

RESEARCH BRIEF SERIES

Domestic Violence and the Workplace

This document contains nine two-page briefs. The first is an overview of the impact of domestic violence on workers and workplaces, six highlight specific research findings from our Canadian research, and the final two present findings from our systematic evidence reviews.

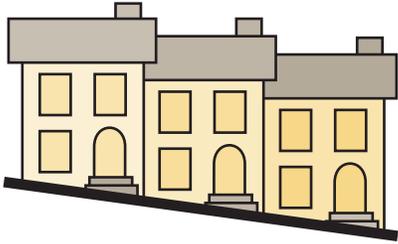
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The Impact of Domestic Violence on Workers and Workplaces



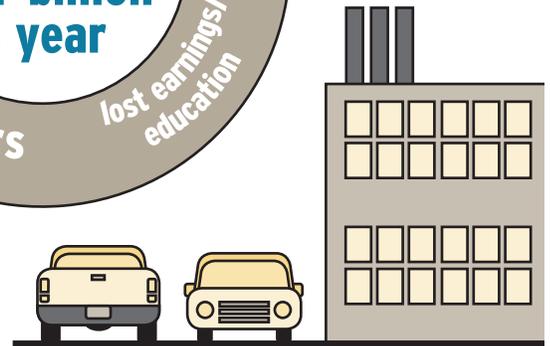
About **1/3** of Canadian workers experience domestic violence at some point.

“...we bring to work everything that happens at home. We can’t compartmentalize or mentally separate these different aspects of our lives...” -study respondent

In nearly **54%** of cases, domestic violence continues at or near work.

Domestic violence victims and perpetrators report negative impacts on:

- absenteeism
- concentration at work
- work performance



71% of employers report having a situation where they needed to protect a domestic violence victim, yet few offer domestic violence training for employees.



About **40%** of victims and perpetrators disclose domestic violence at work. Most disclose to co-workers.

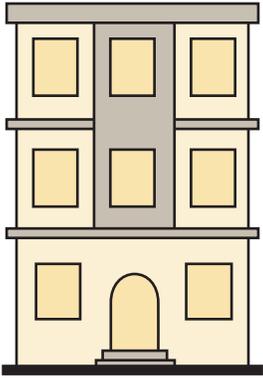
“...the workplace is a logical place to provide support, help, and resources for victims of violence.” -study respondent

PRACTICE & POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- Employers and employees need basic training so that they can recognize the warning signs of domestic violence victimization and perpetration and respond safely and appropriately.
- Additional research is needed to evaluate current strategies that address domestic violence in the workplace (training, leave provisions) and develop and test new approaches (e.g., Occupational Health and Safety legislation), including cost effectiveness.
- Some provincial Occupational Health & Safety legislation is silent on responsibilities related to domestic violence, but if domestic violence occurs at work, the employer is liable.
- Domestic violence-specific legislation is important - the main reason that organizations create a domestic violence policy and associated procedures is to comply with workplace legislation.

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The Impacts of Domestic Violence Perpetration on Workers and Workplaces



THE STUDY 443 heterosexual male respondents from Ontario's Partner Assault Response (PAR) programs were surveyed about domestic violence perpetration and the workplace.

34% emotionally abused and/or monitored their (ex)partner during work hours.

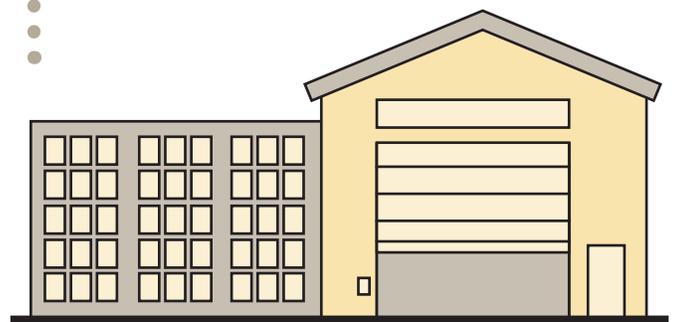
"I spent a night in jail, and got out in the morning, went to work, and due to lack of sleep and stress, I got into a car accident with a work vehicle." -study respondent

9%

reported causing or almost causing accidents due to domestic violence-specific distraction

26%

lost a job as a direct or indirect result of the domestic violence



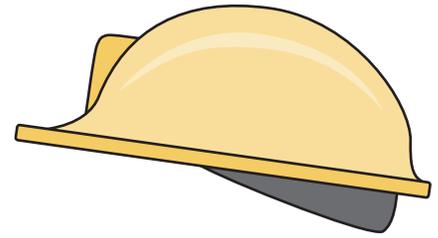
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58%

did not know or were unsure of workplace resources to help address domestic violence.

61%

did not talk about the domestic violence at work.



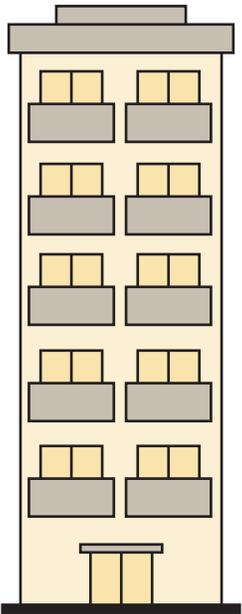
“I wish I could have felt that I could talk to my boss about my feelings prior to the incident.”
-study respondent

PRACTICE & POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- Workplace policies and guidelines should be developed to:
 - address offenders as well as victims, and focus, where possible, on prevention, including accountability for offenders.
 - encourage and support workers in disclosing concerns about domestic violence at work (including domestic violence perpetration) in a safe manner.
- Partnerships between employers and community-based intervention programs should be developed to create better capacity to provide appropriate prevention and intervention to domestic violence perpetrators.
- Managers, supervisors, and workers should be educated about domestic violence in the workplace, and should be provided with specific protocols and tools to intervene with perpetrators or potential perpetrators.

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Awareness of Domestic Violence in the Workplace



THE STUDY 8429 Canadian men and women completed an online survey.

nearly
40%

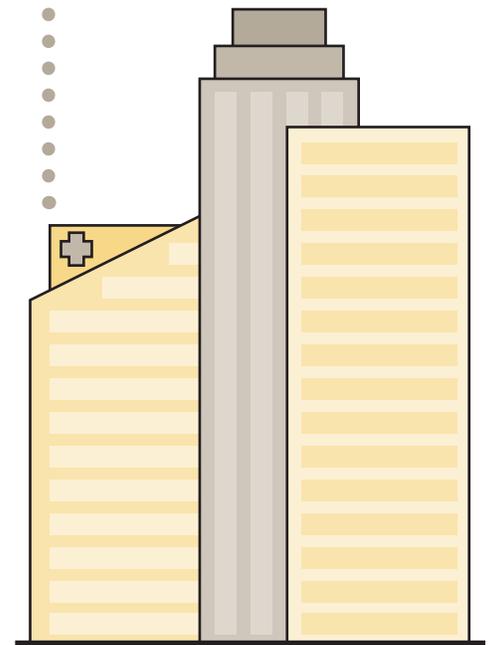
believed they had recognized a domestic victim and/or perpetrator in the workplace.

Recognizing victims was more common than recognizing perpetrators.

“[A] safety plan was developed to ensure other staff are aware of the potential for violence related to the worker’s situation.” -study respondent

Who recognized domestic violence at work?

- Domestic violence victims were more likely than non-victims to report recognizing victims and perpetrators in the workplace.
- Women were more likely to report awareness of domestic violence victimization.
- Men were more likely to report awareness of domestic violence perpetration.

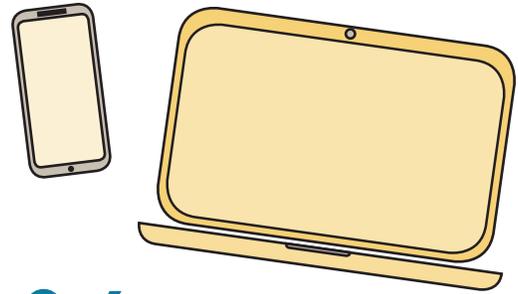


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For more information on this study, see: MacGregor, J. C. D., Wathen, C. N., & MacQuarrie, B. J. (2016). Domestic violence in the Canadian workplace: Are co-workers aware? *Safety and Health at Work*, 7(3), 244-250.

50%

of those recognizing a victim thought the domestic violence affected their coworker's ability to work



38%

of those recognizing a perpetrator thought the abusive behaviour affected their coworker's ability to work

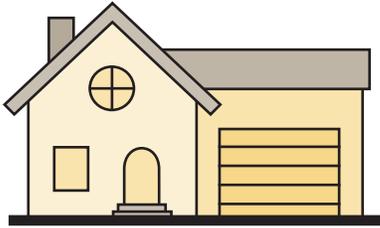
“I know that everyone in the school was shown the picture of the abuser that our co-worker was leaving, in case he would show up at work. I know that she had support from our employer and our union - but things were kept private.” -study respondent

PRACTICE & POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- Training and education is critical!
 - All employees should receive basic training about recognizing victimization and perpetration warning signs, and how to respond appropriately.
 - Leaders should receive additional training on organizational preparation and response to both victims and perpetrators.
- Workplace policies and guidelines should be developed that address victims as well as perpetrators, and focus, where possible, on prevention, including consequences for perpetrators.

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Workplace Disclosure and Supports for Domestic Violence



THE STUDY 2831 Canadian men and women with lifetime domestic violence exposure completed an online survey.

43% discussed domestic violence at work.
Men were less likely than women to disclose.

“I was extremely nervous about sharing my situation... understanding that it may have a negative impact on how my supervisor viewed me and my work. However, that was unfounded and so far they have been very helpful and understanding and have also respected my privacy and been careful not to intrude.” ~study respondent

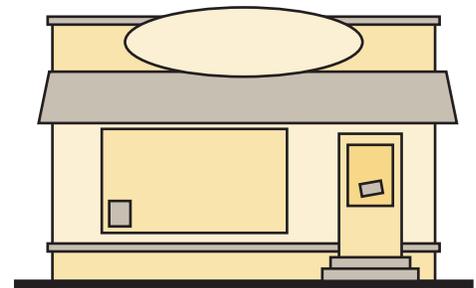
Why didn't people discuss domestic violence at work?

Usually because they:

- felt embarrassed or ashamed
- wanted privacy or felt the domestic violence was not others' business

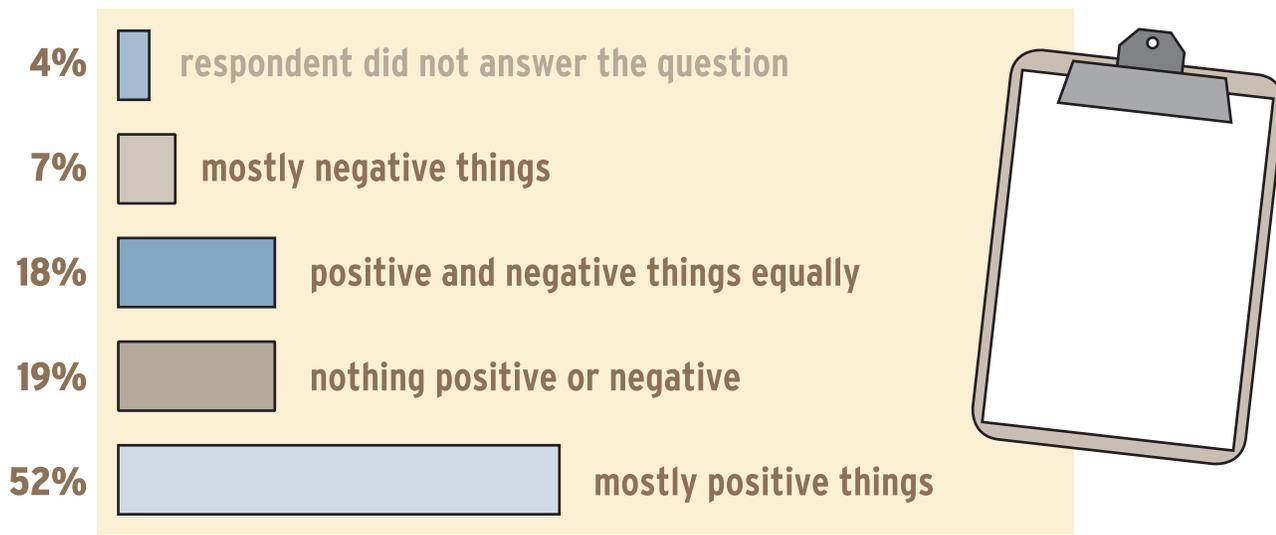
82%

who disclosed spoke to a co-worker



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Overall, what happened at work as a result of disclosure?



“[Disclosure] harmed my relationship with coworkers... some didn’t know what to say, some saw it as a weakness, some saw it as my fault. Some were angry with him but didn’t know what they could do. So it left them frustrated.” -study respondent

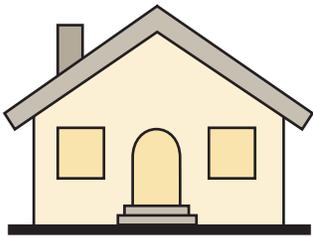
PRACTICE & POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Training and education is critical!

- All employees should receive basic training about recognizing warning signs, and responding positively, including safety planning.
- Leaders should receive additional training on organizational preparation and response.

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Resources for Domestic Violence in the Workplace



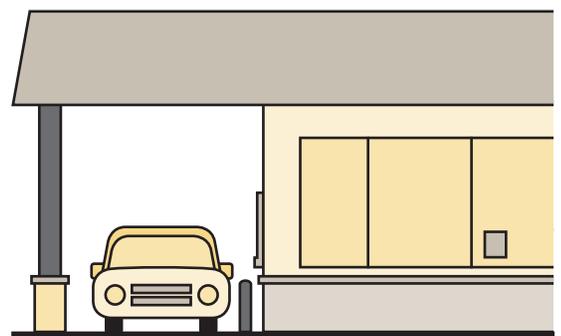
THE STUDY 8041 currently employed Canadian men and women completed an online survey.

42% reported receiving domestic violence-related information from their employer and/or union.

“A clear policy that is publicly stated would help. People need to know that their employer has an understanding of the issues they are facing.” -study respondent

Domestic Violence Information & Resources

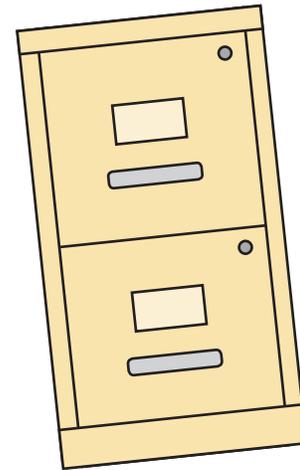
- The most common types of information received were: training/education, written information (e.g., pamphlets) and electronic information (e.g., emails).
- The most common suggestion for workplace improvements was increased education and training.
- Permanent workers were more likely to receive domestic violence information.



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82%

believed workplace supports such as paid leave and safety policies for domestic violence can reduce the impacts of domestic violence on workers.



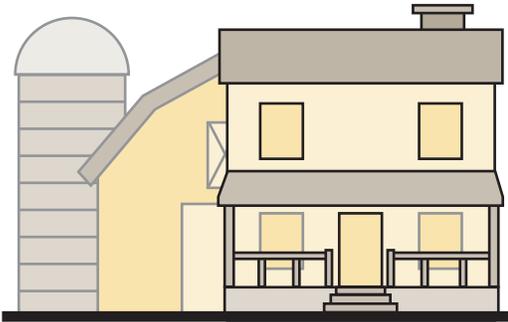
“There needs to be more confidentiality and compassion for victims and abusers to feel comfortable asking for help.” ~study respondent

PRACTICE & POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- Workplaces should be encouraged to provide both training and resource materials specific to domestic violence.
- Research should evaluate the impacts of:
 - paid/unpaid leave on Canadian workers and employers
 - making domestic violence an Occupational Health and Safety hazard in Ontario and other jurisdictions to determine if this is a viable course of action
 - workplace domestic violence education and the need to make this education mandatory to ensure that employers are prepared to respond to situations of domestic violence when they enter the workplace

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Domestic Violence, Work, & Health



THE STUDY

8429 Canadian men and women completed an online survey.

34% had experienced domestic violence at some point in their life.

Unemployed respondents had poorer health compared to employed respondents.

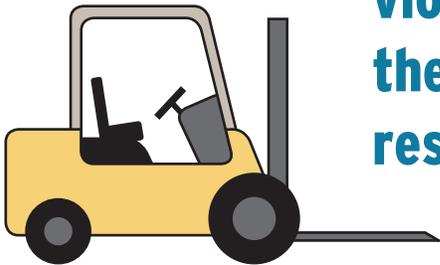
People reporting domestic violence had:

- poorer general health, mental health, and quality of life
- especially poor health if the domestic violence also occurred at or near the workplace
- especially poor health if their ability to get to work was impeded by domestic violence



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Those with domestic violence experience *and* current unemployment had the poorest general health, mental health and quality of life.



The more ways in which domestic violence occurred at or near the workplace, the poorer the respondent's health.

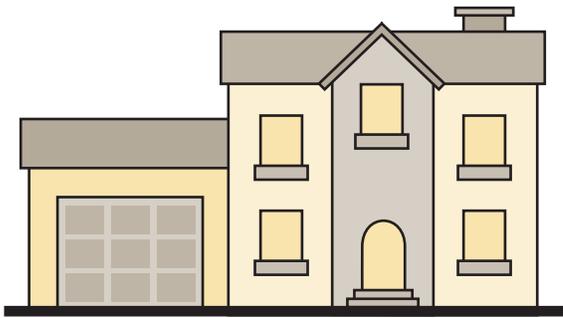
Work may have protective effects: respondents with domestic violence experience who were working had similar health to those with no domestic violence experience who were unemployed.

PRACTICE & POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Workplace programs and government policies, such as paid domestic violence leave, or workplace training and support pathways, are needed to reframe domestic violence as an occupational health and safety issue; a key goal is to help those exposed to domestic violence stay employed.

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The Impacts of Domestic Violence on the Health & Work of Gender & Sexual Minorities



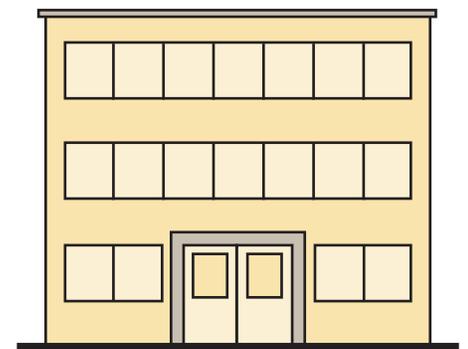
THE STUDY 7918 Canadians completed an online survey and answered questions about their gender and sexual identities; 672 (8.5%) reported being a gender and/or sexual minority.

Gender/sexual minority respondents were especially likely to experience domestic violence and had poorer mental health and quality of life.

“...my ex made threats to call the media and tell them I’m gay [and] also threatened to come take me down at my work; my HR did nothing to protect me... -study respondent

Among those with domestic violence exposure, gender/sexual minority respondents were more likely than non-gender/sexual minority respondents to report that domestic violence:

- continued at/near their workplace
- impeded their ability to get to work
- negatively impacted their work performance

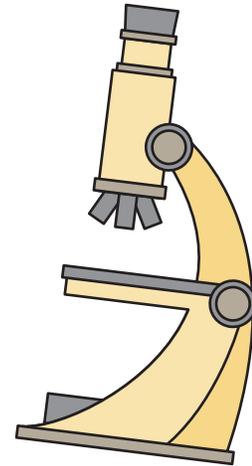


For more information about workplace training & resources, visit: www.makeitourbusiness.ca

For more information on this study, see: Wathen, C. N., MacGregor, J. C. D., Tanaka, M., & MacQuarrie, B. J. (2018). The impact of intimate partner violence on the health and work of gender and sexual minorities in Canada. *International Journal of Public Health*. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00038-018-1127-1>

Gender/sexual minority respondents who identified as trans were especially likely to experience domestic violence.

“They are not supportive [of] being gay in the [school board]... even the police told me my board would never get me help with a gay partner because they don’t support gay relationships.”
-study respondent



Similar to non-gender/sexual minority respondents, 43% of gender and sexual minorities discussed the domestic violence at work, and 17% experienced negative actions at work as a result of disclosure.

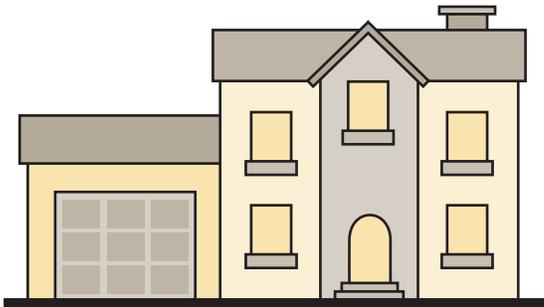
PRACTICE & POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- Workplace responses to domestic violence should account for the additional impacts and barriers faced by gender and sexual minorities in disclosing abuse and seeking help.
- All employees, but especially leaders, require training that includes the use of inclusive language and specific knowledge of gender identity and sexual orientation issues and resources, particularly pertaining to domestic violence.

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Intimate Partner Violence & Work

A Scoping Review of Published Research

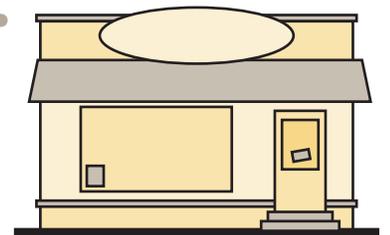
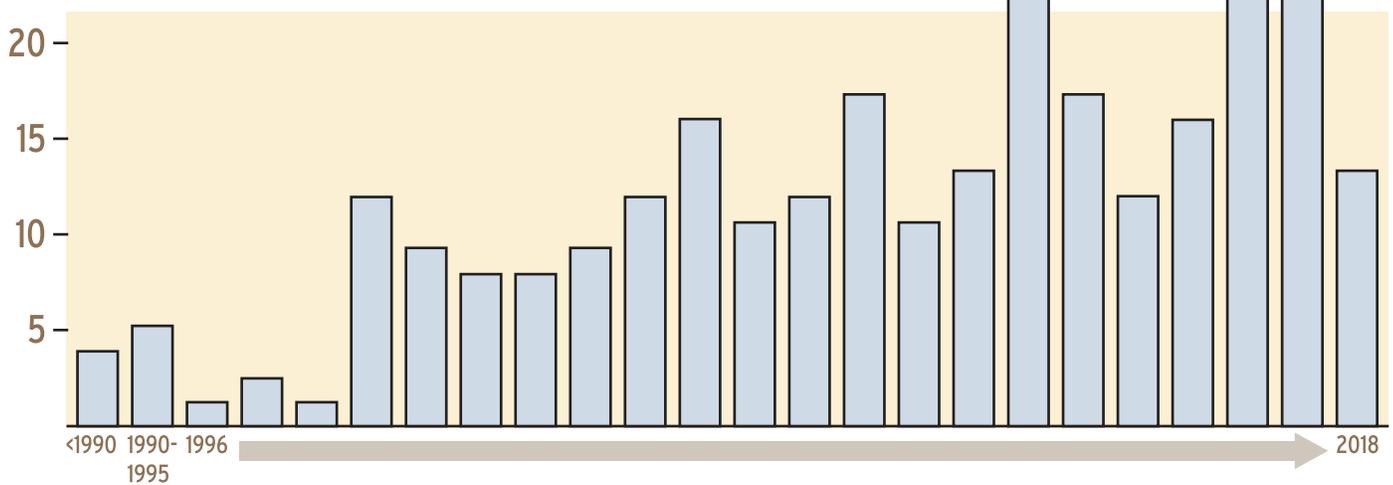


RESEARCH We conducted a scoping review to learn what research has been done on the topic of work and domestic/intimate partner violence (in the review and this document we use the term IPV). We examined relevant articles to discover the most common research topics in this area and identify topics where more research is needed.

235 research articles about IPV & work

51% published after 2010

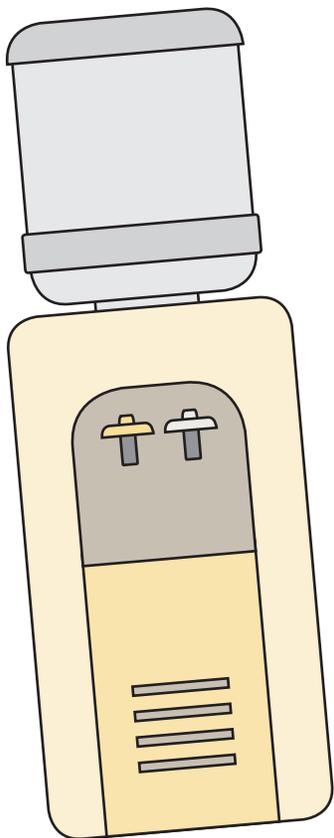
Number of IPV & Work Research Articles by Year:



For more information about workplace training & resources, visit: www.makeitourbusiness.ca

Most common topics researched:

- Relationship between IPV and employment status/stability (31%)
- IPV and work-related factors (20%, e.g., work stress, job satisfaction)
- Impacts of IPV on work (28%, e.g., absenteeism, feeling unwell, harassment at work)



69% U.S. research
25 other countries
represented

Research gaps identified:

- Only 8 articles were reviews; more research synthesis in this area is needed.
- Gender and sexual minorities are underrepresented in this literature.
- Most research focuses on victimization exclusively (70%); more research on IPV perpetration and work is needed.
- Only 9% of studies reported intervention studies – this is an urgent research gap.

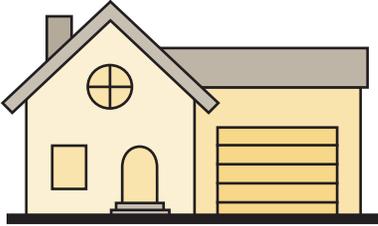
PRACTICE & POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- We don't yet know enough about what workplace supports can best help women experiencing IPV.
- While we wait for better research, workplaces should consider training programs and resources such as www.makeitourbusiness.ca.

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Women's Experiences of the Intersections of Work and Intimate Partner Violence

A Review of Qualitative Research



RESEARCH We conducted a review of qualitative research articles to learn about the benefits and drawbacks of work for women who have experienced domestic/intimate partner violence (in the review and this document, we use the term IPV).

32 qualitative research articles

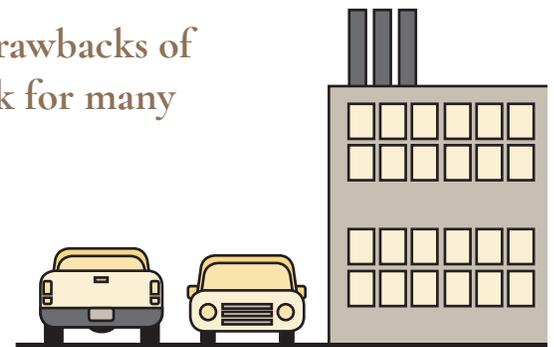
757 women participants across 11 countries

"I remember feeling such... security and safety, peace and relief. There [were] two locked doors between me and my husband, if he ever got mad at me [and came] to see me at work..."

"I was working at a large discount retailer and we didn't have a phone and I told him I'd be off at a certain time, and I didn't get off then 'cause they asked me to work late.... and I didn't have a way to call him... so he came in and dragged me off by my hair."

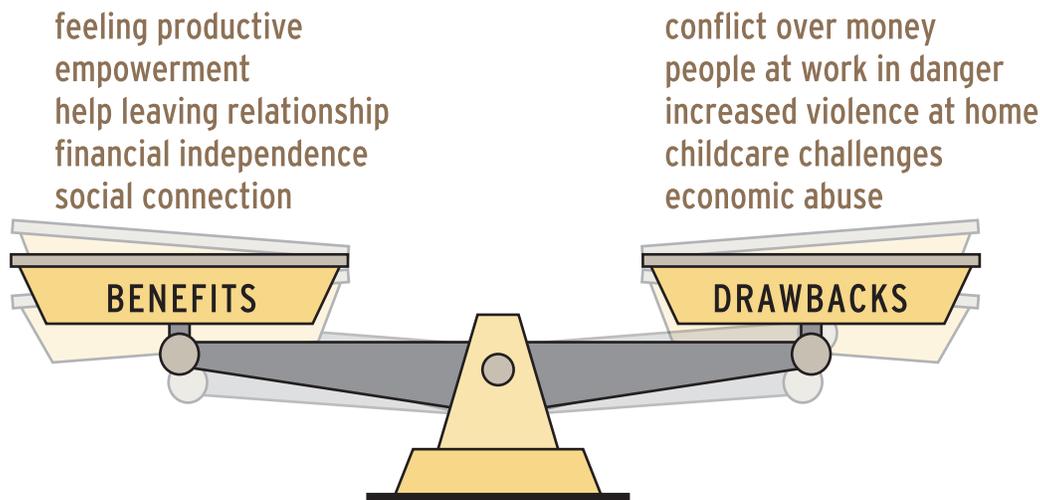
KEY FINDING

Our study revealed a wide range of benefits and drawbacks of work for women survivors, but the impact of work for many women exposed to IPV was *not straightforward...*



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For some women, work means balancing benefits & drawbacks, such as:



There was also variation across women's experiences in three key areas:

- earning income (e.g., less conflict about money vs. more IPV)
- safety at work (e.g., free from IPV vs. IPV continues at work)
- people at work (e.g., supportive vs. judgemental coworkers)

"[I was] indebted to them [the organization] for helping me get out of [the IPV] relationship and I stayed for 20 years.... The only problem was that [they] were just as abusive and I was just as tied to them."

PRACTICE & POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- Employers and policy-makers must 1) understand how work and workplaces can help or hinder survivors – sometimes both at once, and 2) embrace the challenge of ensuring that work is a safe and positive space.
- These efforts, along with research in this area, are key to tackling the complex problem of IPV and expanding the role of the workplace in IPV support and prevention.

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