



Impacts of Domestic Violence in Workplaces in India

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This report provides an unprecedented view of how domestic violence impacts the working lives of women workers, within and beyond transport sectors in India. It is based on survey data collected from October 2019 and May 2020 from 15,561 workers from across a range of India's employment sectors aged 15 years or older, of which 98% of respondents were women. The survey explored workers' experiences with domestic violence, and for those with personal experiences of domestic violence it further examined how their experiences affected their work, their co-workers, and the support that they received. This survey is the first comprehensive investigation of the impacts of domestic violence in the workplace in India.

For the purposes of this study, domestic violence was defined as any form of physical, sexual, verbal, cultural, spiritual, emotional, or psychological abuse, including financial control, neglect, stalking, and harassment, occurring between past or current intimate partners of the opposite or same-sex, who may or may not be married, common law, or living together.

The ground-breaking study was conducted by ITF affiliates, other Indian unions and other organisations working on gender-based violence. The study was supported by researchers at the Centre for Research & Education (CREVAWC) at Western University in partnership with the Domestic Violence at Work Network and the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF).

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS A WORKPLACE ISSUE

The findings leave no doubt that domestic violence is a problem for a significant number of working women in the transport industry.

75% reported **direct or indirect experiences** of domestic violence in their **lifetime**.

47% reported **direct experience** of domestic violence during their **lifetime**.

24% reported **direct experience** of domestic violence in the **past 12 months**.

26% reported **knowing someone at work** who has experienced domestic violence.

Responses also leave no doubt that experiences with domestic violence extend to the workplace. An overwhelming majority (92%) of workers who reported personal experiences of domestic violence said that it affected their ability to work in some way. More specifically, workers reporting being **distracted, tired, unwell** and **injured**. Respondents also reported that experiences of domestic violence made them either **late for work** or **absent from work** altogether.

Findings also revealed that the impacts do not stop with those who experience domestic violence directly. Of those co-workers who identified working with someone experiencing domestic violence, many were **stressed** about the situation, over a third **saw their workload increase** and 30% were themselves harmed or threatened.

The findings also reveal how experiences of domestic violence extend directly into their work and workplace. These findings present challenges for employers who want to ensure safe workplaces.

72% reported receiving abusive phone calls or text messages at work.

22% reported their abuser physically going to their workplace.

42% reported working at the same workplace as their abuser.

More than three-quarters of those who experienced domestic violence said they discussed it with somebody at work. An alarming majority of respondents disclosed that they have experienced discrimination, or feel more vulnerable to other forms of violence and harassment, for reporting their experiences of domestic violence. Almost a quarter (23%) of respondents also reported losing their job because of their experiences with domestic violence.

77% reported that they experienced discrimination or negative or adverse actions from their employer after discussing their experiences of domestic violence.

70% reported that they believe their experience of domestic violence makes them more vulnerable to other forms of violence or harassment at the workplace.

Survey responses show that the majority of respondents (73.8%) believe that workplace supports – such as paid leave, education, training and safety policies for domestic violence – can reduce the effects of domestic violence on workers' work lives. However, findings highlight the disconnection in both legislation and policies that support violence prevention and safe workplaces, with 70% of those who reported experiences of domestic violence were refused leave, even unpaid leave.

When asked to reflect on how companies, unions and governments can best support workers experiencing domestic violence, respondents said that companies should provide paid leave (78.5%), unions should provide peer support programmes, such as the Women's Advocate Programmes (72.8%) and governments should implement laws to prevent and address domestic violence (87.2%).

ELIMINATING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS A COLLECTIVE CHALLENGE

This research has identified the scope and impact of domestic violence on Indian workers and their workplaces, but it is only a first step. Governments, employers, unions and civil society organisations must establish proactive practices to address the impact of domestic violence at work. Eliminating domestic violence is a joint responsibility.

Governments around the world, including New Zealand, Australia and the Philippines, are beginning to recognise the importance of the workplace in the fight against domestic violence and to enact national legislation that grants additional employment rights in cases of domestic abuse. The report's findings show 87% of respondents expressed the need for the Indian Government to effectively implement similar laws.

It is critical that the Government in India works towards legal reform, including amendments in national laws like the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA), 2005 and The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, (SHWP) 2013. Recognising domestic violence as a workplace issue, ratifying Convention C190 and Recommendation 206, and including domestic violence support in Covid-19 response policies would also be positive next steps that signal to the broader public that domestic violence is not a private matter, but one that impacts the workplace, and all of society.

It is critical that employers recognise that a safe workplace is an employer's responsibility. When workers are experiencing violence at work or at home, the impacts are felt in the workplace. Employers must take responsibility to mitigate the impacts of domestic violence in the workplace. This must involve education of all employees – managers, supervisors and workers – about domestic violence in the workplace, as well as specific protocols and tools to protect and support victims and intervene with perpetrators, which must build on successful employer-led initiatives.

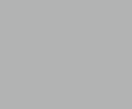
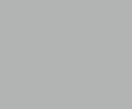
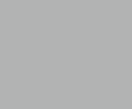
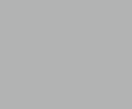
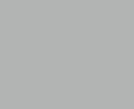
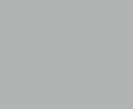
Unions must also recognise and prioritise domestic violence. Domestic violence is a union issue, and women union leaders must lead the work. To escape violence, women need financial independence, yet survivors are often at risk of losing their job and sometimes their lives, if they are not properly supported. A quarter of respondents reported losing their job because of their experience with domestic violence. Unions play a vital role in protecting the jobs and financial independence that women need to survive domestic violence.

It is imperative that unions actively engage in information, awareness-raising and campaigns to prevent domestic violence, including its impacts in the workplace. Unions and civil society organisations must strive to change social norms around toxic-masculinity and engage male and female trade unions leaders to advocate to end domestic violence. Unions must also proactively support survivors, challenge society to question the myths and stereotypes, and increase pressure on employers and governments to take

further steps to prevent the violence. This includes advocating for legal reforms and amendments to the PWDVA, negotiating language from ILO Convention 190 and Recommendation 206 in collective bargaining agreements and policies, and campaigning for paid domestic violence leave, flexible hours, workplace safety plans and seeking reassurances of no reprisals for reporting abuse.

It is a collective social challenge; one place that positive change can happen – for survivors, perpetrators, and employers – is the workplace. Improving the workplace response to violence will require a multi-pronged approach by legislators, employers, unions and advocates, working collaboratively with appropriate allies in society, to protect and support survivors and assist perpetrators in changing their behaviour. Women must be involved in all this work.





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