

CAN WORK BE SAFE, WHEN HOME ISN'T?

Impact of Intimate Partner Violence
in Seven Swedish Workplaces



**Western
Education**

Centre for Research & Education on
Violence Against Women & Children

Executive Summary

Globally, there is a growing body of research on the impact of intimate partner violence (IPV) on workplaces.¹⁻⁵ It is now clear that when workers are experiencing IPV at home the impacts are felt in the workplace. IPV follows those experiencing violence into the workplace, impacting the safety and productivity of workers and co-workers, resulting in lost revenue and increased costs to employers. At the same time, employment has significant protective value for those experiencing IPV, and workplaces can be important locations for changing social norms around violence in intimate partner relationships.

To gain a better understanding of the impact of intimate partner violence on work, employers, and workplaces, researchers at Western University in Canada, commissioned by the Swedish Gender Equality Agency, conducted a survey.

The survey was carried out on two different occasions in Sweden. The first survey took place during September 2021 and the second in September 2023 and was answered by a total of 3495 people.

Some key findings include the following:

- Over 40,0% of the surveyed workforce had been affected by some experience of IPV in their own lives or in the lives of their work colleagues. Overall, more women had experience of IPV than other genders.
- Around 21,0% of women and 9,0% of men reported experiencing IPV in their lifetime. A smaller percentage, 6,0% or 210 individuals reported experiences of IPV in the past 12 months. A small minority of respondents reported using abusive behaviours in their close relationships.
- Of those who reported experiencing IPV, many reported that they had to miss work (81,4%) or were late for work (62,0%) as a result of IPV. Over half reported that it affected their workplace performance, frequently due to being tired, unwell, distracted or due to injuries. Almost 1 in 10 workers who have experienced IPV report that the abuse continued at or near the workplace in some way, for example, abusive phone calls or text messages, stalking, harassment, or threats at the workplace.
- Almost 30,0% of respondents who had experienced IPV discussed violence with somebody at work, overwhelmingly talked with co-workers or supervisors/managers.
- Among the few who reported using abusive behaviour, around half had reached out for help. Many respondents who had used abusive behavior reported that they would seek help if asked to do so by a supervisor or manager.

- Around 32,0% of respondents reported that they may have a co-worker who they believed had, or have had, experienced IPV and around 21,0% reported having a colleague who they believed may have used abusive behaviours. Most felt that these experiences may have had an impact on their colleagues' work performance.
- Respondents frequently reported awareness of potential warning signs of IPV experiences and of using abusive behaviours in their work colleagues, suggesting that there are opportunities to start discussions.

There was overwhelming support among respondents for recognizing the impact of IPV on the lives of workers and for employers to take action to address this issue.

Recommendations were made for employers to undertake activities to plan for change, implement better support to workers, provide training, communicate their actions, and engage in ongoing review of their progress in making workplaces safe and supportive.

Background

Intimate partner violence is a serious and widespread problem worldwide that causes both physical and psychological suffering, with consequences at the individual, family, society level, and beyond.⁶ According to a Swedish National Prevalence Study on Exposure to Violence among Women and Men and its Association approximately 20 percent of women and 10 percent of men have been victims of violence in adult intimate partner relationships.⁷ In addition to human suffering, violence also costs large sums of money; in 2014, the European Institute for Gender Equality estimated that violence against women in Sweden costs approximately SEK 40 billion per year.⁸

Research has shown that some of these impacts and significant costs associated with IPV are borne by employers and employees. Women who have experienced IPV are more likely to have a disrupted work history, including increased short-term absences and longer periods of illness. Experiences of IPV can lead to lower income, more frequent work displacement, a greater likelihood of losing your work, and a greater likelihood of working in casual and part-time roles compared to women without experiences of IPV.⁹⁻¹³ Earnings are reduced by 25 percent for women and fourteen percent for men who have experienced violence while absence due to illness increases by 20 percent for both women and men. These effects occur while violence is occurring but can also continue for years after the violence has ended.¹⁴ Workplaces also include those who have previously or are currently perpetrating IPV.¹⁵ Workplaces may sometimes employ both the person who perpetrates violence and the person who is being abused in the same workplace. In a Belgian survey, more than eleven percent said that the person who perpetrates violence against them works in the same workplace.¹⁶

Researchers have also more recently begun to focus on the financial implications that workplaces face due to intimate partner violence. A study estimated the socio-economic costs of domestic violence in Norway and found that the expected costs amount to NOK 92.7 billion for 2021.¹⁷ Investigations in regions such as South America, Africa, and Canada have revealed that intimate partner violence adversely affects workplace productivity, leading to considerable costs for employers. This emerging research underscores the economic dimensions of a social issue traditionally viewed through the lens of personal or public health.¹⁸⁻²¹

The statistics above show that the experience of violence is common - so common that most people in their professional lives will have met or encountered someone who is or has been a victim of IPV. Surveys to gather data about the prevalence and the impact of IPV in the workplace have now been implemented in a number of international contexts outside of Sweden,

including countries in Asia, Europe, North America and Australasia.²² This research has found that many employees are aware of a co-worker experiencing or perpetrating IPV.²³⁻²⁶ IPV may continue in the workplace with behaviours such as threatening phone calls and monitoring and employees who are experiencing IPV are affected in their ability to work²⁷. Work colleagues also report recognizing signs that co-workers are or may be experiencing IPV. For those experiencing violence from a partner, this may include frequent absences from work, constantly and urgently attending to phone calls or text messages while working and being stringent about having the exact same arrival and departure time every day. For those perpetrating violence in their intimate relationships, this may include frequent lateness for work, frequent calls to a partner during working hours, and difficulty focusing on work tasks. Results of surveys such as these have been instrumental in driving legislative reform. For example, Australia's recognition of IPV in the workplace led to change in legislation to mandate ten days of paid leave for family and domestic violence, a benefit extended to all employees, encompassing full-time, part-time, and casual workers and including family and domestic violence perpetrated by both current and former intimate partners.²⁸

Several other jurisdictions worldwide, acting on the findings of similar studies have implemented legislation providing paid domestic violence leave for workers, including Canada, New Zealand, Philippines and Ireland.²⁹⁻³² These jurisdictions are part of a global trend towards acknowledging and addressing the impact of domestic violence on employees.

IPV – an issue for employers

Global research shows that there is value to understanding and addressing workplace impacts and costs of IPV; however, more research is needed to better understand the context and scope of this issue in Sweden. In 2019, the International Labour Organization (ILO) introduced Convention C-190, a significant international treaty dedicated to eradicating workplace violence and harassment, with an emphasis on combating gender-based violence. Following this, a 2020 inquiry was initiated to evaluate Sweden's capability to ratify this Convention. The inquiry's analysis revealed that no barriers exist to hinder Sweden from ratifying ILO Convention C-190. While it was found that Sweden already satisfies the prerequisites for ratification, the inquiry highlighted the necessity for further refinement and clarity in its work environment legislation. Initiatives that inform employers about relevant regulations and how to effectively disseminate knowledge about IPV are encouraged by the convention.

The employer's perspective on violence falls within the framework of gender mainstreaming, as well as the national strategy to prevent and combat men's violence against women. The Swedish Gender Equality Agency is actively

working on IPV as an employer to better equip managers and employees. To this end, they have published a web-based training course focusing on the employer's ability to detect domestic violence. This includes developing practical, methodical support tools for employers to address this issue in the workplace.

Providing managers and supervisors with essential information and resources to assist employees is crucial. However, detection and support can also occur between employees. Most employees disclose their experiences of IPV to their co-workers. It is therefore important that both managers and employees are included in this work.³³

Purpose of this report

To increase knowledge of how IPV affects employees and managers, to improve detection of violence, and to contribute to knowledge mobilization in an area that needs to be made visible and highlighted, this survey has been implemented in cooperation with seven authorities. Gathering data on this important issue provides stronger evidence to help shape legislation and workplace policies that support violence prevention and safety in the workplace.

What did we do?

The survey was developed by a project team consisting of researchers at DV@WorkNet, Western University in Canada, and senior advisors at the Swedish Gender Equality Agency's department responsible for supporting the implementation of the national strategy to prevent and combat men's violence against women. DV@WorkNet is an international network of researchers, IPV experts, social and labour organizations, and employers who conduct research and mobilize knowledge about the impact of IPV in the workplace. Results and recommendations are the responsibility of the researchers at DV@WorkNet independently.

In September 2021 and September 2023, a web survey was conducted on the impact of IPV on work, workers, and workplaces. The survey was distributed via an open internet link given to the organizations involved, an advertisement posted to their Intranet, and via email. The survey consisted of a range of questions focused on people's experiences with IPV and the workplace, including questions about whether they were personally experiencing, or had ever experienced IPV, and if they knew of anyone at their workplace who was experiencing or perpetrating IPV. Those with personal IPV experience were asked additional questions such as how the IPV impacted their work and their coworkers, whether they discussed the violence with anyone at work, and what types of workplace support they received. The survey was reviewed and approved by Western's Research Ethics Board. This report outlines the main findings from the survey.

Who took part?

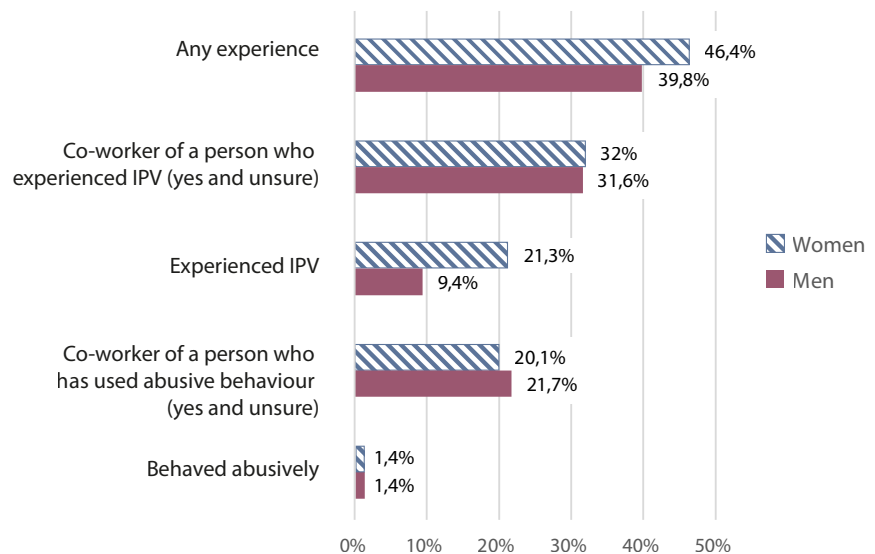
The survey was shared on two different occasions and a total of 3495 participants consented to participate in the survey (40,9% response rate) Of those who responded, 67,7% identified as females, 30,9% as males, and 1,4% identified as gender-diverse or chose not to disclose their gender information. Due to the small number of respondents identifying as gender-diverse no disaggregated analyses were conducted on this group. The majority of the respondents (55,6%) were aged 30-49, 31,9% were 50 years or older, 11,8% were under 29 years of age, and less than 1,0% did not disclose their age.

Workers whose lives have been affected by intimate partner violence

“Violence can be both psychological and physical. It is important to have an employer who is supportive and creates opportunities for the employee to be able to work.”

Overall, 44,4% of the respondents reported that they had been affected in some way in their lives by IPV, either through their own experiences or by their co-workers. Women are more likely to report experiences of IPV as 21,3% reported recent or past incidents of IPV. In comparison, 9,4% of the men reported recent or past experiences of IPV. Men and women respondents were equally likely to report concern about a co-worker who may be using abusive behavior (21,7% of men and 20,1% of women) or who may have experienced IPV (32,0% of women and 31,6% of men). 1,4% of both men and women reported using abusive behaviour in their lifetime.

FIGURE 1: Workers whose lives have been affected by IPV



“Being a victim of intimate partner violence is not just a private matter, it is everyone’s concern to put an end to it. Always. And we must not forget that violence is not always committed outside the workplace. And sometimes you are also a colleague of your perpetrator.”

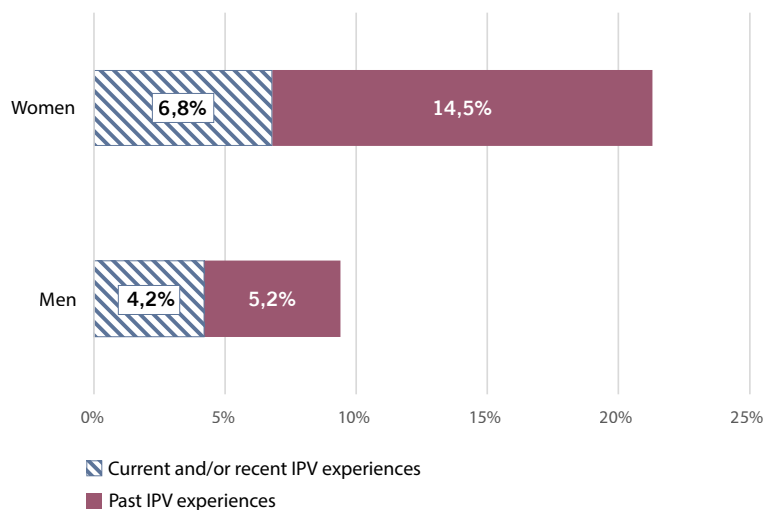
Experiences of Intimate Partner Violence

“Think it’s hard to talk about this because there’s still a stigma attached to being vulnerable. There is a lack of understanding of those who remain in such a relationship and widespread lack of knowledge as to why this can happen. Responsibility is still placed on the victim if they do not leave immediately. Partly because many know little about the psychology behind it and partly because it is unpleasant to talk about.”

Overall, 21,3% of female respondents and 9,4% of male respondents reported that they had experienced IPV in their lifetime. When looking at the last 12 months, 6,0% of the respondents indicated that they had experienced IPV. It is important to note that the prevalence of IPV is often underestimated due to underreporting so these rates may be lower than the true prevalence rate.³⁴

“I think that the fear is too great in the close relationship, so it is black to even talk about it. At work, the victim hides behind the silence because they feel less worthy. Work actually becomes a way to escape from the problems of private life.”

FIGURE 2: Current/recent and past IPV experiences



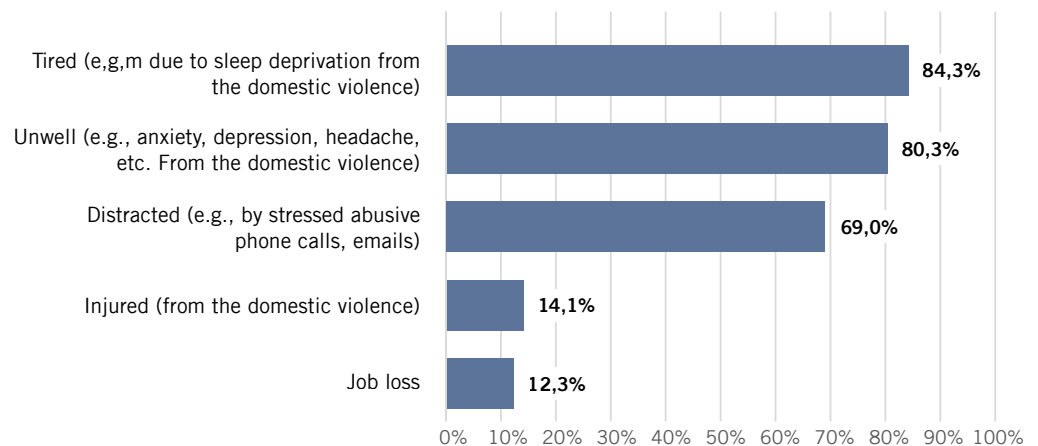
Occurrence of IPV in the workplace and impact on work performance

“As he stood and shouted and swore all that he could in front of my workplace where everyone could hear him, it was obviously hard to keep it together and focus on the work once he got tired and left the place.”

“Not allowed to sleep, exhausted at work, fell asleep while working.”

Experiences of IPV have serious negative consequences for employees, employers, institutions, and society as a whole. Over half of the workers who reported experiencing IPV (52,0%) indicated that their work performance was negatively impacted due to their experiences of IPV. Affected workers reported being tired due to sleep deprivation (84,3%), physically and mentally unwell (80,3%), distracted by stressed abusive phone calls and emails (69,0%), and injured from the experiences of IPV, among other impacts. 12,3% of those who had experienced IPV indicated that they had lost their job due to IPV.

Figure 3: Ways that IPV experiences impacted work performance



“For victims of violence, I know that it affects working life, based on my own experience but also what I have heard from others. It can affect the mental state in general, can mean anxiety, sleep difficulties and more sick leave, and in addition to mental problems also physical problems but which affect for example, mobility in the body and the ability to perform certain work tasks. From my own experience, I feel that my ability to concentrate became worse, which worsened my general performance in working life.”

“Of course, working life is affected by being exposed to violence in a close relationship. You sleep worse, you feel worse, you are more agitated, more distracted, have more anxiety, etc. All that affects one’s ability to work and one’s whole life.”

“Partner initiated quarrel over small things in the mornings that became big and made me not to leave home when I needed to, partly because it was difficult to leave in the middle of it and partly because I was so sad and angry that I didn’t want to see other people.”

IPV Experiences at the Workplace

IPV experiences happen in the workplace. 7,6% of those who had experienced IPV indicated that the abusive person was working in the same workplace. Furthermore, 8,7% of those who had ever experienced IPV and 10,5% of those who experienced IPV in the past year indicated that abuse had extended in or near the workplace in various ways such as through abusive phone calls or text messages (73,1%), stalking or harassment near the workplace (49,3%), threats at the workplace (23,9%), having the abusive person contacting colleagues of the worker (23,9%) or receiving abusive emails (19,4%) or abusive messages on social media (16,4%).

Impact of IPV on unplanned absence and ability to get to work

IPV also impacts employees’ absences from work. Many participants indicated that they had to miss their work (81,4%) or were late for their work (62,0%) as a result of IPV. Of the employees who reported experiencing IPV, 20,6% reported having to take time off work due to IPV. Particularly, they took time off to attend counseling related to coping with IPV (27%) or related to domestic violence such as police and lawyers (25,4%), deal with medical/health issues related to IPV (22,2%), attend family court (19,0%) or criminal court (16,7%), deal with accommodation issues (11,9%), and other reasons (14,3%). Respondents also reported that they had to take time off to deal with psychological/mental health issues (79,0%) and indicated that they needed time to recover and did not feel capable of working (77,1%).

In addition to taking time off work, 21,4% of the respondents who had experienced IPV indicated that experience of IPV has affected their ability to get to their work. Many respondents reported that, for at least some days, they were unable to get to work due to the psychological impacts of their experiences (87,4%), because they were unable to sleep at night (61,3%), or due to physical injuries sustained due to IPV (22,0%). Other respondents indicated that they were prevented by their abuser from attending work because of the following actions taken by the abuser:

- physical restraint or locked in the home (19,7%)
- refusal to care for children or other family members (19,7%)
- cell phone taken or hidden (12,1%)
- prevented from using mobile phone (11,7%)
- car keys or transportation money hidden or withheld (9,1%)
- withholding required personal and work documents (7,6%)
- work clothing or other required items hidden or withheld (2,3%)
- several other reasons (27,3%)

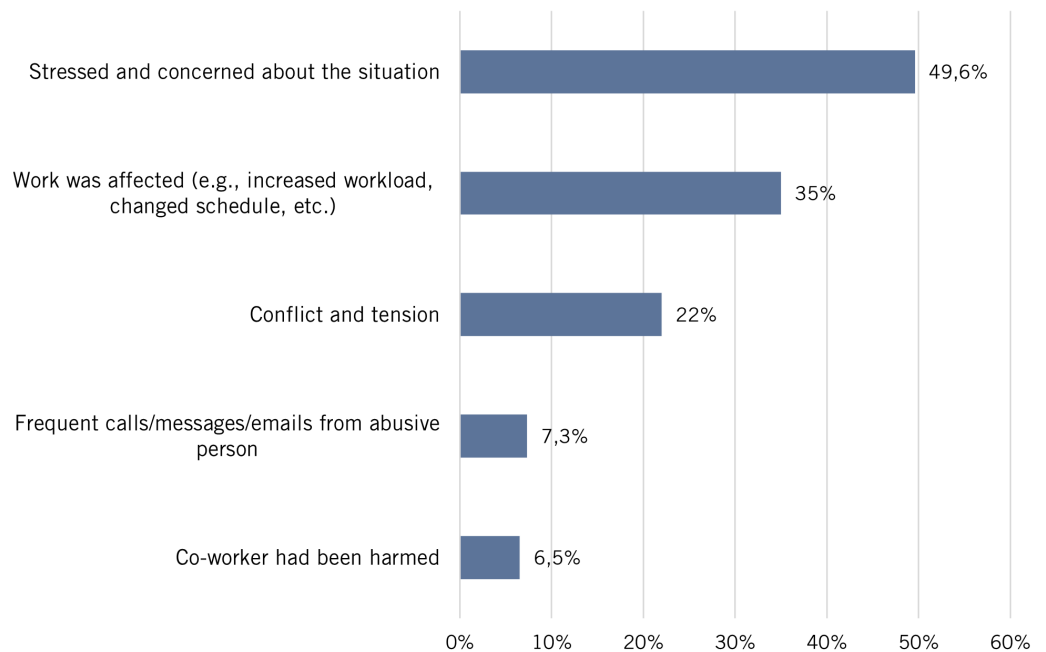
“I was on sick leave. As a result, my colleagues had a higher workload.”

“I become an inferior colleague when I feel down, the workplace is affected when you cannot contribute to create a good environment. You are too absorbed by yourself / the relationship with your partner to be able to care about others.”

Impact of IPV on co-workers

Workers who reported experiencing IPV were asked if they believed that their experiences of IPV affected their co-workers. While 77,6% believed that IPV did not affect their co-workers, 22,4% indicated that IPV may have affected their co-workers. Types of effects on co-workers included being stressed about the employees' situation (49,6%) and increased workload, changed schedule, etc. (35,0%), IPV caused conflict between the co-worker and respondents (22,0%), co-workers had to deal with phone calls, messages, or emails from the person behaving abusively (7,3%), co-workers were harmed (6,5%), and other reasons (25,2%).

Figure 4: Perceived impact of IPV on co-workers



“My relationship with my colleagues has never extended outside of work. Do not feel that we have that kind of relationship where we talk about such private things. Experiences that most workplaces do not have places that are secluded enough to be able to take ‘difficult’ conversations.”

Disclosure at the workplace: Frequency and reasoning behind disclosure decisions

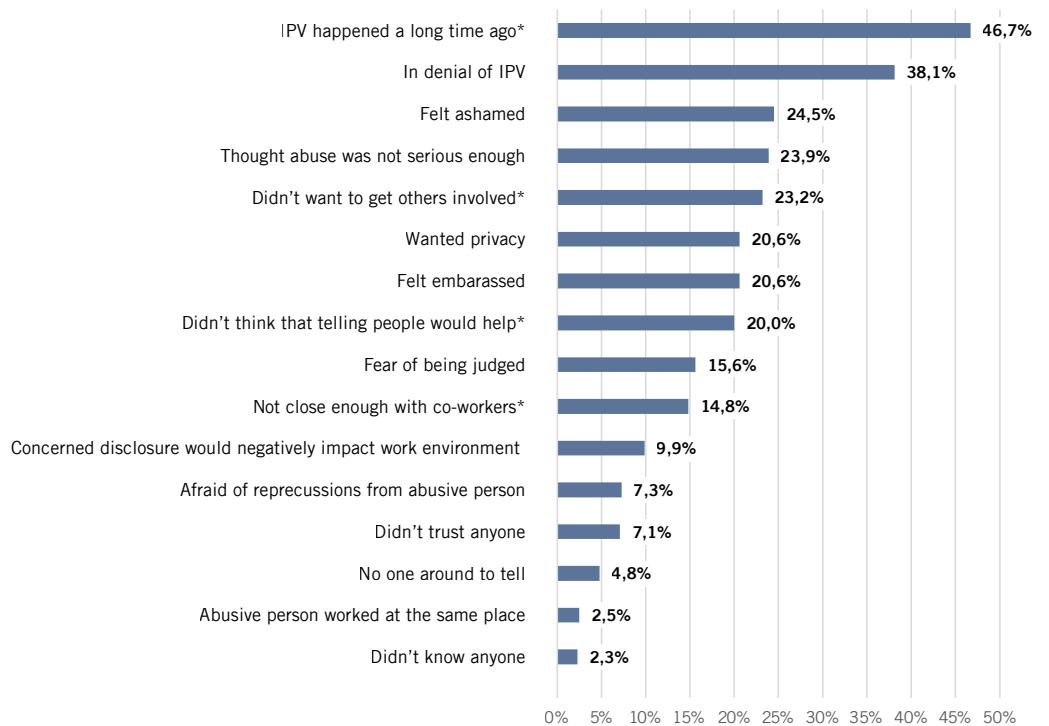
“I was young and it was not physical. Did not realize until later how bad it was.”

“Didn’t even think about telling anyone.”

“I think it’s easy to feel like you’re being stigmatized if you tell such private things to others in your workplace. There is an implicit image that an employee must always be able to deliver and perform and keep the private outside of work. You never want to be the one who can’t cope with your work because you feel bad.”

Most workers (70,9%) did not disclose their IPV experiences to anyone. They did not disclose because of a myriad of reasons including IPV happened a long time ago (46,7%), denial that IPV was happening (38,1%), feeling ashamed (24,5%), believing that abuse was not serious or important enough (23,9%), didn’t want others to get involved (23,2%), feeling embarrassed (20,6%), wanting privacy (20,6%), didn’t think that telling people at the workplace would help (20%), fear of being judged (15,6%), not close enough with co-workers to tell them (14,8%), fearing that job or work environment would suffer in other ways (9,9%), afraid to tell by abusive person (7,3%), didn’t trust anyone (7,1%), no one around to tell (4,8%), and several other reasons (14,7%).

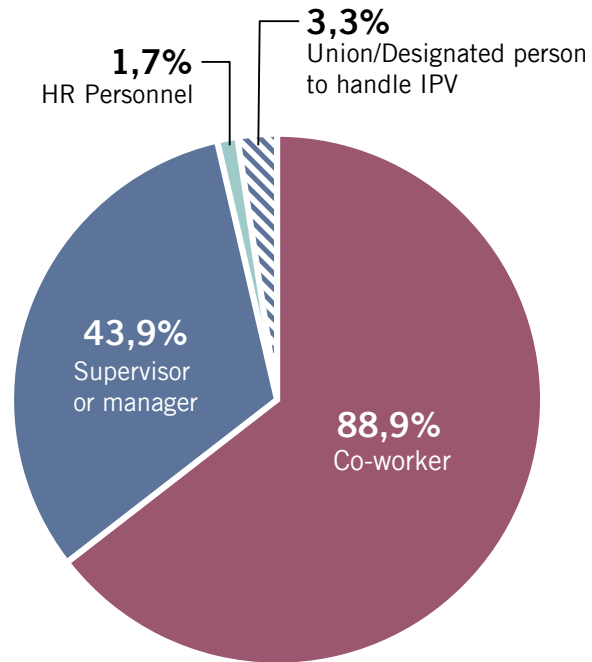
Figure 5: Reasons for not disclosing IPV at the workplace



“I think work groups and managers need to be given more tools to discover and help those who live in violence.”

29,1% of the employees who had experienced IPV disclosed their experiences to someone at work. Most of the respondents disclosed their experiences to their co-workers (88,9%), followed by supervisors/managers (43,9%), HR personnel (1,7%), and close to 3,3% to their union or designated person who handles situations of IPV. Of those who disclosed their experiences to their co-workers, 92,5% found them to be helpful. Most (84,8%) who reported to their supervisor/manager found them to be helpful.

Figure 6: Disclosure to someone at workplace

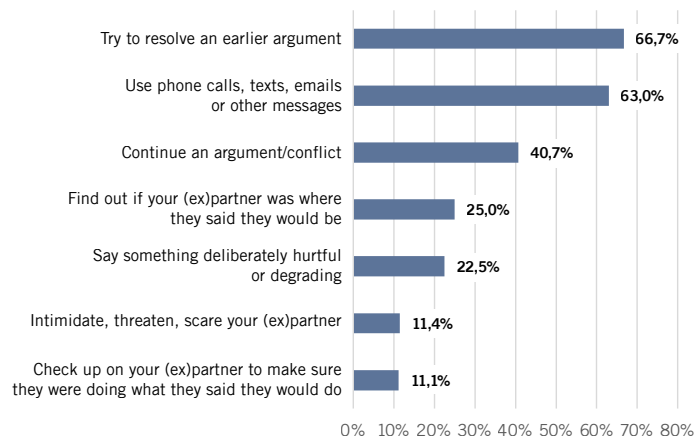


Use of abusive behavior in close relationships

“Anyone who practices intimate partner violence probably has an outlook on life in which this is something normal and that is how this person usually act. It is not just the violence in itself that affects this person on workplace, but rather affects this person’s outlook and behavior throughout their whole life.”

All respondents were asked if they have ever engaged in violent behaviour towards either a current or former partner. 1,4% of both men and women indicated that they have used violence towards their current or former partner at some time during their lifetime. Those who indicated that they had used violent behaviours also reported that they had engaged in some of the following behaviours during work hours - contacting a partner during work hours to try to resolve an earlier argument (66,7%), engaging in abusive phone calls, text messages, email, or other messages (63,0%), continuing an earlier argument (40,7%), contacting their partner/ex-partner to say something deliberately hurtful or degrading (25,9%), contacting their partners’ workplace to find out if the partner/ex-partner is where they said they would be (25,0%) checking up on their partner/ex-partner to ensure they were doing what they said they would do (11,1%), and intimidating, threatening or scaring their (ex)partner while they were at work (11,4%).

Figure 7: Reasons for contacting partner during work hours



Disclosure of abusive behaviour

Overall, 14,0% of those who reported engaging in violent behaviour indicated that they had talked about issues around IPV with someone at work. 60,0% indicated that they had sought help in stopping their violent behaviour. Around one in five (17,6%) indicated that they had sought help from social services/ counselling, 8,8% tried self-help books (e.g. books, videos, online programs), 5,9% sought help from friends and relatives, and 32,4% indicated other reasons. 50,0% of the respondents indicated that they would seek help to change their abusive behavior if their employer asked.

Co-workers experiences

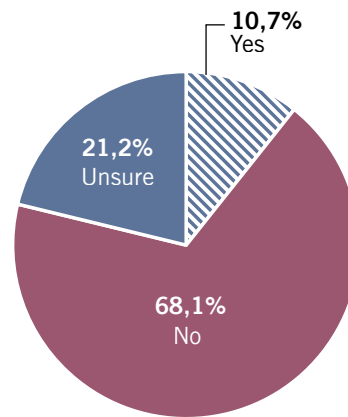
Co-workers who have experienced IPV

“Overheard a phone call that didn’t feel good/right, but unfortunately didn’t ask about it later so I’m not sure who was on the line.”

“Remote work leads to less personal contact and less opportunity to discover that a colleague has been abused, for example. Also less opportunity to be on hand and support.”

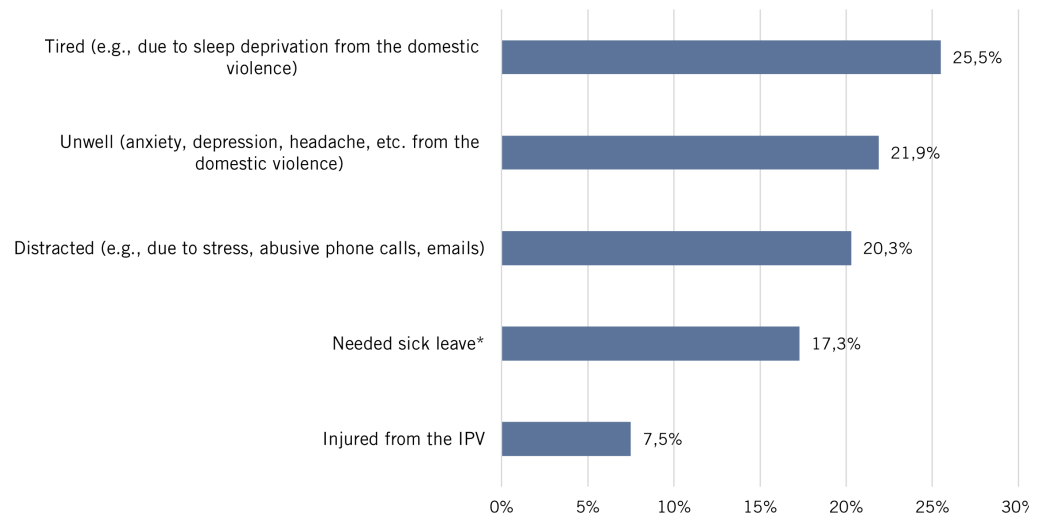
Respondents were asked about the prevalence and perceived impact of IPV experiences on their co-workers. 10,7% of the respondents indicated that they had at least one co-worker who they believe is experiencing or has experienced IPV and 21,2% indicated that they didn't know or were unsure. Furthermore, 16,3% of the participants who were aware of a co-worker's experience of IPV indicated that their co-workers' experience of IPV affected their ability to work and 69,0% did not know or were unsure about the impact.

Figure 8: Co-workers who have experienced IPV



Of those who were sure or unsure whether co-workers' experiences of IPV affected their ability to work, most of the respondents were likely to report that their co-worker was tired due to sleep deprivation from the IPV experience (25,5%), unwell including anxiety, depression, headache (21,9%), distracted due to stress, abusive phone calls or email (20,3%), needed sick leave (17,3%) or were injured due to experiences of IPV (7,5%).

Figure 9: Perception of IPV impact on co-workers’s work performance



Note: * indicate the items that were not included in the first replication.

Signs of experiencing intimate partner violence

Experts have found that there are a number of warning signs that someone may be experiencing IPV. Respondents were asked if they recognized any of the warning signs that a co-worker (past or present) may be experiencing IPV. Almost 30,0% of the sample indicated that they have recognized at least one warning sign, 5,9% recognized at least 2 warning signs, and 17,3% recognized three or more signs. In Figure 10, the 10 most common potential signs of experiencing in IPV in co-workers is reported.

“I was a manager and my employee did not keep appointments, did not perform tasks and constantly talked about the partner in different ways. The person eventually chose to leave the relationship and also to change jobs. New life. Hope it all went well.”

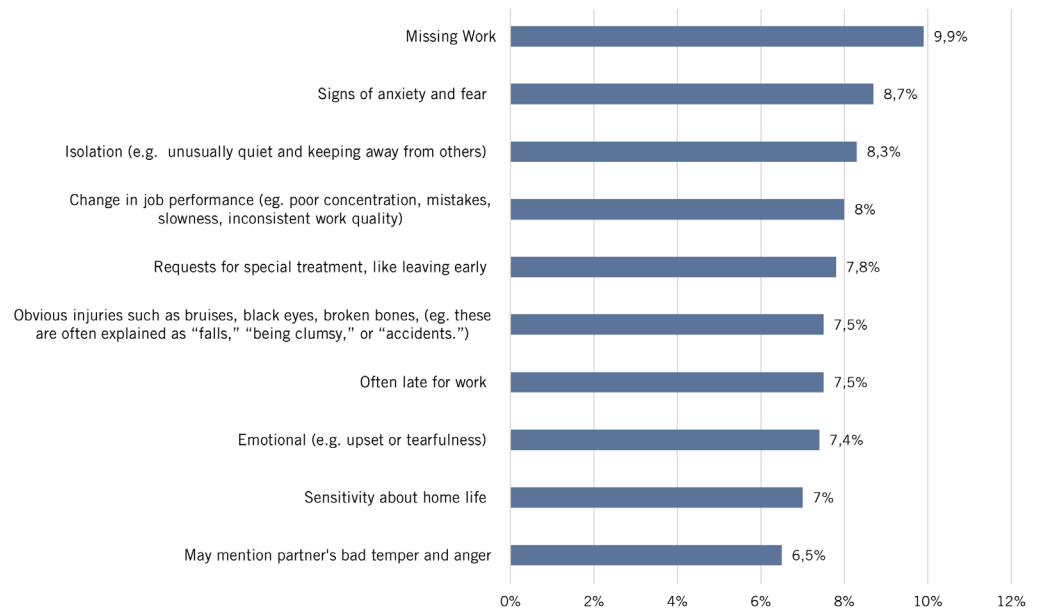
“Stressed to catch the right bus home, cannot be late at home.”

“Talked on the phone during the break instead of having coffee.”

“Was often on short sick leave.”

“Cancelled scheduled meetings several times, just five minutes before.”

Figure 10: Potential signs of experiencing IPV in co-workers reported



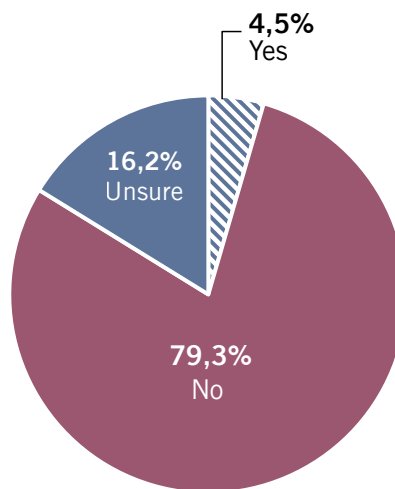
Co-workers who have used abusive behaviour

Respondents were asked if they knew a past or present co-worker who may be using abusive behavior, 20,7% of the respondents said that they maybe have at least one co-worker who would be using abusive behavior or has been previously abusive. Of those who said yes or were unsure, most respondents (87,0%) agreed or reported being unsure of whether the affected colleagues work performance was impacted. A few indicated no perceived impact.

“I believe that the working life is affected for those who use violence in a close relationship by the person e.g. uses e-mail and service phone for private purposes, contact with colleagues who may know the partner or other employees in leading positions in order to smear their partner. Much of the person’s working time is also not spent working, but instead allocating time for harassment in various forms (working for a long time with text material in front of the computer for e.g. legal violence, going away to call and harass, taking long breaks, surfing the net through various social media accounts to stalk).”

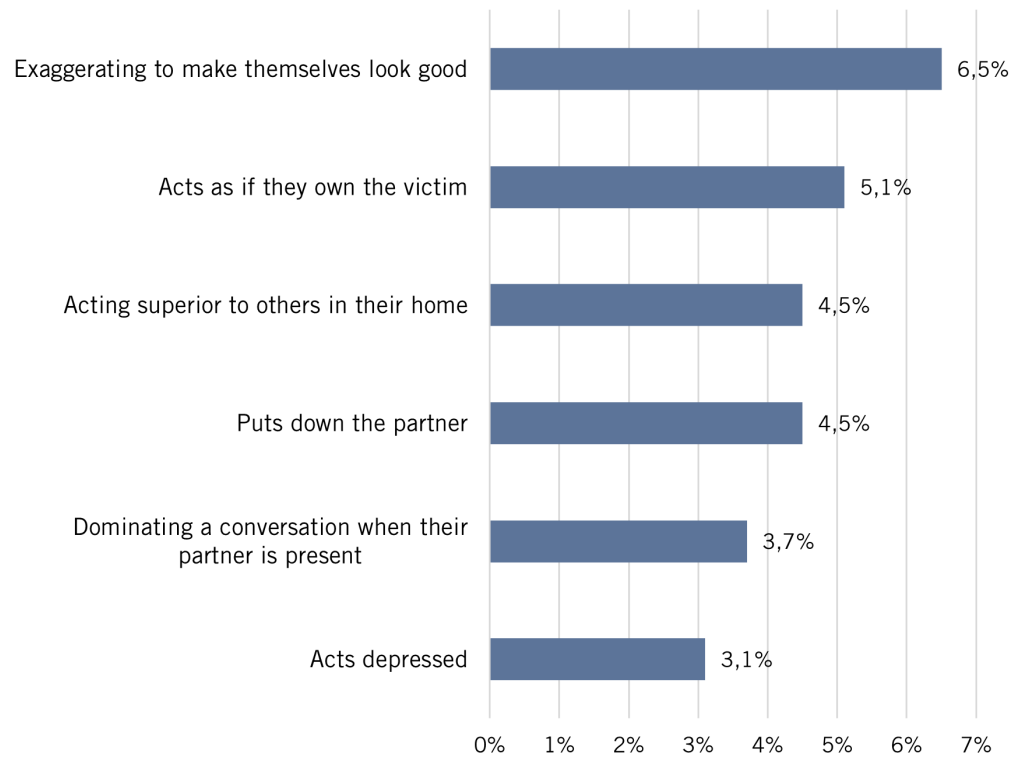
“I know, that a not close colleague, exposed his wife to threats and violence as he told me about a police report etc. I think this colleague needs to talk about this and get support in changing his aggressive behavior and get support to become a better parent. I have recommended the men crisis center.”

Figure 11: Co-workers who have used abusive behaviour



Respondents were further asked if they recognized the warning that the co-worker was using abusive behavior. 14,3% of the respondents reported that they had observed at least one sign that a co-worker was engaging in abusive behaviour. Some of the signs that were identified included lying or exaggerating to make themselves look good (6,5%), acting as if they own the victim (5,1%), putting down the partner (4,5%), acting like they are superior to others in their home (4,5%), doing all the talking and dominating the conversations when the partner is present (3,7%), acting depressed (3,1%). Other signs included trying to keep the victim away from work or other activities, contacting their partner while at work to say something that might scare or intimidate them, taking paid or unpaid time off that seems related to abusive situations, and changes in job performance.

Figure 12: Potential signs of using behaviour in co-workers



“Outbursts that are aggressive over work situations.”

“Access to password to partner’s Facebook account.”

“Acts aggressively and frighteningly without being able to control the anger.”

Beliefs about intimate partner violence in the workplace

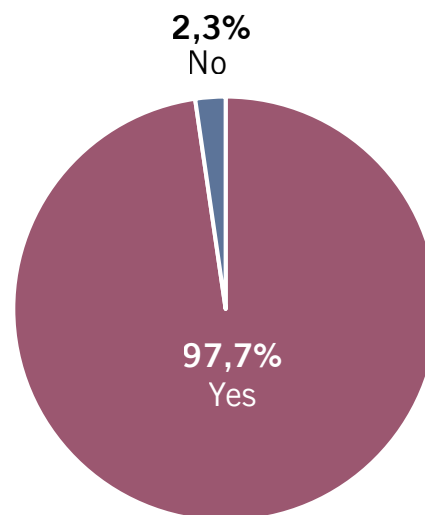
“It is important to dare to be a good colleague and dare to ask if the gut feeling is bad. It’s not just a managerial responsibility. The manager is often further away from everyday life.”

“It is important that all staff receive training in, for example, what signs to look out for to be able to support a potentially abused colleague.”

Respondents were then asked about their perceptions of how IPV might impact people at work, and what employers can do to address this issue. Approximately, 98,0% (97,7%) of the respondents indicated an understanding that IPV impacts the work lives of all that are exposed in some way. Approximately, 83,0% (82,7%) also agreed that IPV impacts the work lives of all who are using abusive behavior in some way.

“It is always good to pay attention and give extra consideration and time to those who are not always seen or heard. The perpetrator may be in need of professional help, but it requires responsibility from everyone to detect and draw attention to it in time.”

Figure 13: Belief that IPV impacts the work lives of all exposed



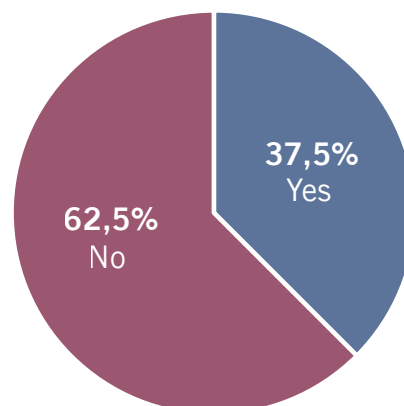
“It should be an issue that is addressed in the yearly staff appraisal, as a matter of routine. And at the occupational health service. Employers should work to reduce the stigma of talking about men’s violence against women and violence in close relationships. Should be a requirement for government agencies.”

Respondents were further asked if they had received any information about IPV at their workplace. 37,5% indicated that they did receive information and 62,5% indicated that they did not receive any information.

“Workplaces and employers generally need to take greater account of their employees’ mental and physical health, not only because a bad mood negatively affects work performance but because it increases cohesion and the chance of good health and an open conversational climate. The lower the threshold is for when someone ask for help, the easier it is to solve it and get back a happy, well-functioning colleague.”

“Everyone should receive continuous training/workshops regarding Violence in close relationships as it can be something that really sometimes goes unnoticed. The person who is exposed may not even understand that he is exposed and therefore it is important that everyone around that person, colleague or manager has the training/ experience to be able to see and notice if things, behavior etc. change in any employee at the workplace. In that case, the colleague/ manager can get in touch and ask the question gently or just be a wake-up call. I had wanted this because I had no idea what was going on with me or in my relationship, or with my partner.”

Figure 14: Employees who have received information about IPV



Conclusion

Over 40,0% of the surveyed workforce had been affected by some experience of IPV in their own lives or in the lives of their work colleagues. Around 21,0% of women and 9,0% of men reported experiencing IPV and a small minority reported using abusive behaviours in their close relationships. Of those who reported IPV experiences, over half reported that it affected their work performance, frequently due to being tired, unwell, distracted, sometimes due to injuries, unplanned absences, being unable to get to work, or having to leave early. Only around 29,0% of respondents who had experienced IPV discussed violence with somebody at work, overwhelmingly with co-workers or supervisors/managers. Far fewer respondents disclosed to the Human Resources department, unions, or designated people. Around half of the respondents who had used abusive behavior reported that they would seek help if asked to do so by a supervisor or manager.

Respondents also reported on the prevalence and impact of IPV on their coworkers. Around 32,0% of respondents had a co-worker who they believed may have experienced IPV and around 21,0% reported having a colleague who they believed may have used abusive behaviours. Most felt that these experiences may have had an impact on their colleagues' work performance. Respondents also frequently reported awareness of potential signs of IPV experiences and of using abusive behaviours in their work colleagues. Some of the most identified warning signs that someone is experiencing IPV include missing work, signs of anxiety and fear, isolation, and change in job performance. Furthermore, participants provided many examples of concerns, such as overhearing derogatory comments, perceiving their co-workers as nervous or sensitive about discussing their home lives and seeing workplace impacts (e.g., unexplained absences, meetings canceled at the last minute) that could have led to more in-depth conversations with their co-workers about their situations and the support that they might require. Participants also identified some of the potential signs that their co-worker is behaving abusively such as exaggerating to make themselves look good, acting as if they own the victim or they are superior to the victim, and putting down their partner.

Finally, there was overwhelming support from respondents for recognizing the impact of IPV on the lives of workers and for employers to take action to address this issue. In the words of one respondent: "It is very important that we start talking about these issues in the workplace and that we increase the level of knowledge of both employees and management." Close to 38,0% of respondents reported receiving information from their employers about IPV; moreover, when information was received, it was very seldom shared as part of policy or standard human resource practice.

Recommendations

Based on previous research and these findings, a range of recommendations may be made for employers to better support workers who experience IPV. Creating a plan to overcome sociocultural barriers to eliminating IPV and addressing the impact of IPV in workplaces is best done as a collaborative process within workplaces. This process should include consideration of the results of workplace surveys as well as a review of current policy, training, communication, and iterative feedback. Some helpful recommendations relevant to a broad range of workplaces are as follows:

Plan for change

Encourage strong leadership on issues of IPV in the workplace and proactively engage workers in conversation about IPV prevention and intervention. Employers should work on IPV issues in a systematic and planned way within the work environment. Systematic work with the work environment is a continuous process with recurring activities that can be applied to IPV work as well.³⁵

Implement key changes to better support workers

Each organization will identify their own priorities for change. Key areas of change generally include the following:

Change policy and procedure

Develop comprehensive workplace policies and procedures related to IPV at work which include risk assessments, reporting procedures, and workplace safety planning, including supports for workers experiencing IPV. Policies need to include digital environments and the array of platforms now used to conduct work, which may also be used to monitor, harass, and continue IPV. Workplace policies and guidelines should be developed to address offenders as well as victims, and focus, where possible, on prevention, including accountability for offenders. Workplace policies should encourage and support workers in disclosing concerns about domestic violence at work (including domestic violence perpetration) in a safe manner and include assurances that those who come forward with their experiences that they will not lose their jobs. Policies also need to account for situations where the person subject to violence and their partner are employed in the same workplace. Policies should include clear expectations of supervisors/managers when they receive disclosures of IPV. The policies should be easily accessible and available for employees to view.

An employee subjected to violence may leave the organization, therefore, exit interviews could be a time where questions may also be asked. These represent learning opportunities for the organization, but also opportunities to intervene.

Provide training

Training and education are critical. All employees need basic training about recognizing victimization and perpetration warning signs, and how to respond appropriately. Education, awareness raising and training materials need to be accessible to workers and appropriate to their workplace. Workplace responses to domestic violence should account for the additional impacts and barriers faced by employees who are members of minority groups. Leaders should receive additional training on organizational preparation and with specific protocols and tools to intervene with victims, perpetrators and potential perpetrators. These guides should include strategies to use when leaders notice risk factors, warning signs, and IPV-related performance issues. All employees, but especially leaders, require training that includes the use of inclusive language and specific knowledge of equity and diversity, particularly as it pertains to domestic violence.

For IT departments, consider training on strategies to deal with technology-facilitated abuse. Such training may include how IT departments can assist with abusive phone calls and emails, finding and removing surveillance software on computers and cell phones owned by the organization, and providing secure communication channels through mechanisms such as VPNs.

Communicate actions

Recognize that IPV is a workplace issue and a problem that impacts the workplace, including productivity, in multiple ways. An effective communications strategy helps to ensure the engagement and buy-in of all members of the organization. Communications strategies are most effective when they are tailored to an organization and continually developed in collaboration and in dialogue with leaders, employees and other key organizational members.

Communications should include lists of internal and external resources for survivors and perpetrators of IPV, including legal, counselling, and safety planning resources, in an accessible and visible location.

Collaborate with community-based organizations and experts

Partnerships between employers and community-based intervention programs create better capacity to provide appropriate prevention and intervention to domestic violence survivors and perpetrators. Community-based experts may assist in training and provide ongoing support for workers experiencing IPV.

Review progress and make improvements

Evaluate the effectiveness of policies, training and other measures taken to prevent and respond to IPV at regular intervals. Workplaces should consider repeated surveys/assessments to understand the experiences of IPV at work and to gather more information on the costs (e.g., presenteeism and absenteeism, tardiness) of IPV at work. Repeated surveys can also demonstrate the impact of having good policies and procedures to respond to employees experiencing IPV.

Learn from reports and investigations about where improvements need to be made (e.g., do policies need to be modified, does the workplace need more training, are leaders in specific areas of the workplace meeting their roles and responsibilities, etc.). It is critical to have procedures in place to regularly review this information.

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