

**INTERSECTIONS
BETWEEN
EMPLOYMENT
AND SAFETY
AMONG
RACIALIZED
WOMEN**

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report examines the intersections between employment and trauma among racialized women. This report draws on data that was gathered through surveys and in-depth interviews with racialized women with lived experience of intimate partner violence in the Toronto region.

Intimate partner violence is closely connected to women's economic security, including their income, employment, and housing. Research has shown that intimate partner violence both directly and indirectly impacts survivors' ability to work and maintain employment. Race and gender can also create unfair outcomes for women's employment. A lack of access to income can increase women's risk of victimization and make it difficult for women to flee violence and establish financial independence.

This report is part of WomanACT's Intersections Between Employment and Safety Among Racialized Women project. The project is undertaking primary and secondary research to better understand survivors' experiences in employment. Using the knowledge created, WomanACT will engage key stakeholders, such as employment agencies, employers, and community agencies, to develop promising practices and strategies to improve women's access to safe and meaningful employment.

ABOUT

WomanACT envisions a world where all women are safe and have access to equal opportunities. We work collaboratively to eradicate violence against women through community mobilization, research, policy, and education.

The organization has been operating as a community-based coalition since 1991 and became a registered charity in 2010. Working closely with the anti-violence sector, governments, industry leaders, communities, and survivors, we strive to promote knowledge sharing, build capacity, and generate discussion. Our research aims to promote public dialogue, transform practice, and shape policy to advance women's safety and gender equity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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WOMAN ABUSE COUNCIL OF TORONTO

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GLOSSARY

Coercive control

A form of violence that is used to control someone and create an unequal power dynamic. Behaviours can include humiliation, intimidation, controlling someone's time or isolating someone from others.

Economic abuse

A form of violence that involves behaviours that control someone's ability to gain and use economic resources. Examples of economic abuse include demanding to know how money was spent, withholding financial information, or building up debt in a partner's name.

Emotional abuse

Behaviours used to control another person by using emotions to blame, shame, embarrass, or criticize. It is often a consistent pattern of verbal, emotional and psychological behaviours that wears down a person's self-esteem.

Employment sabotage

A form of economic abuse that involves tactics used by an abuser to prevent their current or former partner from working, or progressing, in their career. This can include prohibiting a partner from working, restricting their access to employment, or impacting their productivity at work.

Harassment

Any behaviours, including physical, verbal, written, that is known or reasonably known to be unwelcomed and unwanted.

Intimate partner violence

Violence by a current or former partner in an intimate relationship against the other spouse or partner.

Racialization

The process through which groups are socially constructed by race based on characteristics including race, language, ethnicity, economics, and on that basis subjected to differential and/or unequal treatment.

Stalking

Unwanted and persistent surveillance or monitoring of an individual or group, including the use of technological devices to monitor.

Survivor

A term for an individual who is being targeted for abuse. Sometimes they may be referred to as victims.

Trauma-informed

The ability to recognize the role and impacts of traumatic experiences and to avoid re-traumatizing someone.

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Intimate partner violence is directly connected to women's economic security. It can have long term impacts on women's economic security, including their employment stability and housing security.¹ This can be compounded by other factors, including gender, race, and age. Racialized women face systemic barriers to economic equality and are more likely to be in precarious and low-income employment than non-racialized women.²

Research has shown that intimate partner violence can impact job stability, including increased absenteeism and having to change jobs frequently. In fact, some studies suggest that up to 50% of survivors have lost a job due to intimate partner violence.³ The symptoms of trauma, such as anxiety and post trauma stress disorder, have also been shown to impact women's long term job stability and progression.⁴ Employment sabotage, a term to describe the tactics used by an abuser to prevent their partner or ex-partner from working, is another common experience among survivors. Employment sabotage may look like an abuser

refusing to care for children while a partner is at work or an abuser constantly disrupting a partner's work with unwanted phone calls and harassment.⁵ There are many reasons why abusers target women's employment. Employment is often a place of control for women outside of the abusive relationship and is a source of financial independence for women.⁶

While there is limited research on the intersections between intimate partner violence and employment among racialized women, studies highlight the additional barriers to employment faced by racialized survivors, including less access to meaningful employment due to structural forms of discrimination.⁷

Access to decent and safe work is not only a right of women, but also vital for their safety and economic security. Access to income and employment reduces women's risk of victimization and makes it easier for them to leave violent relationships and establish long-term safety and financial independence.

¹ Postmus, J.L., Plummer, S.B., McMahon, S., Murshid, N.S., and Kim, M.S. (2012). Understanding Economic Abuse in the Lives of Survivors. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 27(3),411-430.

² Ng, E., and Gagnon, S. (2020). 'Employment Gaps and Underemployment for Racialized Groups and Immigrants in Canada: Current Findings and Future Directions'. *Skills Next*. Available at: <https://ppforum.ca/publications/underemployment-for-racialized-groups-and-immigrants-in-canada/>

³ Postmus et al., 2012.

⁴ Riger, S. and Staggs, S. (2004). *Impact of Intimate Partner Violence on Women's Labor Force Participation, Final Report*. National Institute of Justice, United States. Available at: <https://nij.ojp.gov/library/publications/impactintimate-partner-violence-womens-labor-force-participation-final-report>

⁵ Swanberg, J. E., Logan, T., and Macke, C. (2005). Intimate partner violence, employment and the workplace: consequences and future directions. *Trauma, violence, and abuse*, 6(4), 286-312.

⁶ Showalter, K. (2016). Women's employment and domestic violence: A review of the literature. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 31(01), 37-47.

⁷ Tarshis, S., Alaggia, R., and Logie, C. H. (2021). Intersectional and Trauma-Informed Approaches to Employment Services: Insights from Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Service Providers. *Violence Against Women*.

METHODOLOGY

The community-based research undertaken for this report was part of a larger project, Intersections Between Employment and Safety Among Racialized Women in Toronto. The objective of this research was to understand the experiences of racialized women with experiences of intimate partner violence in accessing employment and maintaining employment. The research also set out to gather survivors' perspectives and insights on how to improve their access to decent work. The research questions that guided the community-based research were:

- What are racialized survivors' experiences of seeking and maintaining employment?
- What impacts did intimate partner violence have on racialized survivors' employment?
- What would racialized survivors need or want to help them seek and maintain meaningful employment?

The research gathered qualitative and quantitative data through an online survey and in-depth interviews. Research participants included racialized women over the age of 18 with lived experience of intimate partner violence in the Toronto region. The research adopted a definition of women that includes trans women, cis women, non-binary and gender-diverse people. This research defined racialized women as BIPOC and/or Black, Indigenous and People of Colour. This research looks to understand the experiences of Black, Indigenous and other racialized women who experience economic, political and social inequities because of how their identities are racialized. For

these reasons, we are using the terms racialized⁸ people/persons to encapsulate the experiences of the research participants and identify specific identities where possible.

Due to the complexity of the area of research and the unique and individual experiences of intimate partner violence, racism and employment, this report is by no means a complete illustration of the experiences, challenges, and solutions.

SURVEYS

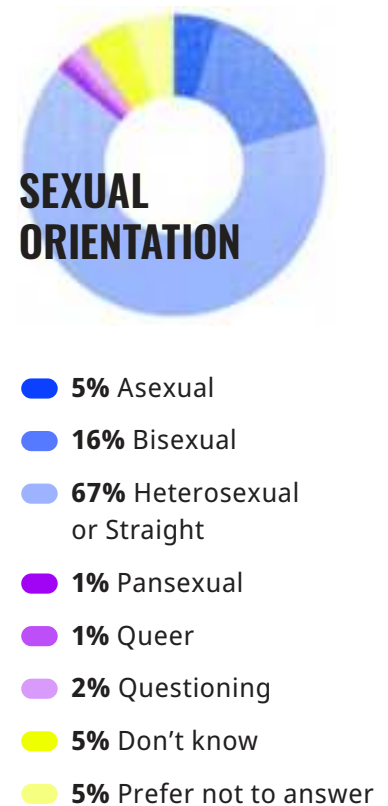
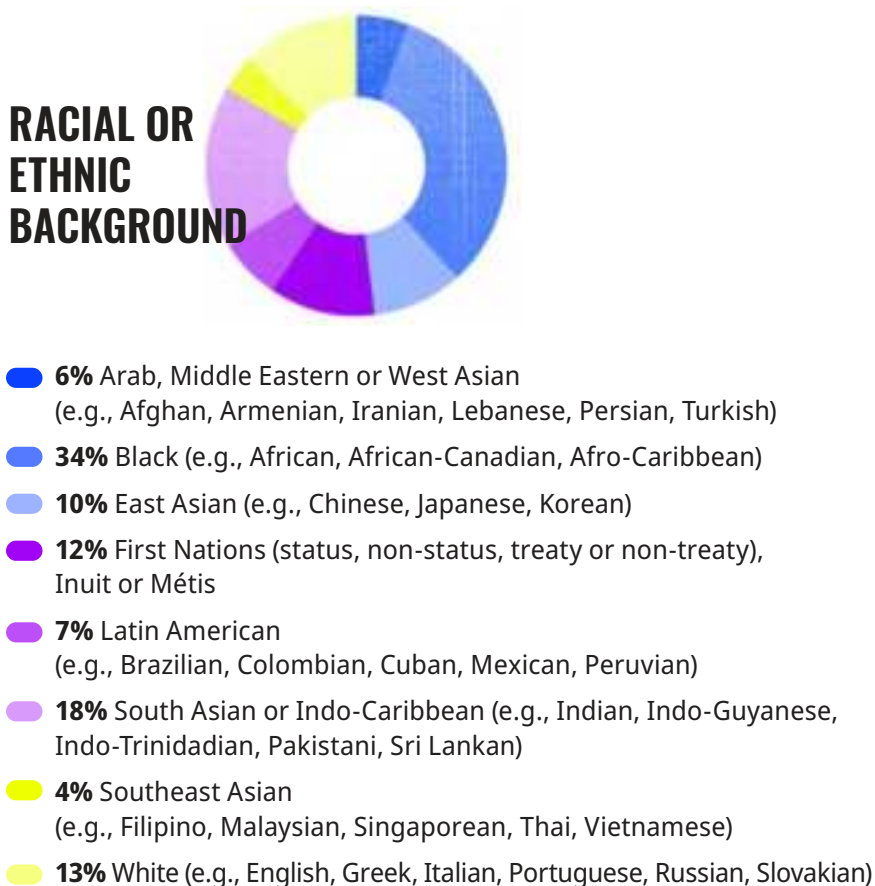
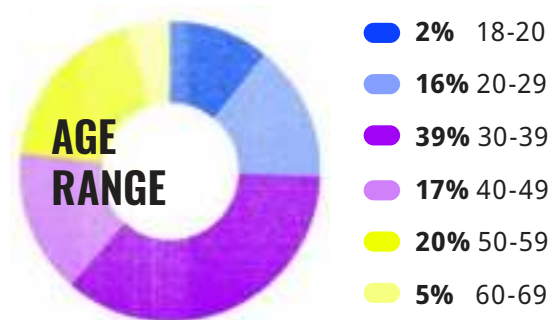
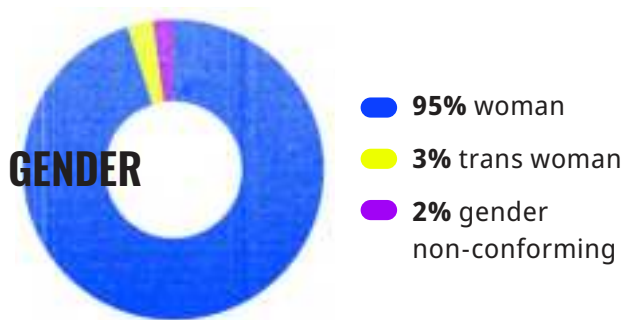
A total of 59 surveys were completed. The survey was available online between January 2022 and February 2022. It was disseminated through local community agencies, service providers, anti-violence against women networks and through social media. The purpose of the survey was to understand the factors impacting experiences of accessing and maintaining employment.

INTERVIEWS

A total of 24 interviews were conducted with research participants. Interview participants were recruited through outreach and engagement with community agencies. The interviews were conducted between January 2022 and February 2022. Interviews lasted approximately one hour. The interviews took a more detailed approach to understanding the experiences of accessing and maintaining employment and the impacts of racism.

⁸ The report refers to the Ontario Human Rights Commission's description of race and racialization. Race refers to socially constructed differences among people, including accent, name, diet, practices, and beliefs. The process of this social construction of race, "the process by which societies construct races as real, different and unequal in ways that matter to economic, political and social life" is called racialization.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND BACKGROUND OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS



IDENTIFY AS A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY



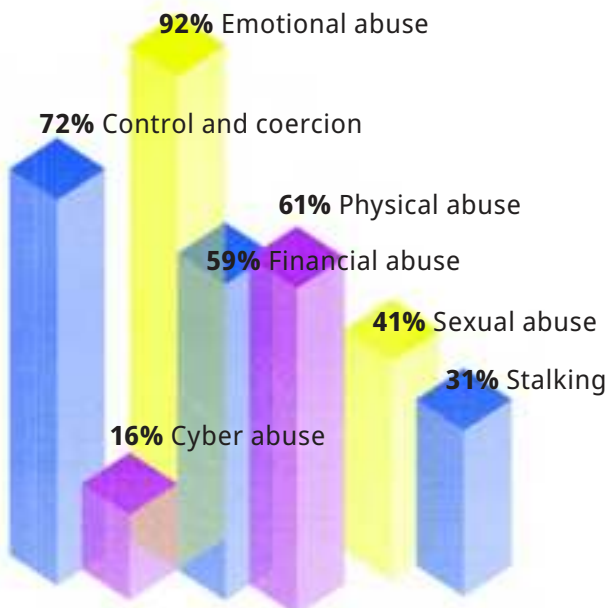
- 39% Yes
- 55% No
- 5% Don't know
- 1% Prefer not to answer

EXPERIENCE WITH IMMIGRATION



- 46% Yes
- 54% No

TYPES OF ABUSE EXPERIENCED



EMPLOYMENT STATUS AT TIME OF ABUSE



- 25% Employed - full-time
- 28% Employed - part-time
- 12% Employed - casual, on-call, temporary or seasonal
- 20% Unemployed or looking for a job
- 8% Stay at home caregiver
- 13% Student
- 2% Retired
- 5% Unable to work

HOUSEHOLD INCOME AT TIME OF ABUSE



- 52% Less than \$2,400 a month
- 18% Between \$2,400 to \$4,000 a month
- 11% Between \$4,000 to \$5,800 a month
- 6% More than \$8,300 a month
- 5% Don't know
- 8% Prefer not to answer

SECTION 1

FINDING WORK



FINDING WORK WHILE IN A VIOLENT RELATIONSHIP

Women reported that their partners used control, manipulation, and emotional abuse to prevent them from finding work. Of the 59 survey participants, 28 (47%) reported that they were prevented from working by their partner or ex-partner. Women described being physically prevented from getting a job, such as being restrained in the home. Some women shared that their partners would discourage them from working because they believed that employment would take away from their expected role in the home, including their caregiving responsibilities. One participant said that her partner threatened to report her to a child protection agency if she were to find employment. Some women reported that their partners told them that they were not allowed to work.

“They forcibly confined me in their home to prevent me from finding work.”

“I was not allowed to work or go outside without my ex-partners’ permission.”

Many women described the emotional abuse they would experience from their partner if they were found to be seeking work. Women shared experiences of their efforts, as well as their confidence, being undermined by their partners when they were seeking work. Women described that their partners would tell them they were too old for a job or did not know enough English to be hired. One participant explained that she wanted to be trained to become a doula. Her partner continually challenged her aspiration by

questioning the salary and suggesting the role was unskilled. When the participant did start to practice as a doula, her partner would sabotage her work by making negative remarks about her potential clients or forcing her to turn down potential clients.

Women described that seeking employment led to arguments or to their partner ignoring them or refusing to speak about it. Some participants reported stopping seeking employment because of the conflict it created. Some women described that their partners would appear supportive while they were seeking work, and even go so far as verbally abusing them for not working, only to then withdraw their support when they started working.

“I got employment and had a discussion about it with him. He agreed and just about the time I was ready to relocate for the job, he declined his approval. I had to forego the job because I did not get his consent to relocate with the children.”

Some women shared that their partners used their race and immigration status to sabotage or control their employment seeking efforts. 29% of survey respondents reported this experience. For example, women reported that their partners used their race and immigration status to undermine their confidence and intelligence. A few women said that their partners threatened to report them to immigration authorities or end their sponsorship application if they were to look for employment. One participant reported that their partner had told her that she would not be considered for a job because she wears a hijab.

“He said I don’t speak English, and can’t get a better job than cleaning. He didn’t allow me to go back to school.”

Women described different ways that their abusive partners sabotaged their efforts finding work. Of the 59 survey participants, 29 (49%) reported that their partner or ex-partner had sabotaged

their efforts to find work. A common theme across interviews was the use of household work or childcare responsibilities to make it difficult for women to seek work. For example, one participant shared that her partner would give her long lists of tasks to do in the home which would leave her without time or energy to pursue work. Another participant shared that she had no support with the children from her partner which meant she was unable to find time alone to look for employment. Many women described the lack of equal or joint parenting as a key barrier, and as intentional.

“When I tried to find a job, my husband was not happy. He said I should stay home and take care of my son, cook and clean and do laundry for him. I couldn’t get out very often, even for socialising, I was under control.”

Other common sabotage tactics discussed by women were their partners creating chaos, disruptions and being physically abusive ahead of a job interview. Women spoke about their partners limiting their access to technology to apply for jobs or destroying their resumes. Some women reported that their partners would intentionally disrupt their sleep before an interview; and others reported that their transportation to job interviews was restricted. Women reported that their partners would physically abuse them ahead of interviews. Women also explained that at times their partner called their potential employment to tell lies about them or provide bad references.

“He would lock me in and not allow me to leave the house when I was smartly dressed to go for an interview.”

“If he gets to know where I went for interviews, he would call and threaten them or falsely accuse me of something.”

FINDING WORK POST-SEPARATION

Women described several ways that their experience of intimate partner violence impacted their ability to seek and obtain work even after the relationship had ended.

A CONTINUED LACK OF SAFETY

A common post-separation experience among women was stalking by their ex-partner in and around the workplace. Women reported that their ex-partner would show up at their work and contact their co-workers. Due to these safety risks, some women mentioned that they avoided employment that was outdoors or public facing. Women noted that at times, their job search reflected their safety needs, rather than their skills or interests. Not only did women share that they often had to leave their employment and relocate, but that they had to limit their job searches to specific geographic areas out of fear of running into their ex-partner.

ECONOMIC INSECURITY

Many women reported that the lack of income and coerced debt that resulted from fleeing violence made it difficult to find employment. Women spoke about not being able to afford childcare, transportation, or appropriate clothing for interviews. In one case a participant described that she did not have enough money to purchase appropriate clothing for winter. She shared that she had to show up for interviews in multiple sweaters and leave them with the receptionist during the interview, which caused her to feel embarrassed.

HOUSING INSTABILITY

Women reported that it was difficult to seek or obtain employment if they did not have stable and permanent housing. Others shared that they did not have a permanent address they could include on a resume or application and could not release the address of a shelter. Overall, women shared that the stress and instability caused by the lack of permanent housing made it difficult to focus on finding work.

LACK OF CHILDCARE

Beyond sharing about challenges finding affordable childcare, women reported that their ex-partners would often neglect child support payments and not support with childcare. Some women also mentioned that they feared leaving their children with their ex-partner and would rather not work to keep their children safe.

EMPLOYMENT GAPS IN RESUME

Some women reported that they had large gaps in their employment on their resume because their partner had prevented them from working. Others reported that they had to exclude some employment experiences because they feared not receiving a good reference because their previous employment had been sabotaged by their ex-partner. The gaps in employment on their resume made it difficult for survivors to apply and find work, which in turn impacted their motivation and confidence to apply for jobs.

EXPERIENCES OF RACISM WHEN FINDING WORK

Most of the women reported that they experienced racism when trying to find employment. Of the 59 survey participants, 30 (51%) reported that they had experienced racism during the job application and hiring process. Women shared that not having English as a first language put them at a disadvantage and that they were treated as less qualified or less intelligent due to their accent. Many women also reported that they believed their accent was deemed problematic by employers even when they spoke English fluently or had studied in English at a post-secondary level. One participant said that during an interview, the interviewer assumed her shyness meant she did not speak English.

Women expressed that judgment against their language skills impacted their confidence when applying for jobs or participating in interviews. One participant described feeling discouraged when she saw that the other candidates interviewing for the position were white women. She described knowing that she would not be hired because of the difference in her English language skills compared to the two other candidates. Many women attributed these experiences and their language skills to the isolation techniques used by their abusive partners who prevented them from developing stronger English language skills.

“Whenever I have to face a white person-boss or try to make the interview, I always feel they are going to judge me, look down upon me, or even if walking on street, my neighbour can look down upon me. I am an immigrant. I do not speak English as fluently, always have this very hurting feeling.”

“My English is ok, but if I can’t think of a word, people will associate that with intelligence.”

Women described additional experiences of racism and sexism when seeking work. They reported that they did not believe they would get hired if the

workplace was made up of predominately white employees or if the job was in a white and male dominated industry. Some women recounted how their race was used as tokenism by employers during the hiring process. Women reported how prejudice against their appearance impacted their efforts to find work. One participant shared that being Black and having natural hair was a barrier to finding work in white male industries. Another participant shared that wearing a hijab was a barrier to finding work.

“In interviews, some job opportunities, I didn’t have the look they wanted. If I went there and saw most other workers are white, I knew I probably wasn’t going to get a job. It happened on some occasions.”

“I have gone to interviews where I was told not explicitly that I didn’t fit the office culture, have natural hair, I would not look responsible. Sometimes I want to keep my hair the way it grows. They said it looked interesting or unkempt, asked if I washed it every day. When I started doing weaves, got more interviews even though same resume.”

A small number of women explained that intolerance for their non-English sounding names was a barrier to job seeking. One participant reported that they used their middle name on job applications because it was more English sounding.

EXPERIENCES OF RACIAL STEREOTYPING

Women reported that racial stereotypes impacted their ability to find work and influenced the types of jobs they could access. Many Black women discussed negative racial stereotypes attributed to their work ethic. For example, Black women shared that they experienced employers perceiving them as difficult, lazy, or untrustworthy. In addition, many Indigenous women reported that they felt they were judged by potential employers and were viewed as likely to cause trouble, have alcohol misuse issues or be unreliable. One Indigenous participant described that employment agencies

offered her jobs in construction, which the participant explained was expected of Indigenous workers, even though her preference was for an administrative role.

"I find it interesting that my race serves me sometimes. I feel that the stereotype that people have of us, Asian females. I found especially when I was younger and looking for jobs in service industry, I was hired quickly, especially if employer was male. I wonder now if they were favourable towards me thinking that perhaps I would cater to the boss/manager, or thoughts I would be passive, submissive, or pleasing, pleasant, playful, all those stereotypes."

FEAR OF RACISM

Women shared that the anticipation or fear of racism impacted their motivation to find work. Women reported that due to past experiences of racism they would second guess themselves and the interviewers in the interview process. One participant explained that her partner had used her fear of racism to justify their isolation of her as a new immigrant to Canada. She explained that her partner had also taken advantage of her fear of racism and would deter her from applying for jobs. The participant described that after the relationship ended, these fears remain, and she continues to find it difficult to look for work.

"I have a lack of confidence going into job interviews, I've been discriminated at interviews. They put a lot of emphasis in job interview. I feel like I would be very nervous at questions, would overthink things, look at all the other times they did me wrong, what if it happens again."

IMPACTS OF IMMIGRATION EXPERIENCE AND STATUS

Women reported that their immigration experience and status directly impacted their experience in

finding work. A lack of knowledge of systems was described as a barrier to finding employment supports and resources. Women shared that their dependence on their abusive partner was a barrier to them increasing their knowledge of systems or how to get around. This was often compounded by abuse and isolation. One participant explained that when she moved to Canada, she was completely reliant on her abusive partner for information and resources. She described that her partner would not provide her with information or resources and therefore, she could not gain English language skills or find employment.

Women who had immigrated to Canada also spoke about the lack of recognition for non-Canadian credentials by employers. Women expressed their frustrations about having acquired degrees and certificates that were recognized in many parts of the world, but not in Canada. In these cases, women often had to re-train to continue a career in their field of expertise. Women reported challenges with having to have resources and time to re-train.

A lack of Canadian work experience was another common obstacle to finding work. Women shared that despite adequate work experience in their countries of origin, these were not recognized as sufficient experience in Canada. One participant questioned why they had been selected to immigrate to Canada based on their work experience, only to not be hired in Canada. Women explained that the challenges in finding employment in their areas of expertise often forced them to apply for employment outside of their areas of interest or forced them into low paying and precarious employment. Women with precarious immigration status reported that they were often hired into unsafe working conditions.

"When I come to this country, the main problem was Canadian experience, racism exist in the society, my English wasn't that great when I came. I had to do contract jobs, one after another. The main thing I had to face was no Canadian experience, although I had education. I had to make extraordinary effort to look for a job."

IMPACT OF TRAUMA ON FINDING WORK

Women described multiple trauma-related symptoms that impacted their ability to find work. Of the 59 survey participants, 42 (71%) indicated that trauma had impacted their ability to find work. Some women described that their trauma and experience of intimate partner violence had led to long-term mental health issues and others spoke to the need for a period of healing. Most participants described feeling too overwhelmed and stressed to start looking for work. They described feeling a lack of motivation, low-self-esteem, numbness, depression, and anxiety. Trauma also impacted the types of jobs women felt able to do. For example, one participant mentioned that while she was encouraged to look for jobs matching her qualifications, she could only cope with physical labour work because of her confidence and needing some time to heal from the trauma of the abuse.

“Health issues from the physical abuse created a disability that impeded my ability to work full-time and when I went back to work, it was overwhelming and mentally draining. I couldn’t afford taking the time off to grieve my loss of my marriage and heal properly.”

SECTION 2

AT WORK



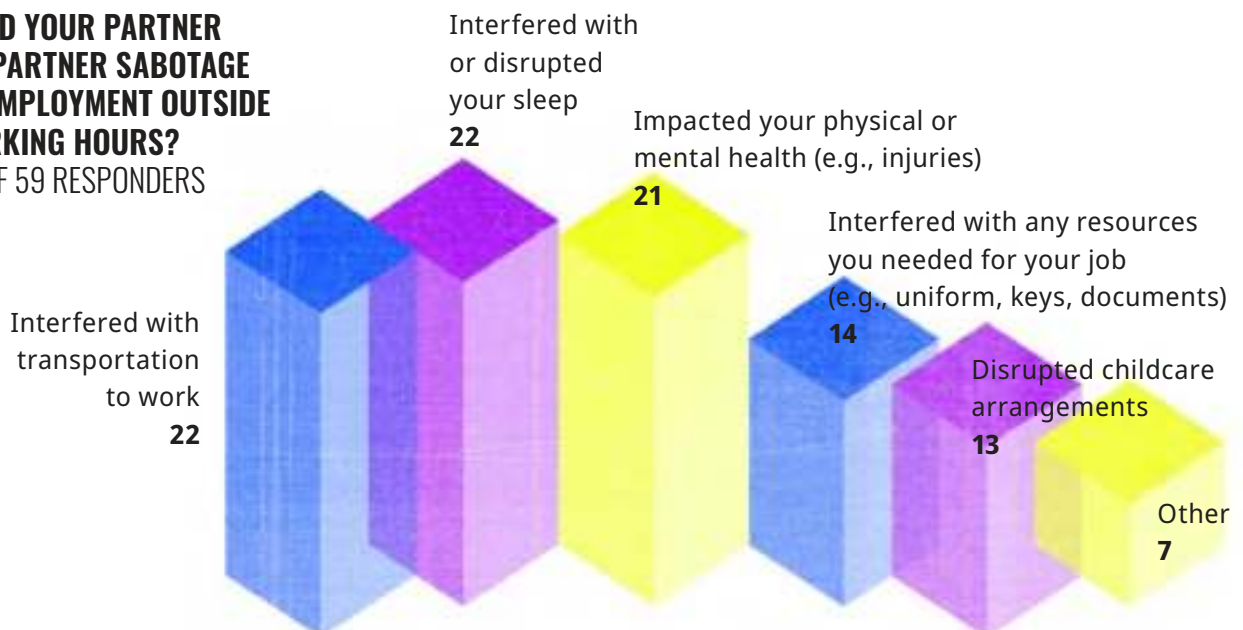
EMPLOYMENT SABOTAGE

Most women discussed employment sabotage as a common form of intimate partner violence that they experienced. Women shared that these sabotage and disruption tactics impacted their productivity, confidence, and credibility at work. In some cases, employment sabotage led to women losing their employment because of their

diminished performance or poor attendance. Other women reported leaving their employment out of shame and embarrassment of the abuse that spilled into the workplace. Employment sabotage was reported as happening outside of working hours, mainly before work, as well as in the workplace.

HOW DID YOUR PARTNER OR EX-PARTNER SABOTAGE YOUR EMPLOYMENT OUTSIDE OF WORKING HOURS?

TOTAL OF 59 RESPONDERS



EMPLOYMENT SABOTAGE OUTSIDE OF WORKING HOURS

Women discussed their partners making it difficult for them to get to work by restricting their access to transportation, refusing to care for children and starting arguments before work. Of the 59 survey participants, 33 (56%) reported that their partner or ex-partner tried to sabotage their employment outside of working hours.

Restricting transportation to work

22 (37%) survey participants reported that their partner or ex-partner had interfered with or disrupted their transportation to work. Women reported that it was common for their partners to have control over their access to and modes of transportation. A lack of control over their transportation made it difficult for women to get to work and get to work on time. Some women shared that their partners would not provide them with money for public transit and would refuse to provide them a ride to work. These experiences were common among women experiencing economic abuse who did not have access to income or financial decision-making power in their homes. A few participants reported that their partners had manipulated them into being dependent on them for rides to different places, only to be refused a ride to work.

Restricting women's access to and control over their mode of transportation was used by abusive partners to control women's time and mobility. For example, one participant reported that her partner insisted on driving her to and from work. The participant shared that her partner would often show up at her workplace early and expect her to leave work early. The participant explained that this caused her anxiety at work and in her relationship. She was afraid of what this would do to her reputation at work and fearful of repercussions from her partner if she did not leave work early.

"Sometimes after we would have argument, he would hide my keys."

"He was obsessive and would attack me as I was walking to my car."

Disrupting sleep

22 (37%) survey participants reported that their partner or ex-partner had interfered with or disrupted their sleep. Women reported that it was common for their partners to make it difficult for them to sleep. They described that their partners kept them up at night with arguments, played music loudly or required them to do a lot of housework. For example, one participant explained that her partner would often start arguments the night before an important deadline at work. Women described that the lack of sleep impacted their health and performance at work. One participant shared that she once passed out at work from working two jobs, being responsible for all the household work and experiencing abuse from her partner. Another participant said that she nearly lost a job because her performance was impacted by her lack of sleep.

"He frequently picked fights right when I had a deadline. He kept me up late to argue or woke me up to argue, accused me of infidelity when I partnered on a project or received support from a male acquaintance."

"He would initiate arguments and prevent me from sleeping so I was unable to work the following day."

Physical and emotional abuse

21 (36%) survey participants reported that their partner or ex-partner would use physical or emotional abuse before work. Women reported that it was common for their partners to start arguments and physically assault them before work. A common experience among women included partners threatening to end the relationship just before the woman was going to work. Another common experience was partners causing physical injuries before work. This often

made it difficult for the woman to get to work and left her in an anxious state before and during work.

"I would have to worry if the relationship would be over whenever I'd go to work."

"I didn't go to work due to the bruises. I was ashamed to go to work."

Refusing to care for children

13 (22%) survey participants reported that their partner or ex-partner would interfere with childcare arrangements before work. Many women shared that their partner would refuse to look after the children when they went to work. One participant shared that her partner would leave the house before she woke up if one of their children was ill so she would have stay home from work to care for them. The participant explained that this happened even when her partner was not employed.

"I worked on shifts, he didn't keep the kids and didn't want me to ask for help from my mother or hire a nanny."

EMPLOYMENT SABOTAGE AT WORK

49% OF SURVIVORS FEARED FOR THEIR OWN SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE BECAUSE OF AN ABUSIVE PARTNER OR EX-PARTNER.

Made you upset so you could not concentrate at work

HOW DID YOUR PARTNER OR EX-PARTNER SABOTAGE YOUR EMPLOYMENT AT WORK? TOTAL OF 59 RESPONDERS



Women discussed harassment by their partners and ex-partner when they were at work. This was often in the form of harassing phone calls, showing up at work, and stalking in and around the workplace. In some cases, this harassment was directed at co-workers or customers. Of the 59 survey participants, 46 (78%) reported that their partner or ex-partner had tried to sabotage their employment while they were at work.

Harassing phone calls and text messages

25 (42%) survey participants reported that they had received harassing phone calls, text messages and emails while at work. One participant described receiving phone calls from her partner every 30 minutes while at work. Women explained that continuous phone calls to the workplace by their partners were used to cause issues between survivors and their employers and co-workers. However, not picking up these phone calls could result in repercussions from their partners. For example, one participant shared that her partner once damaged and flooded her apartment after calling her at work and learning that she was

not there but out on a work-related task. The participant explained that he would often respond in this way if she was somewhere that he was not made aware of. Women also explained that their partners would create emergencies with the children while the woman was at work which would often force the woman to have to leave work early.

“When working in kindergarten, you can’t use phone or pick up call. He bothered me 4 to 5 times a day.”

“When he was mad because I didn’t answer his calls or texts, he would show up and wait for me.”

Stalking in and around the workplace

18 (30%) survey respondents reported that they had experienced stalking in and around the workplace. Women described that their partners would show up at their work and make scenes. For example, one participant shared that her partner showed up at the restaurant she was working in and started an argument in front of her colleagues and customers. The participant explained that this incident caused so much shame and embarrassment that she left the job and the restaurant industry more broadly. In another example, a participant explained that her partner would often show up at her workplace intoxicated and that it happened so often that her boss told her that she had to put a stop to it. Overall, women described that the shame and embarrassment of constant harassment at times led them to leave their jobs.

“Emotional blackmail and harassing me while I’m at work led to me breaking down at work and feeling scared that he might cause a scene or embarrass me. I was not able to concentrate at work and it shows due to my mood and expressions.”

In many cases, stalking in and around the workplace continued after the relationship ended. Women spoke about the lengths that their ex-partners would go to in order to find their new

place of work. Stalking impacted the types and locations of jobs that women were able to consider. For example, one participant worked in mail delivery and was regularly in public and alone. The participant explained that she was always on alert and often distracted while working because her ex-partner would stalk her. Another participant described avoiding jobs and workplaces that were public facing because they provided easier access to her ex-partner.

“After the relationship ended, I switched jobs. He would contact people to try and find where I worked.”

Harassing employers, co-workers, and customers

9 (15%) survey respondents reported that their partner or ex-partner had threatened to hurt their co-workers or cause damage to their employer. Women described their partners threatening and stalking their co-workers. In some cases, co-workers had voiced their discomfort because of the stalking behaviours. One participant shared that her partner, who was also a co-worker, showed up at their workplace with a weapon and threatened her, their co-workers and customers. The participant went on to explain that as a result she had to quit this job.

“I couldn’t go to work, because he was a stalker also physically violent, he would involve everybody, very jealous, co-worker or boss.”

IMPACTS OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE ON JOB PERFORMANCE

JOB PERFORMANCE

Women spoke about the impacts that the violent relationship had on their mental health and confidence that, in turn, impacted their ability to

work. The constant feeling of being emotionally drained while at work was a common theme shared by women. Another common theme was the inability of women to focus and concentrate on their work while faced with danger at home and mounting issues related to housing, child custody and financial stability. Of the 59 survey respondents, 47 (80%) reported that their productivity and effectiveness at work had been impacted by abuse.

Women reported that increased levels of stress and anxiety resulted in a lack of concentration and feeling disconnected from their work. Many participants described being at work and ruminating on things they just experienced at home, such as verbal abuse and what their partner said to them. Women also reported that they were distracted at work by thinking about wider implications of their partners' behaviours. For example, participants described constantly worrying about the economic consequences of the abuse, such as the costs related to their partner destroying things or their fear of eviction. Women reported that the lack of concentration at work led them to forget important information and often resulted in them making mistakes at work.

"My nerves were shot, having constant mini panic attacks on my drive home from work. It was a tough time."

"My concentration was affected. I found it very hard to concentrate and put my personal problems aside and do my job."

Several women highlighted the mental and physical exhaustion that was a result of being in a violent relationship and not having energy to work. This was often compounded by sleep deprivation. Women described that the depression and low energy caused them to be slower than usual while at work. They also described being upset and on edge. For example, a few participants explained that they were often having to leave the workplace suddenly when feeling overwhelmed or would have

to go into the bathroom at work to cry.

"I was down the whole time, wasn't really productive, move at slow pace, more in my head because of abuse I was going through."

"I could feel myself struggling and depressed, everything come to an end, times I felt I should explain why I didn't perform. [I thought] that I would be looked at differently or making excuses or noticed being looked at the most."

Others mentioned the ways in which the abuse resulted in low confidence and self-worth. For example, one participant reported that she experienced a lot of verbal abuse from her partner, including being told by her partner that she could not do anything well. The participant shared that she carried this low self-confidence into the workplace. Women reported that a lack of confidence affected their ability to make decisions when at work and stopped them from pursuing opportunities for career development or advancement

"I overthink everything as a result of the years of abuse which makes it difficult to start and complete tasks. The emotional abuse became my inner voice. Before I met my partner, I thought very highly of myself and my abilities and talents".

"I always underestimated my worth, I always underestimated my ability, and was constantly anxious I would screw up, and get fired."

"My confidence was heavily negatively impacted. I was so proud and confident before. I've become unsure, second-guessing myself even though I am competent and experienced."

However, some women spoke about the positive impact that employment had on their confidence

while in an abusive relationship. For some women, employment reinforced their value and ability in contrast to the criticism and belittling they received at home by their partner. Employment provided women access to a social network and income that increased their confidence and provided them options to leave an abusive relationship. For example, one participant reported that working gave her a sense of independence. The participant reported that working made her realize that she could pay rent and buy groceries on her own.

Injuries to their bodies, including bruises and other injuries, impacted women's ability to perform at work efficiently and complete tasks. One participant reported that she was unable to complete a written report deadline because her partner had broken her arm. Another participant described finding it difficult to sit for long periods of time because she had a sore back from the physical violence.

"I had to hide bruises at work. Focusing on hiding bruises while at the same time trying to distract yourself from the abuse had me in survival mode."

ABSENTEEISM

Common experiences amongst the women included missing days of work, being frequently late for work or being forced to leave work early, because of their partners. There were multiple reasons for these experiences. In some cases, women shared that they were not in a good enough mental state to go to work because of a recent conflict or argument with their partner. In other cases, women shared that they had experienced a panic attack or a nightmare during the night related to the abuse. A couple of women reported that shame and embarrassment of the abuse led them to miss days of work.

Physical injuries were another reason for missed days of work. Participants reported that they would call in sick because they wanted to hide bruises from colleagues or because they needed to take a few days to recover from injuries. One participant

reported that she was in the hospital for five days after suffering from a brain injury because of the violence. The participant reported that she was unable to call her workplace because she was in the hospital and was not thinking clearly. When she did recover, and contacted her employer, she learned that her job had since been filled.

"You were more embarrassed. Your face would be busted, not showing up a few days, you would lose your job, he would then blame you for abuse, then say you can't even keep a job."

Other reasons for missing work because of intimate partner violence included having no support with childcare, having health-related appointments, or having to attend court. Many women reported that they missed work for court proceedings related to criminal and family matters. For example, one participant shared that she had to take off multiple days of work over the course of two and a half years due to ongoing court appearances on a family law case.

EXPERIENCES OF RACISM AT WORK

A consistent theme across interviews was the experience of racism and discrimination in the workplace. Women reported experiencing discrimination in the workplace due to their racial or ethnic background. Several women shared that they were undervalued in the workplace and did not receive equal trust or recognition. For example, one participant described herself as a racialized woman in a predominately white team and explained that even after 10 years in the same workplace, her work was continually double-checked by junior staff.

"I think a person of color has to work that much harder to be listened to, to be promoted, to be looked at that as someone who has a good judge of character. You have to prove yourself that much more than someone who has been privileged."

“You have to work twice as hard. If I left my desk for a second, I would be called up, not white co-workers. But you know as a Black woman, it is hard to find a job. So, you stay.”

Other examples of discrimination in the workplace shared by women included unequal pay and unequal distribution of hours. Women also reported that culturally acceptable practices differed across workplace. For example, one Indigenous woman shared that it was acceptable for co-workers to pray in her workplace, but she was not allowed to smudge because it was deemed a fire hazard.

Of the 59 survey respondents, 31 (53%) reported that racism impacted their experience as a survivor in the workplace. Women explained that racial stereotypes had a significant impact on the responses from employers. For example, one participant reported that she felt she would not receive equal support or accommodations if she were to disclose experiencing intimate partner violence because she was Indigenous. Many women shared that they felt like they would not be listened to or taken seriously by employers because of their race, or because they did not want to be seen as a problem at work.

“I do not want to raise issues at work. I do not want to cause trouble and draw attention to myself. If I wasn’t racialized, I would be able to.”

“I feel like as a minority, not heard or noticed, I am supposed to just go through it, not make noise.”

Overall, many women discussed that if a workplace is not taking racism seriously, they are unlikely to take intimate partner violence seriously. In fact, women shared negative experiences with reporting workplace discrimination. Many women who had made complaints of discrimination in the workplace felt that the process and outcome was unsatisfactory. A couple of women shared that the process led to inadequate training sessions in the workplace. Others felt it was too difficult to

escalate complaints and did not have faith or trust that something would change.

“The amount of incident reports about [discrimination] I’ve written, and nothing happens, they just have to go to sensitivity training.”

“If you complain about discrimination, follow the chain command, nothing is done, they say you can bring it to union, then you hear Black people complain the most, you just deal with it and keep going.”

While some women reported that race did not impact their experience of intimate partner violence and employment, others saw these issues as overlapping, or at times as one dominating the other. Some women acknowledged the parallels in their experiences of being a survivor of abuse and racism. For example, one participant feared being shamed for disclosing discrimination at work because she had been already stigmatized for her experience of intimate partner violence. In another example, one participant reported that the experience of having complaints of racism minimized at work mirrored experiences of gaslighting in abusive relationships.

Alternatively, one woman explained that during her abusive relationship, the workplace had been a place of safety for her. However, the woman described that when she started to experience racism in the workplace, this was no longer the case.

Women shared that the impacts of discrimination in the workplace compounded the impacts of intimate partner violence. 29 (49%) of the 59 survey respondents reported that experiences of workplace discrimination impacted their trauma symptoms from the abusive relationship. For example, women reported that racism in the workplace had caused anxiety, depression, and hypervigilance. Women also spoke at length about the accumulative impact of racism and intimate partner violence on their general health and wellbeing.

DISCLOSURES OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AT WORK

Women discussed the nature of the workplace as a potential compounding factor to their feelings of safety and wellbeing at work, in addition to their experiences of intimate partner violence and racism. Women shared experiences of oppressive, toxic and unsupportive work environments. Women explained that these experiences impacted their ability to disclose the abuse.

Overall, most women did not disclose intimate partner violence to their employers and co-workers, mainly because of embarrassment and shame. Other barriers included a lack of trust, a lack of support, racism, and fears of losing their employment. While women did not discuss specific workplace policies, they described the workplace culture as a key determining factor to seeking help. Women discussed that the level of support and understanding they received from employers and co-workers impacted their likelihood to disclose intimate partner violence or ask for accommodations.

Experiencing judgement or pity from co-workers was a common and concerning experience of survivors. Survivors also feared being stigmatized for the violence due to racial prejudices. For example, some felt their disclosures would be dismissed anyway due to their racial background. Other's feared that it would further stereotypes about the men in their culture or racial background. Some survivors expressed concerns that their colleagues would see them as less capable or professional if knowledge of the abusive relationship came to light.

"I don't want to share any information because of the fear of being treated differently and less valuable on the job."

"The mental illnesses and physical illnesses as a result of the abuse made me feel inadequate especially since I had to keep it a secret at work to avoid being stigmatized. Suffering in silence

"As a racialized woman it is a constant struggle to make people see you as an equal professional. It is hard as a woman in general but racialized women are even more underestimated. My employer has shown signs of sexism and once I overheard him say that the women in the office wouldn't be able to calculate taxes on sales as it would be too difficult for them. Disclosing my experience to my employer was not an option for me and I know it would also not have been taken seriously or kept confidential. There was too much to lose at that point."

impacted my performance and ability to really connect with coworkers."

There were mixed experiences when women did disclose their experiences to their employers. In some cases, women reported that they were dismissed or let go soon after. In other cases, survivors reported that their disclosures were handled poorly.

"It happened once or twice, and I got dismissed. They said it was because of missed days but I knew it was because I confided. They said my personal issues was none of their business and I needed to get the job done. Planning on going to HR, but a lot of bureaucracy, and would make work life difficult."

While many women reported that they had supportive co-workers, a few explained that they felt co-workers had withdrawn support when they did not leave their partner. Some women explained that they felt their co-workers did not want to get involved and others mentioned that their co-workers asked intrusive questions that they felt forced to answer.

"I was the only one that was going through that [and] it reflected on how I was treated by my coworkers. They got fed up when I didn't leave [the abuser]."

IMPACTS OF TRAUMA AT WORK

Women discussed the impact of trauma on their day-to-day experiences at work. Of the 59 survey participants, 43 (73%) reported that trauma impacted their ability to perform at work. 32 (53%) experienced flashbacks at work frequently, 27 (45%) experienced anxiety attacks at work frequently, 21 (35%) experienced hypervigilance frequently and 19 (32%) experienced numbness frequently.

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING TRAUMA SYMPTOMS HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED AT WORK?

TOTAL OF 54 RESPONDERS



Women discussed experiences of flashbacks and anxiety attacks at work. Many reported having post-traumatic stress disorder and explained symptoms including flashbacks and strong physical reactions, including intense anxiety and distress. For example, one participant recalled having an anxiety attack at work after she had left an abusive relationship. The participant described feeling overwhelmed, crying uncontrollably, and having

co-workers try to support her through the attack. Another participant explained that her anxiety was often triggered by hard deadlines or conflicting priorities in the workplace. Overall, flashbacks and anxiety in the workplace impacted survivors' ability to work and at times, forced them to leave work.

"Three weeks ago, I had an emotional breakdown at work. There were too many things going on in my head. I had a flashback. People at work were noticing as normally I am bubbly. They kept asking all day if I was ok. I didn't want to talk to anyone as they won't understand. I sat in my office. I couldn't stop crying."

Anxiety attacks and flashbacks outside of the workplace also impacted job performance. Many women shared how anxiety attacks interrupted their sleep and impacted their ability to be at work the next day. One participant described experiencing flashbacks every few months for 12 years.

Women also discussed experiences of hypervigilance in the workplace. One participant described constantly being in the state of feeling that someone was chasing her, or that something would happen the next second or minute. Other participants reported feeling paranoid while at work, often years after the abuse had ended.

Numbness while at work was another common experience among women. Women discussed feeling disconnected from their work and having difficulties socializing with co-workers. As a result, women worried that employers and co-workers perceived them as not present, unmotivated, or withdrawn.

"I just know that from trauma, I am numb to feelings. There is no feeling. I am just numb. Sometimes at work, you don't react how they expect you to. Once you have been through a lot, nothing phases you."

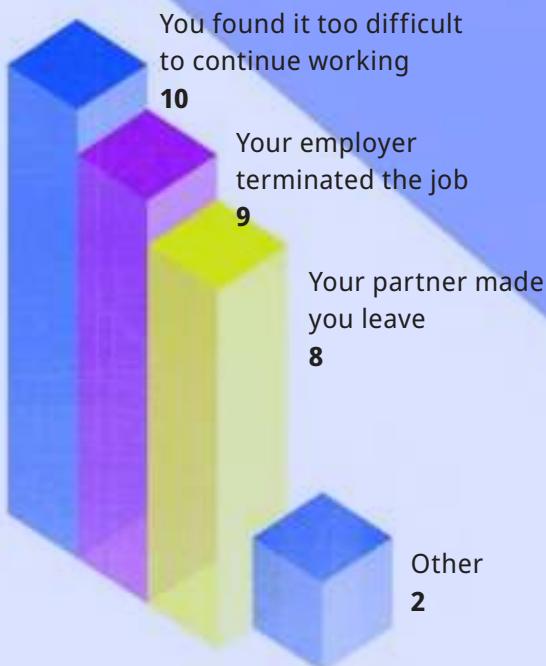
Women described having to hide their symptoms of trauma. Others discussed the importance of trying to keep up appearances. For example, one participant shared that she would still make herself go to social and team functions to appear that everything was okay and that she was a part of the team, even though she was experiencing a lot of anxiety.

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AND JOB LOSS

Of the 59 survey respondents, 14 (24%) reported that they had lost a job due to intimate partner violence. Ten (17%) survivors found it too difficult to continue working, nine (15%) had their job terminated by their employer and eight (14%) were forced to leave by their partner.

HOW DID INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE LEAD TO YOUR JOB LOSS?

TOTAL OF 59 RESPONDERS



Women reported that it was often too difficult to keep working due to the ongoing harassment at work and the impact on their health and productivity. Women described leaving their job due to the embarrassment of the abuse they were experiencing, some reporting frequently leaving jobs. A few participants explained that they left their job pre-emptively as they believed they were going to be fired due to the harassment at work or because of their performance.

"I was so embarrassed I never went back."

"When things got so bad, I would resign so as to not let them know I needed time off."

"I quit jobs as it was just too much hassle."

Women described employers letting them go for several reasons. For many women, this was caused by the constant harassment by their partner in their workplace. Women recounted stories of their managers growing increasingly frustrated of the constant phone calls and partners showing up and disrupting the workplace. Some explained that their employer would explicitly let them go because they would not tolerate the experiences of harassment at work. Other women explained that they were let go for different reasons, such as being told that their contract would not be renewed, but they understood it was because of their partner's harassment in the workplace. One participant explained that she was let go from her employment because her partner stole her work keys and stole from the workplace. Another participant explained that her partner showed up at her work and threatened her colleagues, which resulted in her termination. A few women reported that they were terminated because of their performance at work and their increased missed days of work.

Leaving a job because of safety reasons was another common theme across interviews and surveys. Of the 59 survey respondents, 26 (43%) reported that they had left employment and changed jobs due to safety concerns. This was a common experience after the relationship ended. Women described changing jobs so that their ex-partner could not locate them.

"When I was working as a cashier at a well-known department chain, he made it necessary for me to resign. He would stalk me at any other location in the chain I might transfer to."

SECTION 3

LONG-TERM IMPACTS ON EMPLOYMENT



GAPS IN EMPLOYMENT

Gaps in employment were identified as a common experience and a barrier to securing future employment. Gaps in employment due to intimate partner violence ranged from 1 year to 15 years. Reasons for gaps included many of the themes already discussed in the report, such as partners not allowing women to work or women being unable to work due to symptoms of trauma. Many women reported that extended unemployment was often the direct result of trauma, especially post-traumatic stress disorder.

Gaps in work history were associated with women's unemployment. For example, a few participants mentioned how they felt less confident to re-enter the workforce after such a long time. Other participants described being behind in their industries because of the time out of work. Women reported that employers had a negative reaction to large gaps in employment and asked about the reasons for the gap. Many of these women explained feeling uncomfortable when having to explain the reason for this gap and felt that would not be successful in getting the job if they were to tell the truth.

“The gaps in resume, they feel you are lazy and that is why you are not going to work, but you took time to do physiotherapy or counselling. But you might not get a chance to explain gaps to resume.”

“He caused gaps in my working history. From my resume, everyone can see gaps. I was very hesitant to submit a resume with such gaps. I don’t know if human resources will dislike my history and gaps. That’s why I was finding it difficult to find a good job. It was difficult for so many years.”

In addition to gaps in employment, women reported that intimate partner violence caused an inconsistent and patchy work history. In some cases, women struggled to stay in positions due to the long-term trauma symptoms. This also resulted in multiple short-term employment stints on their resume.

“Before trauma I was in jobs for 6-7 years. I cannot keep a job for 6 months now. I can’t get full time, can’t gather my thoughts. I suffer from trauma and anxiety. I would be so overwhelmed by simplest of paperwork.”

ABILITY TO GAIN MEANINGFUL WORK

Women shared a desire to have a job that they enjoyed and gave them meaning. However, many described that their experiences had hindered their ability to obtain work that reflected their interests, skills, and education. Women described being too distracted by the relationship and overwhelmed by the abuse to seek out work that was meaningful. These experiences often continued even after separation.

“I had to survive. I had to just grab anything, babysit, housecleaning, just to survive. It causes you to lose that drive and will that you had.”

A lack of confidence and self-efficacy was a common long-term impact of trauma among women. Many women explained this as a barrier to applying for jobs, especially jobs that matched their skills and experience. For example, one participant explained that it was many years after she left the abusive relationship that she started to apply for roles that was she suited for. The participant explained that a lack confidence had led to her apply for jobs that she was overqualified for.

The consequences of trauma were compounded by stigma and discrimination in the workforce or by those who were supporting women to access meaningful work. Women described coming up against systems that held stereotypes about the types of work they should do and services that were more focussed on achieving an outcome of any employment, rather than an employment outcome that was meaningful to the survivor.

“Employment agencies did not understand my experiences, due to type of jobs they offered me were so irrelevant. In terms of what I said I wanted pay, location, they were undermining my skills. Stereotyping me and giving me other types of work, I could do this by myself better.”

CAREER PROGRESSION

Many women shared significant impacts that intimate partner violence, racism and trauma had on career progression, whilst some identified few or no impacts. Of the 60 survey respondents, 49 (83%) reported that intimate partner violence impacted their career opportunities and progression. Many women reported that intimate partner violence either blocked their career progression or changed it. A few women described feeling as though they never had an opportunity to pursue a career. Some shared that they were unable to progress in their career due to factors discussed elsewhere in the report, including absenteeism and poor job performance. Frequently having to change jobs due to safety was another barrier to career progression.

"I had to move to another city and the impact of his actions caused many lost opportunities that could never be replaced again. Goals, dreams future aspirations, gone forever sadly. I am still stuck with the outcome of those significant losses as well as feeling the trauma caused by his violent behaviour."

Women reported that partners frequently sabotaged their efforts to progress in their education and careers. This was done directly by partners prohibiting opportunities or through a constant attack on women's confidence and self-worth. Women reflected on the lost time and opportunities. Many experienced sabotage of their education and learning efforts. For example, participants described partners withholding finances for textbooks, disrupting transportation to school, disrupting sleep, or causing arguments before exams.

"I missed work related trainings organized outside of the country due to my passport being hidden or damaged."

"After marriage I had to give up my career and dream of higher studies even though I got a full scholarship."

Women also described how racism created a glass ceiling to their career progression. This was especially felt by those in male and white-dominated industries. Many women reported that they were often passed over for promotions and opportunities due to their race.

"And when I have gotten jobs in the past, moving up is very difficult. Usually someone who is white, it is always white people move [up]. Women of color definitely have a glass ceiling. Even if better qualified and experienced."

Overall, women recognized the impact that the loss of opportunities had on their goals and long-term economic security. Feelings of regret, frustration, sadness and injustice because of this lost time and opportunities were shared by many, especially among survivors who were older. For example, one participant explained that she had to re-start her career at the age of 60 after having left an abusive relationship. The participant described having limited options because of her age and large gaps in her work history.

Women also reflected on how intimate partner violence and their lack of employment opportunities impacted their retirement. They attributed a lack of economic security in their later years to abuse and unstable employment.

"I don't have a career. I am 62 and still have to work. I have missed so much, living in fear. It has been awful."

SECTION 4

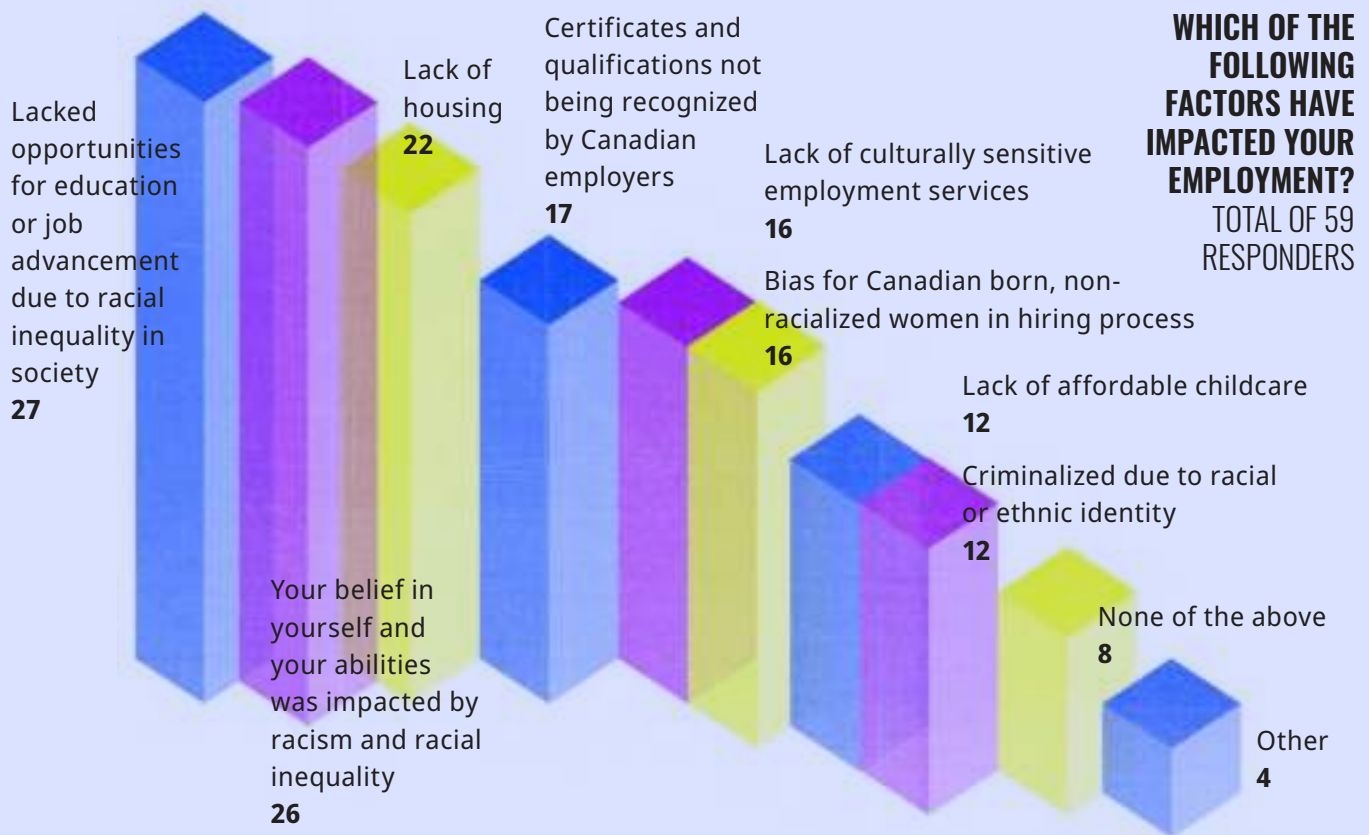
LOOKING AHEAD: WHAT IS NEEDED TO SUPPORT RACIALIZED SURVIVORS TO ACCESS AND MAINTAIN EMPLOYMENT?



SYSTEMIC AND STRUCTURAL BARRIERS

Women were asked to identify factors that had an impact on their employment. A lack of opportunities for education and job advancement due to racial inequality was identified as a factor by the majority (52%) followed closely by racial inequality impacting their self-belief (50%). A lack of

housing was another common barrier (43%). When women were asked to rank these by those that had the greatest impact on their employment, a lack of affordable childcare was ranked as the greatest impact among respondents, following closely by certificates and qualifications not being recognized by Canadian employers.



HOUSING, CHILDCARE, AND FINANCIAL SUPPORTS

Women discussed the importance of housing and childcare for providing stability and the ability to seek out work and maintain employment. Having permanent housing reduced women’s stress while employed. The need for permanent housing was emphasized by women who spoke about the challenges of seeking work or maintaining work while in emergency shelters.

“For racialized women, who have experienced violence, to sustain work, they need to be able to access supports such as affordable housing and childcare, and counselling and/or peer support services.”

“Affordable housing and public transport are needed as racialized women often have lower incomes and therefore cannot afford vehicles or rideshare services such as Uber and Lyft. The state of public transport in Toronto is too unreliable to rely on buses and streetcars that are the only method of transport in the current affordable areas.”

Financial support, especially when leaving an abusive relationship, was identified as an important resource that was not available to many survivors. Financial hardship was a near universal experience among women after separation. Many spoke about being prevented from working and leaving the relationship with very little money. Others shared experiences of leaving relationships with coerced debt and unpaid bills in their names. Money to meet basic needs, including rent, food, and transit, was considered essential by survivors until the time when they are ready to focus on getting employment.

“Women need rent, grocery money, at least support them until they can get a proper job to support themselves forever. I would give them two years, at least they do not worry about basic needs.”

“I want them to have rent, food, and medical things. The real basics. They need food, shelter, safety with their children, and then employment.”

EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS

Women consistently expressed wanting access to emotional and mental health supports. Speaking to someone was identified as one of the most important factors in survivors’ healing and ability to maintain employment. Women discussed this in the form of counselling, peer support groups and friends. Having the time and space to talk to someone provided relief for survivors and provided the emotional support needed to tackle more practical needs, such as housing, income, and employment.

“Women in my situation lose themselves and are unable to get a job and I understand. Having no money, no one to help, no support. I was lucky enough to get some counsellors so I can talk and tell them my situation. No one, not even my friends, knew what I was going through.”

It was important that the support that women received was empathetic and non-judgmental. Women also shared the importance of specialized counselling for racialized survivors because of intersecting traumas of racism and violence. One participant shared her enthusiasm of finally starting therapy in her sixties to address past trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Affordability of counselling was a significant accessibility factor for women. Most women spoke about being unable to afford counselling or only being able to for a short period of time. Women

suggested that counselling, including to cope with trauma symptoms, is often needed for many years.

Support groups with peers was another idea discussed by women. Peer support groups were seen as a place where survivors could come together and share knowledge on resources, learn from each other, offer encouragement and ultimately, reduce loneliness.

“I would like for every racialized woman experiencing intimate partner violence to be never to be without support as it’s lonely.”

“A survivors meeting, a support, kind of like [a support group], but for people with trauma and abuse, where they can go and talk and get things off their chest, with safety and confidentiality.”

SPECIALIZED AND CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE SUPPORT FOR RACIALIZED SURVIVORS

Many women described the need for specialized workplace and community supports for racialized women with experiences of trauma and racism. One participant explained that experiences in her Indigenous community of trauma and sexual abuse in residential schools impacted her experience as a survivor of sexual abuse, especially in relation to how she received support from others.

Women also spoke about the importance of services in understanding the intersections between criminalization and intimate partner violence among racialized communities. Some participants had been criminalized due to the abusive relationship which went on to impact their access to employment.

“Racialized women have unique experiences of experiencing discrimination but also gender based violence. Other people do not understand. They think because we are women our experiences are all the same.”

“Most programs I attended after the fact, like counselling, most of them were geared towards people who are not racialized. The method or techniques did not have intersectional aspect of involving my culture. My culture was a huge aspect to why I was hanging on to my marriage, it is a taboo to divorce in my culture.”

TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT

Women spoke about specific employment supports they would like to have or had found useful. Access to job skill training, post-secondary education and on-the-job training were listed as examples of training that women wanted greater access to. Affordability, including access to education grants or loans, was an important factor for women.

Access to employment support to help women become equipped for seeking work was important too. Support with job seeking, creating resumes and access to computers were important aids. For example, one participant reported that a shelter worker helped to identify positions of interest and adapt her resume to these positions. The participant said this was central to her finding employment. Another participant shared that career advice related to second careers, self-employment and upskilling were helpful.

“When I sat at home, I would go to depression. I made it a point to go to employment resource centre. I told myself it was my office, and I was surrounded by other people who were looking for work. I was not alone, and people looked at my resume. They were my emotional support.”

TRAUMA-INFORMED WORKPLACES AND SERVICES

The need for services, including community agencies, employment agencies and employers to be knowledgeable on intimate partner violence

was shared by most women. Women also shared that trauma-informed practices were important to them, including services that were empathetic, supportive, and considered their individual circumstances.

Women wanted greater programs that were targeted at getting racialized women with experiences of trauma into employment. For example, one participant explained that she received valuable support from an Indigenous employment agency that advocates for non-Indigenous employers to hire Indigenous employees. The participant explained that this support gave her confidence that these employers would take her seriously and were willing to train and support her. Women reported that it would be useful to know of employers who were knowledgeable about intimate partner violence and responsive to survivors. One participant recommended an online platform where women could identify employers that were supportive of survivors.

Women also spoke about the need for employers to understand intimate partner violence and its impact on employment, during the hiring process and while working with employees. Training for employers, especially for human resources, on topics such as intimate partner violence, handling disclosures, trauma, and discrimination, was discussed by most survivors. For example, one participant recalled an experience in which her employer did not know how to respond or support her when she disclosed that she was experiencing trauma from rape. She wanted to be treated in an emphatic way but reported that the employer was focused more on her job than her needs as a person. Many survivors also spoke about the need for representation within human resources, including lived experiences.

“Interviewers giving room to still interview women with gaps in resume if qualified. We can explain the gaps when we get there and still nail the interview and get the job because we are competent despite of the abuse.”

“Training to identify when they see an employee falling off the grid a bit and being able to have that dialogue and feel that your job is not at risk or being ridiculed. To know that our employers care just as much about us as the work we provide for them.”

WORKPLACE ACCOMMODATIONS AND SUPPORTS

Despite very few women having disclosed abuse to their employer or having received workplace accommodations, most identified it as an essential source of support. Some survivors had used their employment health benefits to access counselling or psychotherapy. Workplace accommodations were the most common type of support identified. Women wanted employers to offer paid leave or additional sick leave to help cope with intimate partner violence, including time to move house or access counselling. Women also spoke about the value of employers having flexibility and prioritizing the health of their employees. One participant shared that her employer provides mental health leave which made her feel as though she could stay employed and access that support when she needed it.

Access to counselling was another workplace support commonly mentioned. Because counselling is often unaffordable, women discussed the opportunity for employers to provide counselling. In addition to this being provided through employer benefit programs, survivors recommended that these supports be promoted across workplaces to reduce barriers and help survivors come forward.

“If our workplace wants to recognize that work performance can definitely be affected by domestic violence, it’s only fair that they offer supports for that to their employees.”

Women also spoke about the importance of workplaces having policies and support in place to reassure survivors that their employment is secure if they disclose abuse. Additionally, women shared that it was important for employer accountability to be in place, including repercussions for employers who discriminate against employees because of abuse or fail to protect the employment of survivors. A few survivors suggested a separate organization or body that could hold employers accountable to creating safe workplaces that are free from discrimination.

PEER SUPPORT AND MENTORSHIP IN THE WORKPLACE

Women discussed the value in having established partnerships in the workplace between colleagues to support women to advance in their careers, while also destigmatizing issues such as intimate partner violence, divorce, and criminalization. Connecting with colleagues with similar experiences was viewed as an opportunity to discuss coping with workplace triggers or how to address systemic discrimination faced by racialized women in employment.

“Racialized women who have experienced violence need to regain confidence and understand the effects of the violence and the effects of systemic racism. Programs around self-advocacy and advancement are good support and peer support groups for those specific experiences.”

“We need racialized females, and even male allies, mentors who have gone through the same, helping younger ones like us in our career aspirations as many of us may have to start from scratch after trauma.”

KEY FINDINGS

Racism, trauma, and intimate partner violence create overwhelming and complex barriers to finding and maintaining employment. Racialized survivors often navigate all these complexities while coping with trauma from racism and intimate partner violence. There are also parallels between experiences of workplace discrimination and intimate partner violence. Violence and racial discrimination, as caused by partners, ex-partners, and employers alike, can compound a survivor's trauma.

Racialized women face racism at all stages of employment, including during recruitment, hiring and whilst employed. Racialized women encounter racist stereotypes and stigmatization from employers and work colleagues. Women with experience of immigration also experience specific barriers due to discrimination based on an individual's accent, English language skills and because of the lack of recognition for international qualifications and experience. The experiences of racism in the workplace impact women's likelihood of disclosing intimate partner violence.

Intimate partner violence often spills into the workplace. Employment sabotage, as well as an impact on a women's productivity at work, means that intimate partner violence continues into the workplace. Women can feel shame and embarrassment for their experience of intimate partner violence, and can be met with judgment, intolerance and even re-stigmatization in the workplace. Absenteeism, job loss, and gaps in employment are common consequences of intimate partner violence and have long-term impact on survivors' career progression.

Trauma symptoms have significant and long-term impacts on women's job performance and stability. Survivors cope with anxiety, panic

attacks, flash backs and hypervigilance during and outside of working hours. These symptoms, many of which impact women for years, can lead to a lack of concentration, motivation, and productivity in the workplace. These symptoms are frequently experienced in conjunction with limited community and workplace supports.

Career choices and progression are impacted by intimate partner violence. Partners and ex-partners use various tactics to sabotage women's careers. Survivors' self-belief in their capability is also often diminished by verbal and emotional abuse, and racism. Employment gaps, patchy work history and long-term health issues are all barriers to survivors' ability to obtain decent work that is meaningful to them.

Racialized survivors experience numerous structural barriers and require specialized and wrap-around support to find and maintain employment. Discrimination, poverty, housing insecurity, and a lack of affordable childcare are key structural barriers to racialized survivors' accessing and maintaining employment. Survivors require stability and economic security to be able to find work and long-term supports to help cope with trauma.

Racialized survivors want trauma-informed and anti-racist workplaces. Workplaces that are knowledgeable on intimate partner violence, including on the impacts of trauma and racism, would increase survivors' access to employment, reduce the shame and embarrassment faced by survivors in the workplace and increase disclosures in the workplace. Survivors place importance on workplace accommodations and supports, including access to counselling and peer mentorship. It is important that workplace supports are encouraged and communicated.