



FÓRSA

Survey on domestic violence and the workplace

Background

Fórsa recently carried out a membership survey to garner a better understanding of domestic abuse amongst our membership.

The study set out to establish attitudes towards domestic violence and evaluate supports available in workplaces. Domestic violence is where one person uses abuse to control and assert power over their partner in an intimate relationship. It can be physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or financial abuse.

Last May, delegates at Fórsa's national conference unanimously backed a motion from the union's national executive calling for statutory paid leave for victims of domestic violence. We know this issue is of the utmost importance our members.

Engagement



Engagement was much higher than anticipated, with 3,312 members responding to the survey. Of those who responded, 85% were women and 15% were men.

We had a small number of respondents identify as non-binary (0.1%) and identify as transgender (0.1%).

Respondent's experience of domestic abuse

Just under a third of respondents (31%) indicated that they had personally experienced domestic abuse. 80% indicated that abuse was at the hands of an intimate partner, while 23% said that they were abused by a family member. Just over 5% of respondents said they would prefer not to answer this question.

94% of respondents said they experienced abuse at home, while 18% said this took place while out with friends. 17% of those surveyed said abuse happened while on holidays, and 8% said that abuse continued in the workplace. 47% of respondents said that the workplace provided a safety and a respite from abuse.

87% of respondents said they experienced emotional abuse. Examples given include coercive control, gaslighting, blackmailing, isolation, verbal abuse, and threats of physical violence, amongst others.

55% of respondents reported physical abuse. Respondents outlined slapping, hitting, and choking as examples.

32% of respondents said they experienced financial abuse, such as freezing access to funds intermittently while carrying out shopping for basic goods and controlling finances.

17% of respondents said they experienced stalking.

17% said that they suffered sexual violence and abuse.



Domestic abuse and others

Half of respondents (50%) said they knew someone who has experienced or is experiencing domestic abuse. Of this, 50% said this person was a friend, 42% said this person was a family member, and 16% said this person was a colleague.

31% of respondents said that the work environment offered the person they knew who experienced abuse some safety or respite from the abuse, while 17% said they would prefer not to say.



Domestic abuse and the workplace

Over 80% of respondents said they were not aware of any domestic abuse policies and supports available in their workplace.

Just 7% of respondents said that formalised policies were in place, while 3% indicated that policies were available as part of a local arrangement.










Only 8% of respondents said that supports well signposted in their workplace, with employees made aware of the supports available. 58% said employees were not made aware of any supports available to them.

65% of respondents said they were either “unlikely” or “very unlikely” to discuss personal domestic abuse with their employer. Just 12% of respondents said they were “likely” or “very likely” to discuss this with their employer.

Respondents overwhelmingly felt that domestic abuse policies are required in the workplace, with 77% of respondents answering “yes” to this question. Similarly 71% of those surveyed feel that a workplace policy on domestic abuse leave and supports would encourage those in need it to reach out to their employer for assistance.

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