

New Canadian Study Explores Impact of Domestic Violence on the Workplace



Canadian employers lose \$77.9 million annually due to the direct and indirect impacts of domestic violence. And the costs to individuals, families and society go even further. But we know very little about the scope and impacts of this problem in Canada.

So the Canadian Labour Congress partnered with researchers at the University of Western Ontario to conduct the first Canadian survey on domestic violence in the workplace.

The key findings from the survey, *Can Work Be Safe, When Home Isn't*, include:

- Consistent with national population-based surveys, over a third of respondents reported personal experience with domestic violence at some point in their life. The percentage was higher for women, gender diverse and Aboriginal people; those with disabilities and those reporting a sexual orientation other than heterosexual.
- Among those who had experienced domestic violence, over a third reported that the violence affected their ability to get to work.
- Over 1/2 of those who had experienced domestic violence reported that it continued at the workplace in some way, such as harassing phone calls from the abuser and stalking.
- Of those who had experienced domestic violence, the vast majority reported that it affected their work performance in some way, such as, due to being distracted, tired or unwell.
- Over a third of those who had experienced domestic violence discussed the violence with somebody at work, primarily to co-workers and supervisors/managers.
- The vast majority of respondents, whether or not they had personally experienced domestic violence, believed that it impacts the work lives of those experiencing abuse 'quite a bit' or 'a whole lot.' And yet, most

respondents also thought that employers and union officials aren't aware when domestic violence is affecting workers.

- Most respondents believed that workplace supports such as paid leave and safety policies for domestic violence can reduce its impact on the work lives of workers.

The OHS laws and OHS regulators in several Canadian jurisdictions recognize that violence against women, particularly domestic violence, as a workplace health and safety issue.

For example, Ontario changed its OHS laws to add a domestic violence provision to its workplace violence and harassment requirements. And BC and Manitoba have released resources and toolkits for employers on domestic violence in the workplace.

The OHS Insider has various resources you can use to address domestic violence in your workplace, including:

- Five strategies for addressing domestic violence in the workplace