

Stalking is a pattern of behavior directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to feel fear or suffer emotional distress. Most stalking victims are stalked by someone they know, most commonly a current/former intimate partner (40%) or an acquaintance (42%).^A In situations where the stalking and victim are acquaintances, about one-quarter are professional acquaintances.^B Stalking often intersects with other forms of gender-based violence and harassment, including sexual harassment and intimate partner violence. However, stalking is its own form of violence with its own risks, safety planning needs, and policy response.

Some stalkers meet their victims through the workplace as colleagues, customers, vendors, or other professional acquaintances. Other stalkers — like intimate partners — may target their victims in multiple locations including the workplace.

Stalkers can be very dangerous, yet too often, stalking goes unrecognized and unaddressed — by victims/survivors and their friends and family, support services, legal systems, and workplaces.

Stalking frequently co-occurs with other violence and is a risk factor for homicide.^C All stalkers can be dangerous, but former or current intimate partners are generally more threatening, violent, and interfering than other stalkers^D and may stalk before, during, and/or after the relationship.^E

Intimate partner stalking is a form of domestic violence; when abusive partners engage in controlling behaviors such as excessively contacting the victim while at work, showing up uninvited, and/or sabotaging the victim's work performance, attendance, or workplace more broadly, that's stalking AND intimate partner violence. **Domestic violence at work often takes the form of stalking behaviors.** Stalking behaviors that target an intimate partner's ability to work and remain financially stable are also a form of economic abuse.

Given the increased risk of harm and lethality in stalking cases, it is vital to identify stalking separate from and in addition to concurring victimizations. Whatever way victims or offenders label their experiences, it is vital for workplaces to identify stalking behaviors when they occur because stalking requires a unique policy response.

Stalking can be difficult to identify and distinguish from other victimizations. When describing their experiences, stalking survivors may not use the word "stalking" or express fear, and may use the word "harassment" instead. Generally, harassment creates a hostile environment and makes victims feel annoyed, frustrated, upset, angry, and/or disrespected whereas stalking victims feel fear and/or emotional distress. When a victim feels (or could reasonably feel) unsafe, frightened, or like they cannot live a normal life due to the pattern of behavior — that is stalking. Harassment can co-occur with stalking, can be part of a stalking pattern, and/or can become stalking when the impacts of the behaviors change from feeling annoyed, frustrated, or upset to feeling unsafe, afraid, or distressed.

STALKING BEHAVIORS & THE WORKPLACE

Stalking is much more than monitoring and following. Examples of how stalking behaviors can intersect with workplaces are categorized below.

SURVEILLANCE:

- Following to/from the workplace
- Asking coworkers for information about the victim
- Showing up at the victim's workplace
- Monitoring and/or surveilling the victim while at work
- Tracking software on work devices
- Monitoring workplace communications for information about the victim
- Asking friends, family, and children about the victim's employment, commute, or routine

"He'd walk by my desk a million times per day, to check where I was and who I was talking to."

LIFE INVASION:

- Unwanted contact while at work
- Harassing coworkers, customers, clients
- Submitting complaints about the victim
- Sending gifts, packages, and mail to work
- Harassing the victim while at work, including sexual harassment
- Unwanted contact through work phone, email, and company social media

"He was parked outside the restaurant where I worked and I knew he'd make a scene if I went in for my shift."

INTIMIDATION:

- Damage to work property
- Threats to attack the victim at the workplace
- Threats to harm coworkers, customers, or clients
- Forced confrontations at work
- Threats to get the victim disciplined or fired

"He threatened to show his friends – who were my colleagues – naked photos he took of me while I was sleeping."

INTERFERENCE (through sabotage or attack):

- Damaging or stealing the victim's property needed for work (keys, car, laptop, papers)
- Humiliating the victim or spreading rumors to undermine the victim's employment or make them look bad to supervisors, coworkers, or customers
- Sharing the victim's personal info, photos, or videos
- False complaints or reviews
- Physical or sexual attack at the workplace
- Constant source of distraction
- Purposefully getting the victim fired
- Making the victim late for work or preventing them from going

"A client showed up at my daughter's soccer game, I have no idea how they even found out about it."

A Note on Data and Terminology: Stalking is very under-reported. Measurements differ widely based on the definition of stalking used. This fact sheet uses the terms used by the cited study. More data are needed that explore the specific impacts of stalking on the workplace to guide best practices in the response to stalking victims and offenders.

WORKPLACE IMPACTS ON STALKING VICTIMS

- Work days lost due intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and/or stalking over victims' lifetimes are worth an estimated \$137.8 billion (2022 USD).^{F G}
- 17% of stalking victims describe losing a job or job opportunities.^H
- 1 in 8 employed stalking victims lose time from work as a result of their victimization and more than half lose five days of work or more.^I
- 1 in 7 stalking victims relocate as a result of their victimization, which affects their work.^J
- Stalking victims suffer much higher rates of depression, anxiety, insomnia, and social dysfunction than people in the general population.^K These impacts, and strategies for coping with them, can impact work performance.
- Among victims stalked by an ex-partner, nearly half described job losses because of the actions of that abuser. Job losses were highest while a victim was in the process of separation.^L
 - For those who experienced job losses, more than half of the victims talked to coworkers and about one-third talked to supervisors about the situation.^M
- Among a sample of cyberstalking victims, 48% described negative work consequences. These consequences were exacerbated by the number of online stalking behaviors exhibited and if stalking also occurred offline.^N

STALKING OFFENDERS AND THE WORKPLACE

- 64% of stalkers pursue their victims at least once per week and 78% use more than one tactic.^O
- Intimate partner stalkers are the most likely stalkers to approach, threaten, and harm their victims, and to assault third parties.^P
- 78% of intimate partner violence offenders used workplace resources at least once to express remorse or anger, check up on, pressure, or threaten the victim.^Q
 - 74% had easy access to their intimate partner's workplace, with 21% saying they contacted the victim at work in violation of a no-contact order.
 - 48% had difficulty concentrating at work, with 19% describing a workplace accident or near miss due to preoccupation with their relationship.
 - 42% were late to work and 25% went to the victim's house while on the clock.

DYNAMICS OF WORKPLACE STALKING




- Across nine industry-level studies of stalking, more than a third of stalking victims reported receiving malicious or unsubstantiated complaints at work and having misinformation spread about their professional abilities.^{R S}
- Rates of stalking in the workplace range widely by industry.^{T U} Professions that involve frequent contact with a wide variety of people, and in which the professional has a duty of care to their clientele, may be at increased risk of stalking victimization.^V More research is needed to examine this issue by sector and evaluate best practices in prevention and response.

WORKPLACE RESPONSE TO STALKING

- 31% of workplaces had a formal policy on stalking, 56% did not and had no plans to put one in place, and the remaining 14% planned to put one in place within 12 months.^W
- Stalking survivors who had positive experiences being supported by their workplace describe feeling listened to, having their immediate supervisor take the stalking seriously, having regular formal workplace meetings to deal with the stalking, and having the workplace take steps to manage safety.^X
- Negative workplace experiences included victim blaming, minimizing the victims' experience, discounting their fears, and leaving the victim to manage the stalker alone, thus making the victim feel isolated.^Y
- Stalking survivors are experts in their own situations; workplace responses must always center on their agency, wishes, and consent.^Z

Stalking Prevention, Awareness, and Resource Center

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Workplaces Respond to Domestic & Sexual Violence: A National Resource Center

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This project was supported by Grant No. 2017-TA-AX-K074 and 2019-WW-AX-K001 awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this publication/program/exhibition are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.

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