



SAFE, THRIVING AND SECURE:

FAMILY VIOLENCE LEAVE
AND WORKPLACE
SUPPORTS IN AUSTRALIA

THE MONASH PROJECT TEAM

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We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we come together to conduct our research and recognise that these lands have always been places of learning for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We honour and pay respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders – past and present – and acknowledge the important role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices and their ongoing leadership in responding to domestic, family and sexual violence.

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This project was led by Associate Professor Kate Fitz-Gibbon. The findings contained within this Report arise entirely from the work of Kate Fitz-Gibbon in her capacity as Director of the Monash Gender and Family Violence Prevention Centre and are wholly independent of Kate Fitz-Gibbon's role as Chair of Respect Victoria.

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ACRONYMS

| | |
|------|--|
| ABS | Australian Bureau of Statistics |
| AIHW | Australian Institute of Health and Welfare |
| CBA | Commonwealth Bank of Australia |
| DFSV | Domestic, family and sexual violence |
| DFV | Domestic and family violence |
| DV | Domestic violence |
| EAP | Employee assistance program |
| FDV | Family and domestic violence |
| GP | General Practitioner |
| HR | Human Resources |

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Domestic and family violence (DFV) is a national crisis in Australia. There is increasing recognition across Australian industries and internationally that DFV is a workplace issue. Experiences of DFV not only impacts on victim-survivors' engagement in the workforce but also their work performance and their career progression. Workplaces can be common sites of DFV with perpetrators utilising a range of abusive behaviours to disrupt individual's participation in the workplace and their engagement with co-workers and managers. Furthermore, there is growing consensus that workplaces can play a critical role in responding to DFV through supporting employees affected by DFV.

Access to leave (unpaid and paid) has emerged as one of the potentially critical supports that employers can provide to DFV victim-survivors. DFV leave provisions embed workplace recognition that employees may need time off work if they, or a close relative, are experiencing any forms of DFV and contribute to creating a safe and supportive workplace environment for employees experiencing DFV. There is presently no legislated requirement for Australian workplaces to offer paid DFV leave, and over the past five years there has been significant variance in practice across Australian public and private sectors.

In 2018, the Fair Work Commission varied 123 modern awards to include an employee entitlement to five days of unpaid family and domestic violence leave ([2018] FWCFB 1691). This amendment occurred as part of the legislative requirement on the Fair Work Commission to conduct a review of all modern awards every four years (Fair Work Act 2009 Cth, section 156). At the time of the 2018 amendment, the Fair Work Commission committed to reviewing domestic and family violence leave entitlements in June 2021, three years after the new model term was introduced. It was foreshadowed that this review should consider:

- Whether employees should be able to access paid personal/carer's leave for the purpose of taking family and domestic violence leave.
- The adequacy of the unpaid family and domestic violence leave entitlement.
- Whether provisions should be made for paid family and domestic violence leave.

This Report represents the outcome of one component of the Fair Work Commission's Family and Domestic Violence Leave Review. It presents the findings of a project undertaken to examine employees' experiences of DFV by exploring their access to family violence leave and other workplace supports. In doing so, it draws on the expertise of 302 DFV victim-survivors who participated in a national survey and 42 victim-survivors who also shared in-depth insight into their experiences through their participation in an interview with the research team.

The key findings from this project are presented in this report according to five key themes:

1. The impact of domestic and family violence on employees at work
2. Family violence leave
3. The impact of workplace culture
4. Beyond leave provisions: additional workplace supports provided by employees' workplace
5. Supports accessed by employees outside of their workplace

The findings reveal that while significant progress has certainly been made there is still significant work to be undertaken across Australian workplaces to provide a culture and a policy environment where victim-survivors of DFV are safe and are supported to thrive in paid employment. Experiences of DFV impact significantly on an individual's ability to attend work, to participate meaningfully in work, to fulfill their role expectations, and to progress their career ambitions.

Workplace policies and support practices are essential to ensure victim-survivors are supported to maintain paid employment during their experience of DFV, and to continue to engage with work throughout their recovery. The economic benefits of paid employment are significant in the context of women's economic security and their ability to safely exit and maintain a life free from violence.

This research finds that family violence leave provisions have a symbolic and a functional role to play in the framework of broader workplace responses to DFV. To date, victim-survivors' access to family violence leave – paid or unpaid – have been extremely varied and in many instances hampered by the impact of unsafe workplace cultures which do not promote the safety and economic security of individuals experiencing DFV, and which create significant barriers to safe disclosure.

At the functional level paid family violence leave must be implemented and operate in a way that aligns with the objectives of its introduction. This research reveals that low levels of DFV awareness and trauma informed understanding among employers coupled with requirements to provide documentation in order to access leave have undermined the goal of this policy response. When set alongside emerging best practice recommendations in Australia and internationally, the expertise and experience of victim-survivors identifies the need for workplaces to provide at minimum 14 days paid family violence leave, and ideally access to unlimited leave. As the national crisis of DFV has been exacerbated throughout the COVID-19 pandemic there is a pressing need to ensure that workplace policies are elevated to provide meaningful and effective economic support for all Australian employees that experience DFV.

FAST FACTS

On average, one woman in Australia is killed by a current or former partner every nine days

13 women are hospitalised each day as a result of DFV assault injuries

Around 9,120 women annually become homeless after leaving their homes due to DFV

First Nations women are 32 times more likely to be hospitalised from DFV than non-Indigenous adults

DFV impacts on the physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing and safety of primary victim-survivors, children and their families.

1. INTRODUCTION

Domestic and family violence (DFV) is a national crisis in Australia. On average, one woman in Australia is killed by a current or former partner every nine days (AIHW, 2019), and approximately 13 women are hospitalised each day as a result of DFV assault injuries (AIHW, 2020). Family violence is the leading cause of women and children's homelessness in Australia, with recent research estimating that around 9,120 women annually become homeless after leaving their homes due to DFV (Equity Economics, 2021). DFV has differential impacts across priority cohorts and communities. In particular, First Nations women are 32 times more likely to be hospitalised from DFV than non-Indigenous adults (AIHW, 2019). The impacts of DFV are widespread. DFV impacts on the physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing and safety of primary victim-survivors, children and their families.

DFV is a gendered phenomenon. Women in Australia are nearly three times more likely than their male counterparts to experience intimate partner violence (ABS, 2017). Under the Fair Work Act (2009, s 106A-106E; 107), family and domestic violence is defined as:

Violent, threatening or other abusive behaviour by an employee's close relative that:

- Seeks to coerce or control the employee.
- Causes them harm or fear.

A close relative is:

An employee's:

- Spouse or former spouse.
- De facto partner or former de facto partner.
- Child.
- Parent.
- Grandparent.
- Grandchild.
- Sibling.
- An employee's current or former spouse or de facto partner's child, parent, grandparent, grandchild or sibling, or
- a person related to the employee according to Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander kinship rules.

Over the last decade, there has been increasing recognition that DFV is a workplace issue. DFV not only impacts on victim-survivors' participation in the workforce but also their work performance. Workplaces can be common sites of DFV with perpetrators targeting victim-survivors through abusive emails and phone calls and attending victim-survivors' workplaces. Furthermore, there is growing consensus that workplaces can play a critical role in responding to DFV through supporting employees affected by DFV (see, among others, Australian Human Rights Commission, 2020, 2021; Champions of Change Coalition, 2021; KPMG, 2016; McCarthy, 2018; Tolman, 2011).

Access to leave (unpaid and paid) has emerged as one of the potentially critical supports that employers can provide to DFV victim-survivors. DFV leave provisions embed workplace recognition that employees may need time off work if they, or a close relative, are experiencing any forms of DFV and contribute to creating a safe and supportive workplace environment for employees experiencing DFV (McNicol, 2021). At present, there is no legislated requirement for Australian workplaces to offer paid DFV leave, and over the past five years there has been significant variance in practice across Australian public and private sectors (McNicol, 2021).

BACKGROUND TO THIS PROJECT

In 2018, the Fair Work Commission varied 123 modern awards to include an employee entitlement to five days of unpaid family and domestic violence leave ([2018] FWCFB 1691). At the time, the decision of the Full Bench concluded that:

We have decided to provide five days' unpaid leave to employees experiencing family and domestic violence, if the employee needs to do something to deal with the impact of that violence and it is impractical for them to do it outside their ordinary hours of work. We have decided to defer our consideration of whether employees should be able to access paid personal/carer's leave for the purpose of taking family and domestic violence leave. ([2018] FWCFB 1691, at 307).

This amendment occurred as part of the legislative requirement on the Fair Work Commission to conduct a review of all modern awards every four years (Fair Work Act 2009 Cth, section 156). In the lead-up to the 2018 amendment, the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) advocated for the introduction of 10 days paid domestic violence leave in all modern awards. This proposal was opposed by some employer parties on both jurisdiction and merit grounds ([2018] FWCFB 1691) and was rejected in a decision issued by Vice President Watson in February 2017 ([2017] FWCFB 1133).

At the time of the 2018 amendment, the Fair Work Commission committed to reviewing domestic and family violence leave entitlements in June 2021, three years after the new model term was introduced. It was foreshadowed that this review should consider:

- Whether employees should be able to access paid personal/carer's leave for the purpose of taking family and domestic violence leave.
- The adequacy of the unpaid family and domestic violence leave entitlement.
- Whether provisions should be made for paid family and domestic violence leave.

THIS STUDY

This project comprises part of the Fair Work Commission's Family and Domestic Violence Leave Review (FDV Review), which commenced with a Statement on 15 April 2021 ([2021] FWCFB 2047). In September 2021, the Monash project team was contracted by the Fair Work Commission to undertake qualitative research examining employees' experiences of DFV by exploring their access to family violence leave and other workplace supports. As such, this project is specifically focused on gaining insight into the views and experiences of Australian victim-survivors.

In conducting this study, we acknowledge the objectives of the Fair Work Act (Cth, section 3), which is to 'provide a balanced framework for cooperative and productive workplace relations that promotes national economic prosperity and social inclusion for all Australians'. The legislation sets out that this should be achieved by:

- (a) Providing workplace relations laws that are fair to working Australians, are flexible for businesses, promote productivity and economic growth for Australia's future economic prosperity and take into account Australia's international labour obligations.
- (b) Ensuring a guaranteed safety net of fair, relevant and enforceable minimum terms and conditions through the National Employment Standards, modern awards and national minimum wage orders.
- (c) Ensuring that the guaranteed safety net of fair, relevant and enforceable minimum wages and conditions can no longer be undermined by the making of statutory individual employment agreements of any kind given that such agreements can never be part of a fair workplace relations system.
- (d) Assisting employees to balance their work and family responsibilities by providing for flexible working arrangements.
- (e) Enabling fairness and representation at work and the prevention of discrimination by recognising the right to freedom of association and the right to be represented, protecting against unfair treatment and discrimination, providing accessible and effective procedures to resolve grievances and disputes, and providing effective compliance mechanisms.
- (f) Achieving productivity and fairness through an emphasis on enterprise-level collective bargaining underpinned by simple good faith bargaining obligations and clear rules governing industrial action.
- (g) Acknowledging the special circumstances of small and medium-sized businesses. (Fair Work Act, Cth, section 3).

In addition to the objectives of the Fair Work Act, this study also takes into consideration the role and objective of the modern awards, as set out in section 134(1) of the Fair Work Act (Clth). The modern awards objective is to:

Together with the National Employment Standards, provide a fair and relevant minimum safety net of terms and conditions, taking into account:

- (a) Relative living standards and the needs of the low paid.
- (b) The need to encourage collective bargaining.
- (c) The need to promote social inclusion through increased workforce participation.
- (d) The need to promote flexible modern work practices and the efficient and productive performance of work.
- (e) The principle of equal remuneration for work of equal or comparable value.
- (f) The likely impact of any exercise of modern award powers on business, including on productivity, employment costs and the regulatory burden.
- (g) The need to ensure a simple, easy-to-understand, stable and sustainable modern award system for Australia that avoids unnecessary overlap of modern awards.
- (h) The likely impact of any exercise of modern award powers on employment growth, inflation and the sustainability, performance and competitiveness of the national economy. (Fair Work Act, Clth, s 134).

THIS REPORT

This report seeks to inform the Fair Work Commission's review of the DFV leave entitlements in modern awards. The research presents a largely qualitative analysis of the views and experiences of employees who are victim-survivors of DFV. The key study findings are presented as five key thematic categories:

- The impact of domestic and family violence on employees at work.
- Family violence leave.
- The impact of workplace culture.
- Beyond leave provisions: additional workplace supports provided by employees' workplaces.
- Support services that employees accessed outside of their workplaces.

In presenting the key findings, we draw on the views and expertise of the 302 survey respondents and 42 interview participants who contributed to this project. This report commits to privileging the experience and expertise of victim-survivors, and, as such, their voices are embedded throughout this report.

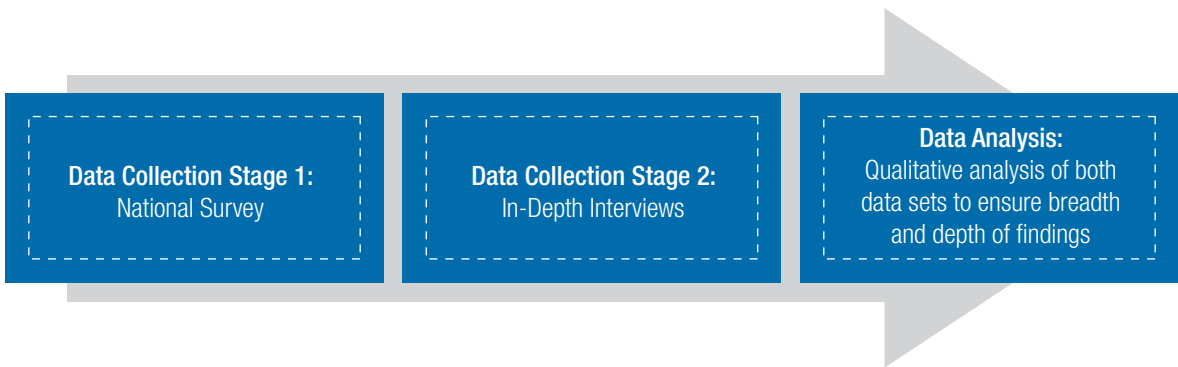


This study sought to be inclusive of the views of all individuals with lived experience of DFV whose work lives were affected by DFV, including those who had sought access to leave provisions and/or other supports within their workplaces.

2. RESEARCH DESIGN

The data collection for this study involved a multi-methods approach combining a national survey (to allow for breadth of views to be captured) and in-depth interviews (to allow for depth of views to be captured). This approach allows the research to capture victim-survivor employee views and experiences and use these to inform the wider review of the Fair Work Commission. The project's key findings are relevant to all Australian states and territories.

FIGURE 1: DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS PROCESS



All data collection for this project was conducted over November and December 2021.

This study sought to be inclusive of the views of all individuals with lived experience of DFV whose work lives were affected by DFV, including those who had sought access to leave provisions and/or other supports within their workplaces. Within this, we recognise that women are disproportionately impacted by domestic and family violence (ABS, 2017), and by extension the focus of this review is likely to have been considered more relevant to women employees. Men are also impacted, albeit at reduced levels (ABS, 2017). We also acknowledge that the evidence base for how LGBTQIA+ people, women with disability and First Nations communities experience DFV violence policies and practices in the workplace is underdeveloped (Champions of Change Coalition, 2021). The experiences of these diverse victim-survivor groups may also be differently mediated by industry, age, employment type and other structural variables.

STAGE 1: SURVEY

An online survey was used to gain insight into the workplace experiences of individuals with lived experience of DFV. The survey included a combination of demographic and open-ended questions. The questions invited participants to reflect on:

- The impact that experiences of domestic and family violence had on them at work.
- The support provided by their workplace and any additional support that they believe may have been useful.
- The types of support services and systems that they accessed (outside work).

This survey design allowed for victim-survivors' views to be analysed as a whole, as well as by industry group, age, gender, disability, sexual orientation, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, and/or culturally and linguistically diverse community membership.

The survey was conducted using Qualtrics software, which is licensed to Monash University and has a high degree of security that ensures data protection. This research received approval from the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC),¹ and the survey was undertaken in a way that was consistent with the ethical principles of informed consent and confidentiality.

Australians over the age of 18 who had experienced DFV were invited to participate anonymously in the survey (see Appendix A for a full copy of the survey instrument). Questions about demographic information were included at the outset and conclusion of the survey. The survey then included a mix of multiple choice and open-ended questions designed to elicit information about victim-survivors' experiences of participating in the workforce, accessing leave entitlements and family violence leave specifically, other DFV workplace supports, and supports accessed external to the workplace. The survey was promoted via a range of platforms, including social media (Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn), relevant national and state-based organisations.

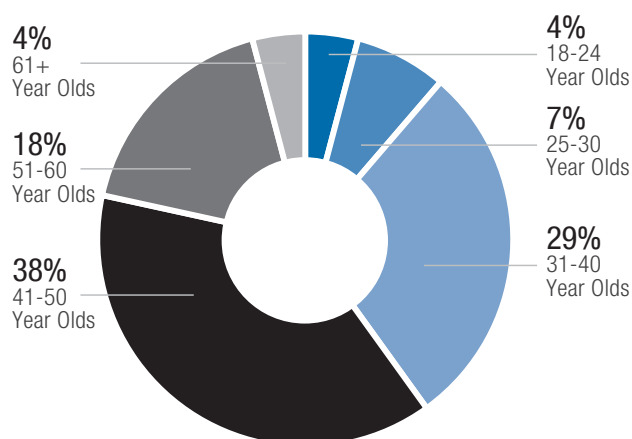
SURVEY RESPONDENTS

A total of 302 victim-survivors completed the online survey. Survey respondents could choose to answer some or all of the survey questions. The survey included a series of questions to gather data on the demographics of the victim-survivor participants and their employment profile. Here, we provide a demographic snapshot of the victim-survivors who participated in the survey.

AGE:

The most common age groups for the respondents who completed the survey were 41-50 years old (38.4%, n=112), 31-40 years old (29%, n=84) and 51-60 years old (17.5%, n=51). Only a small proportion of respondents were 25-30 years old (7.2%, n=21), 18-24 years old (4.1%, n=12) and 60 years or above (4.1%, n=12).

CHART 1: AGE OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

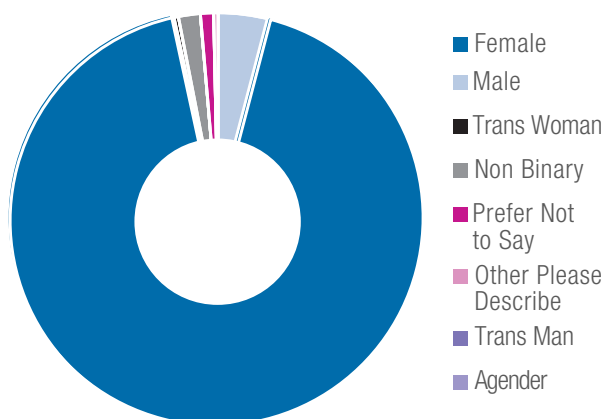


1 Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee project ID: 30404.

GENDER IDENTITY:

The majority of survey respondents identified as female (92.5%, n=272). A small proportion of survey respondents identified as male (4.1%, n=12), non-binary (1.7%, n=5) and trans woman (0.3%, n=1). Four participants did not disclose their gender identity (1%).

CHART 2: GENDER IDENTITY OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

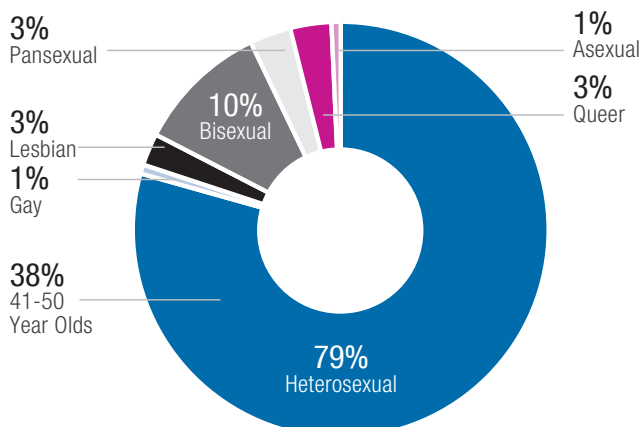


SEXUAL ORIENTATION:

The majority of respondents identified as heterosexual (79.4%, n=223). Other survey respondents identified as:

- Bisexual (10.3%, n=29)
- Queer (3.2%, n=9)
- Pansexual (3.2%, n=9)
- Lesbian (2.5%, n=7)
- Gay (0.7%, n=2)
- Asexual (0.7%, n=2)

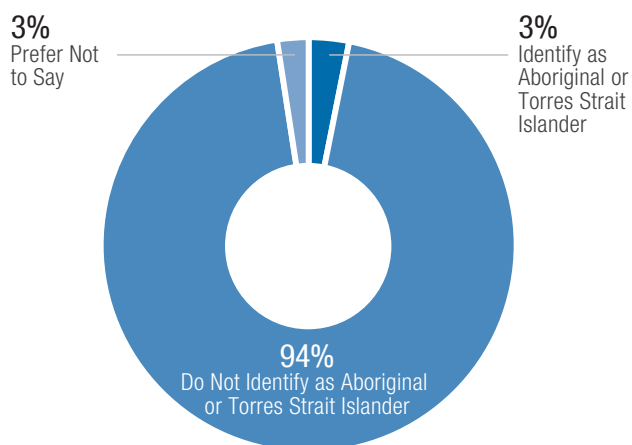
CHART 3: SEXUAL ORIENTATION OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS



ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES:

Of the 302 participants who completed the survey, nine people (3.14%) identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. 271 survey respondents did not identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (94.5%), and seven survey respondents selected 'prefer not to say' (2.4%).

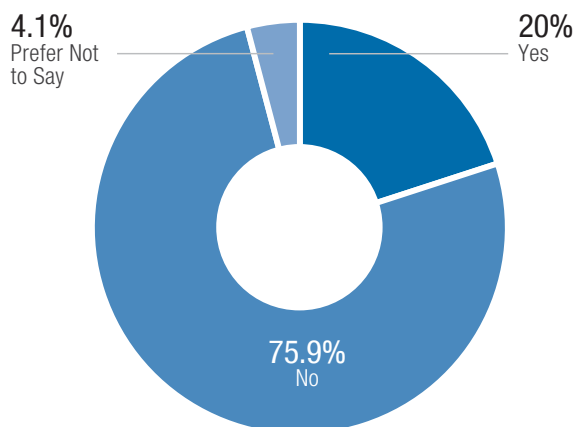
CHART 4: SURVEY RESPONDENTS WHO IDENTIFY AS ABORIGINAL OR TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER



RESPONDENTS WITH A DISABILITY:

20 per cent of survey respondents identified as having a disability (31.88%, n=22). 75.9 per cent of survey respondents do not have/live with a disability (n=148) and eight survey respondents selected 'prefer not to say' (4.1%).

CHART 5: SURVEY RESPONDENTS WITH A DISABILITY



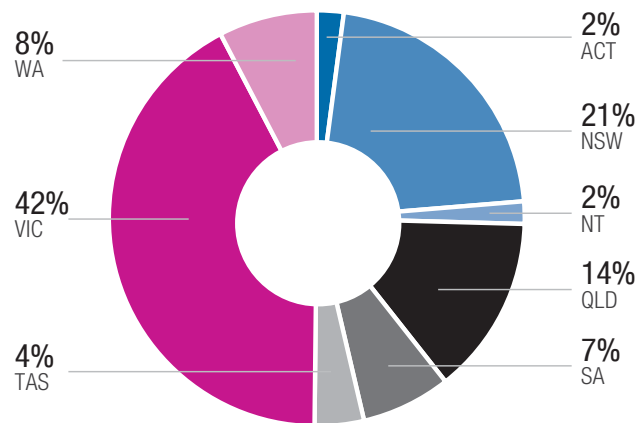
Survey respondents were invited to select what type of disability they had and could select as many options as applied. Of the 22 survey respondents that identified as having a disability, 11 respondents had a physical impairment and 20 identified as having poor mental health affecting day-to-day functioning. Other survey respondents identified as having acquired brain injury (n=3) and autism spectrum disorder (n=2). There were two respondents that selected 'prefer not to say'.

STATE AND TERRITORY LOCATION:

The survey was completed by respondents from every Australian state and territory, with the majority of survey respondents living in Victoria (42.2%) and New South Wales (21.6%). Representation among survey respondents from other states and territories was:

- Queensland (13.9%)
- Western Australia (7.7%)
- South Australia (7%)
- Tasmania (3.8%)
- Australian Capital Territory (2.09%)
- Northern Territory (1.7%)

CHART 6: SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY STATE AND TERRITORY LOCATION

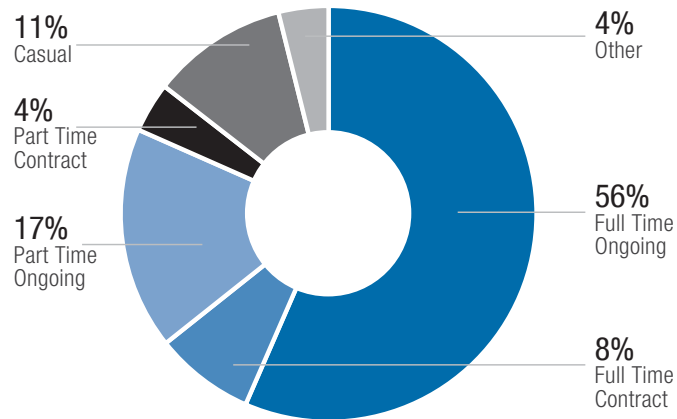


Survey respondents also selected whether they live in a metropolitan, rural, regional or remote area. The majority of survey respondents were from metropolitan locations (63.1%). 22.1 per cent of survey respondents live in a regional area, 13.8 per cent live in a rural area, and 1 per cent live in a remote area.

Given the focus of this study, beyond these demographic questions, survey respondents were also invited to select the type of employment they had at the time of their experience of DFV, and the industry within which they were employed. The majority of survey respondents were employed in full-time ongoing work (56.5%). Other types of employment among survey respondents were:

- Part-time ongoing (17.3%)
- Casual (10.6%)
- Full-time contract (7.8%)
- Part-time contract (3.9%)
- Other (3.9%)

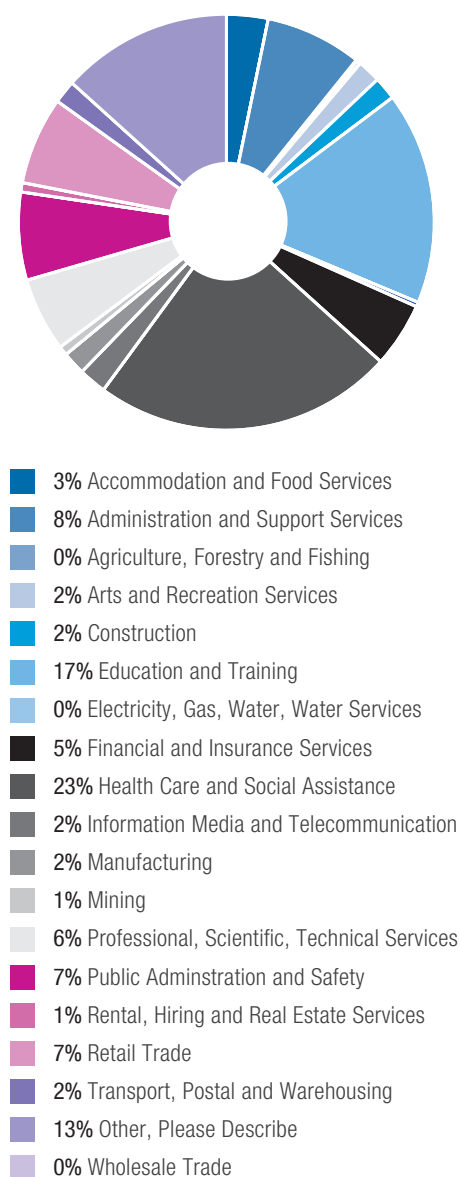
CHART 7: SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY EMPLOYMENT TYPE



INDUSTRY EMPLOYED:

Survey respondents were provided with a list of Australian industries and invited to select which industry they were employed in during their experience of DFV. Just under a quarter of survey respondents were employed in the healthcare and social assistance industry (23.4%). The other most frequent industries that respondents selected were education and training (16.5%), public administration and safety (6.8%), retail trade (6.8%), and financial and insurance services (5%). 13.3 per cent of survey respondents selected other and were invited to describe the industry they were employed in.

CHART 8: SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY INDUSTRY EMPLOYED



STAGE 2: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

To supplement the survey data, all survey participants were asked if they consent to being contacted for a follow-up telephone or Zoom interview with a member of the research team. Interviews were conducted with a smaller number of victim-survivors to gain more detailed insight into their views and experiences of accessing family violence leave and additional workplace supports. Survey participants that identified a willingness to participate in a follow-up interview were contacted via their preferred method (phone call, text message or email) by a member of the Monash project team.

Interviews were conducted individually over November and December 2021. Specifically, interviews were conducted with 42 victim-survivors of DFV, including three individuals who provided written submissions (via email) to the thematic interview questions. All individuals were provided with the option to participate in their interview via phone or Zoom. The small number of individuals who were unable to schedule an interview during the period of data collection were given the opportunity to provide written responses to each of the overarching interview questions.

The interviews were semi-structured. A thematic interview guide was developed and kept deliberately broad to allow for each of the interviews to be tailored to the expertise and experience of the participating victim-survivor (see Appendix B for a copy of the Thematic Interview Guide). These questions were intended to be a guide rather than a firm schedule, and interview facilitators encouraged participants to provide all information that they believed was relevant to the review, even where this did not align directly with the questions posed. It was important to the project team that the review captured all policy and practice areas deemed relevant and important by the victim-survivor participants themselves, within and beyond those identified through the prepared questions.

All interview participants consented to the audio recording of their interview. Following completion of the interview, all recordings were sent for professional transcription and a copy of the full interview transcript was obtained by the Monash project team to facilitate the identification of key themes and findings within and across the interviews.

Following completion of each interview, all participants received a follow-up email thanking them for their participation in the interview and providing them with a voucher to compensate them for their time and expertise. The follow-up email also contained a list of relevant support services to assist any individuals who may have wanted to debrief with a practitioner following the interview.

INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

Interviews were conducted with 42 participants. Of those, 95 per cent identified as female (n= 40), one as male, and one as a trans woman. The majority of interview participants were aged between 41-50 years (n=19, 45%), nine were aged between 31-40 years old (21.5%), eight between 51-60 years old (19%), 4 between 25-30 years (n=9.5%), one interview participant was 61 years and over, and one between 18-24 years old. 37 interview participants identified as heterosexual (88%). Five interview participants identified as having disability (12%), 36 interview participants did not have disability (85%) and one interview participant chose not to say.

We are cognisant that the individuals who participated in this review represent those who were safe and able to do so, and we do not purport to suggest that the experiences of this group of victim-survivors are broadly representative of all victim-survivors seeking support and accessing leave through workplaces across Australia. Every effort was undertaken to ensure the diversity of victim-survivor advocates engaged through this stage of the consultation. However, we recognise that there were significant limits to what was achievable within the timeframe and through virtual platforms. This stage of the review intends to privilege the voices and expertise of victim-survivors in informing this Review. As such, we quote heavily from the interviews throughout this report.

DATA ANALYSIS

Following the data collection phase of this project, the demographic and multiple-choice survey questions were analysed in Qualtrics to facilitate quantitative analysis and to identify trends among survey participants. Data obtained through the open-ended survey questions was downloaded from Qualtrics, and a thematic analysis was undertaken alongside the corresponding interview data. Each of the individual interviews were audio recorded and transcribed in full to facilitate the identification of key themes and findings within and across the interviews. All transcripts were uploaded into NVivo qualitative analysis software to allow for thematic analysis. The inclusion of a series of open-ended questions in the survey elicited, in many cases, multi-sentence text responses from the participants who opted to respond to these questions. These open text responses were combined with the interview data during the analysis phase to form part of the thematic analysis. The qualitative open text survey and interview data is presented together throughout this Report.

In presenting the key themes and findings from the survey and interviews in this report, we have drawn heavily on the voices of the victim-survivors surveyed and interviewed. These are captured through the inclusion of direct quotes. These quotes and the key views of the victim-survivors who participated in this review have been de-identified, and pseudonyms have been given to all interview participants. Where possible, we have noted in our analysis whether a view was held by the majority of participants, by some of them, or by a small minority of survey respondents and/or interview participants.

ETHICAL DELIVERY OF VICTIM-SURVIVOR RESEARCH

This project was carried out by researchers from the Monash Gender and Family Violence Prevention Centre with substantive expertise in DFV, and in conducting ethical research with victim-survivors of DFV. Careful attention was paid to the wellbeing and safety of the victim-survivors involved at each stage of the project. The victim-survivors interviewed were not asked to detail their overall experiences of violence; rather, the focus of the survey and interview questions was on the impact that their experiences had on their engagement with work, and their experiences with accessing employee supports and leave provisions. A range of support services (e.g. state-based and national DFV helplines and specialist support services) was provided on the participant information sheet provided to participants at the beginning of the survey and following their participation in an interview.



3. KEY FINDINGS

The key findings from this project are presented here according to the five key thematic focuses which guided the design of the survey instrument and interview guide, and which subsequently emerged as key focuses of the thematic data analysis. The five key themes are:

1. The impact of domestic and family violence on employees at work
2. Family violence leave
3. The impact of workplace culture
4. Beyond leave provisions: additional workplace supports provided by employees' workplace
5. Supports accessed by employees outside of their workplace

The presentation of the key findings does not attempt to be industry specific. We have looked across the experiences of Australian victim-survivors who were employed in a range of different industries (see earlier Chart 8, page 15). Where possible we have identified the industry that the survey respondent identified as having been employed in at the time of their experience of DFV. The value of looking broadly at Australian victim-survivors experiences of workplace support and leave provisions is that it mirrors the wide remit of the Fair Work Commission's review and the applicability of any decision made to all modern awards. Where relevant we have highlighted instances of good/best practice that was shared by victim-survivors and also identified concerning practices that were experienced by victim-survivors across a range of workplaces.

4. THE IMPACT OF DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE ON EMPLOYEES AT WORK

Domestic violence basically ended my career as my abuser would threaten my clients and colleagues and I couldn't risk them being hurt so in the end I resigned. (Survey respondent, female, financial and insurance services)

It massively impacted my confidence and I was just so busy staying alive that I couldn't give my full effort to work. (Survey respondent, female, education and training)

Domestic and family violence has a significant impact on employees' abilities to attend work, to meaningfully engage in work, to fulfill the expectations of their role, and to participate in the workplace environment. While the focus of this project was to understand victim-survivors' experiences of accessing family violence leave and other supports within and beyond the workplace, the survey and interviews also gathered significant qualitative information which documented the impact of DFV on employees' ability to work more generally. Respondents to the online survey were also able to respond to open ended questions and provide in-depth written answers, which in addition to the interviews are presented throughout the report. Four key levels of impact emerged from these data, each of which are explored here in turn:

- Impact on ability to attend work.
- Impact on meaningful engagement in work and fulfilment of role expectations.
- Impact on participation in the workplace environment.
- Impact on career progression.

The significant impacts that the experiences of DFV have on employees at work highlights the need to ensure that meaningful and effective supports are put in place to negate, where possible, the impacts of experiences of DFV and to support individuals to remain safe and engaged in work.

There were a small number of survey respondents and interview participants who reflected on their workplace as a safe haven – and, in some cases, a welcome distraction – during their experiences of DFV. These participants described their workplaces as safe places to be and often noted the importance of trusted relationships with other work colleagues. As two survey respondents described:

My work saved me. I could focus on it. It was my strength ... I worked almost every day. I had a couple of really close friends at work. (Survey respondent, female, education and training)

My work family rallied around me often. Some attended court to provide evidence. Some wrote statements. They covered for me (in terms of keeping things going) whilst I was absent. (Survey respondent, female, professional, scientific, technical services)

Positive experiences were, however, few and far between in the experiences shared through the survey and interviews. As the following section encapsulates, for the majority of survey respondents and interview participants engagement in work during their experience of DFV presented numerous challenges.

IMPACT ON ABILITY TO ATTEND WORK

In their descriptions of the impact that DFV had on their involvement in paid work, numerous survey respondents noted that in many instances the impacts of violence and/or injuries sustained from an assault meant that they were unable to attend work, often at short notice and typically without proper explanation. As two survey respondents commented:

I was unable to go to work, and people at my work often commented that I missed work a lot. Questions were asked, but I felt it was a secret I had to hide. I became withdrawn ... I feel my managers thought I was becoming a lazy or troubled employee, because of my absenteeism. However, I didn't feel I could be honest with them about the reasons for my absences because of the stigma surrounding domestic violence (Survey respondent, female, transport, postal and warehousing)

I couldn't go because I was ashamed of black eyes and bruises ... I didn't go because I hid at home. (Survey respondent, female, retail trade)

Notably, absence from work can extend well into the relationship separation phase and into the recovery from DFV phase for victim-survivors. Survey respondents described the ways in which the trauma of DFV impacted on their wellbeing and meant that they were not always able to turn up to work. As one survey respondent explained:

I found it very difficult to show up to work regularly in an emotionally stable way. I did manage to most of the time but at times I had to call in sick because I couldn't pull myself together to go to work. When I was at work, I would feel very disassociated at times and as though I could not complete my job well. (Survey respondent, female, hospitality)

An understanding of the ways in which experiences of DFV can impact on an employees' attendance - let alone participation - in the workplace are needed to ensure trauma informed supports are built into workplace responses to worker absence in this context.

IMPACT ON MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT IN WORK AND FULFILMENT OF ROLE EXPECTATIONS

It got so bad I was sleeping in my car and didn't feel safe performing my role anymore. I stopped working due to not being able to ensure patient safety from error. (Survey respondent, female, healthcare and social assistance)

For those employees who were able to attend work, their meaningful engagement in the workplace and their ability to fulfill the requirements of their roles were significantly impacted by their experiences of DFV. This was evident from the experiences shared across the survey and interviews, where numerous participants noted that the psychological impacts of living with DFV impacted upon their ability to concentrate at work, to focus on a task and to deliver workplace outcomes. As three survey respondents explained:

My ability to perform to a satisfactory and professional level at work decreased until I had to leave employment. I would have a lot of time off work, be physically sick at work as well as emotional and would cry easily. (Survey respondent, female, healthcare and social assistance)

Made my days a lot more stressful, constantly thinking about it. Hard to concentrate at times, constantly worrying. (Survey respondent, female, professional, scientific, technical services)

Found it very hard to get through the day. Had ongoing flashbacks, high anxiety and would often have to go to the bathroom as I would have a panic attack. (Survey respondent, female, healthcare and social assistance)

The implications of this were particularly challenging for those victim-survivors who did not disclose what they were experiencing to any members of their workplace, as it meant that often inaccurate assumptions about the workers were made. As two survey participants explained:

I could not bring my full self to my work. I was unable to perform tasks I would normally do with ease due to ongoing anxiety and depression that I developed over a period of about a year ... I did not feel I could talk honestly about what was happening with me. I did not feel I could ask for support of that I was entitled to. I appeared lazy and distracted to my workmates and towards management. They lost faith in my ability to perform. (Survey respondent, female, electricity, gas, water, waste services)

I worried people would judge me for being flaky and tired and panicked where usually I had been reliable. I tried to be open about my experience but professional. (Survey respondent, female, administrative and support services)

These reflections reveal the challenge that arises where an individual's ability to perform in their role or presence within the workplace is significantly hindered due to their experience of DFV, but where the employer does not have that important contextual information. While it is not incumbent on an employee to disclose their experience of DFV – nor should it be an expectation of an employee to do so – this does underscore the need for workplaces to create culturally safe and trauma-informed environments in which disclosures can take place and suitable working arrangements can be put in place to facilitate a victim-survivor's continuation in their role. The range of support policies and practices that survey respondents and interview participants referred to are explored in detail in Section 7.

IMPACT ON PARTICIPATION IN THE WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT

One time I was so upset I cried to my boss in front of other workers. I felt it was better to do the shifts where I worked alone so I could cry or yell without anyone seeing me. I didn't want to be the worker with all the dramas. (Survey respondent, female, healthcare and social assistance)

Beyond an individual's ability to perform the duties of their role, numerous survey respondents and interview participants reflected on how their experience of DFV impacted on their ability to engage socially in the workplace environment. In several instances, survey respondents described that due to their ongoing experiences of violence, they felt unable to engage in conversations and interactions with work colleagues for fear of how they might react to a personal question. As two survey respondents explained:

I feel at times I was very withdrawn from wanting to interact with others at work. If something had happened recently, I was worried people might ask me how I am or how things are at home in case I ended up crying or reacting at work. (Survey respondent, female, hospitality)

I had very little ability to foster and maintain working relationships as I had to use my limited energy and mental capacity to get the job done. I didn't feel safe to disclose to anyone at work either which left me incredibly isolated and lonely. (Survey respondent, female, financial and insurance services)

Other survey respondents reflected on their hyper vigilance of their partners' controlling behaviour and fear that if they were to engage with male colleagues, they would be accused of relationship infidelity. As one survey respondent described:

I worked in a male-dominated field and was always being accused of having affairs. It made it difficult to have proper relationships with my work colleagues. (Survey respondent, female, professional, scientific, technical services)

This experience links back to the earlier discussion on tactics often used by perpetrators to socially isolate their victim and create a dependency upon them. It is also a reflection of the jealous and controlling perpetrator behaviour that is often evidenced in the context of an abusive intimate partner relationship (Boxall and Morgan, 2021).

IMPACT ON CAREER PROGRESSION

It ended that career, and I am still rebuilding my energy and confidence towards a new career two years on. I did not disclose what was happening for me at the time to my work despite having a DFV leave policy because I felt strongly that it would be considered a mark against me in the workplace. (Survey respondent, female, professional, scientific, technical services)

It has totally destroyed my career as a teacher. I currently don't work and feel like I'll never be able to get back into the job. I have zero self-confidence left. (Survey respondent, female, education and training)

The experiences of survey respondents and interview participants clearly demonstrated the significant impacts that experiences of DFV have on career progression. Survey respondents reflected on the missed career opportunities that had occurred at numerous levels and the ways in which absence from the workplace during experiences of violence had impacted their overall career trajectory. As three survey respondents described:

It significantly altered it [my career]. I was unable to finish my grad degree. I was unable to take roles with high responsibility as I needed the flexibility and to be close to pick up. I knew I didn't have a second set of hands to rely on anymore. It kept us in poverty. (Susan)

I was unable to progress in my career ... And was continued to be refused promotions after experiencing family violence. (Survey respondent, female, policing)

I feel like I'm ten years behind where I wanted to be/ could have been. I wanted to do postgraduate study in my 30s – not done. I could have done so much more at work. I was self-employed for 16 years up until the first trial in 2014, I used my company to fund all my legal costs. I lost my company as I rendered it close to bankrupt. My employees lost their jobs. (Survey respondent, female, manufacturing)

Other survey respondents expressed similar experiences:

It meant I wasn't considered for promotional opportunities nor did I have the confidence or capacity to step up and progress my career, it took me five years from escaping family violence to make it back to permanent, full-time, ongoing steady employment without any ongoing health/psychological/social/emotional aftershocks undermining me and being able to be stable and confident to focus on my career and develop myself. (Survey respondent, female, arts and recreation services)

I had to leave the job I loved and a program I developed and implemented. I lost significant pay and superannuation related to a change of job ... I was unable to retain private health insurance and extras, also meaning the loss of benefits of having ongoing extras cover from age 21. I also lost a promotional opportunity which I was well placed for and had been mentored to undertake. This would have offered significant career progression opportunities as well as substantial financial incentives. (Survey respondent, female, justice)

Numerous survey respondents attributed the loss of their job to their experience of DFV, for either direct or indirect reasons. As two survey respondents commented:

I was told my contract would not be renewed because I clearly couldn't manage my personal life. (Survey respondent, female, financial and insurance services)

My contract was not renewed, and I think this was a major contributing reason. (Survey respondent, female, professional, scientific, technical services)

These experiences are particularly concerning for a number of reasons. Research has consistently demonstrated that engagement in paid work outside of the home can lessen a victim-survivor's risk of future violence as it increases their financial independence from their perpetrator, and their likelihood to safely separate from the abusive relationship (see, among others, Cortis and Bullen, 2015; Hughes and Brush, 2015).

Several survey respondents shared the belief that their earlier disclosures of DFV victimisation had impacted the way in which they were viewed in the workplace and ultimately contributed to their career progression or ending (in some instances). As one survey respondent described:

People saw me have a breakdown at work from [my] ex-husbands abuse, and I lost credibility because of this and lost work opportunities. I was told that I should never have let other people know or see the impact DV had on me as I was not offered a job because of this and my future employment opportunities would be impacted. (Survey respondent, female, education and training)

This viewpoint reflects why fear of stigma impedes a victim-survivor's willingness to disclose their experience of DFV. It also highlights the need to ensure that the expansion of any family violence leave policies or workplace supports do not support workplace scenarios whereby the policies encourage disclosure, but the workplace culture informally punishes those that step forward.

PERPETRATOR WORKPLACE DISRUPTION

Acknowledgment of the impact of experiences of DFV on victim-survivors' involvement in work was also closely tied to descriptions in the survey and through the interviews of the ways in which perpetrators utilise workplace disruption as a tactic to further their abuse and coercive control. While the survey and interviews did not ask specifically about the different behaviours that perpetrators engaged in to limit workforce participation or to maximise workplace disruption, responses to the open-ended questions often elicited these details. The range of ways in which a perpetrator may seek to disrupt their partner's engagement in work is well-captured in the experience of one survey respondent:

My ex-husband intentionally set out to destroy my career, to stop me working – he wanted me to be completely dependent on him financially and to further isolate me. He would get into my emails without me knowing and send replies to colleagues and clients that made no sense that made me look stupid. He was telling people in the industry that I was a drug addict, that I was having affairs behind his back, that I was severely mentally ill, that I was a neglectful mother – being in a management position this was devastating to my reputation. Every time I had an important meeting, he would keep me up all night yelling and arguing so I would be overwhelmed and not at my best the next day hoping that I would fail ... I was no longer able to work due to the relentless domestic violence. (survey respondent, female, mining)

Isolating an individual from family, friends and community is a well-established tactic of coercive and controlling perpetrators, and one which is often associated with a perpetrator's desire to stop their partner from engaging in work outside the family home. Numerous survey respondents reflected on the ways in which their partners had sought to minimise or stop altogether their engagement in paid work. As one survey respondent commented:

For most of the relationship with my abusive ex, I was not allowed to work. I had a couple of part-time positions but never lasted long as he forced me to quit ... I was constantly accused of sleeping with co-workers. I was not allowed to speak to any colleagues outside of work. (survey respondent, female, administrative and support services)

The impacts of an individual's retreat from work are two-fold – not only do they achieve the perpetrator's goal to further control and isolate their victim, but they also exacerbate the financial insecurity of DFV victim-survivors.

For those victim-survivors who did remain in the workforce, restricting a person's sleep the night before work was a tactic used by perpetrators, as noted by several victim-survivors who participated in the survey, captured in the following excerpts:

My abuser didn't want me working. He would keep me up all night before knowing I had a shift. I 99% managed to still do my job effectively, but there [were] times my brain couldn't function as it should. He would harass me constantly at work via text or email, with ramification if I didn't reply. He would try to get me to do something naughty (sexually) at work with anyone. (Survey respondent, female, healthcare and social assistance)

I was constantly tired from being kept up for all hours of the night while he berated me, called me names, verbally abused me, blackmailed me and played psychological games with me, this impacted on my work. He called me constantly and [would] SMS me at work, if I did not answer, he would call [my] work phone or drive to my workplace (an hour and a half from home). (Survey respondent, female, healthcare and social assistance)

As captured here, several survey respondents also noted the wide range of behaviours that perpetrators engaged in to threaten their partner's meaningful participation in work and to undermine working relationships. As one survey respondent described:

I'd be allowed to sleep for two hours a night, the rest of the time he'd keep me awake yelling at me. If I tried to leave to sleep at work or in a motel he'd sit on the bonnet of my car and/ or threaten to take my children from me. I'd be exhausted. I had to beg on my knees in front of my children to be "allowed" to go to work ... He'd yell at me or take me on long drives to prevent me working at home ... He'd ring me at work to demand to know where [I was] and when I was coming home. This meant I could hardly speak with colleagues after classes and had to rush from the lecture theatre straight home. He once made me ring my manager because he believed I was being paid too much. He then took the phone and spoke directly to my manager that my contract hours were too high and she should not approve payment for the hours I had worked. I've had to do work – including sending work emails – sitting on the bathroom floor as he tried to bash it down. (Survey respondent, female, education and training)

As captured here, for those victim-survivors that did remain in the workforce, several survey respondents and interview participants reflected on the behaviours that the perpetrator would engage in to disrupt their meaningful participation in the workplace. This included repeated phone calls, constant text messages and last-minute changing of childcare arrangements. As captured in the experiences of numerous survey respondents:

My perpetrator would come to my workplace even when requested not to do that. He continuously contacted me on my work email address. I was always hyper alert whenever the doors opened, or a car would come into the car park. I was a nervous wreck. (Survey respondent, female, education and training)

Constant distraction due to in excess of 20 abusive texts per day and trying to hide this from supervisors. (Survey respondent, female, public administration and safety)

The perpetrator telephoned me on my work phone constantly, as I changed my private phone numbers. Was sometimes unable to attend work due to his late-night stalking at my home. Had to leave work one day as he threatened to set fire to my house. Generally, stressed and not in the best state of mind to perform my duties due to lack of sleep, always looking over my shoulder. (Survey respondent, female, public administration and safety)

I had to step down to part time, and I was barely able to be productive while I was there ... He was stalking me and watching me while I worked. He would call my supervisor and tell them I was sick, and they should send me home. He would bring the children to work and leave them with me because he wanted to go to the gym and couldn't wait an hour until I finished work. He accused my supervisors of sleeping with me. It was a nightmare. (Survey respondent, female, retail trade)

These insights from victim-survivors are critical in that they so clearly illustrate the ways in which women's insecurities in the home coalesce with their workplaces. As Australian workplaces – across all industries – move to offer greater commitments in policy and practice to supporting the needs of DFV for victim-survivors, there is a critical need to ensure all staff are equipped with basic DFV literacy training to ensure they can identify perpetrator workplace disruption behaviours and support the primary aggressor, where necessary and appropriated to do so.



5. FAMILY VIOLENCE LEAVE

I think the whole idea of family violence leave is just such a compassionate way to deal with people who are going through this because I think there's got to be a realisation of the effect ... it seems to me that having family violence leave is a very compassionate acknowledgement of the awful effects of family violence on women in the workforce. (Bree, interview participant)

Access to and experiences of using DFV leave – both paid and unpaid – were extremely varied across the survey and interview samples. Focusing specifically on leave provisions, this section examines the presence and duration of family violence leave and conditions required to access leave, including the documentation required to access leave.

53 per cent of survey respondents (n= 162) reported that they did not have access to family violence leave during their experience of DFV. We note from the interview data that some victim-survivors were reflecting on experiences that predate the 2018 decision to include an employee entitlement to five days of unpaid family and domestic violence leave ([2018] FWCFB 1691).

Survey respondents who identified as not having access to family violence leave were employed in a range of industries, including financial and insurance services; rental, hiring and real estate services; retail trade; education and training; healthcare and social assistance; transport; postal and warehousing; agriculture, forestry and fishing; construction; manufacturing; administrative and support services; arts and recreation services; information media and telecommunication; and professional scientific and technical services. Likewise, there was significant spread across the capacity that individuals who did not have access to family violence leave were employed, including in full-time ongoing, part-time ongoing, full- and part-time contract, and casual roles.

When asked whether in hindsight access to family violence leave would have been helpful, numerous interview participants spoke at length about how the security of having paid leave would have made a difference to them. In particular, victim-survivors spoke about the value of having supported time away from work to plan for their safety and support their recovery. This viewpoint is captured in the comments of an interview participant, who explained:

I just needed some time to get myself together, my headspace, get some treatments, just to see where I am today. I just couldn't believe what was happening to me, because it was a number of assaults. It was just awful. (Bianca, interview participant)

Other participants drew comparisons between the existence of family violence leave policies and their own sense of safety, with one participant noting that had DFV leave been available, 'My daughter would feel safe. I would feel safe'. For these victim-survivors the lack of *paid* family violence leave was closely associated with their experiences of economic insecurity and financial dependence during and following their experience of DFV. Research has consistently evidenced the immediate and long-term financial impacts of intimate partner violence on the economic security of victim-survivors, particularly women (Cortis and Bullen, 2015).

In interrogating the availability, composition and accessibility of family violence leave, this section focuses predominately, herein, on the proportion of survey respondents and interview participants who had accessed family violence leave and who had family violence leave provisions within their workplace but chose not to access them.

AVAILABILITY OF FAMILY VIOLENCE LEAVE

If I didn't have access to [family violence] leave, I would have lost my job, I would have lost everything... I don't know if I would have survived ... [paid family violence leave] was my lifeline. (Soraya, interview participant)

Of the 203 survey respondents who responded to the question asking if they accessed DFV leave, 20.2 per cent (n = 41) had accessed family violence leave (paid or unpaid) while 28.1 per cent (n=57) selected that they accessed another form of leave during their experience of DFV. All survey respondents who accessed family violence leave were either employed in a full-time ongoing or part-time ongoing role. No casuals or contractors who responded to the survey reported having accessed family violence leave. This is an important finding as women in Australia are overrepresented among casual employees, a trend that has been exacerbated since the onset of the pandemic (Wood, Griffiths and Crowley, 2021).

For a small number of survey respondents and interview participants, their experience of accessing family violence leave and the support they received from their workplace following their disclosure was extremely positive. These respondents described workplaces where they felt supported, believed and valued. As three survey respondents commented:

My work was very supportive, so relationships were strengthened. (Survey respondent, female, financial and insurance services)

Due to him tracking my work contact details, I needed to inform my manager and colleagues to ensure I had an escape plan. They were extremely supportive, but I was new at that organisation and it wasn't the first impression I wanted to make! ... Fortunately, due to understanding management and colleagues, it didn't impact my career. (Survey respondent, female, education and training)

My work have been very understanding and supportive since I disclosed to them. There is a dv policy which gives me extra leave. (Survey respondent, female, higher education)

However, the majority of participants who accessed family violence leave still cited significant challenges associated with their participation in paid work and their ability to progress their careers during the period of victimisation. Essentially, it was extremely apparent from the open-ended responses provided that accessing paid family violence leave – in and of itself – did not ensure that victim-survivor engagement in work was unaffected by their experience. This is captured in the experiences described by two survey respondents:

People saw me have a breakdown at work from [my] ex-husband's abuse and I lost credibility because of this and lost work opportunities. I was told that I should never have let other people know or see the impact DV had on me as I was not offered a job because of this and my future employment opportunities would be impacted. (Survey respondent, female, education and training)

Increased difficulties with manager who didn't understand what I was going through. Late for work on occasion as I was attending to the children's needs and increased anxiety meant I was easily distracted. (Survey respondent, female, legal)

Survey respondents also shared anecdotes about workplaces that offered family violence leave but where the response by management was extremely unsupportive of the worker experiencing DFV, and, in some cases, was discriminatory. As one survey respondent described:

I was criticised by my boss for setting a bad example for my team, for being the sort of woman who lets herself be abused (this intensified when on one occasion I had to bring my kids to work after a serious assault). I was performance managed by HR as a result of that and chastised for bringing my personal issues to work. It was horrible. We had nowhere else to be collected from ... To keep my job, I had to hide what was happening and that meant going back to my perpetrator – so I did and copped another three years of bashing. (Survey respondent, female, financial and insurance services)

Understanding these experiences is critical as it highlights the need to ensure that any leave provisions and policies are accompanied by cultural change and trauma informed training on DFV that is needed to ensure the objectives of the provisions are met.

Related to this, unwillingness to disclose that they were experiencing DFV was also cited by survey respondents as a key reason for not accessing family violence leave. Respondents expressed fears of how their employers and/or colleagues would respond as well as a desire not to disclose that they were victim- survivors. As two survey respondents explained:

It was available but I didn't want [my] colleagues to know my business and to spread gossip. In an emergency situation I would just walk out of work or not turn up. (Survey respondent, female, education and training)

I didn't want to talk about it, acknowledge it or admit to it because I was afraid of being stigmatised and put out to pasture. (Survey respondent, female, information media and telecommunication)

Unwillingness to disclose victimisation to an employer in order to access DFV leave emerged as a key point of focus during the in-depth interviews. Numerous interview participants described workplaces where the culture was not conducive to safe disclosure, regardless of the leave provisions available.

21.7 per cent of survey respondents (n = 44) selected 'no' and were asked to provide their reason in response to the question of whether they accessed DFV leave. Analysis of the qualitative responses provided here demonstrated that over a quarter of these respondents were casual employees or on a contract at the time of their experience, and either did not have leave available to them or did not think they could access it. The challenges experienced by casual employees are well-captured by one survey respondent:

I have been unable to progress my career at all. I am limited to working casually because I need to drop everything at a moment's notice to deal with whatever abuse the abuser is hurling at me next. I have zero support from work very much due to being casual. (Survey respondent, female, health care and social assistance)

Understanding the precarity of casual workers is important in the context of the current review of family violence leave by the Fair Work Commission, as any changes to modern awards could be applied – in part or full – to all employees, including casual and contract employees.

For other survey respondents, while in hindsight they identified as victim- survivors of DFV, they reflected that at the time they were experiencing violence they did not view it as such and hence did not believe such leave was relevant to them. As two survey respondents commented:

I also didn't know at the time I was experiencing FV so I never knew I could access other services and financial support. (Survey respondent)

I didn't recognise it as DV at the time. (Survey respondent)

There was only one survey respondent who took unpaid family violence leave. All other survey respondents either did not access DFV leave, or they accessed paid leave.

DURATION OF FAMILY VIOLENCE LEAVE AVAILABLE

The length of the paid leave available to those survey respondents who responded that their workplace did offer paid leave ranged between one day and up to three months paid DFV leave.² The average number of paid DFV leave days cited as available to those survey respondents who could access paid DFV leave was 14 days. Noting the amount of paid DFV leave survey respondents were able to access, the survey also asked how many days of paid DFV leave survey respondents took due to their experience of DFV. The number of days taken ranged between one day and up to 90 days of paid DFV leave. Approximately one third of survey respondents selected that they fully exhausted their family violence leave provisions, while the remaining two thirds of participants noted that they had not exhausted the leave made available to them during their experience of DFV.

Over 60 per cent of the survey respondents that accessed family violence leave believed that the period of leave offered was sufficient. Of those who felt that the leave period offered was insufficient, there were extremely varied views on what would have been a sufficient period of family violence leave. The durations suggested ranged from 'longer than seven days' to 'years, the trauma lasts a lifetime', with a number of survey respondents in between suggesting between two weeks and a month. This viewpoint aligns with emerging best practice recommendations which propose a minimum of 10 to 14 days paid leave, and ideally the introduction of unlimited DFV leave (see, for example, McIlroy, 2021).

Several survey respondents noted the need for flexible and individualised judgment in determining the number of days to be made available for family violence leave. As two survey respondents commented:

It really depends on the severity. I was lucky this time but if it was severe and she needed more time in hospital five days would not have been suffice. (Survey respondent, female, local government)

I think it should accrue, I needed seven weeks in my situation however everyone's situation is different. (Survey respondent, female, manufacturing)

This viewpoint supports current practice in some workplaces where survey respondents referred to being able to access additional leave at the 'discretion' of their supervisor, on negotiation, and on 'an as needs basis'. There is emerging precedence for unlimited leave arrangements in the family violence leave space. In 2019, the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (CBA), for example, as part of a wider program of domestic violence work, announced that it would offer unlimited paid leave to employees affected by DFV. More recently, in 2021 the Business Council of Australia Chief Executive Jennifer Westacott called for paid family violence leave to become a universal employee right. In particular, Westacott praised companies that offered 10 days leave as a minimum and unlimited leave as the ideal approach.

² For several of the survey respondents, the number of paid leave days made available to them was provided in the survey responses as an estimate or recollection as opposed to a definitive number of days.

CONDITIONS TO ACCESS FAMILY VIOLENCE LEAVE

I didn't need to offer documentation, he saw my injuries. (Cathy)

Beyond the number of days made available, and whether the leave was paid or unpaid, the survey also asked individuals whether they were required to exhaust other leave provisions prior to accessing paid family violence leave, and whether documentation was required to substantiate the leave claim.

Of the 41 survey respondents who had accessed family violence leave (paid or unpaid), just under 15 per cent (14.6%, n = 6). There were also a number of survey respondents who explained that the family violence leave they accessed came out of their sick leave balance. Survey respondents who were required to exhaust other leave first worked across a range of industries, including healthcare and social assistance, financial and insurance services, public administration and safety, and information media and telecommunication.

Of those survey respondents who accessed family violence leave, just under half (46.2%, n= 19)) were required to provide documentation to support their leave request. For 53.7 per cent of survey respondents (n=22), no documentation was required to support their DFV leave request.

Survey respondents were invited to list what documentation they provided to their employees in order to access family violence leave. The range of documentation provided included:

- Copy of an intervention order.
- Letter from courts/court documents.
- Medical/doctor's certificate.
- Letter from legal counsel.
- Statutory declaration.
- Police report.
- Letter from psychologist and psychiatrist.

In many instances, it was unclear from the survey response received whether this was the *required* documentation or whether this was the specific documentation volunteered by the individual. In several circumstances, survey respondents listed numerous documents provided. However, it was not clear whether they submitted all these documents voluntarily to support their leave requests and/or whether these documents were considered sufficient evidence on the part of their employers.

The survey asked those participants who were required to provide documentation to support their request for DFV leave whether this impacted their decision to access this leave. For the vast majority of survey respondents, the documentation requirement did not impact on their decision to access leave (83.3%, n= 15). However, for a small percentage of survey respondents (16.7%, n=3), the documentation requirement was viewed as a barrier to accessing the leave provisions and for those employees who did seek to access DFV leave the documentation requirement was viewed negatively in hindsight. As one interview participant described:

I didn't really want that information [court documents etc] on the HR system... at that time I didn't feel like I had much of a choice. (Soraya)

The burden of providing “satisfactory” documentation in order to access DFV leave is well captured in the reflections of one survey respondent:

My Manager also refused my application for Domestic Leave for me to attend my AVO hearing, asking for a copy of my AVO as proof. After I provided this, I was asked to provide a letter from the Police to say that I attended my AVO hearing. When I could not get this information from the police, I was told I could take Annual Leave or Leave without pay. I had to take Annual Leave as I could not afford to take Leave without pay ... My AVO hearing got adjourned as my Ex-partner did not attend court as he was “sick” ... For my next AVO hearing I provided a court subpoena, as advised by my Union. After my AVO hearing I was harassed by my line manager and the Nurses Workforce Manager. I was again asked to prove that I attended my AVO hearing. I have the e-mail chain from my line manager, workforce manager and the Senior Manager requested that I provide this documentation, or I would not be granted Domestic Violence Leave ... When I had attend[ed] my family Court hearings they would print “court” on the roster for everyone in the Department to see. This was 2 years ago, and I have a copy of the roster. I subsequently contacted my Union to request that this not be made public as it was humiliating. Staff in the Department would ridicule me and ask why my court case was taking so long. Again, my personal information was made public. I had to endure 8 years of bullying and harassment. (survey respondent, female, Health Care and Social Assistance)

While this project did not determine the extent to which workplaces across Australia impose conditions upon an employee’s access to DFV, it does point to the challenges that arise where documentation is required prior to a DFV leave request approval. The recent report of the Champions of Change Coalition (2021: 31) noted that, ‘[m]inimising supporting documents required to access support can also remove a potential barrier to employees seeking support.’ Such processes are arguably at odds with a trauma informed approach of ensuring that victim-survivors feel believed and validated upon disclosure of their experience.



6. THE IMPACT OF WORKPLACE CULTURE

My experience FDV was one filled with shame and guilt. I did not want to disclose to my workplace, but that choice was taken away when my ex showed up at work and was abusive. FDV is chronic. FDV sucks up all of your energy. FDV is embarrassing. FDV makes you feel worthless. You can't put a happy face on it at work, workplaces need to see it as an issue that does impact the victim and be sure that they are not revictimizing us. (Survey respondent, female, Public Administration and Safety)

Throughout the survey responses and during the interviews, a clear message emerged from victim-survivors: if workplaces do not have safe and supportive cultures, then the introduction and operation of any DFV policies are null. The administration and operation of the leave policy is just as critical as the existence of the policy in the first instance. As two survey respondents explained:

There were a lot of policies, procedures and resources "available" to support workers on paper. In reality, referrals were impossible to obtain, privacy was constantly breached, judgements were made by people that had no right or authority, breaches occurred and ultimately no services or support was offered. (Survey respondent)

Many on paper – as a government entity there were numerous supports including EAP but they were all regarded as admitting weakness and there was an unspoken (and sometimes spoken) expectation that those in management and executive roles would not access these supports. I also knew that confidentiality was not maintained from my experience of other people's issues. (Survey respondent)

In particular, survey respondents and interview participants reflected on the significant stigma that could be associated with accessing DFV supports if workplaces were not educated on DFV and supportive of employee victim-survivors. This was captured in the following survey response:

If you look at their DFV policy, leave and intranet page you'd give it full marks. The issue was, and is, that if you identify as a DFV victim in the legal profession – you're marked and your career is over – it doesn't matter what the policies say it matters what employers actually do and how they treat you. (Survey respondent)

Findings from the survey and interview data analysis show that access to and the use of any family violence leave (paid or unpaid) is inhibited by social stigma and shame. These feelings are exacerbated in unsupportive and unsafe workplaces. Many survey respondents and interview participants talked about their reluctance to disclose their experiences of DFV at work often due to shame or embarrassment. As one survey respondent explained:

I think I'd always struggle with bringing my personal situation into the light at work. Work was my salvation, my safe place, where I was sure of myself and respected (in stark contrast to home where I was screamed at and belittled and made to feel so useless) so I wouldn't have found it easy bringing DV issues up at work. When my home situation escalated and my former husband took a firearm and started shooting our children's pets (hard to write that without emotion) the kids and I put our surviving pets in the car and left. We just had the clothes we were wearing and fortunately [we had] family to go to. I called into work sick the next day, and at that point I reached out to my closest friend at work [and] told her what had happened, and she covered me for weeks. I was at work but barely functioning and she did whatever she had to make sure my workload covered. I should have taken more leave but that was on me, the organisation I worked for would have willingly given me leave without needing to know the details. (Survey respondent, female, information media and telecommunication)

Another survey respondent reflected on the way in which she perceived that her colleagues willingly 'looked away' from her experience of violence, while also engaging in a culture of workplace bullying:

People would see the bruises and not say anything.

People would ignore the hints and never checked in with me. People would ridicule me for not eating or losing weight or not having the right work clothes etc. (Survey respondent, female, Government)

Another survey participant, who did not disclose their experiences of DFV in their workplace, talked about the type of work environment that would have encouraged them to disclose:

Management training and employee awareness of procedures around how to identify, support someone like me in my experience. I was also very ashamed to share what was happening so knowing that there is a policy or process involving support instead of stigma for taking sick leave all the time. (Survey respondent, female, Electricity, Gas, Water, Waste Services)



The names assigned to types of leave influence employee help-seeking with stigmatising names discouraging employees' use of DFV leave due to their fear of negative association or ridicule upon use (Weeks, 2004). Previous research shows that psychological accessibility is a key barrier to service use (Pfitzner, Humphreys, and Hegarty, 2017; Weeks, 2004). To address these barriers, some research has suggested that non-stigmatising leave labels, such as 'personal leave', 'special leave' or 'compassionate leave', may facilitate employee engagement with DFV leave and other related workplace support by reducing stigma and barriers to use (McFerran, 2011; Weeks, 2004). There is a concern, however, that this fails to provide a clear recognition within the workplace of the need to support DFV victim-survivors and may contribute to the invisibility of victimisation. A recent report produced by the Champions of Change Coalition (2021: 31) suggested that:

Additional paid leave for domestic and family violence may be identified on payroll systems as 'special leave' rather than domestic and family violence leave to protect the employee's privacy and increase confidence that their privacy will be respected. While this limits the ability of a workplace to track take-up, it removes a potential barrier to employees accessing support. Where leave is not identified on the HR system as 'domestic and family violence' leave, ensure processes are in place to offer support to employees who access domestic and family violence leave.

Across the survey responses and throughout the interviews, poor workplace responses to DFV were echoed by many of the interview participants. These reflections extended well beyond the accessibility of leave provisions and were largely focused on the responses that employees received from co-workers following disclosure. As one interview participant commented:

The way my employer treated me was worse than the domestic violence itself ... You can't put up with coping it at home and coping it at work, it's just too much ... Please just treat me like a human ... The workplace just [wants] to get rid of you when you are experiencing domestic and family violence. (Charlotte, interview participant)

Likewise, another survey respondent reflected on the insensitive behaviours of colleagues in their workplace:

The workplace was the only place where I could escape his abuse, to remember who I was as a person and a professional. Outside of work I was stripped of my dignity, my safety, my ability to provide a loving and safe environment for my son. I really needed work to be a safe haven and although there were supports that I will forever be grateful for, the type of alternative work offered without regard for impact, and insensitivity, judgment and blame within some team interactions were unnecessarily insensitive if not cruel. (Survey respondent)

These recollections are somewhat to be expected given the significant body of research that has emerged in recent years across Australia documenting the prevalence of unsafe and unsupportive workplace cultures (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2020, 2021).

This is not to suggest that there were no examples provided of supportive workplace cultures. Some survey respondents provided positive anecdotes of supportive workplaces responses to disclosures of DFV. As two survey respondents described:

My colleagues were very supportive, they offered me somewhere to stay. I was offered support and information. They also encouraged me to leave the relationship and not to leave my job. I attended counselling. (Survey respondent, female, Administrative and Support Services)

Workload discretely managed to ease my load. Colleagues stepped in at key points. Friendship & emotional support. I never felt like a freak or too much. I am absolutely convinced I never would have left my violent ex if it weren't for the discrete, respectful help I received at work. (Survey respondent, female, Professional, Scientific, Technical Services)

Our findings underscore the need for workplaces to provide safe environments for DFV victim-survivors and highlight the reality that without addressing underlying cultural problems, it would be difficult for workplace policies to achieve their stated objectives.

This report, alongside numerous others published across Australian industries over the past five years, demonstrates the need to address unsafe workplace cultures to reduce the likelihood that employees will be afraid or embarrassed to report DFV victimisation. Given the high prevalence of all forms of DFV across the Australian community, there is a significant need to ensure that workplaces across the board are able to support victim-survivors to maintain employment and workplace engagement. Key to creating safe work environments is ensuring that employees are not penalised or ridiculed for seeking help at work. The development of comprehensive DFV workplace policies that build workplace awareness of DFV and support training of managers and HR on how to respond sensitively and confidentially when DFV disclosures are made can contribute to the creation of safe working environments for victim-survivors.



7. BEYOND LEAVE PROVISIONS: ADDITIONAL WORKPLACE SUPPORTS PROVIDED BY EMPLOYEES' WORKPLACE

Beyond the provision of paid or unpaid family violence leave there were a number of supports provided by employers that survey respondents and interview participants referred to as having played a critical role in ensuring their safety and participation in the workforce while experiencing DFV. Importantly many of these supports were also viewed as critical to also supporting the recovery of individuals following their experience of DFV. The supports listed through the survey and interviews as provided by employees could be broadly categorised under three key areas:

1. Flexible working arrangements
2. Safety planning and protocols
3. Workplace based services and supports

Regardless of the support provided internally, there was an acknowledgement among some respondents that supports should be proactively offered wherever possible, rather than relying upon the reactive initiative of the employee victim-survivor to either disclose or to access a relate support. As one survey respondent explained:

"Have you thought about this? This is something that we can offer. This is the type of leave we can offer. This is how long it is. This is what it looks like. This is paid." Looking at, perhaps, when they do come back on board, it might be - they might want to come back and do reduced hours, or they might need just a whole lot of flexibility that they might just need to drop something. (Survey respondent)

This level of proactive engagement with victim-survivors in the workplace requires a commitment to building awareness across the workplace and to the delivery of training on DFV to all employees to ensure conversations are trauma and DFV informed. While numerous interview participants were supportive of whole of workplace supports for victim-survivors of DFV they repeatedly stressed the need to ensure they are implemented and bought to life in a trauma informed way that is consistent with the vision for their introduction.

FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

Numerous survey respondents and interview participants identified flexible working arrangements as a key support that can be provided by workplaces to increase the likelihood that a victim-survivor will be able to maintain employment during and after their experience of violence. Flexible working arrangements can include changes to hours of work, amendments to work patterns or work location, and a shift in the duties required in a role. Under the Fair Work Act all employees who are experiencing DFV have a right to request flexible working arrangements from their employer. Under the Fair Work Act there are however conditions which govern accessibility to flexible working arrangements for victim-survivors, these include that:

employees must have worked with the same employer continuously for at least 12 months. A casual employee can make a request if:

- they've been working for the same employer regularly and systematically for at least 12 months
- there's a reasonable expectation of continuing work with the employer on a regular and systematic basis.

Through the survey and interviews there were numerous positive experiences of flexible working arrangements shared, as two survey respondents described:

I spoke with my line manager who let me take as much annual leave as I needed, which turned out I was negative leave at times, but she still approved it. She also allowed my roster to be flexible and let me work around any issues. (Survey respondent, female, health care and social assistance)

Understanding that I needed specific days and times off to attend appointments or hearings. (Survey respondent, female, not for profit)

Given the dynamic nature of risk for victim-survivors of DFV, flexible working conditions are another form of support that can be provided by the workplace.

SAFETY PLANNING AND PROTOCOLS

A number of survey respondents and interview participants referred to the importance of workplace safety planning and protocols for victim-survivor employees. Examples provided included the introduction of security procedures, advising other staff of the individual's safety needs, and the introduction of individualised safety protocols. As three survey respondents explained:

My staff team were briefed on the risk and his threats of murder suicide. A photo of him was placed at reception and staff were instructed to call police if he was seen in the vicinity. My boss was amazingly supportive. Our senior management were actively supportive. (Survey respondent, female, Public Administration and Safety)

There was a communication plan in place should the perpetrator attempt to call my workplace or make contact outside the premises. This was reassuring and supportive. (Survey respondent, female, justice)

My workplace security unit was helpful and supportive. (Survey respondent, female, education and training)

In some instances, survey respondents reflected that the safety plans put in place were not infallible but at the same time acknowledged the benefit of the time and space these plans did provide. As one survey respondent commented:

All staff were advised to keep my new location confidential. This was eventually breached (about 18 months later) by a new staff member who was unaware of the situation. Fortunately, by this time the perp[etrator] had been seeking professional help and I no longer felt in danger. (Survey respondent, female, retail trade)

Acknowledging that for some victim-survivors getting to and from work can present risks during their experience of DFV, and into their recovery, a small number of survey respondents also noted the safety benefits of receiving alternative transportation support to and from their workplace. As three survey respondents reflected:

My work paid for an Uber in the afternoon to take me home, it was a different car each day, whilst I had no car as my ex was hassling me when I was walking home. (Survey respondent, female, Administrative and Support Services)

I did not know how to drive, and my partner used to drive me to work. The public transport to my work was not great. My colleagues gave me a lift to and from work. (Survey respondent, female, Administrative and Support Services)

Luckily twice, direct colleagues drove me home on some of the days my ex stole my car from the staff carport. (Survey respondent, female, education and training)

Once at work, the importance of offering a safe parking space was also identified through the interviews. As one interview participant described:

They also provided a safe car spot for me in the secure car park which was amazing. (Susan)

Giving meaning to the notion of door-to-door service, tailored supports like those described here can be essential to supporting a victim-survivor to manage their safety needs, and subsequently to be able to continue to attend and engage meaningfully in work. One interview participant suggested that such supports should be proffered through a peer-to-peer support person, whereby victim-survivors are allocated a trusted colleague, HR liaison or line manager to work closely with them to assess and determine their safety planning needs, including any flexible working arrangements.

WORKPLACE BASED SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

Numerous workplace-based services and supports were listed by survey respondents and described in more detail by interview participants. These included:

- Formal and informal employer support – particularly managerial support,
- Employee assistance program (EAP),
- Workplace specific counselling service or program, and
- Employee benefits program.

The most common workplace-based support cited in the survey responses was the EAP. However, while numerous survey respondents and interview participants noted positively that the program had been made available to them, for the majority of respondents and participants it was not viewed as a particularly effective mode of service provision and support. As several survey respondents described:

Counselling was available which I took, but it wasn't very useful. I ended up getting a private professional when I could afford it. (Survey respondent, female, education and training)

There were numerous supports [available] including EAP, but they were all regarded as admitting weakness and there was an unspoken (and sometimes spoken) expectation that those in management and executive roles would not access these supports. I also knew that confidentiality was not maintained from my experience of other people's issues. (Survey respondent, female, Professional, Scientific, Technical Services)

I guess the EAP but the counsellor was not helpful. I tried again a few months later and by then there was a huge waiting list. (Survey respondent, female, education and training)

Beyond the EAP, the importance of managerial support arose frequently throughout the survey and interviews, whereby more commonly the discussions gave rise to the sharing of examples of bad practice. As noted in the previous section, here workplace culture plays a critical role in not only ushering through any new internal workplace supports to be offered to employees who have or are experiencing DFV but also to ensure that those services can be accessed in a safe and trauma informed way.



8. SUPPORTS ACCESSED BY EMPLOYEES OUTSIDE OF THEIR WORKPLACE

Survey respondents and interview participants listed a number of support services that were accessible outside of their workplace during their experience of DFV. These included:

- Legal services including women's legal services,
- DFSV specialist services,
- Counselling services,
- Psychiatrists and psychologists,
- Court support,
- Child and family services,
- Mental health supports,
- Religious institutions – including pastors,
- Emergency housing and crisis accommodation,
- Health services including General Practitioners (GPs) and emergency nurses,
- Police, and
- Victims' services.

Several survey respondents recognised the role that workplaces can play in connecting employee with these external services, with numerous survey practitioners noting the value of workplaces providing referrals to external specialist services. As one survey respondent described:

Our HR department gave my direct manager information about where to obtain help as well as reiterating that we have counselling available for myself and my daughter if we wished to use it. (Survey respondent)

Survey respondents and interview participants also emphasised the importance of supports provided by informal networks, including family and friends. As two survey respondents described:

Lucky I have amazing family who are so supportive. (Survey respondent, female, Public Administration and Safety)

No real supports available at that time other than family and small, trusted friendship group (Survey respondent, female, Accommodation and Food Services)

While the availability of, and quality of service provided by external services are beyond the control of individual workplaces, providing referral information about a range of external workplace supports is valuable to opening up the avenues through which employee victim-survivors can seek support. This information should be made readily available in a central location that does not rely upon the employee disclosing their experience of DFV.



9. CONCLUSION

There is significant work to be undertaken across Australian workplaces to provide a culture and policy environment where victim-survivors of DFV are safe and are supported to thrive in paid employment. The experiences of victim-survivors, as shared throughout this research, reveals the ways in which perpetrators of DFV disrupt engagement in paid employment and utilise the workplace as a setting in which to further perpetrate controlling and abusive behaviours. Experiences of DFV impact significantly on an individual's ability to attend work, to participate meaningfully in work, to fulfill their role expectations, and to progress their career ambitions.

Workplace policies and support practices are essential to ensure victim-survivors are supported to maintain paid employment during their experience of DFV, and to continue to engage with work throughout their recovery. The economic benefits of paid employment are significant in the context of women's economic security and their ability to safely exit and maintain a life free from violence.

Within this context, family violence leave provisions have a symbolic and a functional role to play. At the symbolic level the introduction and existence of paid family violence leave sends a clear message that the workplace recognises the need for victim-survivors to be supported financially during and after their experience of violence. Sending a clear message at the policy level is important for guiding much needed changes in workplace culture whereby DFV has traditionally been seen as a private experience, within which disclosure carries shame, stigma and embarrassment for individual employees. The experiences of victim-survivors shared throughout this study reveal the ongoing barriers to safe disclosure across Australian workplaces and the prevalence of unsafe workplace cultures.

At the functional level paid family violence leave must be implemented and operate in a way that aligns with the objectives of its introduction. This research reveals that low levels of DFV awareness and trauma informed understanding among employers coupled with requirements to provide documentation in order to access leave have undermined the goal of this policy response. The findings support a recommendation made by the Australian Law Reform Commission (2011) a decade ago that:

There should be a core of basic requirements with respect to family violence leave, including that it should be paid, flexible and easily accessible where necessary, while containing sufficient safeguards to maintain the confidentiality of personal information and the integrity of the leave system.

When set alongside emerging best practice recommendations in Australia and internationally, the expertise and experience of victim-survivors identifies the need for workplaces to provide at minimum 14 days paid family violence leave, and ideally access to unlimited leave. The latter recognising the long-term impacts of DFV on victim-survivors, the critical importance of their economic security, and the significant journey which accompanies the recovery phase.

DFV is a national crisis in Australia. Australian workplaces have a key role to play in not only supporting victim-survivors through their experience and recovery, but by embedding policies and practices that demonstrate a real commitment to their economic safety and financial independence. Four years ago, the outcomes of the Fair Work Commission's review provided important recognition of the need for all Australian workplaces to embed unpaid family violence leave in policy. The evolution of this leadership now invites an opportunity to ensure that these policies are elevated to provide meaningful and effective economic support for all Australian employees that experience DFV.

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11. APPENDIX

APPENDIX A: SURVEY INSTRUMENT (COPY)

Participant Consent

Domestic and Family Violence Leave Review

You are invited to participate in a research project being conducted by Associate Professor Kate Fitz-Gibbon and Dr Naomi Pfitzner from Monash University that is investigating the availability and use of domestic and family leave across Australian workplaces. In this survey, you will be asked a series of questions about your experiences of accessing domestic and family violence leave and the support provided by your workplace. We expect the survey will take around 15 minutes to complete.

Please read this [Explanatory Statement](#) in full before deciding whether or not to participate in this research.

Project ID: 30404

Chief Investigator

Associate Professor Kate Fitz-Gibbon

Monash Gender and Family Violence Prevention Centre, Faculty of Arts, Monash University

Phone: (03) 9905 2616

Email: kate.fitzgibbon@monash.edu

Participation

Your participation in this survey is voluntary. You may refuse to take part in the research or exit the survey at any time without penalty. You may stop the survey at any time or skip questions that you would not like to answer. Whilst you may exit the survey at any stage, any responses that you do complete will not be able to be withdrawn, however, the survey is anonymous and at no stage will the researchers be able to identify you.

Confidentiality

Your survey answers will be sent to a link at Qualtrics where data will be stored in a password protected electronic format. Qualtrics does not collect identifying information such as your name, email address, or IP address. Therefore, your responses will remain anonymous. No one will be able to identify you or your answers, and no one will know whether or not you participated in the study.

If you experience any inconvenience or discomfort during the course of the survey, you may stop the survey. You may like to access the [national and state support services](#) listed in this document.

By clicking 'I consent to participating in this research', you are indicating that:

- You have read the above information.
- You voluntarily agree to participate in this research
- You are 18 years of age or older

☐ I consent to participating in this research.

☐ I do not consent to participate in this research.

About you (demographics questions)

First we'd like to ask you some questions about your work and your background.

Please select your age range.

☐ 18-24 years old

☐ 25-30 years old

☐ 31-40 years old

☐ 41-50 years old

☐ 51-60 years old

☐ 61 years old or above

Please select your sex:

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Trans man
- ☐ Trans woman
- ☐ Non-binary
- ☐ Agender
- ☐ Prefer not to say
- ☐ Other, please describe:

Please select your sexual orientation:

- ☐ Heterosexual
- ☐ Gay
- ☐ Lesbian
- ☐ Bisexual
- ☐ Pansexual
- ☐ Queer
- ☐ Asexual

In what state/territory of Australia do you live in?

- ☐ Australian Capital Territory
- ☐ New South Wales
- ☐ Northern Territory
- ☐ Queensland
- ☐ South Australia
- ☐ Tasmania
- ☐ Victoria
- ☐ Western Australia
- ☐ I live outside Australia, please specify country:

Do you identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Please answer the following questions in relation to the most recent job you were in when experiencing domestic and family violence.

In what capacity were/are you employed?

- ☐ Full time ongoing
- ☐ Full time contract
- ☐ Part time ongoing
- ☐ Part time contract
- ☐ Casual
- ☐ Other, please describe

In what industry were/are you employed?

- ☐ Accommodation and Food Services
- ☐ Administrative and Support Services
- ☐ Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing
- ☐ Arts and Recreation Services
- ☐ Construction
- ☐ Education and Training
- ☐ Electricity, Gas, Water, Waste Services
- ☐ Financial and Insurance Services
- ☐ Health Care and Social Assistance
- ☐ Information Media and Telecommunication
- ☐ Manufacturing
- ☐ Mining

- ☐ Professional, Scientific, Technical Services
- ☐ Public Administration and Safety
- ☐ Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services
- ☐ Retail trade
- ☐ Transport, Postal and Warehousing
- ☐ Wholesale trade
- ☐ Other, please describe

The impact that experiences of domestic and family violence had on you at work

The following questions ask about the impact that domestic and family violence had on you at work.

How did your experience of domestic and family violence impact your ability to undertake your job? Please describe.

How did your experience of domestic and family violence impact your participation in your work environment (including your relationships at work)? Please describe.

How, if at all, did your experience of domestic and family violence impact your career progression and opportunities? Please describe.

Did you access domestic and family leave?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No – because it wasn't offered.
- ☐ No - I accessed another form of leave. Please specify what leave you accessed and why you chose to access that leave as opposed to family and domestic violence leave:

- ☐ No – other reason, please specify:

Were you required to exhaust other leave entitlements prior to accessing paid family violence leave?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Was the domestic and family violence leave paid?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

How many days paid leave was available to you?

How many days paid leave did you take?

Did you take the maximum amount of leave on offer?

Was the paid leave period sufficient?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

What, in your view, would have been a sufficient paid leave entitlement? Please describe.

Was documentation required to support your leave request?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

What documentation was required? Please describe.

Did the requirement to provide documentation impact your decision to apply for this leave?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

What, if any, other supports were available at your workplace when you were experiencing domestic and family violence? Please describe.

What, if any, additional supports would you have benefited from at your workplace when you were experiencing domestic and family violence? Please describe.

What supports, if any, did you access outside of work during this experience of domestic and family violence? Please describe.

What supports, if any, did you access outside of work during this experience of domestic and family violence? Please describe.

More about you

Finally, we'd like to ask some further questions about you.

Please select your ethnicity. Please select all that apply.

- ☐ English
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Indian
- ☐ Middle Eastern
- ☐ European
- ☐ African
- ☐ Prefer not to say
- ☐ Other, please specify

Please select the type of area that you live in:

- ☐ Metropolitan
- ☐ Rural
- ☐ Regional
- ☐ Remote

Do you have a disability?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Please select all of the relevant boxes in relation to your disability

- ☐ Physically impaired
- ☐ Visually impaired
- ☐ Intellectual disability
- ☐ Autism spectrum disorder
- ☐ Acquired brain injury
- ☐ Poor mental health affecting day to day functioning
- ☐ Other (please specify)
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Follow up interview

As part of this research, we are conducting follow up interviews with survey participants to explore their views in more detail. Involvement in a follow up interview is entirely voluntary.

If you do choose to participate in an interview, you will be reimbursed for your time with a \$50 Coles/Myer voucher. If you do not wish to participate in an interview your survey responses will still be used in this research.

If you do wish to participate in an interview, please write your preferred method of contact (e.g. phone number or email) below. If you have given a phone number, please specify a preferred time for us to contact you.

Please click the arrow button below to send us your survey response.

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APPENDIX B: THEMATIC INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (USED AS A SEMI-STRUCTURED GUIDE ONLY)

| | |
|--|--|
| 1. How did your experience of domestic and family violence impact your ability to undertake your job? | 9. Was documentation required to support your leave request? |
| 2. How did you experience of domestic and family violence impact your participation in your work environment (including your relationships at work)? | 10. If yes, what documentation was required? |
| 3. How, if at all, did your experience of domestic and family violence impact your career progression and opportunities? | 11. Did the requirement for documentation impact your decision to apply for this leave? |
| 4. Did you access domestic and family leave from your employer? Why or why not? | 12. What, if any, other supports were available at your workplace when you were experiencing domestic and family violence? |
| 5. Were you required to exhaust other leave entitlements prior to accessing paid family violence leave? | 13. What, if any, additional supports would you have benefited from at your workplace when you were experiencing domestic and family violence? |
| 6. Was the domestic and family violence leave paid? | 14. What supports, if any, did you access outside of work during this experience of domestic and family violence? |
| 7. If yes, how many days paid leave was available to you? How many days paid leave did you take? Did you take the maximum amount on offer? | |
| 8. Was the paid leave period sufficient? | |



