

Study investigates effects of domestic violence on workplaces—by asking perpetrators

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Researchers at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto and Western University released a new study today, taking an unconventional approach to understanding the significant effects of domestic violence in the workplace. By seeking the views of the perpetrators of violence, the study found that domestic violence perpetration, like victimization, has costs to the workplace in terms of worker safety and productivity and that most employers lack adequate resources to help perpetrators deal with the issue.

The survey found that perpetration of domestic [violence](#) is associated with substantial negative effects on the productivity and safety of workers with close to half of respondents (46%) reporting that violence issues negatively affected their job performance.

"These studies clearly document the effects of domestic violence on workplaces that fail to address the distress, distraction, anger, and preoccupation workers experience in association with these issues," said Dr. Katreena Scott, Canada Research Chair in Family Violence Prevention and Intervention at OISE at the University of Toronto.

"Our 2014 national study showed us the extent to which domestic violence follows victims to their workplaces. Our aim with this study was to ensure that policies, [workplace](#) education and interventions appropriately address both perpetrators and victims of violence in the

workplace," said Barb MacQuarrie, Community Director of Western's Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children (CREVAWC), "Now we better understand how domestic violence perpetration extends from the home to the workplace as well."

'Perpetrators are our co-workers, our supervisors, those working under our supervision'

Working together with 22 of Ontario's Partner Assault Response programs, researchers conducted a survey of 500 perpetrators of domestic violence. Respondents came from all parts of the province and represented all service regions. The vast majority were men in heterosexual relationships who were identified as having perpetrated domestic violence and referred to intervention by the [criminal justice](#) system.

One-third of respondents (33.9%) reported being in contact with their (ex)partner during work hours to engage in behaviours that were emotionally abusive or to monitor her actions or whereabouts. Of men who engaged in these behaviours, 25% used workplace time to drop by her home or workplace. About 20% indicated that their co-workers were aware of these behaviours.

Nearly a tenth (9%) of respondents reported that they caused or almost caused a work accident as a result of being distracted or preoccupied by these issues. About 25% of respondents indicated that violence issues led to difficulties getting to and staying at work and about 25% reported taking paid time off work to deal with domestic violence issues.

"We know that domestic violence is a prevalent social problem, so it only follows that those who perpetrate this violence are our co-workers, our supervisors, and those working under our supervision," said Tim

Kelly, Executive Director of Changing Ways, the Partner Assault Response Program in London. "This means our prevention and our intervention plans must address those who perpetrate domestic violence as well as victims."

Workplaces a 'closed' climate

Results also suggest that workplaces are still often closed places for dealing with domestic violence perpetration.

Nearly half of men reported that the climate of their workplaces was closed, unsupportive, and unfair when it came to dealing with domestic violence issues and the majority of respondents indicated that they did not know or were unsure of any resources available to them in the workplace to help them deal with domestic violence issues.

Only a third of men reported talking about their domestic violence issues with people at their workplace. When men did talk about their situation, they were most likely to talk to their co-workers or supervisors.

Men were often reluctant to talk about this issue due to concerns about losing their jobs. More than one-quarter of [respondents](#) (26.2%) reported losing their job as a direct or indirect result of domestic violence issues. Many commented that these issues have made it more difficult to seek new work.

Dr. Katreena Scott: Important to know what resources perpetrators think will help

"It is important to understand the experiences of the perpetrators of violence in sharing information with their workplaces and their opinions on the types of resources that should be available," said Scott.

"Education is needed and so too are resources to support workers who are using violence in their intimate partner and family relationships."

Researchers also noted that the impact of domestic violence perpetration was independent of involvement in the justice system. Men reported that the impact of their [domestic violence](#) issues on productivity and time lost were just as great before the incident that brought them to the attention to the criminal justice system as after.

More information: [dvatworknet.org/sites/dvatwork ... rt-Oct-23-2017dl.pdf](https://dvatworknet.org/sites/dvatworknet/files/2017-10/Oct-23-2017dl.pdf)

Provided by University of Toronto

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