

Small steps, big difference:

How FTSE 100 companies can make a positive impact on the lives of domestic violence and abuse survivors through workplace support

Executive Summary



Findings from an independent survey of FTSE 100 companies,
commissioned by UN Women

© 2024 UN Women. All rights reserved.

Produced by UN Women / HeForShe Initiative

Recommended citation: G. Wood (March, 2024), “Small steps, big differences: How FTSE 100 companies can make a positive impact on the lives of domestic violence and abuse survivors through workplace support - findings from an independent survey of FTSE 100 companies, commissioned by UN Women”

The views expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the views of UN Women, the United Nations, or any of its Member States or affiliated organizations.

Acknowledgements

This research report has been funded by Vodafone Foundation* in furtherance of its charitable objectives and as a part of their HeForShe Initiative commitment. Vodafone Foundation combines Vodafone's technology and charitable giving to address some of the world's most pressing problems, including domestic violence and abuse. Research was led by Gemma Wood, External Expert on violence against women, and the report drafted with the support of the following external and internal peer reviewers: Adina Wolf (Resource Mobilization Specialist, UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women); Anna Falth (Head of Women's Empowerment Principles - WEPs, UN Women); Ayesha Fordham (Membership and Partnerships Manager, Employers Initiative on Domestic Violence - EIDA); Mihwa Park (WEPs Coordinator, UN Women); Molline Marume (Thematic Coordination Lead for the Generation Equality GBV Action Coalition, UN Women); Susan Bright (CEO, EIDA); Shruti Majumdar (Knowledge Manager, UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women); Vesna Jaric (Global Head of HeForShe, UN Women). The research would not have been possible without the contribution of the FTSE 100 companies responding to the survey.



**Vodafone
Foundation**

*Vodafone Foundation is a Charity registered with the Charity Commission for England & Wales (charity number 1193984) & a Company Limited by Guarantee registered in England and Wales (company number 13199169).

Executive Summary

Nearly one in three women will experience gender-based violence (GBV) in their lifetime.¹

While GBV can affect anyone, it disproportionately impacts women, especially those from marginalized communities in the least developed countries.

Domestic violence and abuse (DVA) is the most widespread form of gender-based violence (GBV) globally.

It not only devastates lives, families, and communities but also exerts a significant impact on workplaces and economies, serving as a substantial barrier to women's progress and economic empowerment. The global cost of violence against women (VAW) is staggering, amounting to at least USD 1.5 trillion or roughly 2% of the global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per year.²

Achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5, aimed at "achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls," is unattainable without putting an end to all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls.

DVA is a workplace issue because it prevents women's engagement in employment and education and their career advancement, resulting in profound physical, economic and psychological repercussions for survivors.

Having a safe and supportive work environment that can respond to and prevent DVA (such as providing referrals to specialist services, financial support to escape and raising awareness to help prevent DVA) can make all the difference to employees experiencing DVA, protecting their lives and livelihoods. Ultimately, this will advance gender equality and women's empowerment overall.

While the primary responsibility for protecting human rights lies with States under international law, employers also play a critical role.

This role is outlined in international and regional conventions, as well as in certain national legislation. Employers can offer various response and prevention options that address both the immediate needs of survivors of DVA and its long-term impact. Additionally, efforts to promote gender equality in the workplace, communities, markets, and society at large can effectively tackle the root causes of DVA, leading to overall gender equality outcomes.

As the foremost entities listed on the London Stock Exchange in terms of market capitalization, FTSE 100 companies have considerable influence on global markets, workforces, communities and societal norms.

With an estimated global workforce of four to five million employees,³ these companies, operating in diverse industries such as finance, energy, pharmaceuticals, consumer goods and

telecommunications, are well positioned to address the pervasive issue of DVA, particularly in regions with limited state support and human rights protections.

While some FTSE 100 companies are already recognized as exemplary models in the provision of support for employees experiencing DVA, and examples documented, comprehensive research on these practices across the entire FTSE 100 group remains lacking. There is a critical need for further investigation and documentation to understand the scope and impact of existing initiatives and to identify areas for improvement.

Hence, in this ground-breaking initiative, as a part of its HeForShe Initiative UN Women has commissioned the first-ever, research into FTSE 100 companies' workplace support for employees experiencing DVA.

This report documents the key findings and recommendations from the survey providing a unique resource and database on what some of the most influential companies in the world are doing to support survivors, what the lessons and challenges are, and what opportunities lie ahead to collaborate on initiatives that can lead to transformative action on DVA for gender equality outcomes.

The willingness of the FTSE 100 companies to take part in this survey, share information, compare, and learn is unprecedented and signals a commitment to collaborate on addressing DVA both individually and collectively. The survey serves as a baseline for measuring progress over time, providing valuable insights and standards for companies addressing DVA.

Key findings:

Twenty-two FTSE 100 companies, spanning various sectors, participated in the survey: these companies collectively employ over 1.6 million people, 43% of whom are women, across 180 countries globally.

82% of surveyed companies offer support to survivors of DVA:

- The most common support measures available are referrals for employees experiencing DVA to external specialists and support organizations, flexible working options and leave.
- Half of the surveyed companies also focus on preventive support, that can help employees before DVA occurs, such as raising awareness of DVA risks and promoting available assistance.

○ Several companies provide options to tackle the medium-to-longer-term impact of DVA, for example to support survivors' economic independence, including financial support and temporary protection against dismissal.

○ Some companies responding to the survey reported providing the above support for survivors of DVA but not specifically labeling this as relevant to DVA.

○ **Lessons learned from the survey respondents show that, unless these options are clearly labeled as relevant to DVA survivors, employees experiencing issues may not understand or know about the support available.**

90% of companies responding to the survey have recognized violence and harassment as a workplace issue in general through policies and/or guidance, of which:

○ **59% have specifically integrated DVA as a workplace issue within these policies and/or created stand-alone policies or guidance on DVA.**

○ 32% are also addressing DVA across multiple countries of operation, reaching employees in up to 67 countries worldwide.

○ Having specific company policies on DVA is seen as a crucial initial step in fostering a culture of trust, support, and protection, within a commitment to zero tolerance for all forms of violence and harassment.

○ Leadership commitment and workplace policies on DVA make a tangible difference, prompting survivors to share how these measures impact their ability to remain employed.

A key challenge in supporting DVA survivors is addressing stigma and negative beliefs among employees and supervisors, especially regarding DVA as a workplace issue. This is complicated by diverse cultural and social norms across various markets and countries.

○ 23% of companies surveyed reported providing practical guidance and training for managers and HR professionals how to recognize and respond to DVA.

FTSE 100 companies experienced in implementing global DVA support offer valuable insights. Sharing information serves as a small step towards making a big difference for employees experiencing DVA. Through this survey, learning can be shared about the step-by-step process for enhancing support within organizations, some working across complex markets and contexts.

45% of responding FTSE 100 companies reported providing support to the wider community on DVA and/or GBV related issues.

○ There is a clear link between prioritizing and making commitments on support for survivors of DVA in the workplace and expansion of support for customers and communities, as well as gender equality initiatives at large.

Respondents shared ideas for enhancing support inside their company:

○ **Training and education** for all employees on DVA as a workplace issue, especially for managers and HR professionals.

○ **Improving the visibility of available support options** and embedding these within existing employee assistance programs (EAP) and standard well-being initiatives.

○ **Expanding avenues for DVA survivors to access support** (beyond managers) to other professionals, such as a DVA survivor advocate network.

○ **Creating a culture and workplace environment of trust and support** in which survivors feel safe to seek support and share stories of impact.

○ **Linking internal efforts on DVA support with broader corporate social responsibility initiatives.**

○ **Partnering with external organizations and specialists in DVA support.**

○ **Improving collection of data and monitoring of evidence** on uptake and effectiveness of DVA survivor support, to inform improvements.

Respondents shared ideas for enhancing support collaboratively with other companies:

○ **Sharing of best practices** and tools across the FTSE 100 network, including opportunities to discuss and share lessons in person.

○ **Developing a joint stance and commitment** across the FTSE 100 network to addressing DVA as a workplace issue.

○ **Joining forces on national, global, or multi-country awareness raising campaigns** to address the root causes of DVA.

○ **Investing in learning opportunities, tools, and resources (including with the United Nations)** that are adaptable to different contexts, countries, and markets.

Researcher's conclusions and observations:

1. Making a corporate commitment and implementing specific policies is the first step in prioritizing DVA as a workplace issue. With nearly two thirds of surveyed companies having such policies, there is an opportunity for further information sharing, especially in extending coverage across multiple countries.

2. **The support package for DVA survivors at work should include immediate protective measures and long-term response and prevention provisions.** While companies are making progress, there need to be more types of each support available. Learning from advanced companies with global policies and toolkits can aid in moving from short-term to long-term measures.
3. **Competing priorities and diverse corporate agendas reportedly hinder targeted support for DVA survivors.** Recognizing that DVA is a workplace issue, that can affect all employees, disproportionately women, is key **and** understanding that it intersects with all other aspects of employee health, wellbeing and inclusion issues. When DVA is prioritized, survivors feel safe to ask for support.
4. **Addressing the challenge of raising awareness about DVA and changing negative beliefs requires collaborative efforts.** Companies can benefit from shared lessons, which save time and resources. The survey identifies practical opportunities for collaborative and individual support that other employers can adopt.
5. **FTSE 100 companies can collaborate on ways to raise awareness of and prevent DVA, and join forces in supporting survivors in the workplace.** Exploring specific case studies and step-by-step processes will deepen understanding of **how** to do this. Learning from each other's experiences across countries, contexts and markets is essential.
6. **Measuring the success of workplace support for DVA survivors is crucial for building a business case and informing FTSE 100 companies.** Listening to and learning directly from survivors is essential, alongside monitoring the uptake of support to enhance effectiveness. This survey can serve as a baseline, with indicators that can measure progress over the next one to three years.
7. **Prioritizing support for DVA survivors in the workplace links to broader corporate commitments on gender equality,** impacting customers, communities and society. FTSE 100 companies can leverage their influence and extend support on DVA across the workplace, markets **and communities**, advancing gender equality and women's empowerment outcomes.
8. **The participation of 22 FTSE 100 companies in the survey signals a commitment to collaborative action on DVA.** With significant global influence, these companies can serve as role models to other employers, supporting survivors globally and influencing gender equality outcomes where state support is lacking.

Recommendations for FTSE 100 companies and other employers:

1. **Implement good practices outlined in this research in the workplace:** (i) recognize DVA as a workplace issue; (ii) commit to gender equality and ending GBV at leadership levels; (iii) allocate resources; (iv) introduce specific policies, guidance and support provisions; (v) raise awareness and foster a supportive environment; (vi) train managers and HR professionals; and (vii) provide diverse support options across markets and countries. Companies should also refer to UN Women resources and initiatives and the Employers' Initiative on Domestic Violence (EIDA)⁴ for further guidance.
2. **Form a community of practice or coalition with the FTSE 100 network to drive collective progress, sharing information, agreeing on standards and taking collaborative action on DVA.** As role models, these companies can set global standards for DVA support, potentially benefiting millions of people. This could include joining and promoting existing networks (e.g. EIDA) and coalitions with other employers, particularly multinational companies (see recommendation five for more suggestions).
3. **Invest in research, mass communications and awareness campaigns to understand effective approaches for changing the beliefs, attitudes and behaviors contributing to DVA.** Collaboratively address barriers and challenges hindering action to support survivors. FTSE 100 companies could conduct a joint campaign to raise awareness of DVA as a workplace issue across employers and conduct research on campaign effectiveness.
4. **Provide financial support for DVA, GBV and broader gender equality initiatives by investing in NGOs and specialist support organizations.** Companies should offer flexible, long-term funding nationally and globally for such organizations (including for networks such as EIDA) and create partnerships to address root causes and consequences of gender equality and DVA in their markets and communities.

5. Join a UN Women initiative to drive gender equality at scale. For example:

O Sign and adopt the WEPs, if not already a signatory, accessing tools and resources, including Principle 3 on Employee health, wellbeing and safety and the DVA “policy and procedure” template.⁵

O Join the Generation Equality Gender-Based Violence Action Coalition,⁶ by committing to end GBV and joining the collective target of “4000 private sector organizations adopting and

implementing GBV policies by 2026”.⁷ And join Generation Equality’s collective commitment for eliminating violence and harassment in the world of work in general.⁸

O Become a HeForShe champion, making tangible commitments and leveraging impactful resources for gender equality.⁹

O For United Kingdom-based companies, connect with UN Women National Committee UK for resources, networking and initiatives focused on the United Kingdom.¹⁰

Endnotes

¹UN Women and WHO Department of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Research. (2021) Violence Against Women Prevalence Estimates, 2018: Global, Regional, and National Prevalence Estimates for Intimate Partner Violence Against Women and Global and Regional Prevalence Estimates for Non-Partner Sexual Violence Against Women. Geneva: WHO. Accessed 21 February 2024. <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/341604/WHO-SRH-21.6-eng.pdf?sequence=1>

²UN Women. (2020) COVID-19 and Ending Violence Against Women and Girls. New York: UN Women. Accessed 20 February 2024. <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2020/Issue-brief-COVID-19-and-ending-violence-against-women-and-girls-en.pdf>

³For example: Merchant Machine. (19 December 2023) Top 100 UK Companies Ranked by Profit and Revenue Per Employee. Accessed 22 February 2024. <https://merchantmachine.co.uk/profit-per-employee/>; Page 3 of Charities Aid Foundation (CAF). (2023) Corporate Giving by the FTSE 100. CAF: Kent. Accessed 22 February 2024.

https://www.cafonline.org/docs/default-source/giving-as-a-company/corporate_giving_ftse100_2023_report.pdf

⁴The Employers' Initiative on Domestic Violence (EIDA) is a free-to-join members' network of employers. EIDA supports around 1,500 large and small businesses, collectively comprising over 25% of the UK workforce, to take effective action on domestic abuse. For more information, see The Employers' Initiative on Domestic Violence (EIDA). "About Us." Accessed 22 February 2024.

<https://www.eida.org.uk/about-us>

⁵UN Women (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women). About [the Women's Empowerment Principles]. Accessed 22 February 2024. <https://www.weeps.org/about>

⁶For more information on Generation Equality, see UN Women (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women). Accelerating Progress for Gender Equality. Accessed 22 February 2024. <https://forum.generationequality.org/index.php/>

⁷UN Women (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women). (2022) Generation Equality Accountability Report. New York: UN Women. Accessed 22 February 2024.

https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-09/Generation-Equality-accountability-report-2022-en_1.pdf; for the list of Action Coalition Targets, see UN Women (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women). Targets. Accessed 22 February 2024. https://commitments.generationequality.org/targets_and_indicators

⁸For more information on Generation Equality, see UN Women (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women). Accelerating Progress for Gender Equality. Accessed 22 February 2024. <https://forum.generationequality.org/index.php/>

⁹For more information on the HeForShe initiative see: About HeForShe. <https://www.heforshe.org/>, accessed on 26 February 2024.

¹⁰UN Women National Committee UK (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women National Committee UK). UN Commission on the Status of Women. Accessed 22 February 2024. <https://www.unwomenuk.org/>



220 East 42nd Street
New York, New York 10017, USA
Tel: 646-781-4400
Fax: 646-781-4444

www.unwomen.org