

Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence

National Benchmark Telephone Survey on Domestic Violence in the Workplace

In honor of Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence's (CAEPV) 10th anniversary, we conducted a first-ever national benchmarking telephone survey to discover what the general adult employee population believes about domestic violence as a workplace issue – and how they have been impacted.

Among the major findings:

- 44% of employed adults surveyed personally experienced domestic violence's effect in their workplaces
- 21% of respondents (men and women) identified themselves as victims of intimate partner violence
- 64% of victims of domestic violence indicated that their ability to work was affected by the violence
- 33% of victims reported their employer provides no programs or support
- 66% of those surveyed indicated they were not aware of their employer having a workplace domestic violence policy
- 61% of those surveyed believe their employer's "performance and reputation" would "improve if it did a better job addressing the impact of domestic violence, such as through a workplace program"

The Survey Findings

A National Issue

The study found that intimate partner violence has a wide and far-reaching effect on American's working lives – whether in terms of economic productivity, personal safety, office culture or other issues.

A full 53% of respondents are "very aware" to "somewhat aware" of domestic violence as a workplace issue, and 43% rated "Domestic Violence's impact on the workplace" as "very important" – placing it among other major issues with the potential to disrupt our working lives such as "Terrorism" (44%), "Job Insecurity" (41%) and "Employee Theft" (40%). Only "Benefits such as health care or retirement" rated significantly higher (63%).

Significant Impact

Specifically, a majority or more of respondents noted that domestic violence had the following significant impact on victims:

- 71% believe victims lived in “fear of discovery.”
- 67% said victims needed “to seek out co-workers for additional help.”
- 65% noted that the “intimate partner harassed their co-worker at work (by phone or in person).”
- 63% believe victims suffered from an “inability to complete assignments on time.”
- 59% found victims lived in “fear of their intimate partner’s unexpected visits.”

Covering for Victims

Moreover, 31% of respondents felt “strongly” to “somewhat obliged” to cover for a victim of domestic violence by performing his or her work or offering excuses for his or her absence. Additional reported impact included:

- 27% reported “extremely frequently” to “somewhat frequently” having to “do the victim’s work for them.”
- 25% resented co-workers from “great” to “some extent” because of the effect of their situation “on the workplace.”

Workplace Safety

In addition, 38% of respondents were “extremely” to “somewhat concerned” for their own safety when they “found out a co-worker was a victim.” Thirty-two percent believe the co-worker victim feared “for his/her safety” – perhaps because 30% reported that the abuser frequently visited the office.

- 19% said it took “over a year” for the problem to be resolved.
- 23% said “several months.”

Victims Perspective

The domestic violence victims surveyed confirmed non-victims’ impressions – as a full 64% of victims reported their ability to work “significantly” (38%) to “somewhat” (26%) affected.

Among key causes for their decline in productivity, victims noted “distraction” (57%); “fear of discovery” (45%); “harassment by intimate partner at work (either by phone or in person)” (40%); “fear of intimate partner’s unexpected visits” (34%); “inability to complete assignments on time” (24%); and “job loss” (21%).

First-Hand Knowledge

Fifty-seven percent of respondents know someone who has been affected by domestic violence, and 44% have personally experienced domestic violence’s impact on the workplace, most frequently because a co-worker was a victim (45%) – a response that was consistent across educational levels, from a high school degree or less (43%) to some college (44%) to college graduates and beyond (48%).

Employer Support

In victims’ experience, employers provided relatively limited support – with 31% reporting that their employers offered “no programs, support or help.” However, victims did point to receiving the following help:

- 23% “Access to counseling and assistance”
- 18% “Information and referral to domestic violence programs”
- 12% “Contacting authorities”
- 12% “Providing security”
- 8% “Providing flexible leave time and other benefits”

Accessing Support

Only 46% of victims were “easily able to access” available programs or “seek assistance” and 42% were not able to do so. While just 26% found programs or resources “extremely helpful.” The reason victims found “it difficult to access” help included the following:

- 25% “Confidentiality”
- 16% “Concern seeking help would jeopardize job/career advancement”
- 13% “Lack of information”
- 6% “No clear contact person”

One-Third Awareness Policies

Slightly more than one-third of all respondents (34%) were aware of their employers’

domestic violence policies, and among this “aware” group, 49% believe their employer’s program is “very effective.” Program elements mentioned included: providing flexible leave time or other benefits, providing security, contacting authorities, changing hours or work locations and providing access to legal support. Two-thirds (66%) were unaware or did not know if their employer has a domestic violence policy or program in place.

Coming Forward — A Hypothetical

A full 75% of non-victim respondents believe their current employer would be “very supportive” to “somewhat supportive” if they came forward as a victim today. Yet 16% would “not come forward as a victim,” 32% would be “nervous” and 14% would be concerned. Only 26% would be “relieved.”

Moreover, if a respondent were to identify a potential victim at the workplace, his or her response would most likely be personal rather than through professional channels. Specifically, 68% would “reach out to a potential victim” – while only 30% would “report concerns to a supervisor”; 26% would “call the National Domestic Violence Hotline” and 26% would “contact human resources or personnel.”

Raising Awareness, Expanding Policies

Respondents pointed to the following information and services that “would have been helpful”:

- “Comprehensive domestic violence awareness program” (48%)
- “24 hour hotline to report domestic violence and other problems” (45%)
- “Training on domestic violence” (43%)
- “Payroll staffers to raise awareness/promote access” (40%)

Strengthening Reputation

Sixty-one percent believe their employer’s “performance and reputation” would “improve if it did a better job addressing the impact of domestic violence, such as through a workplace program.” Responses were consistent across ethnicity and income, although the study found somewhat higher support among lower educational levels: 72% “High School or less”; 62% “Some college”; 53% “College grad and beyond.”

The Hotline

At the end of the survey, when queried, nearly one-third (32%) of all respondents asked for the “National Domestic Violence Hotline” number. Responses were consistent across

education, income and marital status.

About the Survey

Group SJR, a national survey research and communications firm with offices in New York and Los Angeles, fielded the study from July 15th to September 15th, 2005. The 1,200 person national telephone survey has a margin of error of +/- 3 percent.

The Study's Definition of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is the use of physical, sexual or emotional abuse or threats to control another person who is a current or former husband, wife or other intimate partner such as a boyfriend or girlfriend.

About the Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence

The Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence is a leading force in the fight against intimate partner violence and its effects on the workplace. It is the only national nonprofit organization in the U.S. founded by business leaders and focused on domestic violence and its impact on the workplace. Since 1995, CAEPV has brought together dozens of progressive companies who exchange information, collaborate on projects, and use their influence to instigate change. CAEPV offers extensive research, policy knowledge and issue expertise to the business community, including training, program guidance, and crisis consultation – with programs designed to make the workplace safe and to prevent intimate partner violence from impacting the workplace.

CAEPV has member and associate organizations reaching over one million employees across the U.S. Corporate members include Altria Group, Inc., American Express, ADM, The Avon Foundation, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois, Blue Shield of California Foundation, CIGNA, Eastman Kodak, Enterprise Rent-A-Car, Legal Momentum, Lifetime Television, Liz Claiborne Inc., Mary Kay Inc., Northern Trust, RAND, State Farm Insurance Companies, Verizon Communications, Verizon Wireless, and The Wireless Foundation. Internationally, the Corporate Alliance Against Domestic Violence UK, the United Nations Population Fund/Turkey and the Office of the Status of Women, Commonwealth of Australia are CAEPV member organizations.