

Violence and harassment – what are we talking about?

1. Violence and harassment is a spectrum of harmful behaviour, in many jurisdictions not clearly or not separately defined

Physical

- Rape
- Homicide

Example – United States

- Every year, nearly 2 million U.S. workers will become victims of workplace violence
- The third leading cause of death for workers in the healthcare and professional services industries (education, law and media) is due to workplace violence
- 44% of teachers reported being physically attacked while at school within one year
- For women, workplace violence is the second leading cause of death while on the job

Psychological

- Stalking
- Interfering with work tools
- Intimidation

Harassment

- Making offensive jokes or remarks, or playing unwanted practical jokes, including hazing and other pranks.
- Vandalizing or hiding personal belongings or work equipment.
- Persistently criticising, undermining, belittling demeaning or ridiculing a person.
- Misusing authority, e.g. restricting information or setting impossible deadlines that will lead to failure.

Domestic violence - Canada

- One out of three women have experienced domestic violence, and for the majority, it follows them to work.
- For victims, employment can provide income security, physical safety, self-esteem, social connectedness and mental respite. It can be a key pathway to leaving a violent relationship.
- Abusers often sabotage victims' work as a way of keeping the partner economically dependent and socially isolated, for example by blocking them from getting to work and interfering with their work.
- Abusers may use work time or equipment to send abusive messages or otherwise plan and carry out violent acts.

- Abusers may target their partner at the workplace, through calls, stalking, harassment, assault and other abusive behaviour. At this point, the violence and risks posed by that violence usually escalate.
- Co-workers, clients and others connected with the victim or abuser's workplaces are also at risk for injury or some other form of trauma

2. V&H is real (albeit often vastly underreported), rising and enabled by environmental factors

- The work environment is characterized by work overload, assignments with high demand and low control, role conflict and confusion, insecure and precarious employment, or autocratic management.
- Labour stratification, where groups are concentrated in certain jobs. For example, research shows that traditionally masculine jobs or jobs where women are gender pioneers pose a higher risk for sexual harassment for women.
- There is poor management of harassment complaints.
- The aggressor believes that they will receive benefits by acting violently towards another worker they perceive to be disliked by management.

3. Certain professions are more prone to violence and harassment

- Workers involved in direct patient care, such as nursing staff, health care aides or personal care workers
- Workers who handle cash
- Bus drivers
- Emergency attendants, such as paramedics and other first responders
- Guards, security officers, park rangers and police officers

4. There is not a single solution

- safety and health (e.g. workplace OSH committees, risk assessment techniques)
- equality of opportunity and diversity policies (e.g. recruitment practices)
- employment law (whistleblower protection)