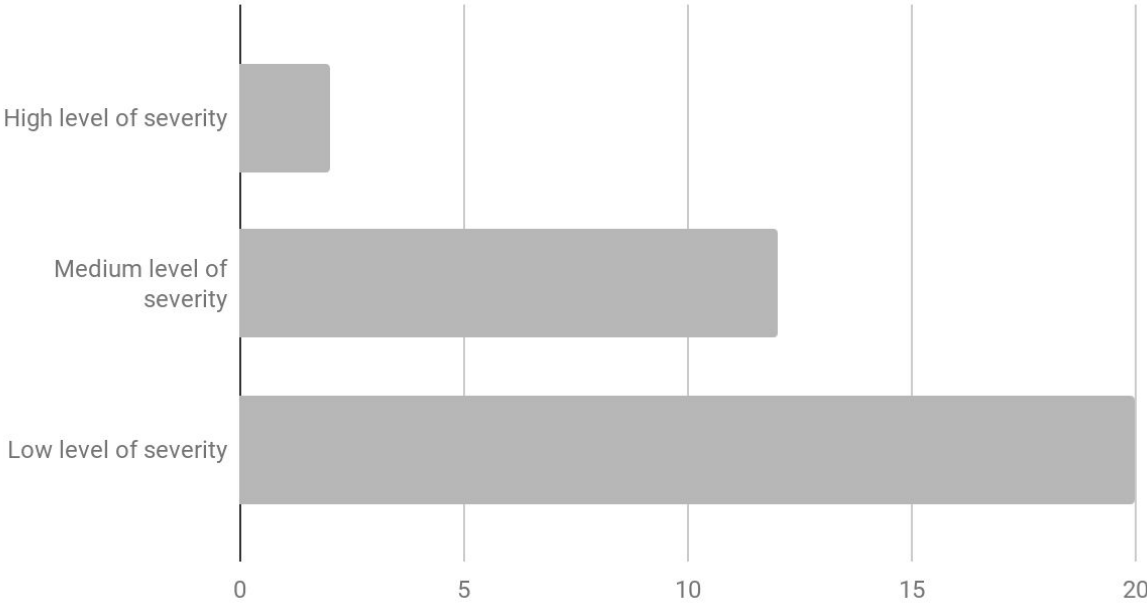
Data of incidents recorded

Of the 5 events the team got reports from, four had Trust and Safety Team members in attendance and incidents were directly reported to them during the event. For the other international event the organizing team as well as other teams within the Foundation reported to Trust and Safety during and after the event.

All events included in this report were big conferences with attendees ranging from around 50 to more than 800. One of them had a broad international scope, the other three were regional conferences. While two conferences were more or less language centered, all had multilingual and multicultural attendance. All events had a dedicated Safety Team.

Most of the incidents were reported in person or via a designated conference safety-chat to Trust and Safety team members, either by attendees or the organizing team. Some incidents were reported per mail, especially from the conference with no Trust and Safety staff attendance.

Taken all conferences together, 34 incidents were reported. 2 of those can be considered to have a high level of severity, 12 a medium level of severity and 20 a low level of severity.
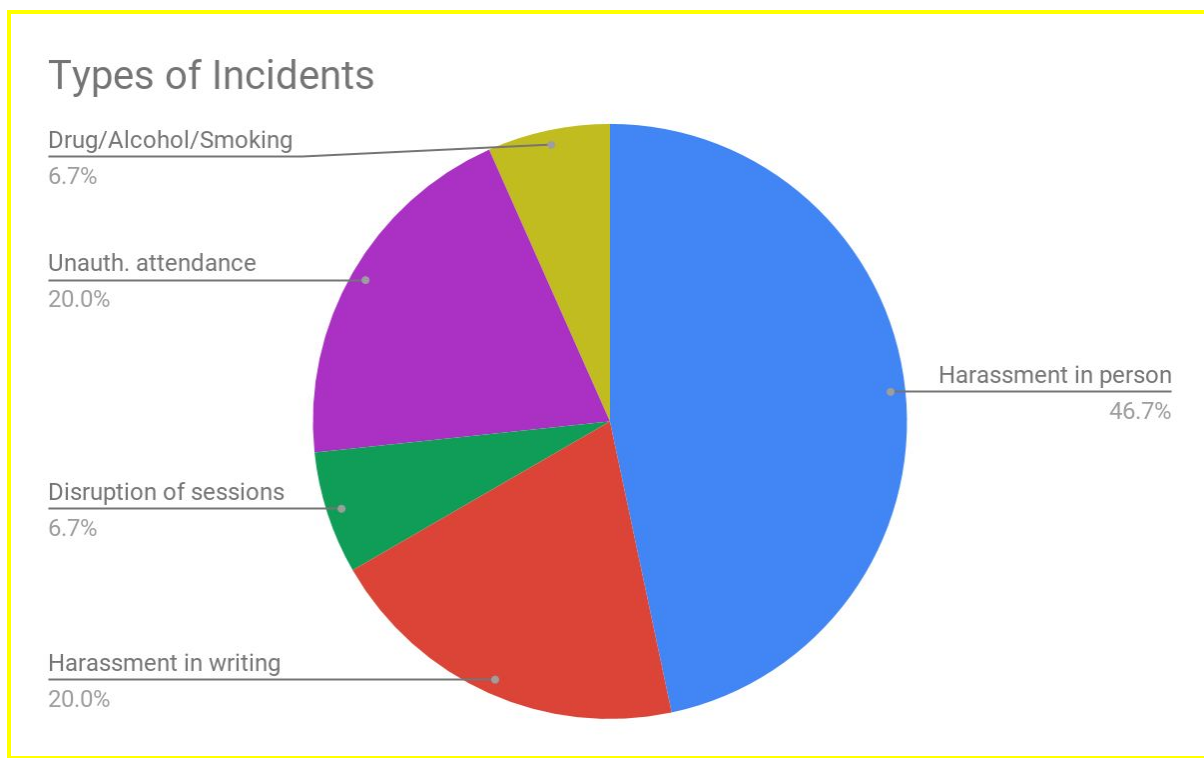
Levels of incident Severity

15 of those incidents can be seen as direct violations of FSP, 12 as other safety related issues at the conference and 7 were reports of incidents not related to the conference. None of the incidents that can be considered to have a high level of severity was a direct FSP violation.

Of the 15 direct FSP violations, 10 were harassing behaviour - 7 cases of harassing behaviour happening in person, 3 cases of harassing behaviour in written communication - one was the disruption of a session, 3 were attempts to attend an event unauthorized and one incident involved smoking, drugs or alcohol.

Of the 12 other safety related issues, 7 were medical emergencies, 2 had to do with passport or visa issues, 1 was of criminal nature and 2 included behaviour endangering others.

The two incidents of a high level of severity did not include conference attendees as perpetrators, all direct actions taken were in support of the persons affected by them.

Of the 13 incidents with a medium level of severity, all resulted in one or several follow-up talks with the involved persons by Trust and Safety staff members or event safety teams on the ground or event organizers. Two people were asked to leave the conference, both of them were involved in more than one incident.

Trends observed and recommendations

Once again, the total number of participants at all in-person events we received reports from was well over 1000, and included people from widely different backgrounds and cultures. Each of those events was a multi-day event. It is to be expected that stressful encounters or mishaps like lost passports happen in such a context. With this understanding, the numbers above are again low and probably indicate that Wikimedia events are mostly safe events.

This reporting cycle was busier than the last one. With Wikimania and a number of other bigger conferences taking place in late summer or fall, it seems to be a pattern that the first two quarters of the fiscal year see more incidents reported to Trust and Safety then the last two quarters. While the reports have not been done long enough to provide statistical evidence, this corresponds with the experience of Trust and Safety Team members.

It is perhaps also important to note that while Trust and Safety team members were present at most of the conferences being reported on here, they were only on the Event Safety Team for one event. At the other conferences, the dedicated Event Safety Teams were made up of volunteers which had been given advice and support prior to the actual event.

Not only in this reporting period, but also in the reporting periods before, a number of incidents were caused by the same person. While each of these incidents alone did not necessarily have a high level of severity, in combination they made for complex cases that took a lot of time and energy from the Event Safety teams. In several cases the perpetrators in these cases had also caused problems at prior events and had received warnings about their behaviour.

Criminal issues were down again this reporting period, as expected. This probably is partially due to the global event happening in a location that is considered a place with low crime rates and few safety issues. But part of that might be also due to better risk assessments ahead of conferences and appropriate measures taken by the event organizers.

A trend to escalate even medical emergencies of low severity to Trust and Safety members can be observed. While this might speak for a high level of trust volunteers have in these persons, it could also indicate a need for more support on the issue in general. This is a trend that will have to be kept under observation, as Trust and Safety personnel are not best equipped to assist with medical problems.

A relatively high number of incidents with a low level of severity were being reported in a very casual manner - not so much as something to be dealt with and where Trust and Safety team members were needed for assistance, but rather as something that had been successfully dealt with by volunteers. This could indicate a growing interest as well as capacity in that field by volunteers.

To keep the high standard of safety or even improve it, it is recommended to continue to support event organizers through the Trust and Safety team through trainings and materials. It is also recommended to continue sending Trust and Safety team members to conferences to be part of the designated Safety teams on the ground for major conferences.

A continuing trend from events of recent years can be observed. Attendees use the presence of Trust and Safety staff at conferences to address issues of harassment that happen onwiki, elsewhere on the net or at local events in person. Reporting such things via mail or other means online seems to be a barrier in some cases, especially for contributors from marginalized groups. This venue of reporting should be kept open or even purposefully widened to encourage those contributors to report harassment.