

THE IMPACT OF INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE ON THE WORKPLACE

Domestic violence, dating violence, sexual violence and stalking are widespread in the United States, affecting individuals of virtually every racial, ethnic, gender, age and socioeconomic group.¹ Studies indicate that one of the best predictors of whether a victim will separate from their abuser is the victim's degree of economic independence. However, the violence often jeopardizes a victim's ability to keep a job, whether because of the need for time off for court appearances or medical attention, or abusers' active interference or sabotage, including preventing victims from going to work, harassment at work, limiting access to cash and transportation, and sabotaging child-care arrangements. Accordingly, female victims are more likely than other women to be unemployed, to suffer from health problems that can affect employability and job performance, to report lower personal income, and to rely on welfare.²

Who Are the Victims of Interpersonal Violence?

Women: Although domestic violence, dating violence, sexual violence and stalking can affect everyone, women are disproportionately the victims.

- **Domestic and Dating Violence:** A recent Department of Justice study reports that 85% of victims of domestic violence are female and 15% are male.³ One in every four women will experience domestic or dating violence in her lifetime.⁴ The Centers for Disease Control recently reported that 23.6% of women and 11.5% of men surveyed reported at least one lifetime episode of intimate partner violence.⁵
- **Stalking:** One in twelve women has been stalked in her lifetime.⁶ The overwhelming majority of victims are women (78 percent), and the majority of offenders (87 percent) are men.⁷ According to the Department of Justice, nearly three out of four stalking victims knew his or her offender in some capacity and 21.5% of stalking victims identified their stalker as a former intimate.⁸
- **Rape and Sexual Assault:** 17.7 million American women have been victims of attempted or completed rape.⁹ A recent Department of Justice study found that 63% of the rapes/sexual assaults experienced by female victims were committed by non-strangers such as intimate partners, friends, and family members.¹⁰ Rape exacts the cost costs per crime victim of any criminal offense: \$127 billion per year.¹¹
- **Violent Crime:** 23% of female victims of violent crime were victimized by an intimate partner.¹²
- **Murder:** Nearly one in three female murder victims was killed by an intimate partner.¹³

Low-Income Women: Violence against women occurs more frequently in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods, and women in these areas are twice as likely to be victims of domestic violence and three times more likely to be victims of severe violence than women experiencing violence in more financially secure neighborhoods.¹⁴

How Does Interpersonal Violence Affect the Workplace?

Victims

- **Missed Work:** Victims of domestic violence frequently miss work due to injuries, court dates, and safety concerns requiring legal protections. Victims of intimate partner violence lose 8 million days of work each year, the equivalent of 32,000 full-time jobs and over 5 and half million days of household productivity.¹⁵
- **Lost Jobs:** Almost 50% of sexual assault survivors surveyed lost their jobs or were forced to quit in the aftermath of the assaults.¹⁶ In 2007, between 15.2% and 27.6% of women surveyed lost a job because of abuse.¹⁷ In 2009, the Department of Justice study found that of the 79% of stalking victims who had a job, one in eight lost time from work. More than half the victims surveyed lost five or more days from work.¹⁸
- **Discrimination:** Domestic and sexual violence victims are often subjected to employment discrimination by coworkers and employers, including harassment, denial of promotions and firing.
- **Harassment:** A recent study found that between 56 and 88 percent of surveyed women experienced on-the-job harassment, including stalking, by their abusive partner.¹⁹
- **Medical Costs:** A study in Seattle found that annual health-care costs were significantly higher for the women who were victims of domestic violence, averaging more than \$5,000 per year.²⁰ The total lifetime cost of injuries due to interpersonal violence occurring in 2000 was approximately \$37 billion—\$4 billion for medical treatment and \$33 billion for lost productivity.²¹

Perpetrators

- **Lack of Concentration:** Recent studies show that between 48% and 57% of abusers surveyed reported having difficulty concentrating at work.²²
- **Missed Work:** Between 42% and 51.8% of perpetrators of domestic violence surveyed were either late or missed work entirely because of their abusive behavior.²³
- **Use of Company Resources:** A study by the Maine Department of Labor found that more than three-quarters of perpetrators used workplace resources at least once to express remorse or anger, check up on, pressure, or threaten the victim.²⁴

Employers

- **Decreased Productivity:** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that the annual cost of lost productivity due to domestic violence equals \$727.8 million.²⁵ Sixty-one percent of recently surveyed senior executives stated that domestic violence has a harmful effect on their company's productivity and 70% said domestic violence negatively affects employee attendance.²⁶
- **Security Concerns:** 94% of corporate security and safety directors at companies nationwide rank domestic violence as a high security concern.²⁷
- **Medical Costs:** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that the costs of direct medical and mental health care services related to intimate partner violence total nearly \$4.1 billion a year.²⁸

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- ⁵ Ctr. for Disease Control and Prevention, *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, February 8, 2008.
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- ⁷ Patricia Tjaden & Nancy Thoennes, Nat'l Institute of Justice, *Stalking in America* (1998).
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- ⁹ National Institute of Justice & Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, *Prevalence, Incidence and Consequences of Violence Against Women Survey* (1998).
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- ¹¹ Nat'l Institute of Justice, *Extent and Costs of Crime Victimization: A New Look* (1996).
- ¹² U.S. Dep't of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Criminal Victimization, 2008* (2009).
- ¹³ Fed. Bureau of Investigation, *Uniform Crime Reports: Crime in the United States, 2000* (2001) (Almost 1/3 of female homicide victims (in reported police records) are killed by an intimate partner).
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- ¹⁷ T.K. Logan *et al.*, *Partner Stalking and Implications for Women's Employment*, J. INTERPERS. VIOLENCE 22(3): 268-291 (2007).
- ¹⁸ Katrina Baum, U.S. Dep't of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Stalking Victimization in the United States* (2009).
- ¹⁹ TK Logan, *et al.* *Partner Stalking and Implications for Women's Employment*. J. INTERPERS. VIOLENCE 22(3): 268-291 (2007).
- ²⁰ YC Ulrich, *et al.* *Medical Care Utilization Patterns In Women With Diagnosed Domestic Violence*. AM. J. PREVENTIVE MED. 24(1): 9-15 (2003).
- ²¹ P S Corso, *et al.* *Medical Costs and Productivity Losses Due to Interpersonal and Self-Directed Violence in the United States*, AM. J. PREVENTATIVE MED. 32(6):474-482 (2007).
- ²² Nancy Glass, Johns Hopkins University, *Community Partnered Workplace Response to Domestic Violence*, Sept. 2004 – May 2009 (2009); Ellen Ridley, Maine Dep't of Labor & Family Crisis Services, *Impact of Domestic Offenders on Occupational Safety and Health: A Pilot Study* (2004).
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- ²⁴ Ellen Ridley, Maine Dep't of Labor & Family Crisis Services, *Impact of Domestic Offenders on Occupational Safety and Health: A Pilot Study* (2004).
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