

The Intersection of Work and Abuse

A survey of victim and survivor experiences in the workplace

Report in partnership with
Futures Without Violence



thehotline.org

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EXECUTIVE

Summary

A primary obstacle to safety for survivors of domestic and/or sexual violence is economic insecurity¹. A 2018 survey of survivors of intimate partner violence found that nearly 3 in 4 respondents (74%) remained in abusive relationships due to financial insecurity². This precarity was often driven by partners' abusive behaviors and a lack of secure employment or access to quality job opportunities³. Learning more about what contributes to insecure employment and what can help survivors maintain employment while seeking safety is essential to developing effective interventions. Survivors know best what they need to be able to address economic insecurity, including ensuring access to and maintaining employment.

Between February and April 2025, the National Domestic Violence Hotline (The Hotline) and Futures Without Violence (FUTURES) conducted a survey to learn about the impact of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking on victims' and survivors' work experiences. The overwhelming majority of completed survey respondents indicated that they were employed during their abuse, indicating that the vast majority of victims/survivors are employed. Moreover, 79% reported that domestic violence made it harder for them to work. However, 53% stated that they did not disclose the domestic violence to their employers, often due to fear of discrimination, job loss, or workplace retaliation. Some respondents described negative experiences at their workplaces after disclosing, such as being harassed, or fired, while others shared ways their employer was supportive (i.e., providing paid leave and flexible schedules), which helped them to maintain their safety and employment.

Most respondents lacked awareness of workplace policies or legal protections related to their status as a victim/survivor of domestic violence, sexual assault, and/or stalking, and many reported that their workplaces did not offer training or educational materials on how to support someone experiencing these abuses. The analysis of the responses contained in this report also indicates that when employers did provide training on the impact of these abuses on the workplace, it led to increased disclosure by employees, enabling the employer to provide the support necessary for them to be safer.

¹ <https://www.pivotalventures.org/articles/sonya-passi-number-one-obstacle-safety-survivors-economic-insecurity>

² Cynthia Hess and Alona Del Rosario, "Dreams Deferred: A Survey on the Impact of Intimate Partner Violence on Survivors' Education, Careers, and Economic Security" (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2018), https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/C475_IWPR-Report-Dreams-Deferred.pdf.

³ Hess and Del Rosario.

For the purposes of this report victims and survivors are terms being used synonymously to identify respondents of the survey who identified as experiencing domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and/or stalking.

Data represented as percents in this report are rounded to the nearest number for ease of reading.

Definitions of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking can be found in the Appendix.

METHODOLOGY:

All responses were anonymous, and collected information had no personally identifying information. A total of 2,082 completed surveys were received. The survey contained a mix of multiple-choice and open field questions to help respondents provide as much detail as possible, in their own words, about their experiences. These questions were hosted on a digital survey tool in both English and Spanish, with Spanish-language responses integrated into the report findings. The analysis contained in this report is limited to respondents who expressed they have experienced domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and/or stalking and that they were employed while experiencing this abuse. Respondents who were not employed or working in any way while experiencing domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence or stalking are not included in the analysis for this report. Respondents answered questions about their sex, race and ethnicity, state of residence, and age. Sample sizes in the non-dominant groups were too small for a full analysis — as such, most of the report analysis represents the entire population of respondents who identified experiencing domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and/or stalking while employed.

Based on the information gathered from this survey, The Hotline and FUTURES have identified the following recommendations for advocates, employers, policymakers and other stakeholders including donors to increase economic security for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking. These recommendations focus specifically on the need to increase access to information about existing legal protections including paid leave from work, provide ongoing workplace training and education on the impact these abuses have on the workplace and on workers, and mechanisms for employees to seek assistance for themselves or to support their co-workers.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EMPLOYERS:

Since the majority of survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking indicated that they were employed at the time of the abuse, employers are in a position to help survivors maintain their job while also allowing them to access services to seek safety, support and healing.

- Work with employee representatives to integrate comprehensive supports for workers who are experiencing domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking and dating violence into workplace policies, including occupational safety and health, anti-discrimination, workplace violence, and paid leave. Make information about these policies easily accessible to workers. Ensure that policies also address how to respond to harm-doers in the workplace and their use of workplace resources to inflict harm.
- Engage with experts in the field of abuse such as state coalitions of domestic violence, survivor-centered training organizations like FUTURES, direct service providers like

The Hotline, and employee representatives to co-create and provide training, education, and awareness activities. This can ensure an approach that is trauma-informed and mitigates additional harm or abuse in the workplace of those who have experienced domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking and dating violence. Experts can support with workplace policies and steps employees need to take with their employer to confidentially access leave, workplace accommodations, and other related benefits to address their victimization.

- Train human resources staff members on how to work with an employee who is a survivor to ensure that they keep disclosures as confidential as possible and avoid blaming victims for the abuse.
- Obtain and verify that health insurance benefits and employee assistance programs provide resources for survivors.
- Create an emergency cash assistance fund for employees that can be used for one-time expenses that can support survivors in maintaining employment.
- Incorporate unemployment insurance information in offboarding specifically for survivors who are leaving work as the result of the violence they are experiencing, since individual employers are not charged for these benefits.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT ADVOCATES AND ORGANIZATIONS SERVING SURVIVORS:

Incorporate questions about the employment status of survivors into intake and counseling procedures and develop resources for staff on how to support a survivor who is employed while seeking safety. Advocates should ensure that survivors understand that workplace supports are available and know their employment rights.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS:

- Advocate for legislation for guaranteed paid leave from work to meet the needs of workers who are survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and dating violence by including permissible uses of leave such as seeking mental health support services and counseling, relocating, meeting with advocates and attorneys, seeking child care, and attending court proceedings. Ensure that state enforcement agencies publish annual or bi-annual reports on the law's usage and have a posting requirement for the law.
- Advocate for legislation mandating that employer's partner with state coalitions on domestic violence or organizations like The Hotline and FUTURES to provide ongoing survivor-centered education and training for all employees on the root causes and impacts of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking on the workplace, and the legal protections available to survivors.

- Create business incentives for employers who voluntarily adopt employment protections that surpass city, county and state requirements for survivors.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUNDERS:

- Require organizations being funded increase staff capacity to address employment-related needs of survivors.
- Maintain that funded efforts require workplace policies that encompass the needs of survivors.
- Fund workforce development efforts that are tailored to the unique needs of survivors.

Everyone has a role in fostering workplace cultures that prioritize survivor safety and address underlying biases about domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking. This is important as we consider every employer in your community — nonprofits, small businesses, contractors, faith-based organizations, sports clubs, educational institutions, etc. These abuses are not confined to any one type of employer, though the prevalence increases across some industries. Therefore, we are all called to ensure that our workplaces are safe for all and can also be responsive to the unique needs of survivors.

Full Report

The Hotline and FUTURES' Workplace Focus Survey is a national survey released in early 2025 and available to survivors via the internet across the United States to capture the impact of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking on victims' and survivors' work experiences and efforts by employers to address those impacts.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Many victims and survivors who completed the survey were working when they experienced domestic violence:

56%

reported they were working when they experienced domestic violence

20%

reported they were working when they experienced dating violence

22%

reported they were working when they experienced sexual assault

23%

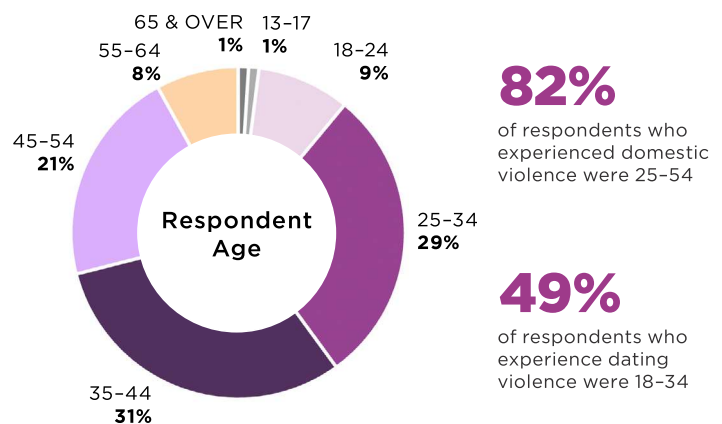
reported they were working when they experienced stalking

**Respondents were able to choose more than one type of victimization.*

91%

identified as a survivor of **domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence or stalking**.

**Respondents who did not identify as having experienced domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, or stalking did not continue with the survey.*



On average, respondents reported experiencing **nearly 2 (1.9) types of violence**.

Survey respondents lived in all 50 U.S. states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. territories of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

**Respondents were asked to answer the survey questions based on their current or most recent employment experience.*

IMPACTS ON SURVIVORS ACROSS DIFFERENT WORK CONTEXTS

DID DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, SEXUAL ASSAULT, DATING VIOLENCE, AND STALKING MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR A VICTIM/SURVIVOR TO WORK?

YES

79%
Domestic
Violence

25%
Dating
Violence

27%
Sexual Assault

35%
Stalking

EXAMPLES OF HOW SURVIVORS DESCRIBED THE EFFECTS, NOT ONLY WHEN THE ABUSE TOOK PLACE, BUT EVEN AFTER THE ABUSE STOPPED:

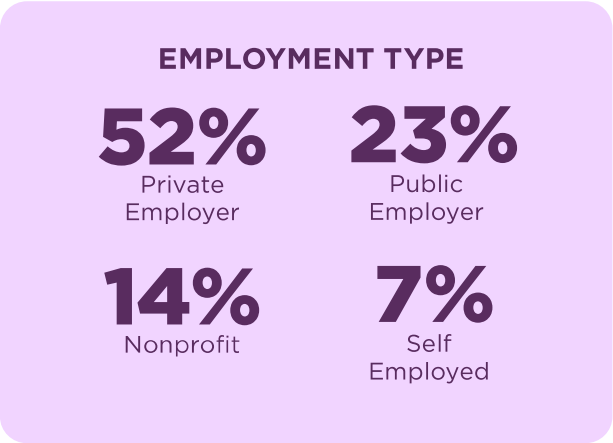


“Not only is it harder to focus on the work at hand when you fear for your safety or are feeling particularly emotional, there’s also the jealousy and accusations from the time you’re at work and away from your partner. There’s no missing a text because you were focused or in a meeting — at least my abuser didn’t take that as an excuse.”

“After a violent incident I would have to take the day off of work to recover. And then once I got out of the relationship I struggled strongly with severe PTSD for three more years, causing me to miss more work days, have panic attacks in [the] office, and struggle with interacting with coworkers.”

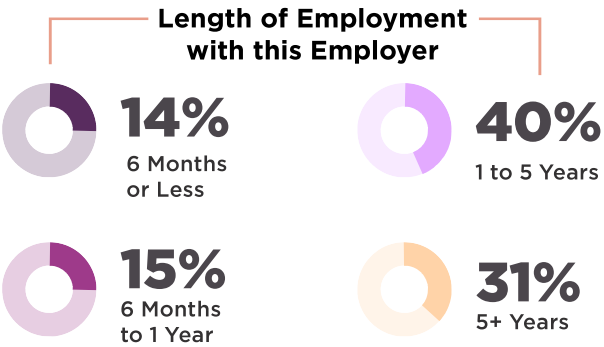
“After each incident, I would end up being late for work or take the whole day off if I had bruises that I couldn’t hide.”

The majority of respondents who completed the survey indicated that they were full-time employees working for private employers. Respondents were more likely to work at either small employers (fewer than 49 employees) or large employers (250 employees or more).



What is your Employment Industry?

Agriculture, Forestry, Fish	1%
Arts & Entertainment	2%
Construction	2%
Domestic Worker	1%
Educational Services	10%
Finance & Insurance	4%
Food Services & Restaurant	9%
Government & Public Sector	7%
Health Care	18%
Hospitality	3%
Legal Services	2%
Manufacturing	3%
Media & Journalism	1%
Other Services	13%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	1%
Retail and Sales	9%
Social Services	9%
Technology and Information Sciences	3%
Transportation and Warehousing	3%



WORKPLACE POLICIES & EMPLOYER RESPONSE TO DISCLOSURE

More than half of the respondents, 53%, did not tell their employer they were experiencing domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault or stalking.

47% OF RESPONDENTS DID TELL THEIR EMPLOYER THEY WERE EXPERIENCING INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE:



The experience of respondents looked different depending on whether they were navigating domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault or stalking at work, with victims and survivors of sexual assault experiencing some of the most negative ramifications of disclosing their abuse at work.

Survivors were asked if their employers provided them with any support related to the impacts of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and/or stalking on their ability to work.

OF THE SURVIVORS WHO RESPONDED THAT THEY RECEIVED SUPPORT FROM THEIR EMPLOYER, THE SUPPORT MOST FREQUENTLY PROVIDED WAS CONFIDENTIALITY REGARDING THEIR DISCLOSURES OF THEIR STATUS AS SURVIVORS:



Survivors of sexual assault were least likely to report feeling supported by their employer. More than half of sexual assault victims reported their employer did not provide them with any support related to the abuse.

Survivors of domestic violence were most likely to report receiving some form of support from their employer. Use of leave time to address the impacts of the abuse was the least supported area. Emotional validation and planning support varied by abuse type, with 40% of domestic violence and dating violence respondents indicating they felt cared for and understood when disclosing.

Employer Action	Domestic Violence	Dating Violence	Sexual Assault	Stalking
My employer/job did not help me	30%	30%	52%	38%
Actively listened and did things to help me	30%	28%	23%	22%
Gave me accommodations	32%	19%	16%	19%
Protected my confidentiality and privacy	43%	47%	26%	36%
Made a safety plan	19%	13%	12%	26%
Made me feel cared for and understood	40%	38%	20%	30%
Told me ways to get help	30%	21%	16%	18%
Let me use paid sick time	17%	2%	8%	7%
Let me use paid vacation time	19%	4%	6%	7%
None of the above	8%	9%	12%	12%

WAYS IN WHICH EMPLOYERS SUPPORT SURVIVORS



“Offered understanding and support and guidance for resources for mental health care and job security options FMLA.”

“They gave me the security of still having my job once I got better mentally.”

“Allowed me unpaid time off work to go to appointments, gave me adequate earlier off time adjustment of 45 mins earlier to be home when my kids got out of school/allowed longer breaks once a week so I could attend 1-hour weekly telehealth therapy during the day without my kids being there.”

WAYS EMPLOYERS COULD HAVE PROVIDED TANGIBLE SUPPORT TO ADDRESS THEIR NEED FOR LEAVE, WHILE PROTECTING THEIR EMPLOYMENT



“Paid leave would have been a godsend. I could not fathom making an escape without it. It was impossible.”

“A domestic violence policy that protects survivors and offers protection from being terminated or rated poorly in performance while leaving or recovering.”

“Being aware and educated on how we can be safe and secure and now steps to take if anyone tries to hurt you.”

SOME SURVIVORS OF EACH OF THE CRIMES — DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, DATING VIOLENCE, SEXUAL ASSAULT, STALKING — EXPERIENCED DISCRIMINATION OR HARASSMENT AT WORK BECAUSE OF THEIR STATUS AS VICTIMS.

50% of sexual assault survivors reported experiencing harassment or discrimination based on their status as a survivor of sexual assault

37% of domestic violence victims and survivors said their employer did not respond negatively when told about the abuse

32% of stalking victims and survivors indicated their employer created an unsafe work environment

23% of domestic violence victims and survivors experienced harassment, discrimination, or unsafe environments

Survivors also reported being **fired from work** because of threats from their abuser, for attending legal proceedings, and for taking time off to heal.

Employer Action	Domestic Violence	Dating Violence	Sexual Assault	Stalking
Employer did not respond negatively	37%	34%	16%	28%
Created unsafe work environment	22%	17%	44%	32%
Denied a promotion or opportunity	15%	21%	24%	19%
Fired due to threat from person who hurt	6%	9%	13%	13%
Fired for attending legal proceedings	7%	2%	13%	1%
Fired for taking time off to get better	12%	11%	13%	8%
Given fewer hours or responsibilities	17%	11%	26%	13%
Harassment or discrimination	23%	23%	51%	26%



FIRED FOR TAKING TIME OFF TO GET BETTER

“I was terminated when I asked for time off due to health concerns from the stress from it {the abusive experience}.”

CREATED UNSAFE WORK ENVIRONMENT

“I wish they could have defended me and stood up for my job. I simply had to move away and find a different job with no other one lined up. I wish they could have let me explain my situation or offered better resources to help me in that time.”

GIVEN FEWER HOURS OR RESPONSIBILITIES

“Anxiety over watching around me while walking to and from the car at the workplace parking. Had to miss many days of work. I was treated different after I informed management about my situation. My hours were reduced, they expressed the concern about the workplace and coworkers, assuming I was putting them in danger. Eventually I was let go.”

“My restraining order was violated at work. The defendant was hired at my job despite my order being on file in the workplace.”

DENIED A PROMOTION OR OPPORTUNITY

“My manager, who knew I was being abused at home and trying to escape, put me on a performance improvement plan (PIP) instead of trying to help.”

Across racial groups, about a quarter of respondents said their employer created a work environment that felt unsafe or uncaring, leading them to resign or quit.

Latina workers reported the highest rates of career retaliation: 23% reported being denied a promotion due to impacts of abuse compared with 17% overall. They also reported higher rates of being fired for taking off to heal and higher rates of being fired for attending legal proceedings.



Black workers reported the highest rate of harassment or discrimination in the workplace: 30% of Black respondents said they experienced harassment or were treated badly based on being a victim of abuse – the highest of the groups.

Employer Action	White	Black	Latino	Total/All
Employer did not respond negatively	35%	30%	35%	34%
Created unsafe work environment	26%	21%	26%	26%
Denied a promotion or opportunity	7%	14%	23%	17%
Fired due to threat from person who hurt	7%	13%	12%	8%
Fired for attending legal proceedings	6%	6%	9%	6%
Fired for taking time off to get better	10%	9%	14%	10%
Given fewer hours or responsibilities	18%	14%	16%	16%
Harassment or discrimination	24%	30%	27%	25%
None of the above	18%	20%	21%	19%

AVAILABILITY AND IMPACT OF WORKPLACE TRAINING AND EDUCATION

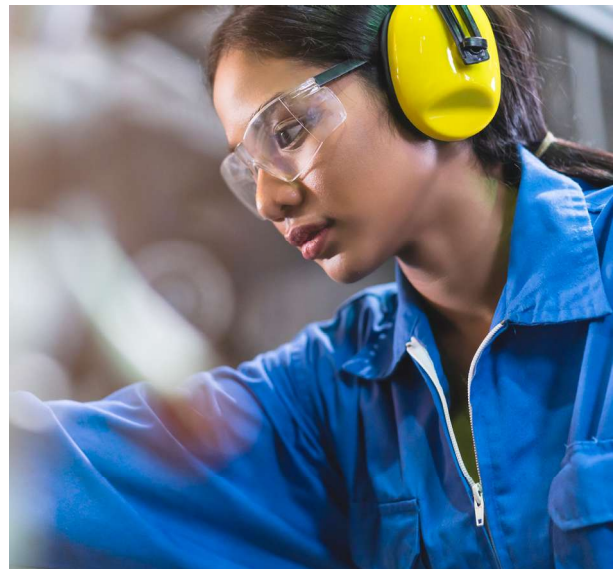
A high percentage (41%) of survivors indicated that they do not know if their employer has rules about revealing whether they see or know about domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault or stalking in the workplace.

DOES YOUR JOB HAVE RULES ABOUT HOW TO TELL SOMEONE IF YOU SEE INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE OR KNOW A COLLEAGUE IS EXPERIENCING IT OUTSIDE OF WORK?



57% said their workplace **does not** provide materials (brochures, posters, bulletins, newsletters, memos, guidelines or educational resources)

60% said their employer **does not** provide training on the prevention and response to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and/or stalking



WORKPLACE TRAINING & DISCLOSURE TO EMPLOYER

Survivors who indicated that their employers provided workplace training on domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and/or stalking were more likely to disclose that they were experiencing abuse.

AMONG RESPONDENTS

56%

with such training
disclosed their experience
to their employer

47%

without such training
disclosed their experience
to their employer

21%

did not know if
training was provided

By abuse type, survivors of **dating violence** reported the highest disclosure rate, with **32%** telling their employer. Disclosure was lower among survivors of **sexual assault (25%)** and lowest among survivors of **domestic violence (22%)** and **stalking (21%)**, regardless of whether their workplace offered training on these issues.

WORKPLACE TRAINING & DISCLOSURE TO EMPLOYER

Respondents whose employers **provide workplace trainings** on the consequences of these crimes/types of abuse were far **more likely to report** that their employer has processes and procedures for reporting.



OF RESPONDENTS WITHOUT TRAINING

56%

reported their workplace has no rules at all

Fewer than 1 in 3

reported they were aware of employers' disclosure rules for any violence category

KNOWLEDGE OF EMPLOYMENT PROTECTIONS AND THE AVAILABILITY OF WORKPLACE PAID LEAVE PROVISIONS

OF SURVIVORS WHO RESPONDED TO THIS SURVEY

71% **did not know if their city, county, state or territory has employment laws** that protect employees who are victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and/or stalking.

50% **did not know if their work provided paid leave** to address the impact of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault or stalking.

43% said their **employer does not** provide such leave.

SURVIVOR NEEDS ADDRESSED BY PAID LEAVE

The survey asked respondents to indicate what they used (or would have used) paid leave from work to address the impacts of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and/or stalking.

Paid leave is a critical need survivors identified in their responses to the survey:

65%
reported they needed paid time off from work to get better emotionally or mentally

60%
reported they needed time for mental health counseling

44%
reported they needed time to find a new place to live

Use of Paid Leave	Percentage
Get better emotionally or physically	65%
Get mental health counseling	60%
Get help from a program	46%
Find a new place to live	44%
Relocate or move	44%
Get help from a lawyer or advocate	42%
Take care of banking, financial, or other logistics	38%
Get a protection order	36%
Get my personal things from home	34%
Go to court proceedings	32%
Taking care of my kids	24%
Something else	14%
Finding someone to watch my kids	10%
Taking care of other dependents	6%

Conclusion

This national survey of over 2,000 survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and/or stalking demonstrates that survivors of these crimes work, and the majority of them are employed while they are experiencing abuse.

Unfortunately, the abuse often undermined their ability to work and shaped whether — and how — they disclosed to their employer. Among those who disclosed, many reported being harassed, discriminated against, or fired at a time when economic security was most critical. Importantly, there are state and local laws providing paid leave from work, prohibiting discrimination and harassment, and requiring employers to provide workplace accommodations to increase the safety of survivors and the workplace.⁴ However, most survivors indicated that they do not know about these laws and thus are not able to utilize them as intended to maintain employment and stay safe.

More than half of survivors opt to stay silent about their experiences; this reflects the unfortunate reality that most survivors do not feel safe to disclose their abuse at their workplaces, and the decision to disclose to an employer carries significant risk. Disclosure rates for respondents varied depending on whether they were experiencing domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault or stalking while employed. Employer responses to survivors also showed great variance depending on the type of violence the survivor experienced. Survivors of domestic violence were most likely to report receiving some form of support from their employer, while sexual assault survivors faced the most severe negative consequences after disclosure, with over half reporting harassment, discrimination, and/or poor treatment based on their survivor status. Overall, employer response was characterized by inaction; when survivors disclosed, approximately one-third reported that their employers provided no help at all, while about 1 in 4 report that their employers created work environments that feel unsafe or uncaring, leading them to resign or quit their jobs.

The majority of survivors also faced significant information gaps that compound their challenges in accessing available workplace supports and protections. Most survivors surveyed did not know whether their jurisdiction had employment laws protecting them, and they were unaware of whether their employer provided paid leave to address needs related to experiencing abuse/violence. These employment protections are critical; when survivors did have access to paid leave, they used it to address a wide range of safety and recovery needs.

The most common needs cited by survivors in the survey include using paid leave for emotional and mental recovery, mental health counseling, and finding new

⁴ Advancing Safety through Employment Rights. Available at: <https://workplacesrespond.org/employment-rights/>

housing. Survivors also use time for medical care, legal assistance, attending court proceedings, and other safety-related activities that are essential for breaking free from violence and rebuilding their lives. The responses highlight the need for leave policies that recognize the long-term and unpredictable nature of recovery from violence. Survivors needed flexibility to address immediate safety as well as ongoing healing and legal processes that could extend over months or years.

Most respondents reported that their workplace either had no processes or procedures for reporting violence or that they were unaware of existing rules. This uncertainty creates additional barriers for survivors who might otherwise seek help from their employers. Survivors also noted the challenges of working in the same organization as their abusers or having perpetrators (those who cause harm) in positions of authority over them. When perpetrators were co-workers or had connections to the workplace, many survivors felt that workplaces prioritized avoiding conflict over protecting their safety, allowing perpetrators to continue their abuse without consequences. These situations made seeking workplace support very difficult and often forced survivors to leave their jobs entirely.

Many survivors emphasized that stress from having to navigate the physical, emotional and economic effects of abuse negatively affected their work performance and resulted in lasting impacts on their careers and workplace interactions. Many described feeling ashamed or stigmatized due to their experiences, making the decision to open up fraught even in potentially supportive environments. Despite these conflicted feelings, survivors still placed enormous value on having supervisors and co-workers who would believe them, maintain confidentiality, and provide emotional support. Many emphasized that being believed was fundamental to feeling safe enough to share their experiences as workers and survivors of violence.

A respondent said, **“I would want HR to have policies to protect us.”**

The good news is that survivors report that employers are increasingly providing workplace education and training on the impact of these crimes/types of abuse on employees, and integrating these issues into their workplace policies, including their leave from work policies. When employers conduct education and awareness training on domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking and their effects on the workplace, survivors are more likely to disclose their experiences, enabling employers to provide support. Importantly, survivors indicated that when they received support from their employers, including confidential reporting and access to paid leave from work, they were able to maintain their jobs and access the services they needed to address the abuse and become safer. Simply put, when employers incorporate information into their workplace policies and training about the impact of these crimes on employees and the state and local laws that provide them protections, their employees feel more comfortable disclosing to their employer, are able to obtain the assistance they need, and keep their employment.

When the government, employers and advocates work together, survivors can access necessary services without fear of job loss, enabling them to achieve safety for themselves, their children, their workplaces and their communities.

Recommendations

Survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking face significant barriers to maintaining employment, yet steady work is often essential to safety and stability. The survey findings make clear that most workplaces remain unprepared to respond: Few offer training, many lack clear reporting procedures, and survivors often do not know whether protections such as paid leave are even available to them. Addressing this disconnect requires a shift in how employers, policymakers and advocates view the role of work in a survivor's path toward security.

INVEST IN TRAINING AND EDUCATION

A first step is to invest in training and education that move beyond awareness toward culture change. Survivors consistently report that harmful misconceptions — such as the idea that violence is a personal problem or that disclosure will be met with skepticism — prevent them from seeking help at work. When workplaces provide trauma-informed training for all employees, including managers and human resources staff, survivors are more likely to disclose, colleagues are better equipped to act as bystanders, and harmful biases are directly challenged. These trainings, especially when delivered in partnership with survivor-centered organizations, can normalize conversations about violence, foster accountability, and create a safer culture overall. Policymakers have an important role to play here by mandating ongoing education and ensuring that standards for workplace training reflect survivor needs.

ADOPT SURVIVOR-CENTERED POLICIES

Equally important is the adoption of clear, survivor-centered workplace policies. Survivors should have multiple, confidential ways to disclose violence — whether through a supervisor, human resources, or anonymous systems — and must be protected from retaliation when they come forward. Policies should also address how harm-doers in the workplace are investigated and held accountable, including explicit prohibitions on using workplace resources to inflict harm. Developing and communicating these policies in employee manuals, with input from staff representatives, ensures that employees know what supports exist and how to access them.

SOLIDIFY EMPLOYMENT PROTECTIONS

Alongside training and policy reforms, survivors need concrete employment protections such as paid leave, flexible accommodations, and reasonable

adjustments to schedules or assignments. Violence is destabilizing, and the ability to take time off for court proceedings, medical care or safety planning without losing income is essential. Federal, state and local governments should explicitly include survivors in leave and accommodation laws, while employers should advance policies that go beyond legal minimums. Enforcement agencies can strengthen these protections by publishing regular reports on leave usage and requiring workplaces to post clear notices of employee rights. Incentives for employers who adopt robust protections can further encourage widespread adoption.

BENEFITS TAILORED TO SURVIVOR NEEDS

Employers should also recognize that legal compliance is a floor, not a ceiling. Workplaces that proactively develop benefits tailored to survivor needs — such as health insurance plans that include domestic violence services, employee assistance programs with trauma-informed counseling, or emergency funds for immediate safety needs — send a powerful message that employee well-being is valued. These measures can be lifesaving for survivors while also improving retention and morale across the workforce.

PARTNER WITH SURVIVOR-CENTERED SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS

Finally, the responsibility for supporting survivors cannot fall on employers alone. Stronger partnerships between workplaces and survivor-serving and survivor-centered organizations are essential to ensure that employees receive comprehensive support. Domestic violence and sexual assault programs can integrate employment questions into intake and counseling processes, and funders can require grantees to adopt survivor-centered workplace policies and trainings. By investing in workforce development programs tailored to survivors, advocates and funders alike can help create employment pathways that are responsive to the realities of violence.

Workplaces that invest in survivor-centered policies, training and support not only help retain employees but also play a profound role in interrupting cycles of violence. When survivors feel safe disclosing their experiences and can access leave or support through their employer, they are better positioned to maintain employment, obtain security, and regain autonomy.



ABOUT

The National Domestic Violence Hotline

The National Domestic Violence Hotline (The Hotline) is the only national 24/7 hotline providing compassionate support, life-saving resources and personalized safety planning via phone, online chat and text to anyone impacted by domestic violence.

To date, The Hotline has answered more than 7.5 million calls, chats and texts from people affected by relationship abuse in the United States. The Hotline is a front-line resource for survivors, often the first source to validate that abuse is being experienced, and a trusted provider of resources, referrals and safety planning. Central to The Hotline is our highly trained advocate staff members, who provide high-quality, trauma-informed education, validation and connection to services that empower survivors to make life-changing decisions with dignity and respect. Our services are free and confidential.

To respond to the unique needs of teens and young adults, The Hotline launched the National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline and **love is respect**, a national resource to disrupt and prevent unhealthy relationships and dating abuse by empowering young people through inclusive and equitable education, 24/7 free and confidential services, and resources to young people between the ages of 13 and 26.



7.5 million+ calls, chats and texts from people affected by relationship abuse answered



Free and confidential services 24/7

As the nation's largest direct-service provider to those impacted by domestic violence, The Hotline is one of the leading collectors of real-life survivor experiences, data and trends. We advocate for survivor-centered policies and legislation using knowledge and data informed by speaking with hundreds of thousands of survivors each year. In coalition with other leaders in the field, we ensure that survivors are represented when policymakers discuss matters that affect their safety and support.

To learn more about the organization and services, visit **thehotline.org**





ABOUT

Futures Without Violence

For almost 40 years, [Futures Without Violence](#) has been providing groundbreaking programs, policies and campaigns that empower individuals and organizations working to end violence against women and children around the world. Providing leadership from offices in San Francisco, Washington, D.C., and Boston, it trains employers on improving responses to violence and abuse through its National Resource Center [Workplaces Respond](#), a public-private partnership led by Futures Without Violence and funded by the U.S. Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women (OVW).

Since it was first funded in 2009, the Workplace Resource Center has assisted nearly 30,000 people and over 500 workplaces, and it has invested more than 1,000 technical assistance hours to support violence prevention and response efforts. Workplaces Respond educates and equips employers, workers, unions and anti-violence advocates with the knowledge, tools and best practices necessary to prevent and respond to the effects of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking and sexual harassment (DVSASSH) in the world of work. Employers, workers and advocates can access information, resources, training and technical assistance at [Workplaces Respond](#) to

support employees who experience violence and harassment and implement proven strategies to promote safer and more supportive workplaces for all employees.

Everyone has a role to play in creating safer workplaces. For more tailored support and assistance with developing comprehensive workplace policies or implementing the recommendations outlined in this report, please submit a request to the team through the [submission form](#).

