

The Impacts of Domestic Violence on Workers and the Workplace Survey 2013

A survey on the impact of domestic violence at work was sent to a sample of 10,000 PSA members working in local government, district health boards, publicly funded community agencies, government departments and the wider state services. It was completed by 1626 members. The results of the survey are consistent with similar research conducted internationally.

In June and July 2013, the PSA conducted a national online survey of domestic violence and the workplace, in collaboration with the New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse. Margaret Rayner-Thomas, was the lead investigator, and undertook the work as part of a Masters in Public Health at the University of Auckland.

A full copy of the report is available from the PSA website:

<http://www.psa.org.nz/CampaignsAndIssues/FamilyViolenceAndNewZealandWorkplaces.aspx>

Key findings

- The majority of participants were women (74%), 80% were in full time employment and most were over the age of 35 (85%). Almost two thirds (65%) were New Zealand European and 14% were Maori.
- 55% of participants reported having some experience with domestic violence either in their personal lives or through someone they know; and 31% reported that those who had this experience with domestic violence had it occur while they were in paid employment or the person they knew was in paid employment.
- 26% of participants had personally experienced domestic violence and more than half of this group (58%) reported being in paid employment at the time.

Of those who had personally experienced domestic violence while in paid employment:

- 38% reported that the abuse had a negative impact on their ability to get to work. The most common reasons reported by this group for this negative impact were physical injury or restraint (62%), fear of leaving children alone with the abusive partner (41%), partner hiding car keys (26%) and failure of the partner to care for children (24%).
- More than half (53%) reported they did take time off from work because of the domestic violence. Of this group, the most frequent reason for taking time off was health/medical reasons (52%), followed by attending counselling (48%), attending police or legal appointments (31%), sorting out accommodation (27%) and attending court (22%).

- The domestic violence also took place in the workplace with the main forms being abusive phone calls, emails or texts (16%), being stalked at work (16%) and the abusive person physically coming to work (10%).
- The major impacts reported on work performance were being late for work (84%) and being distracted, tired or unwell (16%). Of those who reported that the violence they were experiencing had an impact on their co-workers, most said that it created conflict or tension with colleagues (83%). 17% said colleagues were threatened or harmed.
- Less than half (47%) discussed the violence with someone at work. Most spoke with a colleague (69%) and/or supervisors and managers (54%). They also reported discussing the violence with HR staff (7%) or union representatives (4%). Of those who did not disclose at work 92% said that the main reasons for this were a combination of shame and /or a need for privacy.
- Of those who reported the outcome of disclosing at work, 65% reported positive outcomes and 32% reported that nothing happened. The most common help people received was paid time off (31%). Active responses by employers (e.g., alerted security or police, changed/screened phone calls or emails, moved victim to safer place at work, provided transportation, or provided a security alarm) were not commonly reported.
- A third of those who responded to a question about police involvement reported that they had gone to the police about the violence (33%). 8% were involved in Family Court proceedings and one in four had obtained a protection order. Of those who did obtain a protection order, 77% reported that that protection order did not include their workplace.

Of those who reported they knew someone else who experienced domestic violence while in paid employment:

- 29% said their friend or colleague was harassed through phone calls, emails or texts. 27% said the domestic violence their friend or colleague experienced created conflict or tension with their colleagues. 28% said that the workplace provided a supportive environment for their friend or colleague.

Of all of those who participated in the survey:

- 99% said that domestic violence can impact on the work lives of employees.
- 82% thought that workplace entitlements, such as paid leave and safety policies could reduce the impact of domestic violence in the workplace.

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