



**Domestic Violence Workplace Rights and Entitlements Project**

# SAFE AT HOME, SAFE AT WORK?

## **National Domestic Violence and the Workplace Survey (2011)**

Ludo McFerran

Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse

A project of the Centre for Gender Related Violence Studies  
and Micromex Research

October 2011

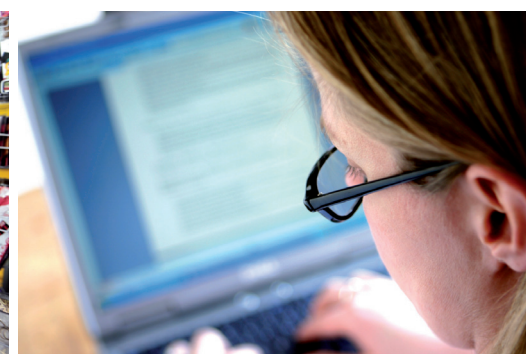


**Australian Government**



**CGRVS**

Centre For Gender Related Violence Studies, UNSW





# Contents

1. Background .....	2
1.1 Definition and incidence of domestic violence .....	2
1.2 The move to implement domestic violence clauses in Australia .....	2
1.3 Workplaces respond to domestic violence .....	3
1.4 Domestic violence workplace rights & entitlements project .....	3
2. Survey .....	4
2.1 Survey design .....	4
2.2 Survey results .....	5
(a). Respondent profile .....	5
(b). Prevalence of domestic violence .....	6
(c). Housing and domestic violence .....	7
(d). Domestic violence affects capacity to get to work .....	8
(e). Impact at work .....	10
(f). Impact of violence at work as reported by co-workers .....	11
(g). Telling someone at work .....	12
(h). Support in the workplace .....	14
(i). Protection orders and police .....	15
3. Conclusion .....	17
4. Key findings .....	18
5. References .....	19

## 1.0 Background

### 1.1 Definition and incidence of domestic violence

Domestic or family violence is an abuse of power by a partner, ex-partner or family member. It takes many forms including intimidation, control, isolation and emotional, physical, sexual, financial or spiritual abuse. Domestic violence can also occur between people in an intimate relationship who do not live together, between people in same-sex relationships, between carers and the person in their care and between people in kinship relationships.

Domestic violence tends to increase over time, becoming more serious and more frequent. Domestic violence harms both the victim, and others including children who witness the abuse. Most forms of domestic violence are a criminal offence. While domestic violence laws and definitions vary across jurisdictions, each state and territory has laws providing for domestic violence protection orders.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Personal Safety Survey 2005* found that 15% of Australian women had experienced physical or sexual violence from a previous partner and 2.1% from a current partner since the age of fifteen. In contrast, 4.9% of Australian men had experienced violence from a previous partner and 0.9% from a current partner since the age of fifteen (ABS 2006 p. 11).

In the Australian component of the International Violence Against Women Survey, over a third of women (34%) who had a current or former intimate partner reported experiencing physical and/or sexual violence since the age of sixteen (Mouzos & Makkai 2004 p.44).

In addition, 37-40% reported experiencing at least one type of controlling behaviour, most commonly name calling, insults, put downs or behaviour that made the woman feel bad (Mouzos & Makkai 2004 p.48).

### 1.2 The move to implement domestic violence clauses in Australia

In 2009, the Australian Domestic & Family Violence Clearinghouse (ADFVC) and the New South Wales Public Service Association (PSA) began discussions regarding the introduction of domestic violence entitlements into industrial instruments. The ADFVC, a project of the UNSW Centre for Gender Related Violence Studies, is a national organisation, providing high quality information about domestic and family violence issues and practice. The primary goal of the ADFVC is to prevent domestic and family violence by supporting specialist and generalist service providers, government agencies, researchers, advocates and activists in their efforts, through the dissemination of information and research, and facilitating dialogue between stakeholders.

In briefing the PSA, the ADFVC cited evidence that being in employment is a key pathway for women to leaving a violent relationship (Patton 2003 p. 71). The financial security that employment affords women can allow them to escape becoming trapped and isolated in violent and abusive relationships, and to maintain, as far as possible, their home and standard of living. Internationally, the ADFVC found that the links between economic independence, being in paid employment and the impact of domestic violence have been steadily developing. The evidence is that women with a history of domestic violence have a more disrupted work history, are consequently on lower personal incomes, have had to change jobs more often and are employed at higher levels in casual and part time work than women with no experience of violence (Family Violence Prevention Fund 1998).

The ADFVC was further concerned by the correlation between domestic violence entering the workplace and an escalation of the violence experienced. In a study of partner stalking (defined as unwanted, repeated attention that is threatening and invokes fear), 95% of women with violent partners who stalked them experienced harassment at their workplace (Logan et al 2007). The Victorian Family *Violence Risk*

*Assessment and Risk Management Framework* identifies stalking as one of the risk factors that can lead to the victim being killed.

According to O'Leary-Kelly et al (2008 p. 6) domestic violence perpetrators target victims at work to increase their control and compromise the victim's economic independence:

*Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is motivated by a desire to control the intimate partner, so perpetrators who extend their abuse to the work setting are increasing the number of domains in which they control their partners. Further, by harassing, stalking, and threatening the target at work, perpetrators may succeed in getting the victim fired and thereby increase the victim's dependence (Farmer & Tiefenthaler, 1997; Gemignani, 2000, Reeves, O'Leary-Kelly, Farmer, Paetzold, & Tiefenthaler, 2001).*

### 1.3 Workplaces respond to domestic violence

The work of organisations such as the American company Liz Claiborne, the U.S. Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence, and the British trade union UNISON, have for the past decade pioneered better workplace policies and practices to reduce the impact of domestic violence on work performance and security.

In the Australian context, Murray and Powell (2008) writing for the ADFVC on domestic violence and the workplace found that a number of initiatives to address the issue of domestic violence and the workplace had been valuable but had relied on the commitment of a senior, influential individual within the organisation. The challenge for the Australian workplace, they concluded, remained to introduce sustainable and widespread change.

As a result of the discussions between the ADFVC and the PSA in 2009, a set of model domestic violence clauses were developed. These were logged by the union as part of bargaining for an enterprise agreement in the university sector in April 2010.

The ADFVC was also meeting with the Victorian Trades Hall Council, and the first Australian family violence clauses were incorporated into the enterprise agreement between the Surf Coast Shire Council and the Australian Services Union Victorian Authorities and Services Branch (September 2010). These provide world's best practice, with up to twenty days extra paid leave for reasons of family violence.

### 1.4 Domestic violence workplace rights & entitlements project

In July 2010 the Centre for Gender Related Violence Studies at the University of New South Wales was funded by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations for an eighteen month project, named 'Domestic Violence Workplace Rights and Entitlements' ('the Project'). The slogan of the Project is 'Safe at Home, Safe at Work', reflecting the goal of reducing the impact on working people experiencing domestic violence by supporting them to stay safely in their jobs and consequently in their homes. The objectives of the Project are to promote the introduction of domestic violence clauses nationally by:

- Briefing a broad range of unions and employers on the issue of domestic violence as a workplace issue, the adoption of domestic violence provisions in enterprise agreements and other workplace instruments.
- Developing with unions and employers a set of model workplace information and training resources for general staff, human resources personnel, union delegates and supervisors.
- Producing model policies and safety plans to assist in the informed introduction of domestic and family violence clauses.
- Surveying union members to provide essential information on the impact of domestic/family violence, and enabling future monitoring of the outcomes of introducing domestic violence clauses and other instruments.

## 2. Survey

### 2.1 Survey design

The Project contracted Micromex Research to implement a research program to better understand the impact of domestic violence on the workplace. Micromex Research and the Project developed the questionnaire.

Respondents were given the opportunity to state whether they had experienced domestic violence in the previous 12 months or more than 12 months ago. If they had not experienced domestic violence they were able to provide information on people they knew who had experienced domestic violence in the workplace. Finally, if they had none of these experiences, respondents could answer two attitudinal questions. Respondents could also provide short comments on some questions.

The projected sample size was 1,000, primarily by an online survey. Respondents were provided with an accompanying letter from the Project assuring them that their participation was voluntary and information would be confidential. Respondents were advised to contact the 1800 RESPECT domestic violence telephone and internet counselling service, should they, as a result of completing the survey, feel the need to talk confidentially about any experience of domestic violence. Ethics approval was granted by the University of New South Wales.

As a national survey, defining domestic violence was problematic. The Australian Law Reform Commission Inquiry into Family Violence and Commonwealth Laws (2010 p. 188) noted that '[t]here is no single nationally or internationally agreed definition of family violence'. For the purposes of defining domestic violence in a domestic violence clause, the Project has recommended that the definition in state or territory legislation in which the clauses will operate is the most appropriate.

Consequently, the Project did not apply one definition for the survey; rather we sought an inclusive self-definition by participants, based on current understandings across Australian communities. This may create limitations to the survey results, as there may be a lack of consistency in respondents' understandings in relation to what constitutes domestic violence.

Organisations that assisted with the distribution of the survey were the Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch), Australian Services Union (Victorian Authorities and Services Branch), National Tertiary Education Union, the NSW Nurses' Association, and the NSW Teachers Federation.

Between February and July 2011, the online survey was emailed to members of the research partnership organisations, requesting their participation in completing the survey. In total, 3,611 completed responses to the survey were received.

A sample size of 3,611 respondents provided a maximum sampling error of approximately +/-1.6% at 95% confidence. At the subset level (by partnership organisation) a maximum sampling error of approximately +/-4.9% at 95% confidence, was achieved.

## 2.2 Survey results

### (a) Respondent profile

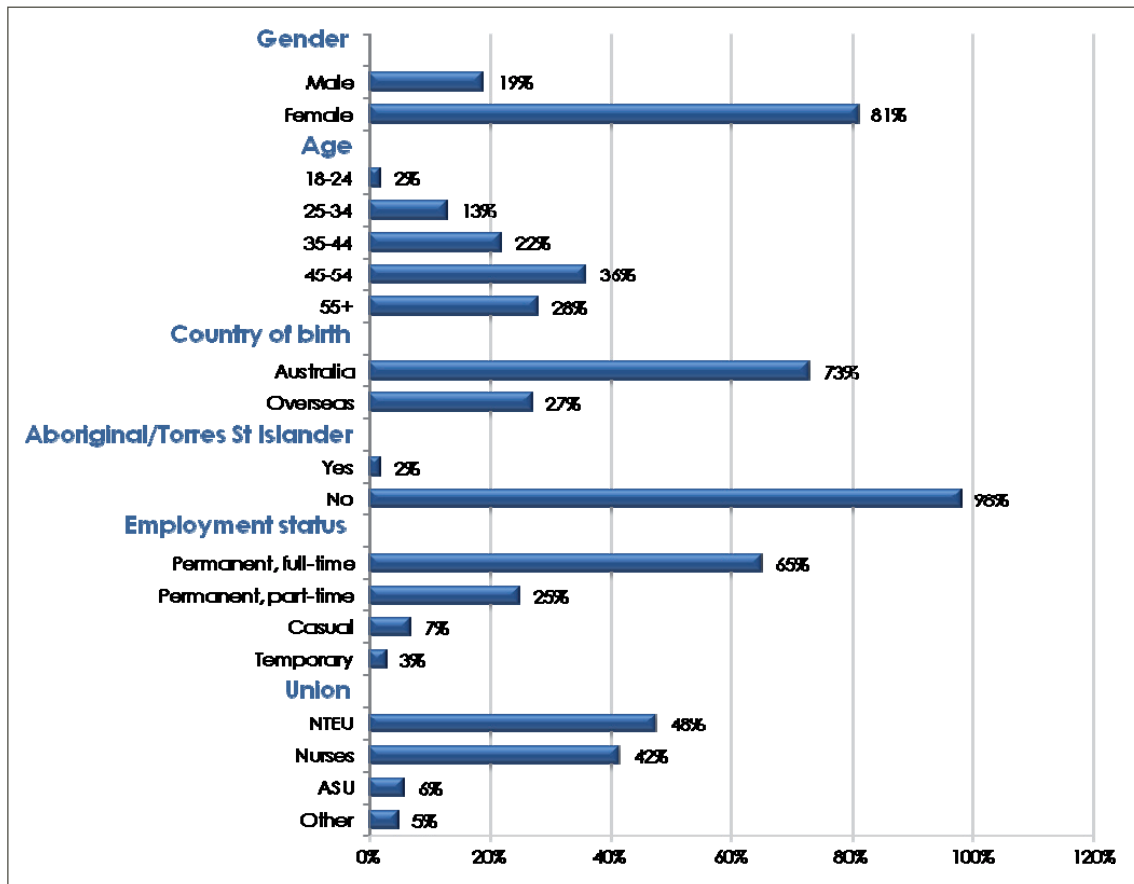
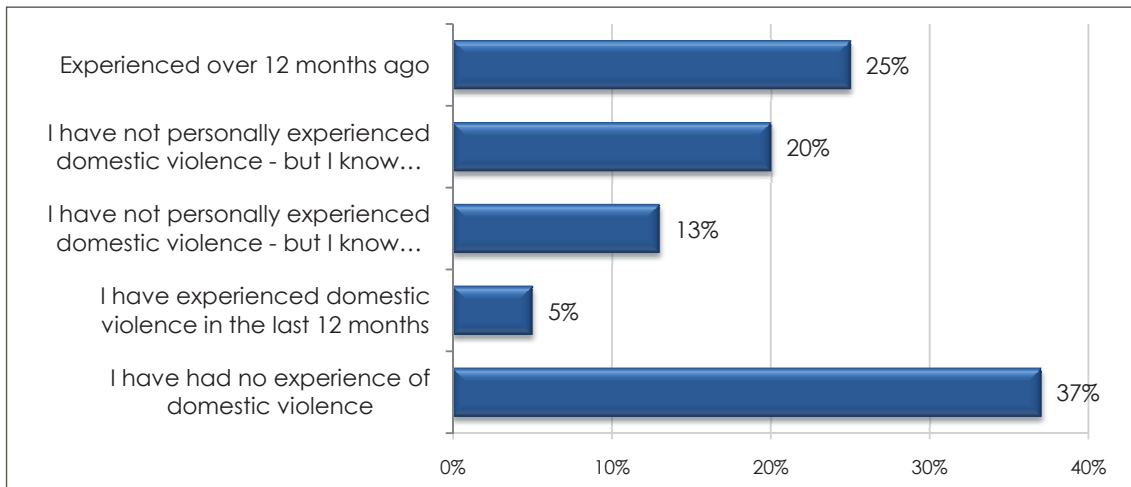


Table 1. Profile

- 81% of the respondents were women.
  - The majority of the respondents (90%) were members of two unions: the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) and the New South Wales Nurses' Association.
  - 48% of respondents were members of the (NTEU) which has over 25,000 members in the tertiary education sector. The NTEU membership ratio currently is 56.11% women to 43.89% men.
  - 42% of respondents were from the New South Wales Nurses' Association, which has approximately 54,000 members. Nursing is a female dominated profession, with 10.4% male membership in the union.
- Two-thirds of respondents were in fulltime employment, higher than national average (ABS 2011).
  - This may in part reflect the demographics of the union membership. The NTEU membership has high rates in full time employment, though the proportion of nurses working part time is 47.7% (AIHW 2011).
- Nearly two thirds (64%) of the respondents were aged 45 and older. This reflects the NTEU membership, and that the average age in nursing is 44 years, with over a third aged 50 years and older (AIHW 2011).
  - The ages of respondents confirm ABS data that peak employment for women is 45-54 (ABS 2011).

**(b) Prevalence of domestic violence**



**Table 2. Q5. Which of the following best describes your experience of domestic violence? Full answers 2 reads: 'I know someone who is in paid employment who has experienced it; answer 3: I know someone who is not in paid employment who has experienced it.**

- The prevalence of domestic violence reported in the survey is consistent with national data (Mouzos & Makkai), with 30% of respondents having personally experienced domestic violence (domestic violence respondents). 5% of domestic violence respondents had experienced the domestic violence in the previous 12 months.
- A further 20% had not personally experienced domestic violence but knew someone in paid employment who had experienced domestic violence.
- According to the qualitative data in the survey, the violence was predominantly intimate partner violence (IPV), but included family violence from adult children, fathers, mothers-in-law, and an adult child's partner.
- Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders, who represented 2% of total respondents, were significantly more likely to have experience with some form of domestic violence (86%, versus 63%).
- 50% of the men responding to the survey knew someone who had experienced domestic violence, or had personally experienced it.

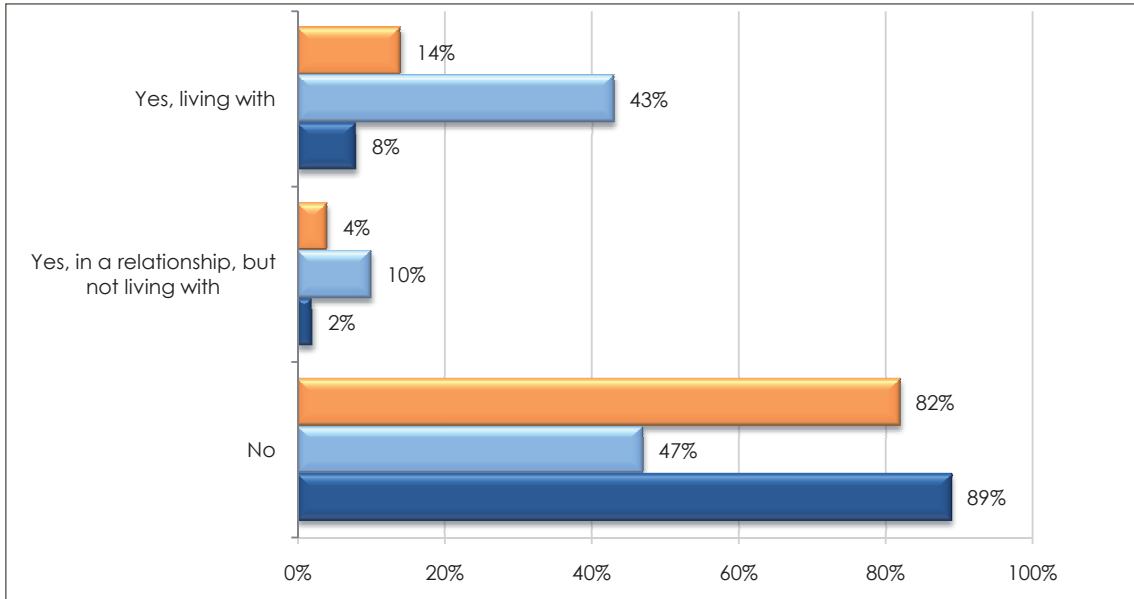
**Discussion**

In Australia, the rate and severity of domestic and family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities plays a significant role in the morbidity and mortality of Indigenous people. Women disproportionately bear the impact of the violence, with Indigenous women 35 times more likely to suffer family violence and sustain serious injuring requiring hospitalisation, and 10 times more likely to die due to family violence, than non-Indigenous women (ADFVC 2010).

Both men and women can experience domestic violence, but women experience more severe and persistent forms of abuse and are more vulnerable due to often having the primary care of children.

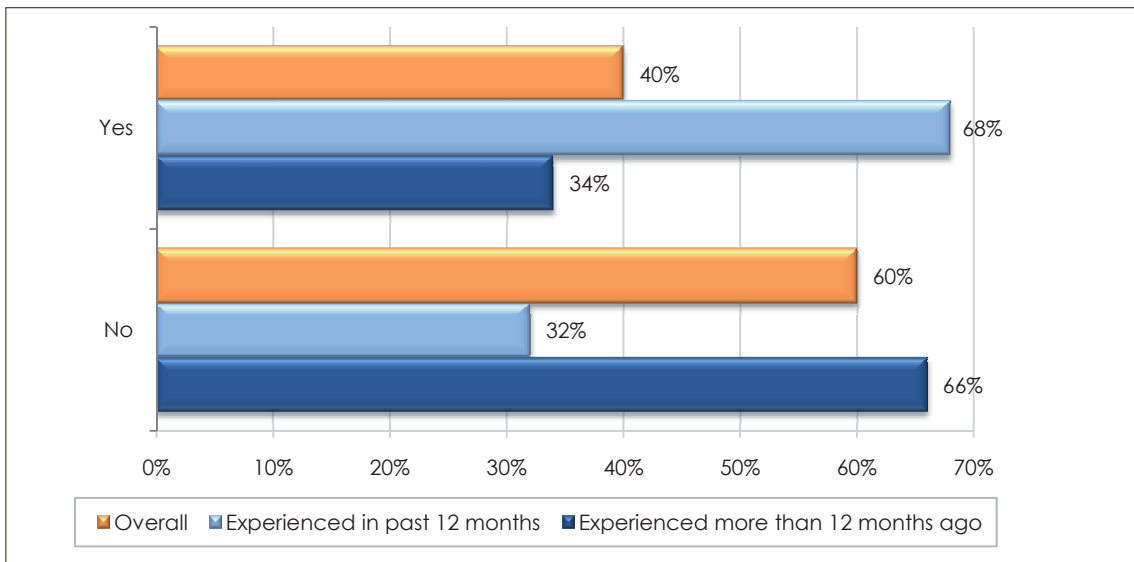


**(c) Housing and domestic violence**



**Table 3. Q6d. Are you still living with/in a relationship with the abusive/violent person**

Only 14% of those who had experienced domestic violence recently or in the past are still living in the relationship (table 3), and only 40% are still living in the family home (table 4). People who had experienced domestic violence in the last 12 months are significantly more likely to be still in the relationship and living in the family home. These results may indicate the value of early intervention provided by programs designed to support women experiencing domestic violence stay safely in their homes.



**Table 4. Q6c. Are you still living in your family home?**

Fifty four percent of the respondents who had experienced domestic violence were currently living in mortgaged homes; 32% in rented properties (table 5). The ABS reports home ownership rates in Australia as fairly stable at around 70% (ABS 2010). Recent housing trends have highlighted the danger of separated women dropping out of home ownership (Beer & Faulkner 2009 p. 101 & p. 115).

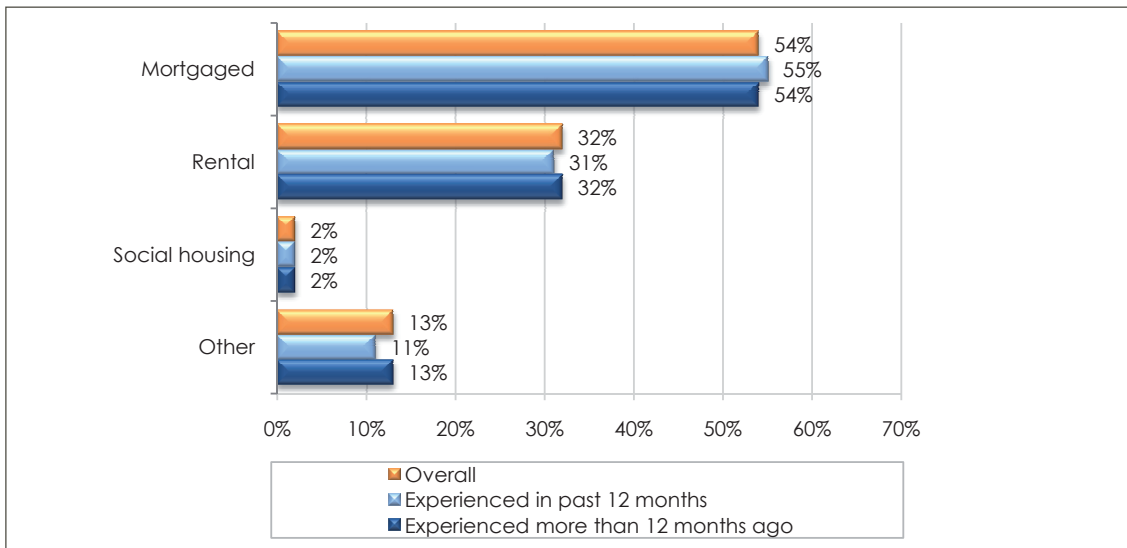


Table 5. Q6f. What best describes your home tenure?

(d) Domestic violence affects capacity to get to work

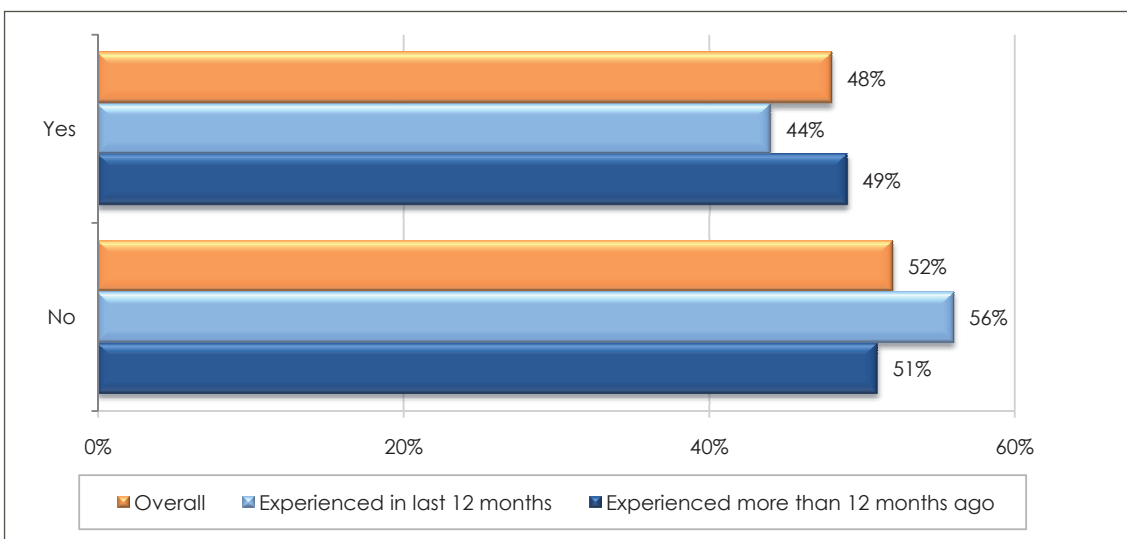
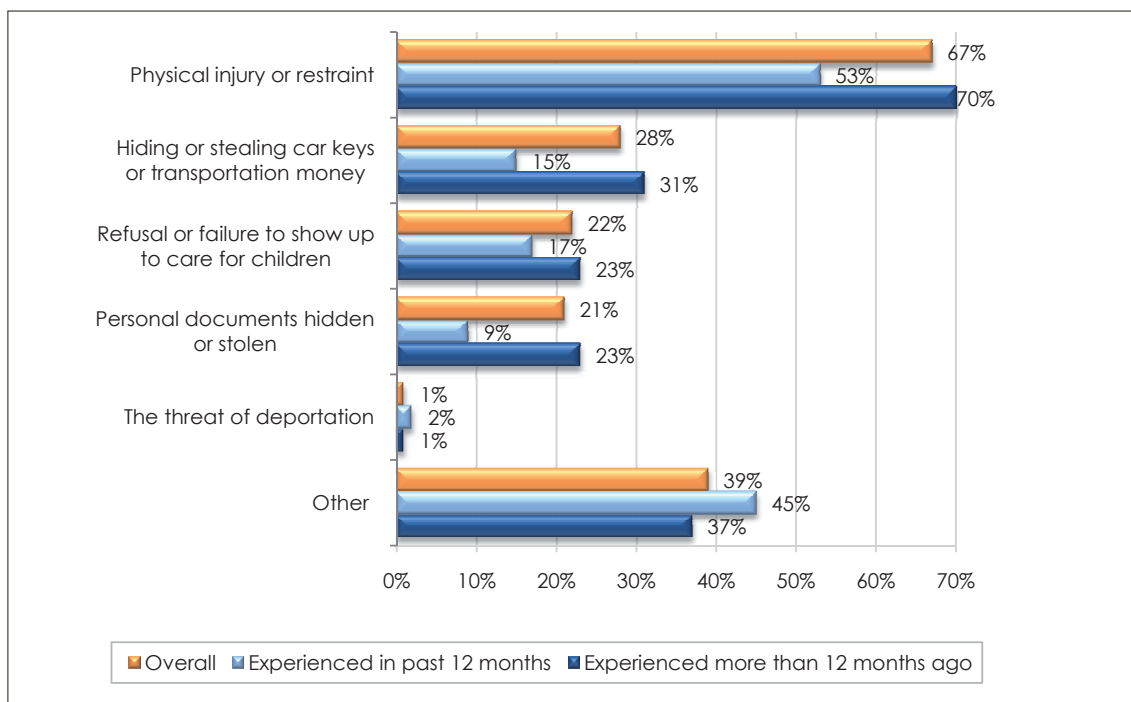


Table 6. Q6a. Did the domestic violence affect your capacity to get to work?

- Nearly half those who had experienced domestic violence reported that the violence affected their capacity to get to work.
- For this group the major reason was physical injury or restraint (67%), followed by hiding keys and failure to care for children (table 7).



**Table 7. Q6b. (If yes), did you experience...?**

## Discussion

The modern expectation that work is a right is denied as a tactic of domestic violence. Controlling behaviours, sometimes interpreted in the early stages of a relationship as excessive love, can escalate in order to keep the partner in an economically dependent state and socially isolated. The pattern of escalation can be seen in the following comments:

*Partner not wanting me to go to work.*

*Threatening me if I did not give up my job.*

*Refused to allow me to work.*

Asked about how domestic violence affected their capacity to get to work, the major reported experience was physical injury or restraint and damage to personal property.

*Fear of going out of the home, afraid of anyone ringing in case he got angry, not allowed to see friends, very angry when I went to work or left the house, had to explain where I was going or had been.*

*Partner undermined job interviews by calling my dean and telling him not to hire me, damaging my supporting material and letting my car tires down during the night before an interview to prevent me getting there.*

*Hiding mobile phone, deadlocking the door, taking house keys, taking the home phone out of wall and taking it with him.*

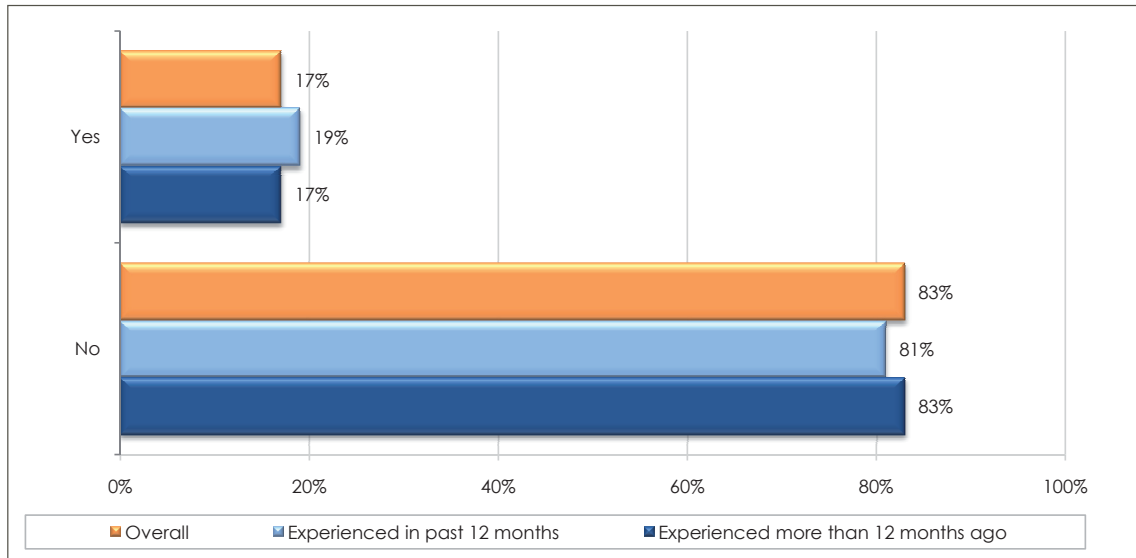
Sleep deprivation is an effective tactic to damage work performance: 'Lack of sleep, difficult to get up on time', 'Sleepless night led to fatigue at work'. Five respondents reported death threats, five reported sexual assault and rape by their partners, and one attempted murder.

*Driving me to close to my place of work then driving off with my documents, threatening to harm my child while I was at work. Also talk of the dangers of me driving to work - possible car accident/injury/death.*

Comments were made on the disruption of being forced out of their homes and getting to work:

*The need to evacuate the family home with children at a moment's notice without ability to collect belongings, and the need to stay overnight with family or friends that complicated usual routines e.g. getting kids to childcare before getting to work.*

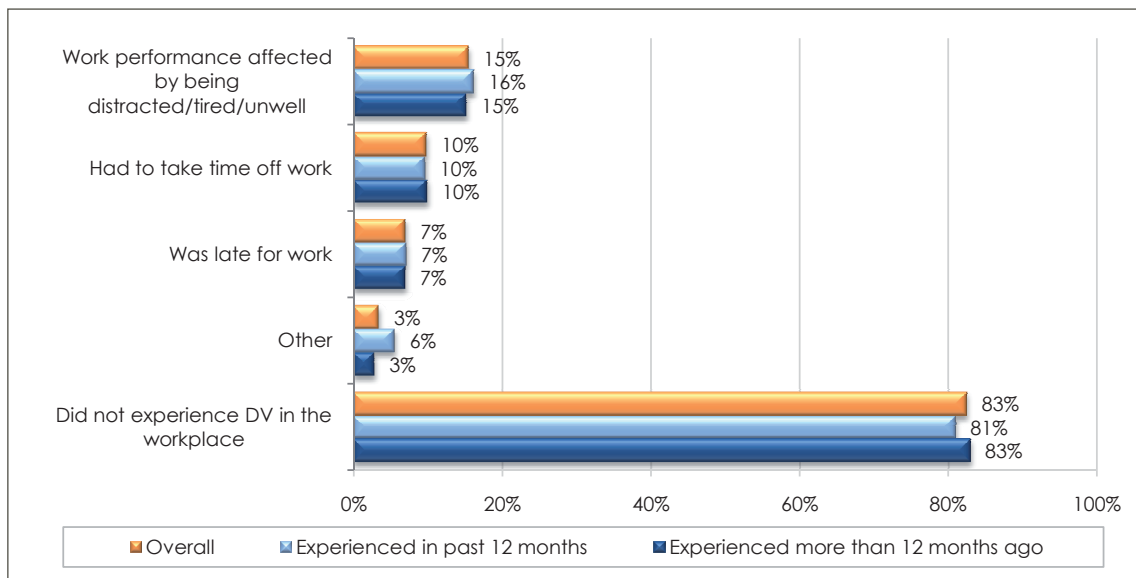
**(e) Impact at work**



**Table 8. Q7a. Did the domestic violence continue at your workplace?**

Of the respondents who had experienced domestic violence in the previous 12 months:

- 19% reported that the domestic violence had continued in the workplace (table 8).
  - The major method being abusive phone calls and emails (12%) and the partner physically coming to work (11%).
  - Negative effect on work performance was the main reported result, with 16% reporting being distracted, tired or unwell, 10% needing to take time off, and 7% being late for work (table 9).



**Table 9. Q7c. Did the domestic violence impact on your performance at work in any of the following ways?**

## Discussion

These results are consistent with previous international research. Nearly half of all comments on impact at work were on the work performance impact of verbal, emotional, mental and psychological violence:

*Mental abuse such as 'you are such a crap nurse why are you working'.*

*Made to feel worthless, incapable of coping with day to day activities.*

*Suffering of anxiety attack & losing my self confidence.*

*Emotionally battered - unable to focus.*

*Crying in front of students.*

Threats against children were reported by 16 respondents:

*Phoning work to say if I'm not home in 10 minutes, the children would be at home by themselves.*

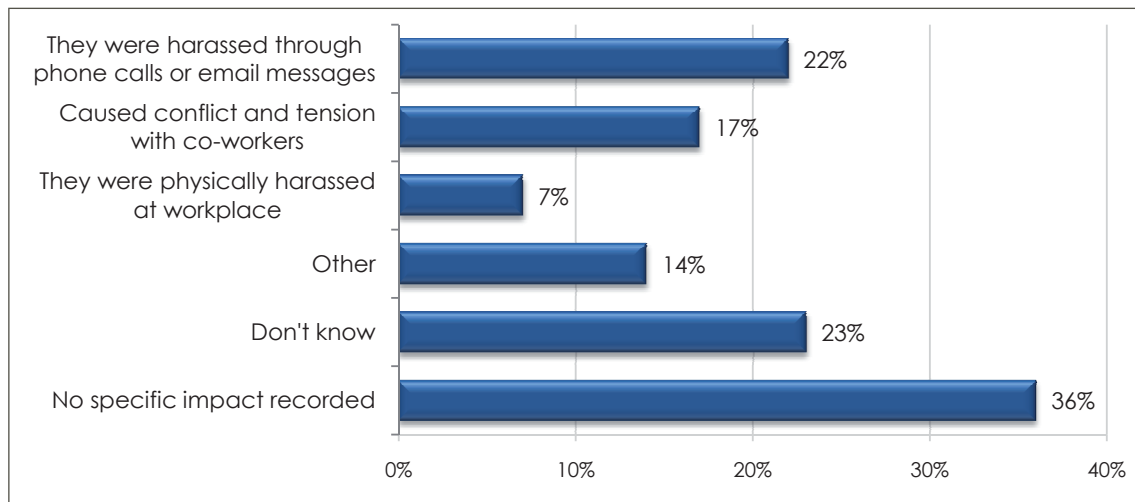
*Threats, fear for children, uncertain of what one would return home to.*

*He would leave the kids at home alone to go to the pub while I was at work.*

The situation may be complicated if both parties work in the same workplace, though this may also allow for the situation to be more proactively managed. Working in the same workplace with your partner, particularly in regional offices and centres was reported by 12% of domestic violence respondents. Six respondents commented on the dilemma of working with their partner:

*Partner transferred to same workplace, becoming my manager, rostered me on same shifts, took same breaks, and shared travel.*

### (f) Impact of violence at work as reported by co-workers



**Table 10. Q12. Did the violence to your friend/colleague impact in the workplace in any of the following ways?**

When comparing the reported impact of domestic violence by witnesses (co-workers) with personal reporting significant differences were indicated:

- Reports by co-workers of the prevalence and impact were higher than reports of personal experience.
- Respondents who knew a person who had experienced domestic violence at work reported their co-worker was harassed on phone at a rate of 22% compared with 12% when self-reporting, or 17% of co-workers reported the violence caused conflict between staff compared with 7% when self-reporting.

## Discussion

This may be attributable to the issue of self-identification, denial or embarrassment by those experiencing domestic violence:

*Didn't know then how to name it, that it was called 'domestic violence' even though I knew it was wrong what he was doing.*

*Didn't realise that what was happening was domestic violence as it was every other form except physically hitting, punching etc.*

*Embarrassed by partner's behaviour in front of colleagues.*

Nurses were significantly more likely than the NTEU group to state that their co-workers were affected by conflict and tension due to the domestic violence situation (83% versus 48%) This may due to the different working conditions, with nurses more likely to be working in open wards and in teams, and the greater exposure of nurses to domestic violence in emergency and health areas.

Co-workers commented on the impact of domestic violence on absenteeism and work performance, such as loss of focus, sleep deprivation, injury, stress, depression, unpredictability, and distraction, all resulted in failure to carry out duties, leading to an increased work load on co-workers.

*Because the phone calls were only being made to her work phone she had to alter her work practice so as to avoid his calls. She was distressed following his call and required additional emotional support from her colleagues and workplace.*

*They weren't reliable because they wouldn't come to work after being hit. They would try and cover up with false stories of how they got a black eye and turn up to work late or not at all.*

### (g) Telling someone at work

Most of the respondents affected by domestic violence thought their colleagues were unaware of what was occurring (79%), but believed that visible bruising and injury and behaviour change and emotional state alerted their colleagues to the situation.

Nevertheless, nearly half those who had recently experienced an incident of domestic violence had discussed the violence with someone at work.

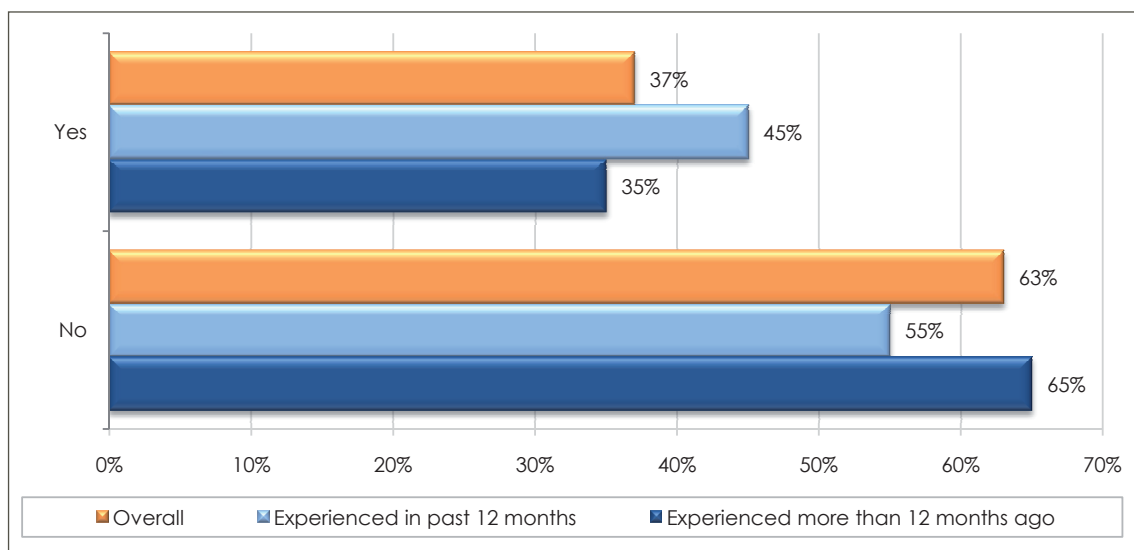


Table 11. Q8a. Did you discuss the violence with anyone at work?

- Forty five percent of respondents affected by domestic violence in last 12 months discussed the violence with someone at work, primarily co-workers or friends rather than supervisors, HR staff or union representative.
- Forty eight percent of respondents who had experienced domestic violence did disclose the violence to a manager/supervisor, though only 10% found them helpful.
- Friends and co-workers were also found to be more helpful than supervisors, HR staff or union representatives.
- For those who did not discuss the problem at work, the major reason given was 'privacy', followed by reasons of shame and fear of dismissal, though less for people who had more recently experienced the violence.

## Discussion

These findings are consistent with international research. There will continue to be barriers to workers disclosing a sensitive issue, such as the impact of domestic violence on their work performance and safety unless the workplace has undertaken the necessary procedures to ensure this impact will be treated as a workplace issue and support is guaranteed. Concern about the barriers to disclosure has led to calls for a non-explicit leave entitlement that does not require disclosure. In this light, we consider it significant that nearly half of those who had experienced domestic violence did disclose to their manager or supervisor, even in the absence of entitlements, policies or an understanding of the workplace impacts. The evidence is that workers are prepared to disclose but require and need a workplace that is supportive and informed.

For some experiencing domestic violence, work is an escape:

*At work I needed to focus on work and to talk about it would have stressed me too much. There wasn't time anyway so I just try to switch off home and concentrate on my work. Sometimes it was respite to come to work and keep my mind busy on other things.*

*When starting new job, who wants to hear about your ex?*

However, other comments reflected the strain of not disclosing.

*Having to lie to hide injuries, cancelling appointments, social isolated from friends/family.*

*Stress, getting through days at work like everything is ok.*

*Telling lies at work about why I had injuries on my body.*

Comments often reflected fear: of gossip, reprisal, damage to career advancement, not being believed as the relationship was same-sex, and other unforeseen consequences:

*They were negatively judged and staff gossiped about them, including managerial staff.*

*I live in a small town. My partner has mental health and alcohol issues exacerbated by unemployment. I did not want everyone to know, affecting his chances of work, recovery and fathering our son again.*

Responses of co-workers will depend on the understanding in their workplace of the impact of domestic violence and the workplace culture:

*Co-workers often didn't know how best to help. Also caused some negativity due to others having to take my workload.*

*My workmates became involved in protecting me, at some risk to themselves.*

*They knew what was going on and were powerless to do anything, they had to support me and carry extra load when I was not well.*

*They were very supportive of me, and this included accompanying me to court, inviting me to stay at their homes, signing affidavits.*

**(h) Support in the workplace**

As a result of discussing the violence with someone at work, most respondents who had experienced domestic violence found that nothing changed as a result, or the outcome was negative. Arguably, the results were minimal or negative because respondents were talking with co-workers and friends rather than those at work able to initiate change, or in workplaces without a supportive culture:

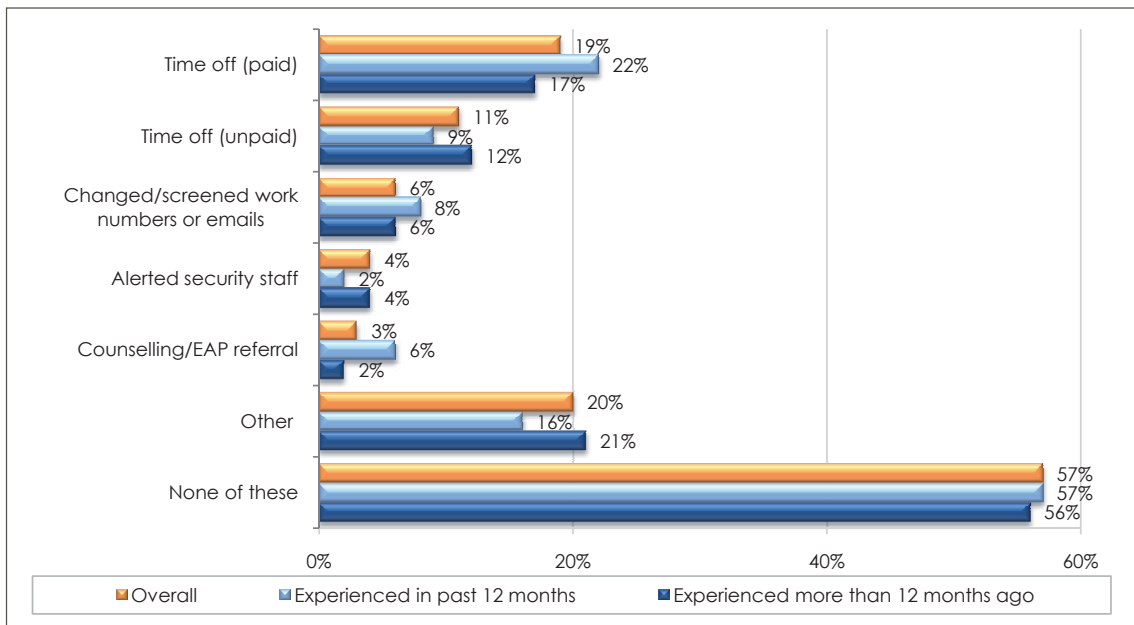
*Laughed at by fellow staff members when I explained the situation.*

*Frosty interactions at work and difficulty functioning as work colleagues.*

*My workplace swept the whole incident under the carpet - I felt totally unsupported.*

*Colleague turned up at work frequently with bruises, scabs where cuts were healing and was ostracised by senior staff at a small regional university campus. It was terrible. I left and could not work there ever again. I am still in touch with this person.*

Where workplaces were able to assist, this was primarily in the form of paid (19%) or unpaid leave (11%).



**Table 12. Q10d. Was your work able to help you in any of the following ways?**

**Discussion**

The paid leave was in the form of access to existing leave entitlements. In comments it is not clear whether the paid leave was approved for the purposes of responding to domestic violence, and more than one respondent clearly struggled with taking time off.

*I took a sick day to cover my time with a black eye.*

*I was able to access special leave on days I had to attend court.*

*Time off to see counsellors, my child's school, reorganize bank accounts and other joint services, see police, make statements.*



*I have been able to take paid time off when needed but it was made very difficult for me to get approval for this leave and I was made to feel unreliable, and my manager made it clear she was annoyed with me. I now just ring up sick.*

*Please note - I was ordered to take time off work or risk dismissal.*

Other forms of support were commented on:

*General moral support and understanding when not able to work to 100% capacity, for example, change of duties or longer lunch breaks so that I could undertake stress reducing exercise.*

*As her friend and SU rep I was encouraged by management to help by referring her to WIRE, organising visit from Members Equity to sort out financial issues. Workplace referred victim to EAP. Paid time was sick leave.*

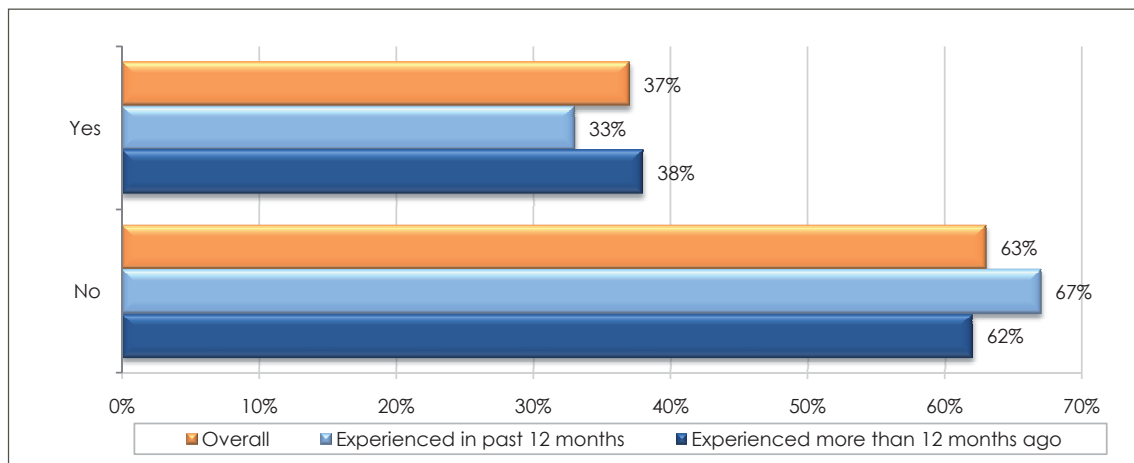
*Walked to car with colleagues and followed home once out of the relationship, also while still in the situation we provided her with food and money as this was all restricted in her situation.*

It was of concern that only 6% were referred to counselling through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Not all workplaces provide access to EAP and not all EAP providers are skilled in counselling on domestic violence, nevertheless a number of respondents commented on the benefits of counselling:

*Counselling substantially helped with self-esteem.*

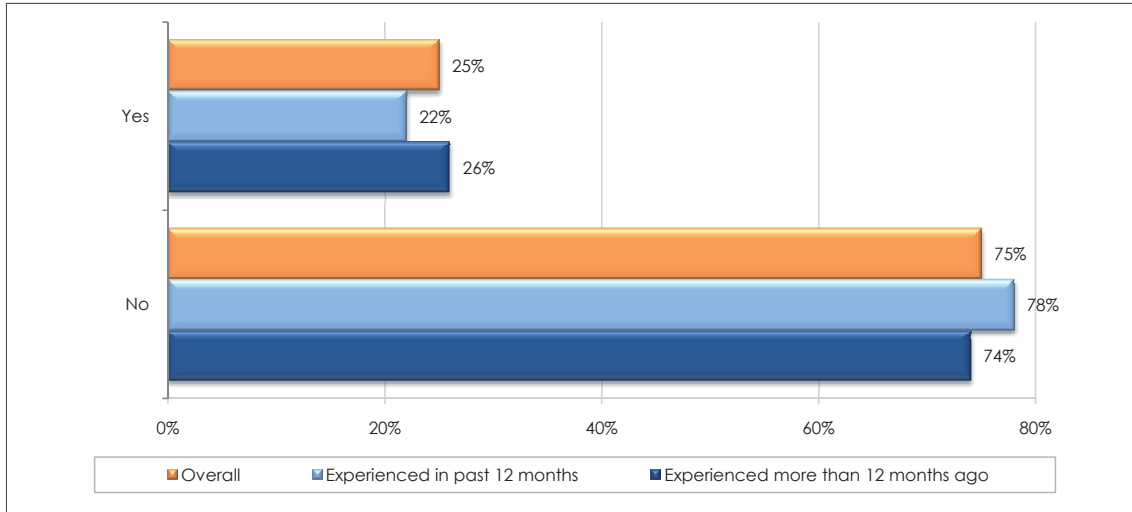
### (i) Protection orders and police

Over one third of all respondents who had experienced domestic violence reported the violence to the police.



**Table 13. Q11a. Have you ever reported the violence to the police?**

Twenty five percent of all respondents who had experienced domestic violence had obtained a domestic violence protection order, but less than half (41%) included their workplace in the order.



**Table 14. Q11b. Have you ever obtained a protection order?**

### Discussion

These results are consistent with previous Australian surveys in terms of reporting to police, but higher for protection orders.

In the *Personal Safety Survey, Australia 2005*, 63.2% of women who experienced physical violence at the hand of a male partner (current or previous), boyfriend or date in the previous 12 months did not report the most recent incident to the police (ABS 2006, p. 21).

The *Personal Safety Survey, Australia 2005* found that only 10% of women who had experienced violence by their current partner had successfully sought a protection order against them.

### 3. Conclusion

These results confirm that the impact of domestic violence is an Australian workplace issue, and demonstrate overwhelming support for sustainable and widespread change in the Australian workplace. All respondents thought that domestic violence can impact on the work lives of employees (100%) and the vast majority (78%) believed that workplace entitlements could reduce the impact of domestic violence in the workplace.

We all want people to be able to be safe at home and safe at work. There were some very sobering comments from respondents about what happens when we fail to achieve this. One respondent's friend was killed by her partner, another committed suicide. We all want a reduction in death and homicide as a result of domestic violence. Australian homicide data indicates that intimate partners or ex-partners account for 55% of homicides of women in Australia 2007/2008 (Virueda & Payne, 2010, p. 20, Table 10).

This workplace data on the impact of domestic violence in Australia confirms international research findings. According to the results, nearly two thirds of the respondents had personal experience or knew someone who had personal experience of domestic violence. Nearly a third of respondents had personally experienced domestic violence, and for nearly half of these workers the violence had affected their capacity to get to work. For 19%, one worker in five who experienced domestic violence, the violence continued at the workplace.

The survey also provides baseline data for future monitoring and evaluation of the improvements in working people's ability to stay safely in their jobs as a result of the introduction and implementation of domestic violence workplace entitlements. The Project has developed a framework for future monitoring and evaluation which seeks to test the fundamental question: are these strategies improving the safety, economic security and well being of working people affected by domestic violence? The rates of domestic violence may remain stubbornly high while the systemic disadvantage of women continues, but the impact at work can be reduced by partnerships between the unions, employers and the domestic violence sector.

## 4. Key findings

- Nearly a third of respondents (30%) had personally experienced domestic violence.
- Nearly half those who had experienced domestic violence reported that the violence affected their capacity to get to work, the major reason was physical injury or restraint (67%), followed by hiding keys and failure to care for children.
- Nearly one in five (19%) who experienced domestic violence in the previous 12 months, reported that the violence continued at the workplace
- The major form the domestic violence took in the workplace was abusive phone calls and emails (12%) and the partner physically coming to work (11%).
- The main reported impact was on work performance, with 16% reporting being distracted, tired or unwell, 10% needing to take time off, and 7% being late for work
- Respondents who knew a person who had experienced domestic violence at work reported rates higher than personal reports: their co-worker was harassed on phone at a rate of 22%, or 17% reported the violence caused conflict with co-workers compared with 7% when self-reporting.
- 45% of respondents with recent experience of domestic violence discussed the violence with someone at work, primarily co-workers or friends rather than supervisors, HR staff or union representative
- For those who did not discuss the problem at work, the major reason given was 'privacy', followed by reasons of shame and fear of dismissal.
- Where workplaces were able to assist, this was primarily in the form of existing paid (19%) or unpaid leave (11%).
- Over one third of all respondents who had experienced domestic violence reported the violence to the police. 25% of all respondents who had experienced domestic violence had obtained a protection order, but less than half (41%) included their workplace in the order.
- All respondents thought that domestic violence can impact on the work lives of employees (100%) and a high percentage (78%) believed that workplace entitlements could reduce the impact of domestic violence in the workplace.

## 5. References

- AIHW 2011. *Nursing and midwifery labour force 2009*. AIHW bulletin no. 90. Cat. no. AUS 139. Canberra: AIHW. Viewed 28 September 2011 <<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail/?id=10737419682>>. 90.4% of employed nurses were female in 2009.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006, *Personal Safety Survey, Australia, 2005* (reissue), cat. no. 4906.0.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics 2010, *Measures of Australia's Progress, 2010, Housing*, cat. no. 1370.0. Viewed 4 October 2011 <[http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/1370.0~2010~Chapter~Levels%20of%20home%20ownership%20\(5.4.3\)](http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/1370.0~2010~Chapter~Levels%20of%20home%20ownership%20(5.4.3))>.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011, 4125.0 Gender Indicators, and Australian Labour Force.
- ADFVC 2010 *Special Collections Indigenous people* Viewed 4 October 2011 <<http://www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au/specialcollections.htm>>.
- Australian Law Reform Commission 2010, *Family Violence – A National Legal Response*, ALRC Report 114.
- Beer A & Faulkner D 2009, *21st century housing careers and Australia's housing future*, AHURI Final Report, no. 128, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, Melbourne.
- Family Violence Prevention Fund 1998, *The Workplace Guide for Employers, Unions and Advocates*, San Francisco, CA Cited in Franzway, S, Zufferey, C & Chung, D, 'Domestic violence and women's employment', paper presented at Our Work, Our Lives Conference, September, Adelaide, 2007.
- Logan T, Shannon L, Cole J & Swanberg J 2007, *Partner stalking and implications for women's employment*, Journal of Interpersonal Violence, vol. 22, issue 3, pp. 268-291.
- Mouzos J & Makkai T 2004, *Women's experiences of male violence: findings from the Australian component of the International Violence Against Women Survey (IVAWS)*, Research and Public Policy Series 56, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra p.44 & p.48.
- Murray, S & Powell, A 2008, *Working It Out: domestic violence issues and the workplace* Issues Paper 16 ADFVC .
- O'Leary-Kelly A, Lean E, Reeves C & Randel J 2008, *Coming into the light: intimate partner violence and its effects at work*, funded by the National Institute of Justice and University of Arkansas.
- Patton, S 2003, *Pathways: How Women Leave Violent Men*, Government of Tasmania, Hobart, 2003. Viewed 24 August 2009 <<http://www.bensoc.org.au/uploads/documents/Moving-Forward-full-report-June-09.pdf>>.
- Virueda, M., & Payne, J. (2010) Homicide in Australia: 2007 -08 National Homicide Monitoring Program annual report, Monitoring Report, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra.



**For more information about the domestic violence workplace rights and entitlements project contact:**

**Ludo McFerran:** (02) 9385 1806; 0423 231 058; ludo.mcferran@unsw.edu.au

**Robyn Dale:** (03) 9663 4555; 0414 706 148; robyn@urcot.org.au

**Tashina Orchiston:** (02) 9385 1733; t.orchiston@unsw.edu.au

**Web:** [http://www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au/dv\\_workplace\\_rights\\_entitlements\\_project.htm](http://www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au/dv_workplace_rights_entitlements_project.htm)



Australian Domestic & Family Violence Clearinghouse



**UNSW**  
THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES



Australian Government



**CGRVS**  
Centre For Gender Related Violence Studies, UNSW

