Policy paper

Supports (th)at work

Policy tools to support workplace action on intimate partner violence

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Abstract

Effective workplace supports can help to address the high social and economic costs of intimate partner violence (IPV) to individuals, businesses and societies. This paper highlights steps that employers and governments are taking to strengthen workplace approaches to IPV, particularly public policy measures across OECD countries to encourage an effective workplace response. Firms are taking action by developing workplace policies on IPV and establishing accompanying processes, building organisational capacity to respond to violence by upskilling staff, connecting workers with support, and offering flexible working arrangements to enable victim-survivors to continue working. Governments, too, are stepping up: several now offer employment protection for people subjected to IPV, a right to request flexible working arrangements, guidance for employers in developing workplace supports, and – in limited cases – paid domestic violence leave entitlements for employees.

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Executive summary

Intimate partner violence is pervasive, and its impacts are significant. In OECD countries, on average almost one in four women (23%) report having experienced physical or sexual violence at the hands of an intimate partner in their lifetime; given the significant underreporting of violence, the real number is likely to be higher. The scourge of violence is not only a fundamental human rights issue, but it brings high social and economic costs to individuals, businesses and societies.

Employers play an important role in broader societal efforts to address IPV, and workplaces are an important site for prevention and response. In addition to presenting a potential safety and security risk to workplaces, IPV can significantly affect victim-survivors' ability to participate in, thrive at and advance at work, harming workers and employers. While robust data on the workplace impacts of IPV are scarce, national and company-level surveys conducted in OECD countries indicate that most victim-survivors (between 55-84%) report at least some work-related impacts, and a worrying number of victim-survivors (between 16-58%) report that the abuse has continued at or near the workplace on at least some occasions. Dealing with the impacts of abuse while maintaining employment can present a significant challenge: a high share of victim-survivors report taking time off work to deal with the impacts of the abuse, and worryingly, some drop out of the workforce or need to change jobs altogether. This is particularly concerning given economic security can be critical to leaving and recovering from violent relationships.

Effective workplace supports could help to improve social and economic outcomes for workers and businesses, and there are impressive examples of employer-level actions to end IPV, including in partnership with victim-survivor organisations and workers' representatives, amongst others. Approaches are commonly focused on establishing robust oganisational policies and processes to respond to violence; upskilling workers to be able to identify and respond to violence, and/or to intervene when they witness behaviours or attitudes that can be a precursor to violence; ensuring that victim-survivors are connected with appropriate support, either through direct provision or referral to appropriate services; and establishing workplace flexibility measures that enable victim-survivors to address the impacts of violence while maintaining employment.

Ending violence against women is a priority for OECD member countries, and public policy plays an important role in encouraging and supporting an effective workplace response. Addressing violence against women is by far the biggest gender equality priority in OECD countries: in 2024, almost 9 out of 10 countries (87%) reported violence against women as one of their top three gender equality priorities. Several countries have extended employment protections and/or an entitlement to flexible working arrangements to workers affected by IPV, and some are encouraging and supporting employer efforts through guidance, good practice certification schemes, professional equality obligations and transparency measures. Domestic violence leaves have emerged as a relatively recent policy trend: at least six OECD countries now have (national) paid domestic violence leave entitlements for a least a subset of the population, though coverage and design of the leave schemes varies considerably across countries. While long-term results remain to be seen, limited early evaluation finds meaningful benefits. It will be important to continue to monitor downstream impacts on social and economic outcomes.

1 Supports th(at) work: Why workplace approaches to intimate partner violence matter

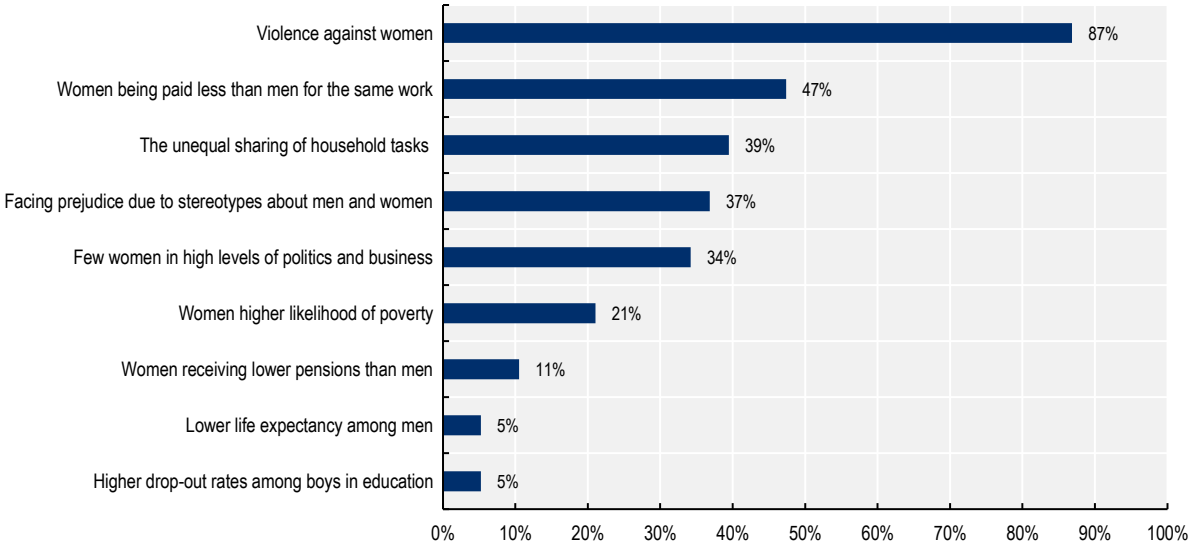
Violence against women is tragically common, with an estimated one in three women globally experiencing physical or sexual violence in their lifetime – and sometimes both (World Health Organization, 2021[1]).[1] Across the OECD, almost one in four women (23%) report having experienced physical or sexual intimate partner violence (IPV) in their lifetime (OECD Family Database, 2020[2]).[2] The real number is likely to be higher, given significant underreporting. The consequences of violence can be devastating for those affected, including potential impacts on their health, employment, safety and security, with violence a leading driver of homelessness amongst women (OECD, 2023[3]).

The social and economic costs of this violence are high. Violence can significantly impact victim-survivors' ability to participate in, thrive at and advance at work, driving significant costs to individuals, businesses and economies. The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) estimated the costs of violence against women in the EU-27 alone to exceed EUR 290 billion in 2019, which includes substantial costs driven by lost productivity and time away from work (EIGE, 2021[4]).[3]

Tackling violence against women is by far *the* biggest gender equality priority reported by OECD member countries. **There has been a remarkable increase in the prioritisation of violence against women in recent years**: almost 9 out of 10 OECD countries (87%) now list violence against women as one of their top three most urgent gender equality priorities (Figure 1), up from 65% in 2016, when the OECD first began surveying Adherents to the OECD Gender Recommendations.[4]

Figure 1. Violence against women is the top gender equality priority for OECD countries

Share of OECD governments ranking specific policy issues as their first, second or third priority for gender equality, 2024 or latest year available



Note: Responses from 38 countries to the 2024 Questionnaire on Policy Combinations for Gender Equality and/or the 2021 Gender Equality Questionnaire. Responses for eight countries – Austria, Denmark, Estonia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom – were obtained from the 2021 Gender Equality Questionnaire. Respondents selected gender equality priorities from a list of topics based on the OECD Recommendation on Gender Equality in Education, Employment and Entrepreneurship. Respondents were able to identify additional priorities which are excluded from the graph, but responses included: undervaluation of women-dominated occupations; gender differences in health, including mental health; worse work-life balance for women, and persistent economic gender inequality.
Source: 2024 Questionnaire on Policy Combinations for Gender Equality and 2021 Gender Equality Questionnaire.

1.1. Workplaces can help tackle the high social and economic costs of intimate partner violence

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is one of the most pervasive forms of violence against women, and its causes and consequences are far-reaching. Adequately funded, cross-sectoral approaches to prevent and respond to violence are needed to end it, extending to and beyond the education, justice, health, employment and social protection sectors. Employers can play an important role in preventing and responding to violence within the context of these broader societal efforts to end IPV, and ILO Convention No. 190 calls on adherents to mitigate the impacts of domestic violence in the world of work as far as reasonably practicable to do so (discussed in further detail below).

Workplaces offer a **unique venue for identification and support for victims-survivors**. Workplaces can be a safe place when a home is not one, and colleagues can be well-placed to identify warning signs of violence such as absenteeism, changes in behaviour, and performance-related challenges.

Workplaces can also support **stability and economic security for victim-survivors**, which can be critical to leaving and recovering from violent relationships. Leaving abusive relationships can fuel economic insecurity, with some financially worse off following separation (Summers, 2022[5]). Victim-survivors report that employment can be a crucial path to financial independence and economic security alongside many other potential benefits, such as time away from the violence, improved self-esteem and confidence, and contact with valued supports (Alsaker et al., 2016[6]; MacGregor et al., 2020[7]).

While robust evidence on the impact of violence on employment and economic outcomes is relatively scarce, available data shows that intimate partner violence can seriously affect victim-survivors' economic security, including lower employment rates, greater financial distress and higher reliance on government benefits. Drawing on data from the 2021-22 Personal Safety Survey, for example, Australian researchers have found a 5.3 percentage point employment gap between women who had experienced (physical, sexual, emotional or economic) partner violence or abuse in the past five years and women who had never experienced violence, with an even higher gap for women subject to economic abuse (9.4 percentage points) (Summers, Shortridge and Sobeck, 2025[8]).

It is important that employers can **recognise and sensitively address the workplace impacts of violence,** even if that violence takes place outside of the workplace. Surveys with victim-survivors consistently find that IPV affects their ability to stay in, focus on, and/or progress at work, with significant consequences for workers and employers (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, 2023[9]). National and company-level surveys covering OECD countries, including Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Spain, Türkiye and the United Kingdom, typically find that the majority of victim-survivors (between 55-84%) report work-related impacts, with some surveys finding that over 80% of survivors report that the violence had affected their job[5] (Opinium Research, 2021[10]; Wathen, MacGregor and MacQuarrie, 2015[11]); Pillinger et al (Wathen, MacGregor and MacQuarrie, 2015[11]), (Pillinger et al., 2019[12]) cited in (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, 2023[9]), and (Belgian Institute for equality of women and men (IEWM), Western University, DV@WorkNet, 2017[13]; McNicol, Fitz-Gibbon and Brewer, 2022[14]). Some of the most common reported workplace impacts of violence are feeling distracted or finding it difficult to focus, feeling tired or unwell, and low self-esteem/confidence, with knock-on consequences on participation in (and productivity at) work.

A **high number of victim-survivors report taking time off work to deal with the impacts of abuse, and – worryingly – some drop out of education and employment altogether**. In Australia, in 2021-22 it is estimated that around a third (34.6%) of Australian working women who experienced violence reported taking time off work because of the violence, with a particularly high rate of leave-taking amongst women with dependents (41%) and women exposed to more frequent violence[6] (66.5%) (Summers, Shortridge and Sobeck, 2025[8]). A 2019 survey in Spain found that 15.6% of women who experienced intimate partner violence were unable to participate in education or employment "for some time" as a result of the abuse, increasing to 21% of those who experienced physical or sexual violence (The Government Delegation against Gender Violence, 2019[15]).

Many victim-survivors completely **drop out of the workforce or need to change jobs**, with around one in three victim-survivors in a 2022 Australian survey reporting that they were or had been unemployed (18.9%) or that they needed to change jobs (14.1%) because of domestic or family violence (McNicol, Fitz-Gibbon and Brewer, 2022[14]).[7] Effective workplace support could provide a triple benefit of helping to keep workers safe and economically secure, reducing the costs of violence to businesses by enabling retention of skilled employees, and reducing the social and economic costs of violence to societies.

1.2. Workplaces play an important role in addressing perpetration

Employers also have an important role to play in **addressing perpetration of violence, and addressing violence when it spills over into the workplace.** While estimates vary, surveys commonly find that safety risks follow victim-survivors to work, and perpetrators often use work resources or work time to continue the abuse – sometimes intentionally to control or isolate victim-survivors (McNicol, Fitz-Gibbon and Brewer, 2022[14]). Surveys conducted in OECD countries including Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom find that between 16-58% of those who have experienced abuse have had perpetrators interfere with their ability to get to work, had the abuse follow them to (or near) their place of work, or have been subject to abuse while on work time (Belgian Institute for equality of women and

men (IEWM), Western University, DV@WorkNet, 2017[13]; McNicol, Fitz-Gibbon and Brewer, 2022[14]; Pillinger et al., 2019[12]; Wathen, MacGregor and MacQuarrie, 2015[11]). Most commonly these surveys find that around half of victim-survivors report a continuation of the abuse at or near the workplace, at least sometimes.

Workplaces play an important role in ensuring safety in the workplace, and there is significant opportunity for employers to contribute to prevention by addressing the social and cultural norms that enable abuse to take place, and by connecting perpetrators to programmes and supports that could help to stop further violence. Workplace bystander training, for example, has been leveraged to challenge the social and cultural norms that enable abuse to take place, with "bystanders" trained to identify comments and behaviour that could support or lead to violence, and to appropriately intervene (UN Women and ILO, 2020[16]). Trade unions, too, have engaged in awareness-raising on sexism and violence in workplaces, with French Union CGT developing the "Violentomètre," a visual tool identifying sexist and violent behaviours with grades of severity (CGT, 2022[17]), cited in (Baranska and Picard, 2024[18]). Signposting to appropriate services to prevent harm may also be particularly important given that many are likely reluctant to disclose the use of violence: in Australia, for example, peak body No To Violence operates the Men's Referral Service, a telephone counselling, information and referral service for men who are or may be at risk of becoming abusive (Australian Department of Health and Aged Care, 2024[19]). Costa Rica reports that within its 911 emergency system, there is a sub-office (managed by the Institute of Masculinity, Couples and Sexuality) which assists men in an effort to prevent violence against women.

1.3. International conventions have increasingly recognised the workplace impacts of intimate partner violence, and the role of employers in addressing them

International conventions have increasingly recognised the economic and workplace impacts of violence, and the unique role that employers can play to address them. While employers' legal responsibilities vary across countries (discussed in further detail in section 3 below), international conventions have drawn attention to the importance of workplace action on violence against women and domestic violence: Article 17[8] of the Istanbul Convention calls for Parties to encourage the private sector to participate in the development of policies, guidelines and standards to prevent violence against women, ILO Convention No. 190 requires adherents to recognise and as far as "reasonably practicable" mitigate the impacts of domestic violence in the world of work, while the 2024 EU Directive on Combating Violence Against Women requires member states to ensure that supervisors in public and private organisations receive information about the impacts of violence against women and domestic violence on work, and the risk of third-party violence, such as violence committed at the workplace by the partner or former partner of an employee. Collectively, these instruments also highlight heightened risks of violence for population groups experiencing multiple forms of discrimination and call for countries to take these heightened risks into account.

Growing international recognition has been accompanied by increasing policy innovation across public and private sectors, with companies and governments alike implementing measures aimed at ensuring an effective workplace response to violence, and improving social and economic outcomes for victim-survivors. This policy paper provides a high-level overview of public and private sector efforts to address IPV, with a particular focus on public policy approaches across OECD countries to encourage an effective workplace approach to violence. The focus is on measures that have been implemented to address the impacts of IPV that occur principally outside of work, rather than policy measures which deal with sexual harassment and violence at work.[9]

2 Employers are taking action to address intimate partner violence

Employers of all sizes are taking action to address violence, with workplace actions to address IPV often focusing on measures to identify and respond appropriately to signs of abuse, and connect victim-survivors with resources and support (Adhia et al., 2019[20]). Four approaches are particularly common: development of organisational policies or frameworks that set out a robust approach to violence; building capacity in the workforce by upskilling workers and establishing supportive processes to respond to violence; connecting victim-survivors with appropriate supports, either through direct provision or referral to services; and establishing workplace flexibility measures that enable victim-survivors to plan for their safety and deal with the impacts of the abuse while maintaining employment.

2.1. Setting out an effective organisational approach to violence

Some companies are focusing on developing **a robust policy or framework that guides the organisation's response to violence**, setting out critical considerations such as how disclosures should be handled, confidentiality and safety measures, the support available to workers, and the organisation's approach to perpetration. These policies can help to build confidence in reporting by clearly setting out how and to whom disclosures can be made, and the support that could be made available to workers to help keep them safe and employed (some practical examples of safety planning measures are highlighted in Box 1, together with some considerations for employers in responding to perpetration). For example, in 2021 the multinational luxury goods company Kering implemented a global domestic violence policy, providing for confidential support, flexible working arrangements (as to working hours and work location) and referral to services (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, 2023[9]), while Vodafone's global policy has provided for specialist counselling and up to 10 days paid "safe leave" for employees experiencing domestic abuse and violence to seek help and go to appointments (UK Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Trade, 2021[21]).

Partnerships can play an important role in establishing safe and effective workplace approaches to IPV. Input from survivors and specialist organisations is critically important: as noted by the Champions of Change Coalition, approaches to violence **are most likely to be safe and effective when developed together with people with experience of violence and abuse** (2021[22]). Social dialogue, trade unions, worker's representatives and collective bargaining, too, can play a key role in supporting robust workplace approaches. In France, energy company EDF's collective bargaining agreement on gender and professional equality envisages workplace supports for victim-survivors, and EDF has partnered with Association FIT (une Femme, un Toit), for expertise, advice and training on domestic violence (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, 2023[9]; Baranska and Picard, 2024[18]). In the United Kingdom, UNISON has developed a model workplace policy on domestic violence taking into account remote working risks (UNISON, 2022[23]), cited in (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, 2023[9]).

Box 1. What are employers doing to help keep their workplace and workers safe? Workplace safety planning and responses to perpetration in practice

Workplace safety planning

Workplace safety planning is an important tool to identify the steps that employers can take to help keep victim-survivors safe while they are travelling to and at the workplace, including in the context of broader occupational health and safety measures. Workplace safety plans should be based on the individual needs and circumstances of workers experiencing abuse and developed jointly with the victim-survivor, recognising – as noted by the Champions of Change Coalition – that victim-survivors are often *the* experts in managing their own safety, and are doing so on a daily basis (Champions of Change Coalition, 2021[22]). Some of the practical measures that employers can consider to keep their workers safe include:

- **Measures to prevent victim-survivors being located or contacted by their partners**, such as changing a worker's e-mail address or phone number, providing them with a second mobile phone, re-assessing any safety and security (e.g. GPS tracking) features on work devices or enabling victim-survivors to relocate to a different or more secure office location if they request to do so
- **Support, check-in and emergency contact systems**, such as panic buttons or safety words that can be signalled in case of emergency, having a dedicated support person or contact within the organisation, or checking in with employees when contact is lost
- **Flexible working arrangements**, including as to working hours, tasks and work location; and
- **Measures to keep employees safe on their way to and from work**, for example through taxi pick-ups or arranging for someone to escort them from their transport to the workplace.

Workplace safety plans should be sensitive to the unique needs of remote workers, for example by ensuring alternative options for employees that cannot safely work from home.

Approaches to perpetration

Workplaces also need to consider how to respond when an employee perpetrates IPV, or might be at risk of doing so. As with responses developed for victim-survivors of violence, workplace responses to perpetration should be tailored to the unique circumstances of workers. The Australian state of Queensland has teamed up with partners to produce guidance on workplace approaches to employees who use or may use violence or abuse, highlighting that workplace responses should take into account a number of factors, such as the safety of their workers and workplace; the employer's legal obligations (including confidentiality and any legal limitations to confidentiality); whether workplace adjustments are needed to ensure safety (for example, by strengthening security, controlling access to work resources, or separating workers if both parties are employed in the same organisation); whether disciplinary action is warranted (for example, if an incident takes place in the workplace); and whether early intervention, support and referral to behaviour change programmes are possible/appropriate under the circumstances, amongst others. In France, for instance, government guidance highlights that public officials who perpetrate domestic and/or intra-family violence may be subject to disciplinary action under certain circumstances, for example where the violence impacts the operation of the service and brings the administration into disrepute, taking into account factors such as the severity of the acts and the nature of the worker's duties, amongst other factors (Directorate-General for Administration and the Civil Service, 2023[24]).

Employers should also take care to carefully consider the language used around perpetration of violence, noting the need to promote accountability while encouraging positive behaviour change, for example through sensitive and behaviourally-informed language. In Australia, the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations has supported the development of guidance on "how to manage and support employees who identify as domestic violence perpetrators," encouraging employers to support efforts to change behaviour.

Note: See (Champions of Change Coalition, 2021[22]) for more practical examples of workplace safety planning, the role of safety planning in the broader context of workplace safety and security, and for practical resources on developing a workplace safety plan. For more comprehensive suggestions on workplace approaches to perpetration see (Queensland Government et al., n.d.[25]), noting that legal obligations may differ in the reader's national context, as national legislation may influence national employers' legal obligations.
Source: Workplace safety planning adapted from (Champions of Change Coalition, 2021[22]).Other sources: (Queensland Government et al., n.d.[25]; Directorate-General for Administration and the Civil Service, 2023[24]; Transitioning Well, 2023[26]; Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, 2023[27]).

2.2. Building capacity in the workforce to prevent and respond to violence

Many companies are also moving to **build capacity in the workforce to address IPV**, by upskilling workers and drawing on specialist support. To be effective, policies to keep workers safe and employed need to be backed by **well-prepared people and processes**: a company that encourages disclosure without preparing key personnel to be able to effectively respond to that disclosure can risk further harm, including for the person disclosing, for the person receiving that disclosure (including through potential for vicarious trauma), and the wider workforce.

This means, for example, building capacity in the workforce (people and processes) to identify and respond appropriately to disclosures of violence, to be able to conduct safety planning and/or workplace risk assessments where needed, to be able to intervene should violence spill into the workplace (including in the context of broader occupational health and safety structures), and to ensure appropriate support structures for employees supporting victim-survivor colleagues. L'Oréal has rolled out training for key employees including nurses, social assistants and managers to strengthen understanding of the steps that need to be taken, while Viva Energy Australia has provided training to people and culture representatives, health team members and contact officers to be able to respond to disclosures of domestic and family violence, backed by an "initial response checklist" for first responders (Champions of Change Coalition, 2021[22]).

In addition to training for key personnel – such as human resource departments, managers and socio-medical staff – some companies are also establishing awareness, education and training programmes for the wider workforce. These programmes can help to ensure that workers are aware of and connected with the supports available to them, of particular importance given that some workplace surveys have revealed relatively low awareness of workplace policies and programmes on violence. In Ireland, a survey of over 3 000 workers by Forsa trade union revealed that most (8 in 10) were not aware of support available in their workplace (Fórsa, 2022[28]), cited in (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, 2023[9]), while a 2022 national survey of around 3 000 victim-survivors in Australia found that only around a quarter of survey respondents were aware that they had access to a domestic, family and sexual violence policy (26.44%) (McNicol, Fitz-Gibbon and Brewer, 2022[14]). In the United Kingdom, small and large companies alike have rolled out training for all employees, with Lloyds Banking Group providing training for all colleagues on how to identify and offer support for domestic abuse, while Luminary Bakery – a small social enterprise bakery in England – mandated annual safeguarding training for all staff to be able to identify and respond to "red flags" (UK Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Trade, 2021[21]).

Trade unions have also been engaged in training and awareness activities on IPV, including in the context of measures to address workplace harassment: across countries such as Canada and the United Kingdom, several trade unions have provided training and guidance to their representatives to recognise signs of domestic violence, provide confidential support, and connect workers with appropriate services. In Canada, Unifor negotiated a Women's Advocate programme, with specially trained workplace representatives working to help women with issues related to workplace harassment, intimate partner violence and abuse, to access workplace and community resources (Unifor, 2013[29]; Unifor, n.d.[30]), while the Trades Union Congress (TUC) in the United Kingdom offers online, interactive learning for union representatives on domestic violence and what they can do to support (TUC, 2021[31]). Peer training and support models have also been deployed in some companies, with trained domestic abuse "champions" working across organisations to identify and respond to signs of abuse and connect victim-survivors with support.

These training programmes can also contribute to **fostering a respectful and supportive workplace culture**, which can facilitate help-seeking, and from which victim-survivors report great benefit (McNicol, Fitz-Gibbon and Brewer, 2022[14]). *How* workplace policies are operationalised is critically important: poor implementation can present a barrier to help-seeking, and to participation at work (McNicol, Fitz-Gibbon and Brewer, 2022[14]). In Australia, for instance, some victim-survivors that have accessed domestic violence leave report discriminatory responses, such as being criticised and performance managed for "bringing their personal issues to work", ultimately leading one victim-survivor to return to the abusive relationship so that they could stay employed (Fitz-Gibbon, Pfitzner and McNicol, 2023[32]). Anti-discrimination law in Australia now includes subjection to family and domestic violence as a protected attribute to prohibit this type of discrimination, including in the workplace (discussed in further detail below). Safe and supportive workplace environments can help to facilitate both help-seeking and continued employment.

2.3. Connecting workers with appropriate supports

Companies have moved to **ensure awareness of and access to services** through direct provision, assisted provision, or referral to outside services. Experiences of violence can necessitate access to a range of support, including health, financial, housing, childcare and legal assistance, which can be challenging to navigate – particularly on work time (OECD, 2023[33]). Workplaces are stepping up by providing access to services, and dedicated leave to enable victim-survivors to use them (see Box 2).

Box 2. Companies are providing access to family and domestic violence leaves, with collective bargaining and workers' representatives playing an important role in extending leave entitlements to victim-survivors

Over the past 5-6 years, some OECD countries have introduced paid domestic violence leave entitlements for employees affected by IPV (discussed in further detail below). Yet, coverage of paid domestic violence leaves remains limited across OECD countries, and employers play an important role in helping to ensure that workers can take time off work to deal with the impacts of violence without fear of losing their jobs.

A growing number of companies are opting to provide family and domestic violence leave to their employees. In Australia, for example, preparations for the implementation of a national leave entitlement showed that around a third of Australian workplaces already voluntarily offered paid family and domestic violence leave, with a census of non-public employers conducted by the Workplace Gender Equality Agency finding that just over a third of organisations (35.3%) offered paid domestic violence leave in 2019-20, up from 17.1% in 2016-17 (Workplace Gender Equality Agency, 2022[34]; FairWork

Commission, 2022[35]). This sharp increase may have been spurred by implementation of five days of unpaid FDV leave applicable to employees covered by modern awards in 2018, with employers opting to go "over and above" the unpaid entitlement (Fitz-Gibbon, Pfitzner and McNicol, 2023[32]).

Collective bargaining is playing an important role in ensuring adequate protection and leave entitlements for victim-survivors, too. In Europe, some firm-level agreements and sectoral collective agreements extend leave entitlements prescribed by law, with some collective agreements in countries such as France and Spain extending paid leave or other financial assistance to victim-survivors (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, 2023[9]). Telecommunications company Orange in France provided for five days of paid leave in its 2022-24 agreement, for example, while in Spain the finance and insurance sectoral agreement provides for financial assistance with housing, legal advice and counselling up to EUR 1 000 (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, 2023[9]). In Italy, the 2019 sectoral agreement for the wood, cement, brick and stone sectors extends the entitlement to leave beyond the national entitlement of three months (though still for those certified), while the 2020 collective bargaining agreement between Vodafone Italy and territorial and national trade unions provides for the possibility for reduced working hours and extended paid leave entitlements in some circumstances, amongst other supports (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, 2023[9]); (Pillinger, 2023[36]).

In France, trade unions have also negotiated provisions relating to domestic violence in collective agreements in the context of broader gender and professional equality commitments. A collective bargaining agreement (CBA) concluded between railway operator SNCF and French trade unions CGT, UNSA-Ferroviaire, SUD-Rail and CFDT (2021-24) sets out measures relating to gender equality in working conditions and pay, for example, in addition to support for victim-survivors of domestic violence, including an entitlement to three days of paid leave for legal or medical consultations, flexible working arrangements (as to time and place of location) and training and awareness-raising measures, amongst others (Baranska and Picard, 2024[18]).

Source: (Workplace Gender Equality Agency, 2022[34]; FairWork Commission, 2022[35]; Fitz-Gibbon, Pfitzner and McNicol, 2023[32]; European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, 2023[9]; Baranska and Picard, 2024[18]).

Where workplaces do offer access to services, delivery models vary, ranging from services and benefits delivered directly by employers, such as medical or financial support; services contracted by employers, including psychological counselling through employee assistance programmes; and/or strong referral pathways to outside services, such as specialised domestic violence services and legal services.

In Australia, property group Mirvac extends up to AUD 5 000 of financial support to employees per "occasion" for medical and housing costs, and childcare costs for permanent employees, while multinational metals and mining company Rio Tinto provides assistance to those who may use violence, including leave to attend accredited family and domestic violence behaviour change programmes, accommodation to enable families experiencing violence to remain safe (i.e. shifting the onus of relocation to the perpetrator, to enable family members to remain at home), and referral to specialist support services (Champions of Change Coalition, 2021[22]).

2.4. Embedding workplace flexibility measures to facilitate safety and employment

Companies have also focused on **embedding workplace flexibility measures** to enable victim-survivors to address the impacts of violence while maintaining employment, for example by enabling them to reduce or change their working hours to be able to access support that is only available during working hours, and

to plan for their and their family's safety. This can include flexibility in relation to hours, tasks and work location, as well as adaptations to processes, for example having wages paid to another bank account (UK Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Trade, 2021[21]).

2.5. Employer action can deliver meaningful benefits, within and beyond the workplace

Employer action can deliver meaningful improvements to outcomes. Despite insufficient good-quality evaluations on the impact of workplace supports for victim-survivors, studies suggest that these supports can lead to better awareness of IPV, greater willingness to intervene if employees are experiencing IPV and better (more) provision of information to victim-survivors, with some qualitative studies suggesting that workplace supports can facilitate job retention, at least in the short term (Adhia et al., 2019[20]; Swanberg and Logan, 2005[37]; Swanberg, Macke and Logan, 2007[38]). As companies are scaling up efforts to address violence, there is a significant opportunity for better evaluation, including of interventions targeted to perpetrators, which have historically been lacking (in and out of workplace settings).

Critically, broader measures **to promote women's economic empowerment and tackle discrimination must be central to violence prevention efforts**: there are strong links between gender inequality and IPV, and effective prevention strategies must take aim at the discriminatory attitudes that enable abuse to take place. Related to this, the **private sector is acting in other ways to prevent and stop IPV outside of the workplace**. For example, some employers are also moving to address domestic violence in their supply chains and customer base (Champions of Change Coalition, 2021[22]). In Peru, pharmaceutical company Laboratorios Bagó targeted a violence awareness campaign to young women through products to alleviate menstrual pain, while in Australia banks have been playing an important role in identifying and preventing financial abuse by flagging low-value bank transfers with threatening messages, with one bank launching a police referral pilot that enables victim-survivors to escalate the transactions to police (UN Women, 2020[39]; Commonwealth Bank of Australia, 2023[40]). In France, AXA Insurance now includes support for victim-survivors in home insurance contracts, including legal and psychological support and up to seven days of emergency housing (AXA Insurance, 2025[41]).

Employer networks and trade union networks are also playing an important role in some countries in addressing intimate partner violence and its workplace impacts (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, 2023[9]). In Europe, the One In Three Women Network – co-founded by the FACE Foundation and the Kering Foundation – is a European Network of companies who have committed to provide support for victim-survivors of violence, and have worked to conduct research, raise awareness, develop policies and produce awareness and training materials (Kering Foundation, n.d.[42]). Trade unions have also worked to address intimate partner violence and its workplace impacts (examples of which are provided above). In Europe, the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and its affiliates have taken a range of steps to raise awareness of IPV and to address its workplace impacts, including through ETUC's 2024 project "safe at work, safe at home, safe online" and the adoption of a resolution "on the offensive to combat gender-based violence in the world of work," calling for further action through EU social dialogue, amongst other measures.

3 Public policy can encourage and support employers to implement an effective approach to violence

Governments, too, have implemented measures to strengthen workplace approaches to IPV, focussed on both entitlements and protections for workers, and/or guidance and support for employers.

3.1. Employment protections for workers affected by violence

A number of OECD countries have **instituted legal reforms to extend employment protections to workers affected by intimate partner violence (typically for domestic and/or family violence), including by explicitly legislating the right to non-discrimination for victim-survivors**. This could help to promote earlier identification and support, particularly given fear of stigmatisation and negative repercussions remain considerable barriers to disclosure and help-seeking. Given the significant impacts that intimate partner violence can have on people's ability to participate in and thrive at work, it could also help to ensure that workers are not unfairly penalised for the impacts of violence on work performance (Baranska and Picard, 2024[18]). At least Australia, New Zealand and Spain have implemented employment or non-discrimination protections for victim-survivors. Other countries, including Ireland and Slovenia, have introduced employment protections in specific circumstances, for example for workers accessing domestic violence leave (in Ireland), or for employees that have reported the violence and where proceedings relating to the violence and the elimination of its consequences (for example legal proceedings) have not yet been completed (Slovenia) (discussed in further detail below).

In 2018, New Zealand amended its human rights act to extend employment protection to people affected by domestic violence, protecting against adverse and detrimental treatment including dismissal and discrimination in terms of employment or working conditions.[10] In 2023, Australia made "subjection to family and domestic violence" a protected attribute under the *Fair Work Act 2009*, meaning that employers cannot take adverse action against employees or prospective employees because they are or have been subjected to family and domestic violence (Fair Work Commission, 2023[43]).[11] Spain has introduced a number of employment rights intended to prevent the exclusion of victim-survivors from the labour market, including an entitlement for female victim-survivors to an employment-protected suspension of their employment relationship, and protection against dismissal for female victim-survivors exercising their rights (e.g. to a reduction or re-organisation of their working hours) (Government Office for Gender-based Violence, 2022[44])[12] while Ireland has legislated specific employment protections for workers accessing domestic violence leave, amending the Unfair Dismissals Act (1977) in 2023 to protect employees against unfair dismissal for taking domestic violence leave.[13] In Slovenia, the Labour Relations Act (Article 189.a člen) provides for special protection in the employment relationship for employees that have experienced domestic violence in the past two years, reported the violence to the police or a social work centre, and where proceedings relating to violence and the elimination of its consequences have not yet been completed, as evidenced by a certificate from the social work centre, the court and other institutions.[14]

3.2. Flexible working entitlements

OECD countries including Australia, Italy, New Zealand, Slovenia and Spain have also extended **a right to request flexible working arrangements for victim-survivors** – at least in some circumstances – which could support employment by helping victim-survivors to manage the impacts of violence while maintaining employment (Table 1). What arrangements workers can request, and the circumstances under which workers can request them, varies across countries: eligible employees affected by family violence in New Zealand can request short-term flexible working arrangements for up to two months, for instance, while flexibility entitlements are somewhat broader in Spain, where female employees can also request changes to their place of work (Table 1).

Other countries such as Canada, Greece, Lithuania and Spain have **more generally extended a right to request flexible working arrangements to *all* workers**, with broader potential benefits for better work-life balance by enabling working parents to accommodate caregiving responsibilities (OECD, 2023[45]).

Table 1. Entitlements to flexible working arrangements specifically dedicated to workers affected by domestic and family violence

Country	Entitlements
Australia	Employees can request flexible working arrangements if they are experiencing family and/or domestic violence, or supporting/caring for a household or immediate family member experiencing such violence
Italy	Female workers that have been certified by their municipality to be in a "protection programme" and with co-ordinated and continuous collaboration relationships included in their protection path have the right to shift from full-time to part-time work *where available* in the workforce. At the employee's request, the part-time employment relationship must be transformed into a full-time relationship again
New Zealand	Workers affected by family violence (all forms of violence in family and intimate relationships) have the right to request short-term flexible working arrangements for a period of up to two months
Slovenia	Employees who are victim-survivors of domestic violence[1] may, for the duration of the employment relationship, propose part-time employment for the period of arranging protection, legal and other procedures and remedying the consequences of domestic violence (during which time the permanent employment contract is suspended, if the employee was employed for an indefinite period). Employers must justify their decisions in writing within 15 days, and part-time workers shall be entitled to remuneration for work and other rights and obligations as a full-time worker (unless otherwise stated in the Act) and to the same social insurance rights as if they were working full-time, if provided for in the law. Employees who are victim-survivors of domestic violence are also entitled to work shorter hours, as employers must enable victim-survivors to more easily reconcile their professional obligations with those arising from the arrangement of protection, legal and other proceedings, and eliminating the consequences of domestic violence. An employer may only require a victim-survivor employee to work overtime, assign them to night work, or assign them irregular or temporary working hours with their prior written consent
Spain	Female employees have a right to a number of flexibility measures, including reductions in their working day or working hours, and to changes in their working location (right to remote working and preferential rights to transfer their work location). Absences from work or challenges with respect to punctuality related to the physical or mental health impacts of violence can also be determined to be justified by health and social care providers

Notes: [1]In Slovenia, this relates to victim-survivors who have experienced domestic violence in the past two years, have reported the violence to police or social services, and the proceedings relating to the violence and elimination of its consequences have not yet been completed. They are required to prove this by means of a certificate from the social work centre confirming the assessment of the risk of domestic violence, the court and other institutions.
Source: Australia: (Australian Public Service Commission, 2024[46]); Italy: (Presidency of the Council of Ministers, 2015[47]); Spain: (Government Office for Gender-based Violence, 2022[44]); New Zealand: (Employment New Zealand, 2024[48]).

3.3. A few countries have extended paid domestic violence leave entitlements to victim-survivors, with early evaluation finding meaningful benefits

The implementation of domestic violence leaves is a relatively recent development: over the past five to six years, a growing number of OECD countries have extended national paid leave entitlements to workers affected by domestic and family violence. These leaves recognise that those affected by violence may need to take time off from work and supports them to do so, helping to ensure that victim-survivors do not need to choose between their job and their safety. By doing so, they could help to maintain employment for victim-survivors, help businesses retain skilled employees, and address the high costs of violence to individuals and businesses. This type of leave seems to be valued by victim-survivors, too: in a national survey and in-depth interviews conducted in Australia prior to the implementation of paid domestic violence leave, several victim-survivors emphasised that domestic violence leave would have supported their recovery, and helped them to plan for their safety (Fitz-Gibbon, Pfitzner and McNicol, 2023[32]).

At least six OECD countries – Australia, Canada (public sector only), Ireland, Italy, New Zealand and Slovenia – now have national paid domestic violence leave entitlements for at least a subset of the population.[15] In Australia, Ireland and New Zealand the entitlement covers all eligible employees, in Canada the entitlement is for public sector employees, in Italy the leave is reserved for victim-survivors in a certified "protection" programme, and in Slovenia the leave is available to victim-survivors where proceedings relating to the violence and the elimination of its consequences have not yet been completed (including, for example, legal proceedings). The United Kingdom (Northern Ireland only) has also passed legislation to extend paid domestic abuse leave (safe leave) for all eligible employees, with implementation of the entitlement forthcoming.[16] Coverage and eligibility of the leave schemes vary across countries with some important differences, including as to duration and pay, eligibility requirements, worker coverage, the circumstances under which workers can take leave, the evidentiary and process requirements for workers to take leave, and whether carers are eligible (see Annex A for a more detailed overview by country).

3.3.1. Duration and pay

OECD countries have most commonly extended an entitlement to 5 or 10 days of paid leave per year, with entitlements ranging from five days per year in Canada, Ireland and Slovenia, 10 days per year in Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom (Northern Ireland only), and 90 days over a three-year period in Italy (where the entitlement is restricted to people that have been certified by municipal social services to be included in "protection pathways"). In all countries leave is envisioned to be paid at 100% of employees' normal rate of pay, though payment rules differ across countries.[17] Leave is generally paid for by employers, except for in Italy where leave is paid by the state social security institute: employers generally pay the leave and deduct it from the company's social security contributions, though in some cases the social security institute pays workers directly (including for example for seasonal workers and self-employed workers).

3.3.2. Eligibility requirements and types of experiences covered

Leave is typically available to employees that have experienced domestic and/or family violence, though definitions vary across countries. These leaves are generally not intended for victim-survivors of non-partner sexual violence.

Length of service requirements vary across countries. Some countries have established a "day one" entitlement to leave (Australia, Ireland, the United Kingdom (Northern Ireland)), while others include minimum length of service requirements (three months in Canada and six months in New Zealand). While there is a balance to be struck, length of service requirements may inadvertently exclude victim-survivors

of violence, given they generally have weaker labour force attachment, and are therefore potentially less likely to meet minimum length of service requirements (Fair Work Commission, 2022[49]). This may be particularly challenging for victim-survivors of economic violence, where their partner has prevented them from working. In some countries perpetrators are explicitly excluded from accessing domestic violence leave, though there has been some discussion over whether such leaves should be extended to perpetrators to enable them to attend prevention programmes that might stop further violence.

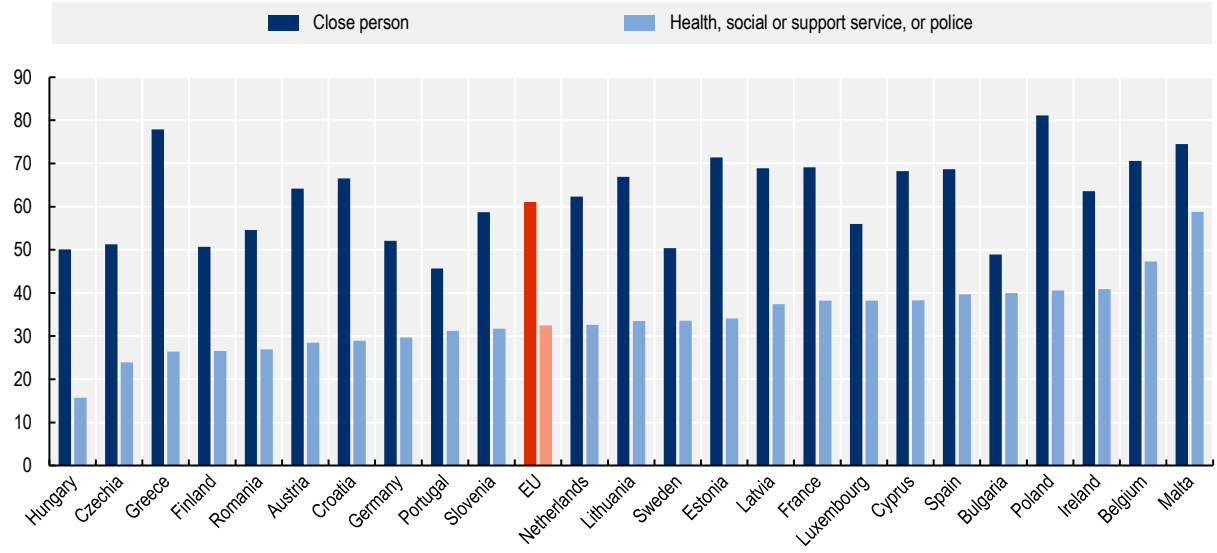
3.3.3. Worker coverage

Worker coverage by contract type also varies considerably across countries, with relatively broad coverage in Australia (all full-time, part-time and casual employees), Ireland (all employees) and the United Kingdom (Northern Ireland), where legislation calls for the establishment of domestic abuse leave (safe leave) for all workers, irrespective of whether they are an employee. Broad worker coverage is particularly positive given economic insecurity can heighten the risk of violence and vice versa, meaning that people in more precarious working conditions are potentially at heightened risk of violence, less able to access leave, and less able to forego the income earned from work. They therefore particularly stand to benefit from access to such leaves.

Worker coverage is narrower in Canada (public sector employees with three consecutive months of continuous employment), New Zealand (all employees with six months of continuous employment with their employer, or that have worked a minimum number of hours in a six-month period), Italy and Slovenia. In Slovenia, leave is available to employees who have reported the violence to the police or social services, and where proceedings relating to the violence and the elimination of its consequences (including, for example, legal proceedings) have not yet been completed. In Italy, leave is available to employees who have been certified by municipal social services to be included in a protection programme related to gender-based violence, for example where they have accessed services from an anti-violence centre or shelter.

While these requirements for certification could help to promote help-seeking, given that the majority of victim-survivors do not report their experience to authorities, in practice these requirements are likely to serve as a barrier to access for some. In the European Union (EU), for example, data from the first wave of the EU Gender-Based Violence Survey shows that on average only a third of ever-partnered women exposed to intimate partner violence disclosed the violence to one of health, social, support or police services (33%) (Figure 2). Disclosure also varies considerably across services: disclosure to health and social services is most common (25% on average across the EU), followed by police (17%) and support services (10%).

Figure 2. Share of ever-partnered women who have experienced violence by an intimate partner, by person/support service to whom violence was reported, 2024 or latest year available



Note: Data for Bulgaria, Portugal and Slovenia have low reliability, and should be interpreted with caution. Data collection took place between 2020 and 2024. Support service means any organisation or official body providing help to victims of violence, e.g. support services, helplines, shelters.
Source: EU survey on gender-based violence against women and other forms of inter-personal violence (EU-GBV) (wave 2021) (Eurostat, 2025[50])

3.3.4. Circumstances under which workers can take leave

Some countries specify specific circumstances – or "permissible uses" – for which the leave can be taken. Permissible uses include, for example, accessing medical and other specified services (Canada, Ireland, the United Kingdom (Northern Ireland)); arranging protection, legal and other procedures at institutions; and remedying the consequences of domestic violence (Slovenia). Other leave schemes more broadly extend an entitlement to time off where needed to deal with the impact of or issues related to the abuse (Australia and New Zealand). These broader types of provisions can help to ensure that the many circumstances for which leave may be required are covered.

The time horizon within which employees can access domestic violence leaves also varies across countries: in some countries leave is available to employees that are *currently experiencing* violence (Australia), though more commonly leave is available to employees with *current or past* experiences of violence (Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, the United Kingdom (Northern Ireland). These broader time horizons can be helpful given that the impacts of violence can persist long beyond dissolution of abusive relationships. In Italy, eligible workers can take the leave within three years from the commencement date of a certified protection programme.

3.3.5. Evidentiary and process requirements to take leave

Evidentiary requirements vary considerably across countries, as countries strike varying balances between ensuring accessibility (not introducing prohibitive requirements that may serve as a potential barrier to uptake) and legitimate access, recognising the importance of believing victim-survivors when they disclose violence. Most commonly, employees do not need to provide evidence to request the leave, but employers can request at least some supporting documentation (in Australia, Canada and New Zealand). Access requirements are more stringent in Italy and Slovenia, where workers must provide evidence from public

authorities. In Italy, employees are required to provide employers with a certification from their municipality. In Slovenia, employees are required to provide a certificate from the social work centre on the assessment of the risk of domestic violence, proof of a report to the police and proof of proceedings before the authorities in relation to domestic violence, for example a summons to court or a summons from the social work centre. Evidentiary requirements are less stringent in Ireland where no evidence is required, and employers are generally not permitted to request it.

Reducing the documents that need to be provided to access domestic violence leaves can reduce barriers to help-seeking, particularly given the sensitive nature of the circumstances, and the sensitivity of the information that may be requested (e.g. some victim-survivors may not be comfortable providing their employers with official reports if they contain details of the abuse) (Champions of Change Coalition, 2021[22]). An early evaluation of the operation of family and domestic violence leave in Australia, for instance, signaled that evidentiary requirements could serve as a barrier to uptake for some. In Australia, employees do not need to provide evidence to request leave, but employers can request evidence that shows employees need to do something to address the impacts of violence, and that it is not practical to do so outside their working hours. Early evaluation showed that many felt it reasonable for employers to be able to request evidence, but victim-survivors were concerned with the perceived requirement to provide onerous evidence, over half of leave takers reported difficulties gathering necessary evidence, and misconceptions about what evidence could be accepted were stopping some victim-survivors from accessing the leave (Commonwealth of Australia, 2024[51]; Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, 2024[52]). Clear and consistent communication from governments and employers around evidentiary requirements for leave-taking could help to address these issues to some extent.

3.3.6. Leave for carers

Canada, Ireland and New Zealand stand out for extending domestic and family violence leave entitlements to at least some carers, meaning that parents supporting a victim-survivor child up to 18 can also access leave (in Canada); that employees supporting a “relevant person” such as a child, spouse, cohabitant or intimate partner can take leave (in Ireland); or that people who cohabit with a victim-survivor child up to 17 can also access leave (in New Zealand).

3.3.7. Early evaluation points to meaningful benefits, and areas for improvement

While few evaluations of these new domestic leave schemes have been conducted, limited **early evidence points to beneficial impacts**, while signaling a need for better awareness to promote uptake (see Box 3). An independent review of the operation of the Family and Domestic Violence (FDV) leave entitlement in Australia found broad support amongst employers, workers and victim-survivors of the leave entitlement; suggestive evidence that the leave entitlement was being used to help victim-survivors maintain employment and income; and that the leave had the potential to reduce stigma surrounding domestic violence (see Box 3). The review also noted concerns amongst small businesses around the resource implications of FDV leave, and pointed to a need to increase awareness of the entitlement to improve uptake, to build capacity within workplaces (and particularly amongst managers) to create an environment that facilitates disclosure and effective responses to disclosure, and to ensure that organisations have appropriate mechanisms in place to ensure trust and privacy in implementation of the leave (see Box 3). The review also highlighted heightened barriers to access for certain population groups, such as casual workers, First Nations workers and people living with a disability, amongst others, linked to language and cultural barriers, heightened shame and stigma, and fewer avenues for (and access to) support amongst other factors (Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, 2025[53]).

The Australian Government response to the review agreed to all of the review’s recommendations and set out a number of future directions for the scheme, including a maintained focus on awareness-raising, targeted measures for population groups, and ongoing evaluation. The Australian Fair Work Ombudsman

has taken a number of steps to raise awareness of the entitlement, including through publicly-available communications, educational tools and resources on accessing and managing the entitlement (Fair Work Ombudsman, n.d.[54]). It will be important to continue monitoring the downstream effects of these leaves on labour market participation and economic outcomes, including on the costs and benefits to businesses.

Box 3. Early evaluation of Australia's domestic and family violence leave shows meaningful benefits, and points to areas for improvement

In 2024, the Australian Industrial Transformation Institute at Flinders University conducted an independent review of the operation of Australia's family and domestic leave entitlement, drawing on research by the Behavioural Economics Team of the Australian Government (Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet) which conducted surveys with 594 victim-survivors of family and domestic violence, 1 437 employers and 3 008 Australian workers, and interviews with 15 employers and 22 victim-survivors. The review found:

- **broad support for the paid leave entitlement**, with ~85% of victim-survivors, 77% of employers and 87% of workers supportive
- suggestive evidence that the **leave was being used as intended**, with the small number of paid leave-takers amongst interviewed victim-survivors (n=46) expressing that **the leave was helping victim-survivors to stay in work (89%), to maintain an income (91%)** and to access support, using the time to arrange for their safety (41%) or their child's safety (43%), and to access police (39%), medical (22%) and legal (24%) services. These findings were echoed by stakeholders in the independent review, with specialist family and domestic family violence services highlighting that the leave had allowed several victim-survivors to leave abusive relationships while maintaining some financial security (Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, 2024[55]).
- Suggestive evidence that the **leave entitlement has the potential to reduce stigma in the workplace**: in a survey experiment, Australian workers were given a fictitious scenario of a victim-survivor accessing FDV leave, and asked to evaluate their competence and suitability for management, and to assign them a bonus. Workers who had received information about the FDV leave entitlement before being asked to carry out the evaluation rated the victim-survivor as more competent, more suitable for management, and more deserving of a higher bonus than the workers that did not receive information about the leave entitlement prior to conducting their evaluation (Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, 2024[52]).

The independent review also highlighted a number of challenges with respect to implementation of the scheme alongside challenges related to evidentiary requirements (discussed in further detail above), namely:

- The review noted **concerns amongst small and micro businesses around the cost and staffing implications of the leave,** with just below a third of micro (28%) and small businesses (30%) raising concerns about the financial impacts of DFV leave. The research found that concerns about cost were highest amongst employers that had not provided any FDV leave (30% cited financial cost as a barrier), compared to employers that had already provided access to FDV leave (18%).
- **Low awareness was likely contributing to low uptake of the leave**, particularly amongst casual workers. Of the small, non-representative sample of victim-survivors that reported having experienced FDV in 2023-4, 13% had taken paid FDV leave, up from 6% prior to implementation of the entitlement, in the period between 2018-22. Awareness of the leave entitlement was found to be fairly low, at 58% amongst employers and 39% amongst victim-survivors. Awareness and

uptake of the leave was particularly low amongst casual staff, with 20% of casual employees aware of the leave, and only 1 out of 19 of casual employees that were victim-survivors accessing FDV leave. This is a particularly notable finding given that women are overrepresented in casual work with limited access to leave (Fitz-Gibbon, Pfitzner and McNicol, 2023[32]).

- Researchers point to low awareness as a possible driver of low uptake, possibly combined with uncertainty about evidentiary and other requirements to access the leave, and recommend greater awareness-raising of the entitlement, including potentially a greater role for first responders to highlight the availability of leave to victim-survivors. Researchers also note that FDV leave was the first paid leave entitlement extended to casual employees through the national employment standards, and assumptions by casual workers that they are not eligible could have contributed to low awareness and/or uptake.

Concerns around trust and privacy loomed large for employees: victim-survivors reported concerns about disclosing the abuse to employers with some noting discriminatory responses when they did disclose, pointing to the critical importance of strong organisational culture and processes for effective implementation of domestic violence leaves:

- The necessity to disclose abuse served as a barrier to leave access for some, with victim-survivors reporting concerns that disclosure would negatively impact their career, and concerns over their employer's ability to maintain privacy and anonymity. Around a third of victim-survivors did not disclose the abuse to anyone they worked with, with fewer than 2 in 5 disclosing to their managers. Strong relationships between victim-survivors and managers seemed to be linked to help-seeking, with researchers finding an association between leave uptake and the degree of trust that victim-survivors reported in their manager.
- Worryingly, a significant minority of the victim-survivors that accessed FDV leave (7 out of 46) reported that they were fired or asked to resign after using FDV leave, and a significant minority of employers (37%) reported feeling ill-equipped to have conversations about FDV when violence was disclosed to them.

Similar findings have been reported in the United States (US) state of Oregon, where a small-scale qualitative study three years following Oregon's (unpaid) state leave law highlighted the potential of "IPV leave" to reduce stigma, but found that 74% of participants were not aware that the leave existed. Key barriers to access of the leave included fear of negative repercussions (concern that accessing the leave would lead to job loss, damage their career or how people at work perceived them) and lack of payment, with key implementation barriers noted as lack of awareness and lack of training for supervisors (Laharnar et al., 2015[56]).

Source: (Laharnar et al., 2015[56]; Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, 2024[55]; Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, 2024[52]).

3.4. Countries are providing more guidance and greater transparency to employer efforts to address violence

Though legal reforms are increasingly conferring additional rights to affected workers, countries do not always explicitly require employers to take steps to protect their workers from IPV that occurs outside the workplace. While employers have obligations relating to the health and safety of their employees at work, the boundaries of employers' responsibilities to address domestic violence have been the subject of some discussion. Legal analysis by Dentons lawyers and Thomson Reuters (2020) of a subset of

OECD countries – Australia, Canada (Ontario), New Zealand, France, Italy and the United Kingdom (England and Wales) – highlighted that it is not always clear if employers' duty of care extends to violence perpetrated outside of the workplace, even if its impacts affect employees' health and safety at work. In Australia and New Zealand there is some recognition that domestic and family violence could constitute a risk posed to the health and safety of employees at work, while responsibilities in France and Italy were reported to be less clear (Thomson Reuters Foundation et al., 2020[57]). The Canadian state of Ontario stands out as a jurisdiction that imposes a positive duty on employers to protect their workers from domestic violence where it spills or risks spilling over into the workplace, with legislation requiring employers to protect workers if they become aware or reasonably ought to be aware of domestic violence that might expose a worker to physical injury in the workplace (Thomson Reuters Foundation et al., 2020[57]). In the United Kingdom, statutory guidance issued in connection with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 states that "employers should consider the impact of domestic abuse on their employees as part of their duty of care" (Home Office, 2022[58]). The significant increase seen in remote work since the COVID-19 pandemic may also have implications for employers' obligations as working from home has become more common, and the boundaries between homes and workplaces have become less rigid. Reflecting these links, the 2022 European framework agreement of the Social Dialogue Committee of Central Administrations on digitalisation highlights domestic violence, and draws attention to its prevention in the context of health and safety (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, 2023[9]; TUNED and EUPAE, 2022[59]).

To encourage effective workplace approaches, countries **are providing guidance and support to employers to address intimate partner violence**. Partnerships with specialist organisations and input from victim-survivors play an important role here, too, in ensuring that guidance is well-designed and implemented. The Irish Government has partnered with Women's Aid to develop a Policy Template and Guidance Note to support employers in developing workplace domestic violence policies, including guidance on promoting workplace cultures that facilitate disclosures of abuse (Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 2023[60]; Department of Children, 2023[61]). France, too, has developed a practical guide on domestic and intrafamily violence for employers with expert input from the governmental Women's Rights Service ("*service des droits des femmes et de l'égalité entre es femmes et les hommes*"), the president of Association FIT (*une Femme, un Toit*), and other partners (Directorate-General for Administration and the Civil Service, 2023[24]). International guidance is helping to guide employer responses, too, with the International Labour Organization (ILO) publishing a guide for employers on addressing, preventing and responding to violence and harassment in the world of work (2022[62]).

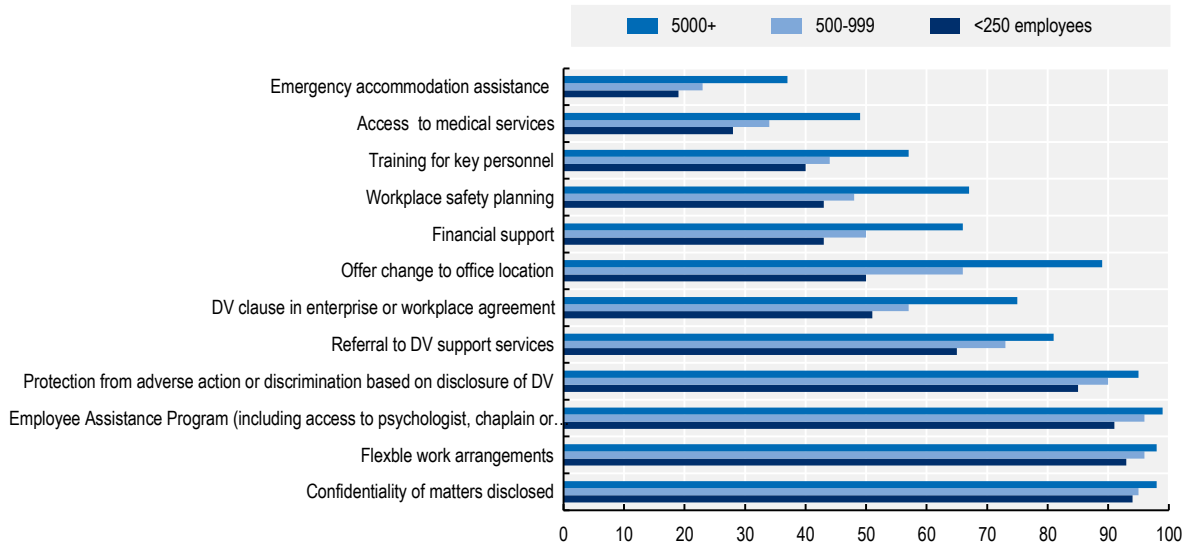
Some countries have **also sought to incentivise effective workplace approaches through greater recognition and transparency of good practice**, with a handful of countries implementing (thus far voluntary) certifications and employer reporting. France has a voluntary label for high-performing gender equality firms which has the fight against discrimination and violence against women at work as a key criterion (Ministry of Labour, Health, Solidarity and Families, 2023[63]). Peru has launched a voluntary "Safe Company" certification and incentive mark for public and private organisations that promote gender equality at work and implement measures to prevent violence and discrimination against women at work and in the community (European Commission, 2020[64]; Government of Peru, 2025[65]).

Some countries have also embedded considerations related to **intimate partner (and other types of) violence in broader gender equality obligations**, including in requirements for organisational gender equality plans (in France), and mandatory pay gap reporting schemes (in Australia). France's legal framework includes a requirement for public sector organisations and local authorities to develop a multi-year action plan for professional equality between women and men which must include (inter-alia) measures to prevent and deal with discrimination, acts of violence, sexual harassment and sexist acts.[18] Government guidance suggests that preventative measures for domestic and intrafamily violence (such as awareness-raising) are intended to be in scope of this requirement for professional equality action plans (Directorate-General for Administration and the Civil Service, 2023[24]).

Australia has **integrated questions on employer responses to family and domestic violence as part of its mandatory pay gap reporting scheme**, meaning that companies calculating and submitting mandatory pay gap information also submit information on the availability of specific workplace supports for domestic and family violence, such as confidentiality measures, emergency accommodation assistance, and whether workplace or enterprise agreements contain a domestic violence clause. Industry and company-level information is made publicly available on the Workplace Gender Equality Agency's website, bringing greater visibility and opportunity for comparison to workers and employers (Workplace Gender Equality Agency, 2023[66]). Looking at reported workplace supports by company size, for example, it is clear that in general larger companies in Australia (by number of employees) tend to offer more assistance to employees who are experiencing family or domestic violence than smaller companies (Figure 3). This varies by type of support: there are a set of supports that are reported to be nearly universally available across companies (confidentiality of disclosure, flexible work arrangements and Employee Assistance Programmes), while some supports are almost twice as likely in very large companies compared to smaller companies. For example, 37% of employers with 5 000 or more employees reported offering emergency accommodation assistance, compared to 19% of companies with fewer than 250 employees. This could reflect lower capacity amongst smaller employers to implement (at least some) workplace supports for people affected by family and domestic violence, and targeted support for smaller workplaces and/or robust public provision could help to ensure that victim-survivors can access the same rights and support mechanisms irrespective of where they work. Australia, for example, has developed a specific guide on family and domestic violence for small employers, including a checklist for managing family and domestic violence issues in the workplace (Fair Work Ombudsman, 2023[67]).

Figure 3. Larger companies in Australia tend to report more comprehensive support for employees experiencing family or domestic violence than smaller companies

Share (%) of Australian private sector organisations that report a policy/strategy to support employees experiencing family or domestic violence (multiple choice), 2023-24, by employer size (number of employees)



Note: Employers with 100 or more employees report annually against six priority areas. Only data for some company groups (by size) are shown here, to provide an indicative view of how company supports change as company size increases. Data disaggregated for companies of different sizes are available on the Australian Workplace Gender Equality Agency website. Financial support includes e.g. advance bonus payment or advanced pay.
Source: OECD Secretariat, using data from the Australian Workplace Gender Equality Agency Industry Data Explorer, available at www.wgea.gov.au/Data-Explorer/Industry.

3.5. Supporting victim-survivors into the workforce

In addition to supporting victim-survivors in the workplace, some governments have implemented specific schemes to support victim-survivors to *enter* the workforce, of particular importance given the deleterious impact that IPV can have on employment. The United Kingdom piloted a programme of support for women who were not working and needed to do so to leave violent relationships (UK Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Trade, 2021[21]), while Spain provides financial incentives (discounts on the company's social security contributions) to companies that recruit women victim-survivors (Government Office for Gender-based Violence, 2022[44]). Costa Rica reports that it has piloted bilateral initiatives with private companies to find job placements for victim-survivors who are leaving specialised care centres. Social protection and employment support play a critical role in preventing and addressing the economic insecurity that can fuel and be driven by violence.

4 Conclusions

Workplaces play an important role in preventing, identifying and responding to IPV. Across the OECD, there are impressive examples of public and private efforts to ensure an effective workplace approach to intimate partner violence, and to improve social and economic outcomes for victim-survivors. Partnerships play an important role: input from victim-survivors and specialist organisations can help to ensure that workplace actions are safe and effective, while social dialogue, workers' representatives and collective bargaining have also helped to raise awareness of the workplace impacts of violence, and to promote adequate protections for affected workers.

Governments are leveraging a range of policy tools to encourage and support workplace action on intimate partner violence, including measures targeted to firms and workers. Some countries have extended employment protections and entitlements for employees affected by intimate partner violence, with considerable potential to facilitate disclosure and help-seeking, and to support job retention for affected workers. This includes employment protections and rights to flexible work arrangements for workers affected by IPV, paid domestic violence leave entitlements, and employment support for victim-survivors to *enter* the workforce. The coverage and design of domestic violence leaves varies considerably across countries, with potential implications for access, cost and outcomes. Some countries have also implemented measures targeted at firms, including guidance for employers, good practice certification schemes, professional equality obligations, transparency measures and incentives for employers to recruit victim-survivors.

While too few of these measures have been robustly evaluated, they can provide meaningful benefits. Workplace supports can improve awareness of IPV and connect victim-survivors with valuable information, with some qualitative studies suggesting that effective workplace action can support job retention, at least in the short term. While the long-term impact of domestic violence leaves remains to be seen, early (albeit limited) evaluation of domestic violence leaves suggest important benefits: domestic violence leave has the potential to support job retention and to help address the stigma surrounding IPV, which still keeps too many people from accessing the support that they need. Early evaluation also points to the importance of raising awareness of these entitlements and to building capacity in the workforce to implement them effectively (particularly to ensure adequate privacy measures and to ensure that managers are well-equipped to respond, both of which could help to facilitate take up). It will be important to continue to evaluate the long-term impacts of these leaves, and governments should look to scale up high-quality evaluations of actions to address intimate partner violence, within and beyond the workplace.

Of course, workplace, social protection and employment support must be embedded in the context of an adequately funded, cross-sectoral approach to prevent and address intimate partner violence, extending to and beyond the education, justice, health, employment and social protection sectors. As public sector employers, governments should also look to build capacity amongst frontline workers to address IPV. Co-operation within and across sectors must remain a priority, with previous OECD work showing that strong integration and co-ordination of services for victim-survivors are the exception, and not the norm (OECD, 2023[33]). The stakes are high, but so too are the potential benefits: effective public and organisational responses to violence can not only save lives, but they can help stem the extraordinarily high costs of violence to individuals, businesses and economies.

Annex A. High-level overview of paid domestic and family violence leave entitlements in OECD countries

Table A A.1. High-level overview of national paid domestic and family violence leave entitlements

Country	Implemented	Length (days)	Payment rate (%)	Paid by	Eligibility criteria and operation	Evidentiary and privacy requirements
Australia	2023-24	10	100%	Employer	• All full-time, part-time and casual employees • Available to employees experiencing family and domestic violence to address the impact of family and domestic violence where not practical to do so outside their working hours • Available from commencement of employment. Balance resets annually and can be taken as single or multiple days. Part-days possible by agreement. • Employees must notify employers of the leave as soon as possible, which can be after leave has started • For casual employees, paid at full rate for shifts that they were rostered for when they took the leave	• Employees do not need to provide evidence to request leave, but employers can request evidence that shows employees need to do something to address the impacts of violence, and that it is not practical to do so outside their working hours • Evidence can be support service documents, police or court documents, or a statutory declaration • Employers are not permitted to state reason for leave on payslips

Country	Implemented	Length (days)	Payment rate (%)	Paid by	Eligibility criteria and operation	Evidentiary and privacy requirements
Canada	2019	5	100%	Employer	• All public sector employees that have completed three consecutive months of continuous employment • Employees are entitled to 10 days of leave in total, five of which are paid if eligibility (length of service) requirements are met • Available to employees that are victim-survivors of family violence, and to parents supporting a child who is a victim-survivor of family violence (under 18), to deal with family violence in specified circumstances, namely to seek medical attention or counselling, obtain family violence services, to relocate, to seek, prepare for or participate in legal or court proceedings, and to take regulatory-prescribed measures • Not available to those who have been found to – or are likely to have – perpetrated violence. • Can be taken in one or more periods. Employers can refuse part-days	• Employers can request "documentation" in support of the reasons for the leave for a period of 15 days after an employee's return to work, but employees are only required to provide it where it is reasonably practicable for them to obtain and provide it • Type of evidence required to be provided (on request) is not specified
Ireland	2023	5	100%[1]	Employer	• All employees • Available where an employee or "relevant person" to the employee has experienced in the past, or is currently experiencing, domestic violence, to deal with (or support the relevant person in dealing with) impacts of domestic violence in specified circumstances, namely to seek medical attention or counselling, obtain victim services, to relocate, to seek legal assistance or advice, to obtain an order under the Domestic Violence Act (2018), to seek assistance from the police and security service (Garda Síochána), or to seek or obtain any other relevant services. • Can be taken on days where the employee would otherwise have been working. Part-days are not permitted, meaning part-days would be counted as one full day of leave	• No statement of facts or other evidence is required. Employees must provide their employer with a signed confirmation of their leave when they return to work, setting out the commencement date and duration of the leave • Employers are required to acknowledge the confirmation but are not permitted to request further information about the leave or its circumstances

Country	Implemented	Length (days)	Payment rate (%)	Paid by	Eligibility criteria and operation	Evidentiary and privacy requirements
					• Employees must notify employers of the leave as soon as possible, but no (advance) notice is required	
Italy	2015	90 (over three years)[2]	100%	Social security institute (generally advanced by employers)	• Female employees that have been certified by municipal social services to be included in "protection pathways" related to gender-based violence (e.g. accessing services from an anti-violence centre or shelter) • Can be taken on days where the worker was scheduled to work, in daily or hourly (half-time) "mode" • Employers generally pay the leave and deduct it from social security contributions, but in some cases (e.g. for seasonal workers and self-employed female workers) it is paid directly by the social security institute	• Workers must provide their employers with the certification from their municipality and at least seven days of notice setting out the commencement and end date of the leave, except for when it is "objectively impossible"

New Zealand	2019	10	100%	Employer	• All employees that:
					  ○ have six months' current continuous employment with their employer, or a six-month period (at any time) where the employee has worked an average of at least 10 hours a week and at least 1 hour per week and 40 hours in every month; and
					  ○ Have experienced domestic violence or ordinarily or periodically cohabits with a child (<17 years old) who has experienced domestic violence (irrespective of how long ago the violence occurred, and even if it occurred before the worker became an employee)
					• Can be taken on days where the employee would otherwise have been working
					• Employees and employers can agree for the leave to be taken in advance
					• Employees must notify their employer of their intention to take leave as soon as possible
						• Employees do not need to provide evidence to request leave, but employers can request "proof" that employees are affected by family violence.
						• Employers can refuse payments for leave if proof is not provided unless the worker has a "reasonable excuse" not to do so, for example if they had to relocate quickly and were not able to obtain proof
						• Evidentiary requirements not prescribed by legislation. Government guidance suggests employer and workers should act in good faith, and evidence could include a letter or email from a support person or support organisation about the circumstances, a declaration, or documents/reports from police, courts or medical practitioners

Country	Implemented	Length (days)	Payment rate (%)	Paid by	Eligibility criteria and operation	Evidentiary and privacy requirements
					• Employers do not need to pay domestic violence leave if the employee is being paid accident compensation or weekly compensation for a work-related injury	
Slovenia[3]	2023	5	100%	Employer	• Available to employees for the purpose of arranging protection, legal and other procedures at institutions and remedying the consequences of domestic violence, for example where there are ongoing legal proceedings • Employee must notify the employer no later than three working days before the commencement of the absence	• On notifying their employer, the employee must also submit a certificate from the social work centre on the assessment of the risk of domestic violence, proof of the police report, and proof of proceedings before the authorities in relation to domestic violence (for example a summons to court or a summons from the social work centre)
United Kingdom (Northern Ireland only)	TBC Legislation passed 2022	10	TBC, suggested 100%[4]	Employer	Legislation has provided a statutory basis for an entitlement to "safe leave" for workers, but full details of the leave have not yet been finalised. The Department for the Economy is developing regulations to operationalise the entitlement. The legislative basis for safe leave: • Sets out eligibility for workers (including those who are not employees) who are or have been subjected to abusive behaviour by someone to who they are connected, and who require time away from work to deal with issues related to the abuse, including for example to access legal or healthcare services, finding alternate accommodation, obtaining welfare support or protecting family members • Provides a "day one" right to leave, i.e. no length of service eligibility requirement • Suggests that the entitlement can be taken flexibly (i.e. not in a single continuous period within a year), though regulations may attach conditions in respect of entitlement (e.g. when it can be taken) • Sets out that regulations may require employees to give notice as is reasonably practicable *before* taking safe leave	Implementation of the entitlement is forthcoming

Note: Definitions of violence and types of violence vary across countries. Payment rates refer to full-time employees. Payment rules differ across countries and are not described in detail here. In Australia, for example, eligible full-time or part-time employees must be paid at the employee's full rate of pay for the hours they would have worked had they not taken leave, in Canada eligible employees must be paid at their regular pay rate for their normal hours of work, while in Italy the payment rate is calculated using average daily earnings in a specified period preceding the leave. The time period in which workers can use the leave also differs across countries. For example, in Australia the year is calculated from an employee's work anniversary, in Canada the entitlement is per calendar year, and in Ireland the entitlement is for any 12-month period.

1 In Ireland, regulations provide for the minister to prescribe the daily rate of pay, taking into account social, economic and other factors. The daily rate of pay payable to eligible workers is set out in relevant regulations, and is currently effectively the worker's ordinary daily pay rate. A "relevant" person means someone who "has experienced or is experiencing domestic violence or abuse" and can include a spouse or civil partner, cohabitant, intimate partner, child who is under 18, or another dependent person.

2 In Italy, eligible workers are entitled to 90 days of leave which can be taken within three years from the commencement date of a certified protection programme. Leave is paid directly by the social security institute, INPS (Istituto Nazionale della Previdenza Sociale).

3 In Slovenia, the Act defines an employee who is a victim of domestic violence as a person who has experienced one of the forms of domestic violence defined in the law governing the prevention of domestic violence in the last two years, has reported the violence to the police or social services, and the proceedings relating to the violence and the elimination of its consequences have not yet been completed. The victim proves this by means of a certificate from the social work centre confirming the assessment of the risk of domestic violence, the court and other institutions.

4 In the United Kingdom (Northern Ireland only), the payment rate is not yet stipulated, but the legislation states that the regulations must provide for employees to be entitled to the same terms and conditions of employment, including as to pay, suggesting pay at the pre-leave rate.

Source: Australia: (Fair Work Ombudsman, 2023[68]; Fair Work Ombudsman, n.d.[54]); Canada: Canada Labour Code (R.S.C., 1985, c. L-2), (Government of Canada, 2021[69]); Ireland: (Workplace Relations Commission, 2023[70]), Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023 (Section 7); Italy: (Istituto Nazionale Previdenza Sociale, 2024[71]; Presidency of the Council of Ministers, 2015[47]); New Zealand: Domestic Violence – Victims' Protection Act 2018 (Section 72), (Employment New Zealand, 2024[48]); Northern Ireland: Domestic Abuse (Safe Leave) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022, (Department for the Economy, 2024[72]); Slovenia: Labor Relations Act (ZDR-1) (Article 168a).

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Notes

[1] Estimated share of women aged 15 years or older who have experienced physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence, and/or non-partner sexual violence (World Health Organization, 2021[1]).

[2] Self-reported lifetime prevalence of physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner, women, 18- to 74-year-olds.

[3] Estimate calculated by estimating the costs of gender-based and intimate partner violence in the United Kingdom in 2019 and extrapolating to EU-27. EIGE estimated the cost of gender-based violence against women.

[4] 31 OECD countries responded to the 2016 OECD Questionnaire on Progress in Implementing the 2013 Gender Recommendation.

[5] A 2022 survey of 3 002 victim-survivors of domestic and family violence (DFV) who worked in Australia while experiencing DFV found that 84% of victim-survivors reported that their experience of DFV impacted their job (with one in four reporting that DFV *significantly* impacted their ability to do their job (McNicol, Fitz-Gibbon and Brewer, 2022[14]), while a multi-country study of 4 762 workers of Vodafone across Germany, Ireland, Italy, Spain, Türkiye, the United Kingdom and non-OECD countries (India, Kenya and South Africa) found that 94% of workers who reported having experiencing domestic abuse said that it had negatively affected their performance at work (Opinium Research, 2021[10]).

[6] "Exposed to more frequent violence" refers to Australian working women who reported experiencing violence by a previous partner "all of the time/most of the time".

[7] Relates to the share of respondents who reported that their experience of domestic and family violence was an instrumental factor in their current or past unemployment, or their need to change jobs.

[8] Article 17 states that "Parties shall encourage the private sector, the information and communication technology sector and the media, with due respect for freedom of expression and their independence, to participate in the elaboration and implementation of policies and to set guidelines and self-regulatory standards to prevent violence against women and to enhance respect for their dignity."

[9] Definitions and understandings of intimate partner violence vary across countries, and measures to address it can be incorporated within efforts to address broader forms of violence, such as domestic and/or family violence. While the focus of this paper is on intimate partner violence, references to broader measures (e.g. on domestic violence), are included throughout this paper, as they typically address intimate partner violence, too. Efforts have been made to ensure that national measures are referred to as they are in their national context.

[10] Section 39 of the Domestic Violence – Victims' Protection Act 2018, inserting section 62A in the Human Rights Act 1993.

[11] Section 351(1) and section 772(1)(f) of the Fair Work Act 2009.

[12] Article 21 of Organic Law 1/2004 on Comprehensive Protection Measures Against Gender Violence.

[13] Section 33 of the Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023.

[14] Article 189.a člen of the Labour Relations Act (ZDR-1).

[15] In Costa Rica, the Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres (the public National Women's Institute) co-ordinates with the social security system to obtain disability leave for women at risk of femicide, to help them maintain their employment.

[16] The relevant Act states: "the Department must make regulations entitling an employee who is a victim of domestic abuse to be absent from work on leave…for the purpose of dealing with issues related to the domestic abuse (referred to in this chapter as "safe leave")" (Section 1 of the Domestic Abuse (Safe Leave) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022).

[17] In Australia, for example, eligible full-time or part-time employees must be paid at the employee's full rate of pay for the hours they would have worked had they not taken leave.

[18] Articles L132-1 and L132-2 of the General Civil Service Code.