



# The Impact of Domestic and Sexual Violence on the Workplace in Solomon Islands

Survey Report

March 2019

AN INITIATIVE OF THE PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP



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# 1 | Executive Summary

Fifteen of Solomon Islands' largest companies have signed up for the *Waka Mere Commitment to Action*. *Waka Mere*, or 'She Works' in Pijin, aims to advance gender equality in the country's private sector by promoting women in leadership; building respectful and supportive workplaces; and increasing opportunities for women in jobs traditionally held by men. *Waka Mere* is led by the International Finance Corporation (IFC), a member of the World Bank Group, in collaboration with the Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SICCI), the apex representative organisation for the country's private sector. The initiative is supported by the Governments of Australia and New Zealand.

1,248 people, a third of all employees, from nine *Waka Mere* companies, participated in this survey on 'How problems at home affect employees at work'. This survey was conducted in 2018 and was designed to identify:

- Employees' views of domestic and sexual violence and the impact it has on workplaces
- The prevalence and dynamics of domestic and sexual violence experienced by employees
- The effects of domestic and sexual violence on employees' ability to attend work, to be safe and productive at work, and the associated costs to businesses
- The availability and helpfulness of various kinds of support to employees affected by domestic and sexual violence, both provided by employers and in the community.

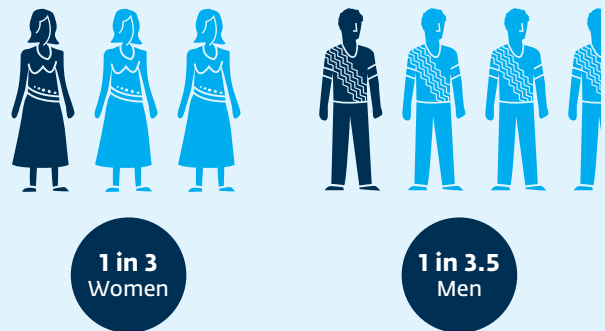
The survey findings will inform ongoing development of appropriate workplace responses and provide an early benchmark to measure changes in the ways that staff are supported. It is not a pure baseline as some companies have already started to implement aspects of workplace responses.

## Experience and Acceptance of Violence

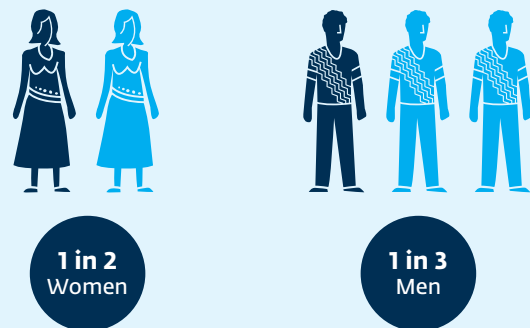
One in three of surveyed employees experienced domestic or sexual violence in the 12 months preceding the survey. In two companies, the rate was even higher, with approximately half of employees

### Experience of domestic and sexual violence

Experienced domestic or sexual violence in the 12 months preceding the survey



Experienced domestic or sexual violence in their lifetime



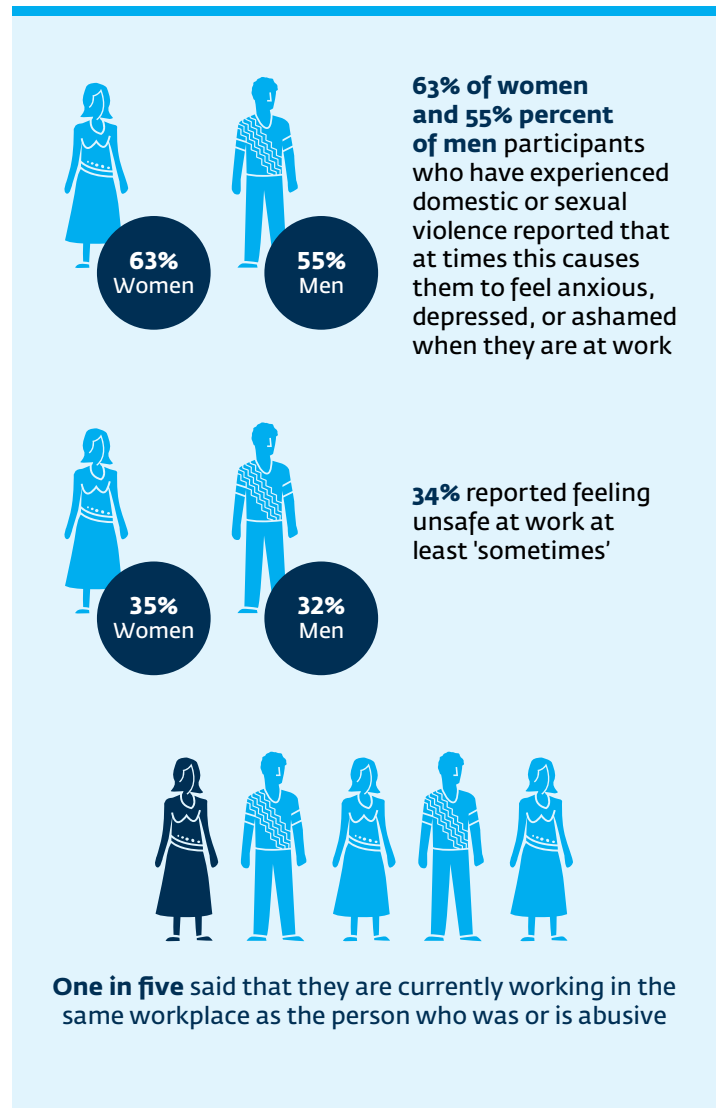
reporting domestic or sexual violence in the preceding 12 months. Overall, 44 percent of respondents (49 percent of women and 38 percent of men) reported that they had experienced some form of violence in their lifetime. In addition, 6 percent of participants who did not report experiencing violence themselves, said that they had close family that had. For many who reported violence, occurrence is regular—a quarter said violence occurs at least once monthly.

Encouragingly, the survey found much lower levels of acceptance of domestic and sexual violence than in previous studies; such as the 2009 Solomon Islands Family Health and Safety Study and the 2015 Solomon Islands Demographic and Health Survey. In the current survey, 31 percent of participants said they believed that domestic and sexual violence is sometimes acceptable, with men more likely to have this opinion than women (36 percent and 27 percent respectively). This compares positively with 71.2 percent women, and 56 percent men, employed in income-earning jobs, who had agreed with at least one specific justification for wife beating in the Demographic and Health Survey.

This emerging trend, at least in part, may be due to the work that has already been done in *Waka Mere* participating companies. Many of their employees are already involved in activities aiming to raise awareness of domestic and sexual violence, its consequences, and support services, with the central message that violence is unacceptable. Companies can now reinforce this positive finding and encourage an ongoing shift away from victim blaming. This will help to build an open and supportive environment for more affected people to come forward.

### Impacts of Violence on the Workplace

Eighty-four percent of participants recognised the potential (13 percent) or actual (71 percent) effects of domestic and sexual violence on workplaces. Of those who reported experiencing domestic or sexual violence, 81 percent reported at least one workplace impact. This represents 35 percent — or one in three — of all employees who participated in the survey.



The most frequently reported area of impact was in relation to employees' ability to get to work, stay at work, or how they feel when they are there. Sixty-three percent of women and 55 percent of men who experienced domestic or sexual violence reported that at times this causes them to feel anxious, depressed, or ashamed when they are at work; 34 percent reported feeling unsafe at work at least 'sometimes' (men, 32 percent; women, 35 percent); and one in five said that they are currently working in the same workplace as the person who was or is abusive.

### Estimating the Cost to Business

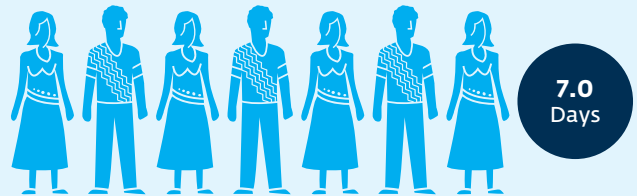
The stress of domestic and sexual violence, as well as any physical consequences, follows people to work — as may the perpetrators. As well as the significant personal toll, this has a cost to business.

We calculated this cost in the following ways:

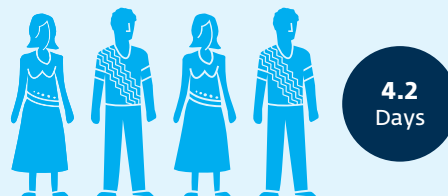
- For survey participants who reported feeling distracted, tired, or unwell, we applied a productivity-loss multiplier based on the frequency of the effect reported, as follows: rarely = 5 percent; sometimes = 10 percent; often = 15 percent; always = 20 percent. That is, for someone who reported 'always' feeling distracted, tired, or unwell at work, we estimated that they lost 20 percent of their nine-hour work day<sup>1</sup>, or 1.8 hours.
- For employees who reported being late to work, we calculated lost productivity on the basis of one hour per time. For this, and for employees who reported being absent from work, we used the frequencies for the four-week period (as per the survey question) in our calculation for the year.
- For time spent by employees responding to the effects of domestic and sexual violence in the workplace, we used the mid-point of the answer category (less than 1 hour per week = 0.5 hours; 1-5 hours per week = 3 hours; 6-10 hours per week = 8 hours; more than 10 hours per week = 10 hours).

The above calculations were applied to the whole workforces based on the experience of the sample. We assumed the same prevalence and the impact among the workforce. As the sample was not randomly selected, this is not a statistically accurate approach. It does however illustrate the cost of domestic and sexual violence to businesses.

#### In one year, for every employee:



**7 person-days** are lost due to employees feeling distracted, tired or unwell due to domestic or sexual violence



**4.2 person-days** are lost due to employees being absent from work due to domestic or sexual violence



**0.6 person-days** are lost by employees being late due to domestic or sexual violence



**5.6 person days** are spent responding to the effects of domestic and sexual violence in the workplace in an unstructured way

<sup>1</sup> All calculations use a nine-hour work day (as per the Solomon Islands labour law (1996)), and a 48-week work year.

Often employee absences and occasions of low productivity are unexplained. Staff feel too ashamed, or are otherwise unable, to tell their employers why they are missing work or why their performance is suffering. In this situation, employees may just resign, or their employer may choose to end their employment. Recruitment and training new employees incurs further costs to businesses. Given that a third of those affected are at mid or senior level, and 70 percent have been at the company for two years or more, this can be substantial.

### Help-Seeking

Eighty-one percent of survey participants—more men (86 percent) than women (77 percent)—thought employers should help affected employees. Slightly less than half of employees affected by domestic or sexual violence, with no variation between men and women, have spoken to someone at work about the violence, most commonly to another colleague, followed by a supervisor or manager. There is some evidence that employees who go through more formal channels—their supervisor or manager, human resources officer, or the domestic-violence contact officer<sup>2</sup> (where they have been set up)—have better outcomes, compared to those who discuss the violence with a colleague. Shame and a fear of gossip were the main reasons selected for not speaking to someone at work.

More women (63 percent) than men (52 percent) reported that they did not receive any assistance from their employer after they spoke to someone at work. Of those who did receive assistance, for women, the most common form was unpaid time off (11 percent of those speaking to someone at work), and for men, assistance with transport to and from work (17 percent). The number of survey participants that reported accessing various services outside of the community was low. The police, counselling, and other support services (indicated to be primarily connected with the church) were the main services accessed. Twenty four percent of women and 16 percent of men who reported that they had experienced domestic or sexual violence had accessed at least one service outside the workplace.

Several participants commented on the need for greater awareness within workplaces about domestic and sexual violence, including what it is, services available, workplace policy, and the impact it has on the workplace.

### The Importance of a Workplace Response

This survey on *'How problems at home affect employees'* at work clearly shows a wide range of effects on individual employees, their employers, and their colleagues. The survey also shows that positive changes are already happening – it appears that there is lower acceptance of domestic and sexual violence within these nine participating companies, and where employees do access various forms of support, it is usually helpful. This benefits both employee and the business.

It is noteworthy that the survey demonstrates that while more women experience violence and report slightly more effects, both men and women are affected. This is something that is not surprising to many employees throughout the Pacific region. Women are more vulnerable because of the severity and prevalence of violence against women specifically and the additional dimension of unequal power, often fewer options to leave, and differences in physical strength. However, the fact that both men and women are so affected is an important entry point for workplace responses and a powerful motivation for change. Workplace strategies to address violence are beneficial to women and men.

Companies involved in the *Waka Mere* commitment are beginning to implement a range of workplace responses and are starting to see the benefits of these. With such high losses to productivity, a likely contribution to staff turnover, and the positive outcomes that can be realized for both employees and employers, these workplace responses make good business sense.

<sup>2</sup> The domestic violence contact team is a workplace specific group of people trained by IFC under the *Waka Mere* initiative to be a point of call for those experiencing domestic or sexual violence. Team members refer employees to appropriate support services, and coordinate the assistance provided by the company.



**MYTH:**

Employees affected by DSV are not sure how their company can support them

**FACT:**

Employees said the most useful support from their company is time off and counselling



## 2 | The Waka Mere Commitment to Action

The *Waka Mere Commitment to Action* is a two-year initiative that aims to promote gender equality in the private sector in Solomon Islands. It was launched in July 2017 at the Australian Solomon Islands Business Forum and includes 15 of the largest companies in Solomon Islands, with nearly 6,000 employees combined. *Waka Mere*, or 'She Works' in Pijin, is led by the International Finance Corporation (IFC), a member of the World Bank Group, in collaboration with the Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SICCI), the apex representative organization for the private sector in Solomon Islands.

Through *Waka Mere*, each company has committed to action in one or more of the following three areas:



**Promote women in leadership**



**Build respectful and supportive workplaces**



**Increase opportunities for women in jobs traditionally held by men**

Reflecting that many Solomon Islands businesses want to diversify their talent pool and recognize the contribution of women staff and potential recruits, 14 *Waka Mere* participating companies have made commitments to build respectful and supportive workplaces for their employees. Twelve companies completed domestic violence contact team training. Nine of these companies participated in the employee survey '*How problems at home affect employees at work*'. Three companies adapted IFC's model workplace policy on domestic violence and began implementing a structured response to domestic violence. It is envisaged that the remaining *Waka Mere* participating companies that have made commitments to build respectful and supportive workplaces for their employees will adapt and implement domestic violence workplace policies in 2019.

This employee survey '*How problems at home affect employees at work*' was implemented to inform ongoing development of appropriate workplace responses and provide a baseline from which to measure changes in the way that staff are supported.

### 3 | Domestic and Sexual Violence in Solomon Islands

The Family Health and Safety Study (2009)<sup>3</sup>, found that violence against women was extremely prevalent in the Solomon Islands and it was among the highest globally (See Table 1 below).

The availability of these data and the recognition of the level of violence in Solomon Islands homes and communities has brought progressively more attention, resources, and in 2014, contributed to the passing of the Solomon Islands Family Protection Act into law. The Family Protection Act makes domestic violence an offence, contains preventative measures to stop violence before it occurs and prescribes penalties including fines and prison sentences for those found guilty of domestic violence.

The increased public visibility and discussion of domestic violence has also occurred within Solomon Islands companies. Employees and employers have recognized, at least informally, that the spill-over effects of domestic and sexual violence are entering workplaces. However, before the *Waka Mere* commitment, they did not always see the full extent – how many women and men were affected and in what ways – nor was it clear what could be done to help staff.

**Table 1 - Level of intimate partner and/or non-partner physical and/or sexual violence for Solomon Islands and comparators<sup>4</sup>**

	Solomon Islands (2009)	Samoa (2000)	Kiribati (2008)	Vanuatu (2009)	Fiji (2011)
<b>Intimate partner physical or sexual violence:</b>					
Last 12 months (%)	42	22	36	44	
Lifetime (%)	64	46	68	60	72
<b>Intimate partner and/or non-partner physical or sexual violence</b>					
Lifetime (%):	64	76	73	48**	31**

Note: Vanuatu and Fiji lifetime prevalence of physical and/or sexual violence is non-partner violence only.

<sup>3</sup> Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), Ministry of Women, Youth & Children's Affairs, National Statistics Office (2009) Solomon Islands Family Health and Safety Study: A study on violence against women and children. Honiara: SPC, p.69.

<sup>4</sup> Fiji data from Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (2013) Somebody's Life, Everybody's Business: National Research on Women's Health and Life Experiences in Fiji (2010/2011): A Summary exploring the prevalence, incidence and attitudes to intimate partner violence in Fiji. Remaining data from UN Women (2013) Violence against Women Prevalence Data: Surveys by Country (as of December 2012).



**MYTH:**

**Domestic violence is not a workplace issue**

**FACT:**

**71% of employees thought domestic and sexual violence had an impact on the workplace**

## 4 | Survey on How Problems at Home Affect Employees at Work

### Survey Objectives

This survey was designed to identify:

- Employees' views of domestic and sexual violence and the impact it has on workplaces
- The prevalence and dynamics of domestic and sexual violence experienced by employees
- The effects of domestic and sexual violence on employees' ability to attend work, to be safe and productive at work, and the associated costs to businesses
- The availability and helpfulness of various kinds of support to employees affected by domestic and sexual violence, both provided by employers and in the community.



### Survey Methodology

The survey questionnaire was based on a similar survey tested by IFC in Papua New Guinea in October 2015 (unpublished) and an earlier one implemented in Australia.<sup>5</sup> It includes six main parts:

1. An introductory explanation including the purposes of the survey, confidentiality, and definitions of violence, after which consent to participate is sought
2. Some basic (non-identifying) demographic data on participants
3. Views and experiences of domestic and sexual violence
4. The impact that this has had on (a) the respondent when they are at work; (b) co-workers, supervisors and clients; (c) the physical workplace and its assets
5. Help-seeking and support provided by the company and service providers
6. General responses about the effects of violence on employees and whether the company should help.

No section or questions are compulsory, and if participants report not having any personal experience of domestic or sexual violence in part 3, they skip to the final section, part 6.

The survey was administered either online via the SurveyMonkey platform, through a one-on-one interview with a trained survey enumerator, or independently using a paper copy. Surveys could be completed in either English or Pijin. Survey responses from the three mechanisms were then consolidated into one dataset for analysis. The quantitative data from the survey was complemented by qualitative data from interviews with managers and separate female and male group discussions at three companies facilitated by IFC. The study was conducted in accordance with established ethical protocols for researching violence against women<sup>6</sup>, and drew on lessons from conducting related surveys in Papua New Guinea and other settings.

<sup>5</sup> McFerran (2011) National Domestic Violence and the Workplace Survey. Sydney: Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse / University of New South Wales.

<sup>6</sup> Particularly Ellsberg M, and Heise L (2005) Researching Violence Against Women: A Practical Guide for Researchers and Activists. Washington DC: WHO/ PATH; Fulu & Lang (not dated) Ethical and Safety Guidelines for Research on GBV. Thailand: Partners for Prevention.

There are two important differences to note between this survey design and other studies designed to establish prevalence of violence against women (such as the Family Health and Safety Study). Firstly, the sample was not randomly identified. The survey was focused on workplaces and the participants are all employed. Participation in the survey, while encouraged by participating companies, was voluntary. The target was that at least 30 percent of total employees would participate for each company. The survey was open only to those aged 18 years and over; it therefore cannot be assumed that the sample is representative of the entire workforce, nor of the Solomon Islands. However, we are confident that the sample is sufficiently large and diverse that it presents a good enough picture to fulfil the survey's objectives.

Secondly, the first prevalence screening question (*What best describes your own experience of domestic or sexual violence in the past 12 months, more than 12 months before, or not at all?*) uses the neutral language of 'experienced violence'. It does not, at this point, differentiate between those who have perpetrated violence, and those who have been the victim. Subsequent questions do delve in more detail about personal experiences of certain kinds of violence, and from the enumerators' feedback we know that people usually responded in terms of their experience as a victim. Nevertheless, the purpose of the survey was to demonstrate the effects of domestic and sexual violence on a workplace, and this happens both when employees are perpetrators or victims.

“ (Domestic violence) is a major contributing factor to poor performance in workplaces. Victims are mentally, physically and spiritually handicapped. The burden is overwhelming to bear each day, thus victims or even perpetrators experience severe lack of concentration when they are in such situation.”

(Woman survey respondent, company #9)

## A Note on the Accuracy of Findings

Due to the sensitive topic, studies such as this are generally thought not to be able to elicit a completely accurate picture of domestic and sexual violence, and the experience of violence is often assumed to be under-reported. The methodology, including the way violence is first defined and the type of questions asked in this survey, was developed with reference to existing guidance<sup>7</sup> for such research intended to minimize under-reporting, and most importantly, not to do further harm or re-traumatize survey participants.

However, having multiple ways for participants to complete the survey - online, on paper, with or without enumerators - limited some of the lessons that could be applied to encourage accurate disclosure. For example, this survey needed a consistently applied logic that was clear enough to be followed in the range of survey completion methods, and did not make respondents feel that they were being asked irrelevant questions. Therefore, the survey did not include multiple opportunities to disclose violence, and did not revisit the initial answer to whether respondents had experienced violence or not.<sup>8</sup>

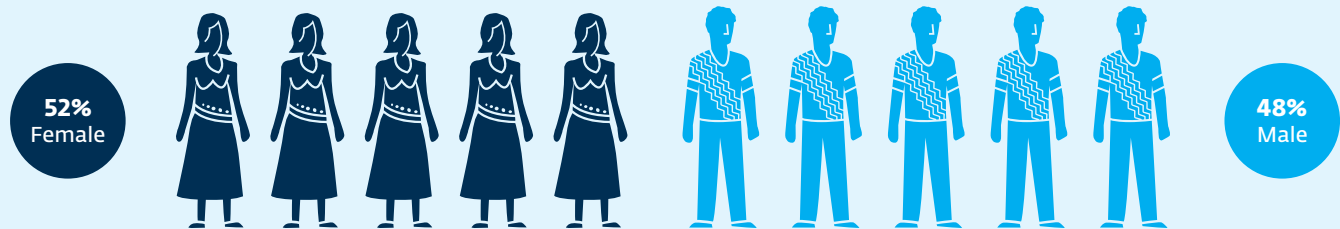
A spot-check of surveys that were completed on paper (rather than online) without an enumerator indicated that in a small number of cases, survey participants had skipped or answered in the negative to the filter question on the experience of violence, but had responded to other questions regarding the experience or effect of violence. In summary, we assume that there is some under-reporting in this survey and actual prevalence rates are higher than those summarized here.

7 Ellsberg M, and Heise L (2005); Heise L (2013) Monitoring and measuring partner violence. STRIVE Learning Lab (presentation). London: London School of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene.

8 Ellsberg and Heise (ibid.) note that studies that include only one or two questions on violence, or use filter questions can result in substantial underreporting (p.97).

## Survey Participants

### Percentage of Female and Male participants



In total 1,248 people across the nine companies completed the survey.

The adult literacy rate in Solomon Islands in 1999<sup>9</sup>, was 69 percent for females, 83.7 percent for males and 76.6 percent overall (UNSECO Institute for Statistics).

Thirty-eight percent of female participants and 41 percent of male participants were in the 25 to 34 age group; 67 percent of women and 61 percent of men had dependent children; and 18 women (3 percent) and 14 men (2 percent) self-identified as having a disability.

All but 23 participants were born in the Solomon Islands. Most participants worked in either Honiara (36 percent of women, 49 percent of men), or Western Province (61 percent of women, 47 percent of men), reflecting the geographic locations of the companies taking part. A small number of participants worked in Central, Choiseul, Makira-Ulawa, and Malaita provinces.

A higher proportion of female participants were at a junior level (68 percent) compared to males (55 percent).



<sup>9</sup> This is the last available data.

Sixty-five of the participants provided additional comments; they expressed thanks for the survey, and many noted that it helps *'to understand the cause and effects of domestic violence and how it affects my work and the work place'*; how it *'helps to understand what is DV and how it affects workers not to attend work'*; and that employees made the connection *'in terms of safety during working hours inside the company'*.

Several respondents expressed appreciation that the survey was a sign that the company would offer support to employees, and that *'this survey will help companies improve their approach to us employees'*. There were a few requests for the survey to be repeated regularly, and for it to be implemented with staff in remote locations.

**Table 2 - Distribution of survey participants by gender and company**

Company	Female	Male	Not stated/other	Total
Not specified	3	1	-	4
Company 1	2	54	-	56
Company 2	23	96	-	119
Company 3	369	179	1	549
Company 4	81	49	-	130
Company 5	35	24	-	59
Company 6	28	90	-	118
Company 7	14	31	-	45
Company 8	62	47	6	115
Company 9	29	23	1	53
<b>Total</b>	<b>646</b>	<b>594</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1,248</b>

# 5 | The Survey Findings

## Experience and Acceptance of Domestic and Sexual Violence

One in three of the participating company employees experienced domestic or sexual violence in the 12 months preceding the survey. For two companies, the rate was even higher, with approximately half their employees reporting experiencing domestic or sexual violence in the preceding 12 months.

This survey found a comparable but lower prevalence of violence than the Solomon Islands Family Health and Safety Study (FHSS) (see table 1)<sup>10</sup>.

In addition, 80 survey participants (6 percent), who did not report experiencing violence themselves, said that they have a close family member that has experienced domestic or family violence, and a further 20 percent know someone else that has. Therefore, 70 percent of all respondents have been affected by domestic or sexual violence.

Survey participants also estimated that a large proportion of staff are affected by domestic and sexual violence<sup>11</sup>. On average:

- Men thought that 48 percent of women and 45 percent of men are affected
- Women thought that 58 percent of women and 46 percent of men are affected.

As these estimates are higher than the self-reported lifetime prevalence (49 percent of women and 38 percent of men), it may be indicative of the expected under-reporting in this survey. Employees may have an idea of what is happening in their co-workers' lives from working (and sometimes also living) at close confines, but this cannot be assumed with certainty.

Positively, this survey found a much lower level of acceptance of domestic and sexual violence than previous studies, and a different pattern of acceptance for men and women. In this survey, 31 percent of all participants reported believing that domestic and sexual violence is sometimes acceptable, with men more likely to report this than women (36 percent and 27 percent respectively).

**Table 3 - Personal experience of domestic and sexual violence**

	Female	Male	Not specified / other	Total
Personal experience in last 12 months	35%	29%	25%	32%
Personal experience more than 12 months ago	14%	9%	25%	12%
Not personally, but close family member	6%	7%	-	6%
Not personally, but know someone	17%	22%	38%	20%

<sup>10</sup> The lower prevalence may be explained by (i) an actual reduction in prevalence in the 10 years since the FHSS was undertaken, noting that this would need to be confirmed by implementation of a comparable methodology and cannot be assumed from our findings; (ii) sampling differences, with the FHSS referring to ever partnered women that have more exposure to potential domestic violence (the most prevalent form being violence against women perpetrated by men); (iii) methodological differences including different question structures and types of violence included; (iv) the sample for this survey was not randomly identified and is focused on workplaces and the participants share the common characteristic that they are employed. Nevertheless, the prevalence found in this study is high – referring back to Table 1 it remains high compared to previously recorded prevalence among Pacific neighbors.

<sup>11</sup> Survey participants were asked to indicate how many women and men in their workplace were affected by domestic and sexual violence by moving a slider (online) or placing a cross [x] on a line (paper) that represented a continuum from none (0 percent) to all (100percent).



This compares with 71 percent of women and 56 percent of men employed in income earning jobs recorded in the 2015 Solomon Islands Demographic and Health Survey, and 73 percent of women in the 2009 FHSS, who agreed with at least one specific justification for wife beating. We note that the companies that participated in

this survey have been involved with the *Waka Mere* initiative for over a year. Throughout this time, they were involved in activities that aimed to raise awareness of domestic and sexual violence, its consequences, and support services, the central message being that violence is unacceptable.



Table 4 - Experience and acceptance of domestic and sexual violence among survey participants

Gender	Experience of domestic or sexual violence		Percentage of participants that believe that domestic and sexual violence is sometimes acceptable		
	Within last 12 months	Lifetime	(a) Have not experienced violence	(b) Have experienced violence	Total
Not specified / other	25%	50%	25%	0%	25%
Female	35%	49%	19%	35%	27%
Male	28%	38%	27%	50%	36%
<b>Total</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>31%</b>

Note all percentages for (a) and (b) based on number of responses to prevalence question (NS/O=8; F=634; M=588; T=1,230).

There was a significant<sup>12</sup> association between whether people had experienced violence, their acceptance of violence and their perceptions of colleagues acceptance of violence:

- Eighty percent of women and 73 percent of men who report not having experienced violence think that domestic and sexual violence is never acceptable, compared to 65 percent of women and 50 percent of men who have experienced violence
- Only 13 percent of participants who report not having experienced violence think that most people in their workplace think domestic violence is acceptable in some circumstances, compared to 23 percent of participants who have experienced violence – the proportions were almost identical for men and women.

This is consistent with international studies that find that risk of violence often goes hand in hand with acceptance of violence and of controlling behaviours. For example, the World Health Organization (WHO 2017) reports that *Women are more likely to experience intimate partner violence if they have low education, exposure to mothers being abused by a partner, abuse during childhood, and attitudes accepting violence, male privilege, and women's subordinate status*.<sup>13</sup>

This finding of lower levels of acceptance is important for companies in two ways. The still high prevalence rate indicates that behaviour is somewhat out of step with changing beliefs - although there may also be some self-censorship with participants being reluctant to admit that they think domestic and sexual violence is sometimes acceptable. Either way, companies can reinforce the positive findings that acceptance of violence appears to have decreased, and now most employees think that it is not okay. Companies should continue to raise awareness about domestic and sexual violence, its impacts on the workplace and how the workplace can support employees affected by violence to improve workplace norms about the acceptance of domestic and sexual violence. Generally, individuals' own attitudes and beliefs have

been found to be a poor predictor of behaviour; people are more influenced by their expectations of what their peer group thinks and does, and what will happen if they do or don't conform to this.

Secondly, companies can encourage an ongoing shift away from victim blaming, particularly for those seeking help, and emphasize that most employees think that domestic and sexual violence is never acceptable – that it was not the person's fault. This will help to build the open and supportive environment needed for those affected to come forward.



<sup>12</sup> Meaning that the finding is unlikely to have happened by chance ( $p < 0.05$ ).

<sup>13</sup> World Health Organization (2017) Key facts: Violence against women (update November 29, 2017). Available at <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>.



**MYTH:**  
Domestic and sexual violence  
is not an issue employees  
face on a regular basis

**FACT:**  
27% of women who experience violence  
said it occurred at least monthly

## Types and Frequency of Violence

Women are more likely than men to report physical and sexual violence (either by a family or non-family or household member), and men were more likely to report financial abuse. Eighteen percent of women and 11 percent of men who have experienced violence reported experiencing three or more forms.

The introduction and consent process for the survey included a reasonably detailed explanation of different forms of violence and once participants had identified that they had experienced any form of domestic or sexual violence, a follow-up question asked for further details of the type of violence (Table 5).

The types of domestic violence were defined as:

- *Physical abuse, such as slapping, hitting, pushing, choking, and can be with or without a weapon*
- *Sexual abuse, including forcing you to have sexual relations when you did not want to, or forcing you to do something you find intimidating or degrading*
- *Psychological or emotional abuse, intimidation, and harassment. This can include stopping you from going out or seeing your friends, belittling or humiliating you, making you feel bad about yourself, or stalking (repeatedly following you or contacting you by phone, text or email)*
- *Economic or financial abuse, including taking your money or controlling how you spend your money, or trying to stop you from working*
- *Threats to do any of the above are also included.*

Sexual violence was defined as:

- *Sexual violence can be perpetrated by anyone, including a domestic or household member, friend, acquaintance, authority figure or stranger.*

Examples of sexual violence include:

- *Rape (sexual intercourse without consent)*
- *Sexual assault (touching a sexual part of your body without your consent, or forcing you to touch a sexual part of their body)*
- *Unwanted sexual advances (including stalking)*
- *Threats to do any of the above.*

The survey did not attempt to identify the specific nature of physical violence, such as how it was initiated, and whether it was in self-defence, nor did the survey explore the severity of this or other forms of violence. Without this, men's and women's experience of violence can appear more similar than they actually are.

For many of those who reported experiencing violence, it occurs regularly—a quarter said that the violence occurs at least once monthly. It is also recent—about three-quarters of women who experienced domestic or sexual violence experienced it within the 12 months prior to the survey.

For women, violence is most commonly perpetrated by a current or previous boyfriend or husband (64 percent), and for men, by a current or previous wife or girlfriend (44 percent). For 75 percent of women and 27 percent of men experiencing violence, it was from a male family or household member. Seven percent of all respondents, with no difference between men and women, reported violence from a work colleague or supervisor. Of these, the men were usually in junior positions (76 percent) and women more distributed between junior (58 percent) and mid-level (29 percent). 13 percent of women and 6 percent of men reporting violence from a work colleague or supervisor were at a senior level. The survey did not ask whether this form of violence was at their current workplace, but 11 respondents from four different companies mentioned some form of harassment.

“ For us in the domestic violence contact team, we are learning that that there are different types of violence was an eye opener. We always only thought of physical violence.”

**Freda Fa'aitoa**  
*HR Manager, Bank South Pacific*



**Table 5 - Experience of particular domestic and sexual violence behavior among survey participants who reported ever experiencing domestic or sexual violence**

Type of violence	Women (n=319)	Men (n=224)	Not stated / other (n=4)	Total (n=547)
Physical violence	39%	29%	-	35%
Psychological / emotional violence	61%	63%	75%	62%
Sexual abuse by family or household member	17%	4%	-	11%
Financial abuse	38%	44%	-	40%
Threats to do any of the above	8%	4%	25%	6%
Sexual abuse or stalking by non-family or household member	6%	4%	-	5%
Physical and / or any sexual violence	50%	33%	-	42%
Proportion experiencing two or more types of violence	40%	37%	-	39%

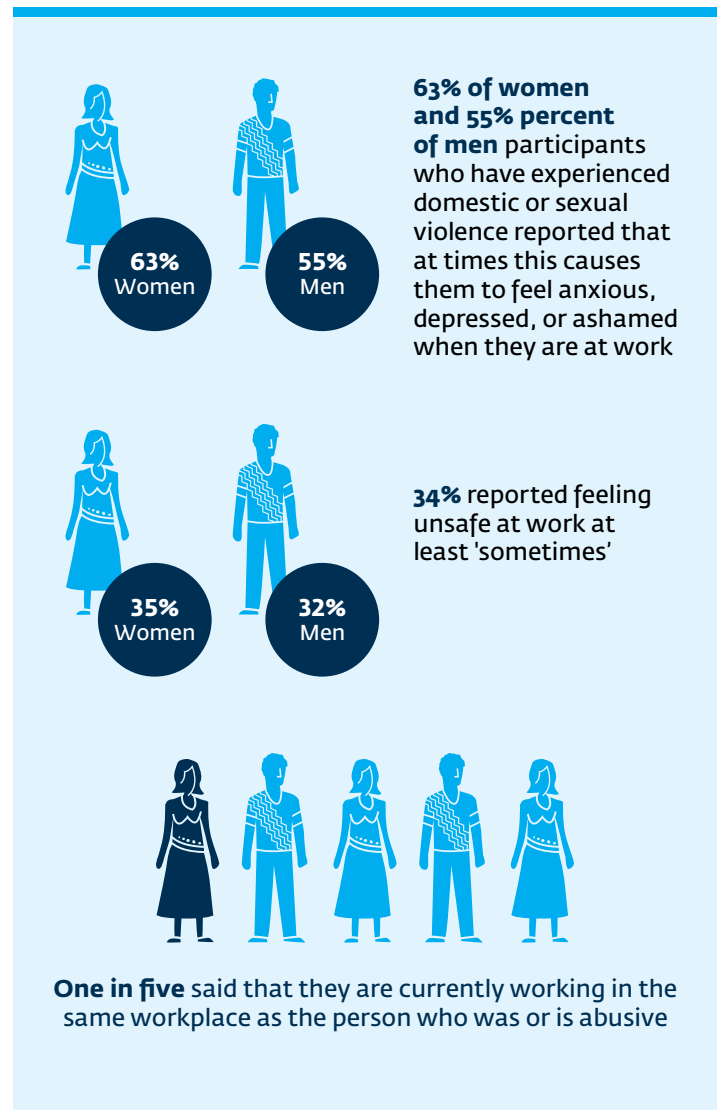
## The Effects of Domestic and Sexual Violence on Workplaces

Seventy-one percent of employees surveyed thought that domestic and sexual violence had an impact on the workplace, and a further 13 percent thought that violence can have an impact, but they had not seen it themselves. Therefore, in total 84 percent of participants recognized the potential or actual effects of domestic and sexual violence on workplaces.

The survey asks about three sets of impacts that domestic or sexual violence can have on employees and workplaces:

- Impacts on individual employees' ability to get to work or to stay at work, and their ability to concentrate and be productive when they are at work. This includes feelings of anxiety or shame; physical injury; being stopped or made late; damage to work-issued uniforms, ID cards, or equipment; or failing to show up or care for children;
- Actions of the abusive or violent person while the survey participant is at work—such as pressure to not stay late at work or attend work functions, or not to accept work opportunities; harassment via phone calls, email or social media messages; or the abusive or violent person turning up at the workplace or its surrounding;
- Actions of the abusive or violent person that affect the workplace or others at work, such as contacting, threatening, harming, or causing conflict or tension with colleagues, supervisors, or clients; or damaging company property.

Of those who reported experiencing domestic or sexual violence, 81 percent reported experiencing at least one workplace impact.



The most frequently reported area of impact was in relation to the first point above - ability to get to work, stay at work, or how employees feel when they are there. Sixty-three percent of women, and 55 percent of men who experienced domestic or sexual violence report that at times this causes them to feel anxious, depressed, or ashamed when they are at work. Several survey participants made specific comments about this. Comments related to employees' own experience: 'I (am) usually absent because of DV at home' (man, company #2); 'I've experienced a lot of DV in life and handling machines is a risk for me, (sometimes) I've got distracted' (woman, company #3); 'Domestic violence affects me a lot and my ability to get to work especially when I am injured' (woman, company #4). Others observed the impacts in others: 'domestic and sexual violence should really be put into a great consideration cos it can affect the working people who are involved by performing poorly in their work place or being absent from work due to accidents and so on' (woman, company #5).

While many expressed their concern and compassion, others also noted that the violence can cause tensions or feelings of unfairness that can simmer in the workplace – 'Some colleagues come to work still angry and (that) usually affects us' (man, company #2); 'STOP DV, it disturbs employees at work places, talking from my experience it causes internal problems between colleagues too because of misunderstanding' (man, company #4); 'Domestic violence affects other workers and some of us are doing more work because others left early to sort out family issues (and) DV' (man, company #4).

Thirty four percent of respondents who have experienced domestic or sexual violence reported feeling unsafe at work at least 'sometimes'. (men = 32 percent, women = 35 percent) and one in five said that they are currently working in the same workplace as the person who was or is abusive.



## Estimating the Cost to Business

The stress of domestic and sexual violence, as well as any physical consequences, follows people to work – as may the perpetrator. As well as the significant personal toll, this has a cost to business.

**Table 6 - How often employees have had trouble getting to work, staying at work, or had their work performance affected, because of domestic or sexual violence**

Once	A few times	Monthly	Weekly	Daily
14%	32%	3%	3%	2%

Note: Expressed as a percentage of participants that reported ever experiencing domestic or sexual violence

The survey asked participants a short series of questions about how often their focus or presence at work had been affected by domestic and sexual violence in the four weeks preceding the survey. Questions included how often they had felt distracted, tired, or unwell, how often they felt unsafe, how many times they had been late, and how many days they had missed work?



The productivity loss from feeling distracted, tired, or unwell was calculated using the multipliers in Table 7. For example, if someone reported feeling distracted, tired, or unwell ‘sometimes’, we calculated that they lost 10 percent of their productivity at work. For someone working five days a week, this means that they may be losing the equivalent of one half day per week in productivity.

Table 7 shows that in the survey sample, feeling distracted, tired, or unwell brings an average of 0.6 days of lost productivity per employee over a four-week period. This amounts to 7 days per employee per year.<sup>14</sup>

Companies also experience productivity losses due to employees being late or absent from work due to their experience of domestic and sexual violence:

- Seventeen percent of all survey participants reported that they have been late at least once in the previous four weeks due to domestic or sexual violence. Some had been late eight times or more.<sup>15</sup>
- Fourteen percent of all survey participants reported that they have missed at least one day of work in the previous four weeks due to domestic or sexual violence. A small number of survey participants reported very frequent absences.

Table 8 shows the magnitude of staff absences or lateness accruing from domestic or sexual violence. Even if we assume that employees are only late by one hour per time, this equates to 0.05 days<sup>16</sup> per employee in a four-week period<sup>17</sup>. Further, the average staff absence of 0.35 days per employee in a four-week period equates to almost 1,400 lost person-days every four weeks across the full staff cohort, or just over four days per full time employee, per year.

<sup>14</sup> This is calculated with the assumption that employees work 48 weeks per year, and have four-week annual leave. The leave period is not included in the calculation.

<sup>15</sup> For the purposes of this calculation, reports of more than five days late or absent in the four-week period were summarized in the 5+ category.

<sup>16</sup> As per the Solomon Islands Labour Act (1996) calculations are on the basis on a nine-hour work day. We have assumed 12 x 4 work week periods in a year (and 4 weeks of official leave).

<sup>17</sup> If the full staff cohort (3,970) of the participating companies are affected in the same way as the sample, then this small loss of 0.05 days per employee equates to almost 200 person days in a four week period.



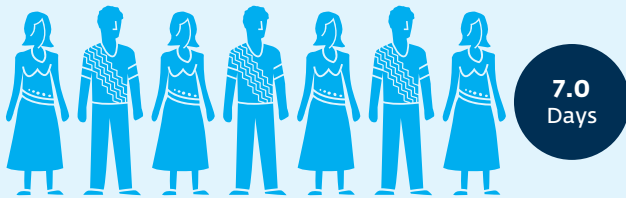
Table 7 - Estimated productivity loss due to employees feeling distracted, tired, or unwell at work as a result of domestic and sexual violence

Frequency of effect reported	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	Total
Estimate of productivity loss (multiplier) (a)	-	5%	10%	15%	20%	
Number of survey participants reporting feeling distracted, tired, or unwell in previous 4 weeks (b)	187	50	239	35	23	
Estimate of total person-days lost in 4-week (20 work day) period for survey sample (= (a) x (b) x 20)		50	478	105	92	725
Average number of days lost per employee in a 4-week period due to feeling distracted, tired, or unwell (based on survey sample)						0.6

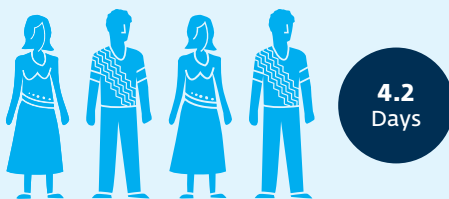
Table 8 - Person-days lost due to staff absences or lateness as a result of domestic or sexual violence over a four week period

Number of times late due to domestic or sexual violence (a1)	1	2	3	4	5+	Total
Number of survey participants reporting being late (a1) times in previous 4 weeks (b1)	40	67	42	45	13	207
Assuming 1 hour late per time and a 9-hour day, number of days lost due to lateness (= (a1 x b1) / 9) in previous 4 weeks	4	15	14	20	7	61
Average number of days lost due to lateness per employee in a 4-week period (based on survey sample)						0.05
Number of days absent due to domestic or sexual violence (a2)	1	2	3	4	5+	Total
Number of survey participants reporting being absent (a2) days in previous 4 weeks (b2)	47	42	38	33	11	171
Number of days lost due to staff absence (=a2 x b2) in previous 4 weeks	47	84	114	132	55	432
Average number of days lost due to absence per employee in a 4-week period (based on survey sample)						0.35

### In one year, for every employee:



**7 person-days** are lost due to employees feeling distracted, tired or unwell due to domestic or sexual violence



**4.2 person-days** are lost due to employees being absent from work due to domestic or sexual violence



**0.6 person-days** are lost by employees being late due to domestic or sexual violence



**5.6 person days** are spent responding to the effects of domestic and sexual violence in the workplace in an unstructured way



Often these absences are unexplained, with staff feeling too ashamed, or otherwise unable, to tell their employers why they are missing work or why their performance is suffering. In this situation, employees may just resign, or their employer may choose to end their employment. Recruitment and training new employees has further costs to businesses. Given that a third of those affected are at mid or senior level, and 70 percent have been at the company for two years or more, this can be substantial.

Responding to the effects of domestic violence or sexual violence also takes up staff time, either discussing the issue, assisting the affected person to access support services, or addressing the consequences of staff absences, lateness, or low productivity. As shown in Table 9, survey participants spent an average of 50 hours per employee per year – or more than one week of full time work responding to the effects of violence<sup>18</sup>. This equates to 5½ person-days spent responding to responding to the effects of domestic and sexual violence in the workplace in an unstructured way per employee.

<sup>18</sup> Survey participants were asked: If you are a manager or supervisor, how much time per week do you spend dealing with the effects of domestic and sexual violence in the workplace (on average)? We used the mid-point of the answer category (no time = 0, less than 1 hour per week = 0.5 hours; 1-5 hours per week = 3 hours; 6-10 hours per week = 8 hours; more than 10 hours per week = 10 hours) to calculate the time spent responding to the effects of domestic and sexual violence in the workplace.



“ Domestic violence is a big contributing factor to absenteeism in a company. Violence is affecting the family and, at the same time, has a direct effect on business operations and turnout.”

**Suzy Aquino**  
*Plant Operations Manager, SolTuna*

## Help Seeking

**Table 9 - Time spent responding to the effects of domestic and sexual violence in the workplace**

	Frequency of response	Total hours spent per year <sup>**</sup>
Less than 1 hour per week	431	10,344
1-5 hours per week	244	35,136
6-10 hours per week	26	9,984
More than 10 hours per week	14	6,720
<b>Total hours spent per week for survey sample</b>		<b>62,184</b>
<b>Average hours per employee per year</b>		<b>50</b>

To calculate the total hours spent, the following conversions for the answer categories have been used: less than 1 hour per week = 0.5 hours; 1-5 hours per week = 3 hours; 6-10 hours per week = 8 hours; more than 10 hours per week = 10 hours

An unstructured approach, involving various employees with inadequate information and limited knowledge of referral processes, is likely to drive up the cost to business, while not providing the best response to affected employees. As discussed in the following section, the survey indicates that employees who speak to domestic violence contact team members, human resource officers, and their supervisors, are more likely to report positive outcomes and being provided with at least one form of support than those who speak to another colleague or 'someone else'.

Eighty-one percent of survey participants - more men (86 percent) than women (77 percent) - thought that employers should help affected employees. One-hundred of the 353 additional final comments were in support of help that is or could be provided by employers: '*the company should help employees who are affected from DV. It has had a big impact with their performance*' (man, company #2); '*the company should take serious action to address this issue because this can affect me and my colleagues*' (woman, company #4).

**Table 10 - Comparison of outcomes from speaking to various people at work about experiencing domestic or sexual violence**

Person spoken to at work	# survey participants	What happened as a result? *			% receiving at least 1 kind of support*
		Negative things happened	Nothing really happened	Positive things happened	
DV contact team member	7	0%	43%	43%	57%
Union delegate	4	0%	50%	50%	50%
Boss / another supervisor or manager	47	15%	15%	70%	51%
Other colleague	110	13%	46%	41%	35%
HR officer	8	0%	13%	88%	88%
Someone else	27	4%	33%	63%	44%

\* Expressed as a percentage of survey participants who reported speaking to that person. Note that some survey participants may have spoken to more than one person, and some numbers are small meaning that care should be taken when interpreting these results.

## Who Employees Talk to

Slightly less than half of employees affected by domestic or sexual violence, with no variation between men and women, have spoken to someone at work about the violence. Both men and women affected by domestic or sexual violence most commonly speak to other colleagues, followed by a supervisor or manager.

Human resource officers, union officials, and members of the domestic violence contact team were only rarely mentioned.

Most companies included in the survey do not yet have a domestic-violence contact team, or it is in the very early days of establishment. However, for those who did speak to a domestic-violence contact team member, most found it to be moderately (33 percent) or very (44 percent) helpful. About half of those who spoke to someone at work said that positive things happened as a result, and 39 percent that nothing really happened. It is likely this reflects that often speaking with someone at work was in an informal context (to another colleague) rather than to discuss options for assistance, as might be the purpose of speaking to a domestic-violence contact team member, supervisor, or human resources staff. As indicated by the results reported in Table 10, a higher proportion of employees affected by domestic or sexual violence report positive outcomes, and receiving at least one form of support, when they speak to a domestic-violence contact team member, HR officer, or their boss or another supervisor, than those who speak to another colleague, who presumably is often not in a position to provide concrete support.

More women (63 percent) than men (52 percent) reported that they did not receive any particular assistance from their employer after they spoke to someone at work. Of those who did receive assistance, for women, the most common form was unpaid time off (11 percent of those speaking to someone at work), and for men, assistance with transport to and from work (17 percent).<sup>19</sup> After this, women most commonly reported other assistance (9 percent), and paid time off (7 percent). Men most frequently reported unpaid time off (13 percent), and other assistance (8 percent). Very few survey participants reported their employer facilitating their access to other kinds of support, such as counselling, medical care, or short or longer-term accommodation.

The number of survey participants that reported accessing various services outside of the community is reasonably low. The police, counselling, and other support services were the main services accessed. Other support services were mainly indicated to be connected with the church (21 women and 9 men). Twenty-four percent of women and 16 percent of men who reported that they had experienced domestic or sexual violence had accessed at least one service outside of the workplace.

Reporting the violence to the police had the highest proportion indicating that it was not helpful. Only 28 of the 547 people reporting violence had obtained restraining orders. More than half of these were said to have included the workplace.

<sup>19</sup> It may be that this assistance is routinely provided rather than specifically in response to the domestic or sexual violence.

## Why Employees Don't Seek Help

“ Mi garem D.V issues but me fraet for story lo office nogut oketa gossipim me. Me no save who for trustim lo ples waka (I have DV issues but I am afraid to speak to someone at the office in case they gossip about me. I don't know who to trust at my workplace)”

(female employee, company #6)

Being ashamed (25 percent) and a fear of gossip (20 percent) were the main reasons for not speaking to someone at work, but 41 percent of those affected by violence who did not talk to anyone said there was ‘another reason’. This may include because the violence was some time ago or before they worked in that workplace. Not knowing who to talk to or thinking that it wouldn't help also featured. Positively, only a few survey participants indicated that it was because they were afraid of being fired or that their supervisor or management would think they couldn't do their job – although it does apparently happen: *‘I don't know if my employer has in place programs to support victims of DV, which has a big impact on work places and (employees are fired for that’* (man, company #7).

## What do Employees Think Would Help?

Almost a third of both men and women who have experienced domestic or sexual violence, and who spoke to someone at work about it, identified that time off with pay and counselling would be the most useful, followed by coordination of access to support services. Thirty participants commented on the need for greater awareness within workplaces about domestic and sexual violence, including what it is, services available, workplace policy, and the impact it has on the workplace. About the same number of participants referred to links between salary and housing conditions and domestic and sexual violence – pointing to stressors in these areas as a trigger for violence, and recommending that companies look into these issues as part of the package of support.

## Conclusion

The data demonstrates that domestic and sexual violence harms employees and creates costs to businesses.

*Waka Mere* companies should continue to raise awareness about domestic and sexual violence and adapt and implement workplace policies. This will improve workplace norms about the acceptance of violence and create a safe and supportive environment where employees affected by violence feel able to disclose their experience of violence and seek support, improving the lives of those affected by violence and the business.





“ Employees affected by violence would say that they had a family problem or not say anything at all. They would be absent, and we would not know why. But things started to change since we began developing a policy on domestic violence. Even this (IFC) survey we did to understand where we stand led to two people coming out and seeking our support.”

**Janet Inito**  
*HR Manager, Hatanga Construction*



“ We have formed a team of six responders who were trained to handle disclosures of violence. Three employees already reached out seeking our support. We designed a policy on violence and will roll it out soon. This will guide the options we provide including applying for leave, changing phones, moving to a different location, and getting safe transport to work.”

**Hernandia Zoleveka**  
*HR Manager Assistant, Solomon Airlines*



## 6 | The Importance of a Workplace Response

This survey on 'How problems at home affect employees at work' clearly shows a wide range of effects on individual employees, their employers, and their colleagues. The survey also shows that positive things are already happening – it appears that there is lower acceptance of domestic and sexual violence within these nine participating companies, and where employees do access various forms of support, it is usually helpful. This benefits both the employee and the business.

It is noteworthy that the survey demonstrates that while more women experience violence and report slightly more effects, both men and women are affected. This is something that is not surprising to many employees throughout the Pacific region. Women are more vulnerable because of the severity and prevalence of violence against women, and the additional dimension of unequal power, often fewer options to leave, and differences in physical strength. However, the fact that both men and women are

“ Employees have started to disclose incidents of violence, receive structured support, and be able to carry on with their jobs. This helped increase productivity and save associated medical, security, and new recruitment costs. In fact, we have already recouped the costs of implementing the policy and we recently saved two jobs of employees affected by violence. Previously, we would have terminated their employment as we would not have known why they were absent, seemingly without cause.”

**Freda Fa'aitoa,**  
HR Manager, Bank South Pacific

“ Five of our employees were trained as the contact team for domestic violence issues and are now rallying others. It has been like looking ourselves in the mirror – in some cases, people realize they might be a perpetrator, that there are different types of violence, that even the words you use might be a form of verbal abuse.”

**Manasseh Taloafiri,**  
HR and Corporate Services Manager,  
Solomon Islands National Provident Fund

“ I did not know how to get people to open up or how to talk about violence – but now I feel better equipped to do it. I know what to ask, what to say, where to refer them, how to encourage them to do something about it. It feels very good to know I can help and I already see a positive change. This is also good for the company as it shows we care and builds employee loyalty.”

**Janet Inito, HR Manager, Hatanga Construction**

so affected is an important entry point for workplace responses, and a powerful motivation for change. Workplace strategies to address violence are beneficial to both women and men.

Companies involved in the *Waka Mere* commitment are beginning to implement a range of workplace responses and are starting to see the benefits of these. With such high losses to productivity, a likely contribution to staff turnover, and the positive outcomes that can be realized for both employees and employers, these workplace responses make good business sense.

## 7 | Waka Mere Participating Companies

The following companies participated in the survey:



Bank South Pacific



Bulk Shop



Hatanga Construction Ltd



National Fisheries Development



Solomon Airlines



Solomon Islands National Provident Fund



Solomon Islands Ports Authority



Solomon Islands Water Authority



SolTuna



**MYTH:**

**Domestic and sexual violence is a matter that needs to be handled outside the workplace**

**FACT:**

**81% of employees said employers should help affected staff**



Visit [www.ifc.org/gender/EAP](http://www.ifc.org/gender/EAP) to find more testimonials and inspiring stories about Waka Mere.

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