Abused Women
At Work

2009
Introduction

In Denmark, violence against women is considered an unacceptable offence and a serious social problem, which the government is trying to combat though national action plans and a number of initiatives.

In 2000, a cross ministerial working group was appointed that produced a status report on violence against women in Denmark. This status report became the basis for *The Action Plan to Combat Men's Violence Against Women 2002-2004*. The subsequent action plans *The Action Plan to Combat Men's Violence Against Women and Children in the Family 2005-2008* and *The National Strategy to Combat Violence in Intimate Relationships 2009-2012* are a further development of these ongoing efforts. Examples of the initiatives include support for victims, prevention work, offers of help to violent men, collecting knowledge, research, a strengthening of cross departmental municipality response, improving professionals' knowledge and competence, consciousness raising campaigns, etc. The targets for the initiatives are battered women, children, perpetrators and professionals. In the beginning, battered women and children were the main focus, but new research has found that men are also the victims of violence in intimate relationships and they are also now part of the target group for the initiatives.

In 2002 The European Union decided to uncover the extent and nature of the violence though seven indicators that allow the member states to collect data about the problem which is comparable, and to implement the UN's Beijing Plan of Action on equal status and combating violence against women. It was decided to collect information about victims, perpetrators, what support the country offers victims, what activities are targeted the perpetrators allowing them to break with the cycle of violence, training for professionals, national initiatives to combat violence against women and evaluation of the initiatives.

The National Observatory on Violence Against Women¹ took the initiative in 2004 to create a national database in which both national data registers and public surveys that contain information on violence against women are included. The National Institute of Public Health and The University of Southern Denmark are monitoring the database for the Ministry of Gender Equality, and they publish reports based on the seven indicators. There have also been a series of research-based reports on violence against women in Denmark. Together, the database and the research results give a broad picture of the phenomenon of violence against women in Denmark.

The statistics from the national database show a decrease in partner violence in Denmark from 42,000 a year (2004) to approx. 28,000 a year (2007). The statistics also show that although domestic violence has decreased, over all violence against women has risen. It is estimated that there are 70,000 incidents of violence against women each year in Denmark².

Although there is a reduction in the numbers in relation to domestic violence, there are still many women who are subjected to violence. Violence against women is a serious social problem in Denmark and the government has appropriated 35 million DKK over the next four years (Sats Fond 2009) to combat the phenomenon.

The government's future goals
The government's overall and long-term goal is that no women or men are subjected to domestic violence. The concrete goal is to reduce the number of incidents of domestic violence from 28,000 yearly to a maximum of 20,000 before 2012. It is also a goal to reduce the number of domestic violence incidents against men from 8,900 a year to a maximum of 7000 incidents a year before 2012. The statistics are checked through data from the national database on violence against women. And the declared goals are a prerequisite for the funding from the government satspulje grants.

Perspektive- and Actionplan 2009 by The Ministry for Gender Equality, 2009
This report

This report is a part of the Daphne project “Abused Women At Work - Workplace Policy for Exploited Women – a Trade Union Action”³. The objective of the report is to uncover the character and extent of domestic violence in Denmark and as well as to focus on the influence this abuse has on women's work life. The report will be used to qualify the work done in the Daphne project and be part of an analysis of similar research reports done in the Daphne project's partner countries, Spain and Lithuania.

The design of the report

The report consists of three parts:

1. A definition of terms, a review of the different forms of violence and domestic violence characteristics.
2. A description of the magnitude and character of violence against women in Denmark, with special emphasis on domestic violence propagated against women. The statistics come primarily from the national database which has collected the newest numbers and reports as well as statistics from shelters.
3. A focus on abused women’s working life based on qualitative interviews with victims of domestic violence and experts, as well as on the material that is available on abused women's work situation in Denmark.

Interviews

The purpose of the interviews is to increase knowledge about abused women’s working life through a look at the following themes:

- How has the violence influenced the women's working life?
- What are the women's needs at work?
- What kind of experiences have they had at work?
- Taboos and barriers
- Experiences with managers, colleagues and union representatives
- The women's perspective on their work life as abused women.

Interview persons

A total of 5 interviews were completed in connection with this report. Two with professionals from The National Institute of Public Health and The Danish National Organization of Shelters for Battered Women and their Children (LOKK) as well as interviews with three abused women. All the interviews were recorded except for one where written notes were taken. The recorded interviews were transcribed and approved by the interview persons. The abused women volunteered to be interviewed after reading a notice on The Network of Abused Women's website www.netvaerk.org.

The abused women

Interview person nr. 1 has a higher education and works as a project manager. She was subjected to physical abuse when she was younger and psychological and material abuse in her last two relationships. She has no children. Although it has been two years since the abuse, it is only recently that the woman has felt at ease. She is still fearful when she goes out in public because of the risk of meeting her abuser.

³Danish title: “Den voldsramte kvinde er en kollega – virksomhedens handlemuligheder”
Interview person no. 2 has a higher education and works as a high school teacher. She has been psychologically and sexually abused and has a child with the man. The child was also subjected to physical violence. She has not previously been in an abusive relationship. She still has many conflicts with the man and is in the middle of a court case concerning custody rights over their child.

Interview person no. 3 was a hairdresser and on welfare when she went to the women's shelter. She has been subjected to psychological abuse and left the man when the violence became physical. She has a child from a former relationship. She has not been in a violent relationship before. She has lived in several different shelters, but has gone “underground” and now lives in a summer house. She is not receiving any public benefits because she refuses to give her address for security reasons. She borrows money to get by.

The interviews were conducted both in person and as telephone interviews, depending on what was most appropriate for the woman. The interviews were a minimum of 2 hours, as the interviewees wanted to tell their stories. Although the report is based on only a few women, there is a lot of data, as the interviews were quite thorough. In this report, only data that has to do with the women's working life has been included. The women said afterwards that they were glad for the opportunity to tell their story. One of the women suggested on The Network of Abused Women's website that other women allow themselves be interviewed. This generated a few enquiries, and in the end we had more interview persons than we needed for the report. We would like to say thank you to the brave women who shared their touching stories.

The interviews were transcribed and approved by the women and then arranged by subject. The data concerning the women's working life has been separated out in order to shed light on the situation of abused women's working life. The data is systematized and arranged by subjects that cut across the interviews, and these subjects create a background for the interview materiale.

Limitations
This report focuses on domestic violence perpetrated on women over 18 years of age and the consequences of this violence for the women's work life. Therefore it does not focus on the men who are subjected to domestic violence, nor does it deal with, why men commit the abuse or the consequences of domestic violence for the abused women's children.
Definition of terms

In Denmark, violence against women is understood in terms of the UN's definition in the Beijing action plan:

any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.

The definition includes all forms of violence against women. The National Board of Social Services defines violence in the following manner:

Violence is an act or a threat that, no matter what the purpose, is meant to hurt another person’s integrity or to frighten, hurt or harm the person – no matter if the person is a child or an adult man or woman. The violence can have the same effect on other people who witness or hear the act. The violence can be a conscious act, or an act, that happens in effect. The act also transgresses society’s laws and norms⁴.

This report focuses on domestic violence understood as violence in an intimate relationship. By domestic violence we mean the abuse that takes place between current or former partners in an intimate relationship or marriage.

⁴Municipalities' preparedness in relation to violence. The National Board of Social Services, 2009
The forms of violence

Violence against women is perpetrated in different ways and can take different forms. Danish research reports show that the abuse is of a complex nature. In the report there is a distinction between five general types of abuse: physical abuse, psychological abuse, material abuse, financial abuse and sexual abuse. In reality these types of abuse are intertwined and there are often several forms of violence occurring in the same situation.

Physical Abuse
Physical abuse can include hitting, kicking, pushing, biting, shaking, choking, knife cutting, burning, the use of a weapon, etc.

Psychological abuse
Psychological abuse can be for example intimidation, insults, control or domination of another through various acts such as:

- Direct or indirect threats of kidnapping the children, throwing the woman out, committing suicide, killing the woman, always being able to find and harm the woman, abusing the children, abandoning her, destroying her job possibilities or her career, hurting or threatening to hurt loved ones, threats of being thrown out of the country (foreign women), forced deportation, playing upon fear of authorities, withholding information, threats, etc.
- Humiliation of the woman though demeaning treatment, making her feel ridiculous, minimizing physical injuries, criticism, telling her she is ugly or useless, refusing to speak to her, ignoring her, humiliating her in front of the children or others, telling her that she is crazy and should be in a psychiatric ward, convincing her that she is wrong.
- Taking control of all aspects of the woman’s life, including time, work, clothes, money, etc. Preventing her from going to work or studying, following her everywhere.
- Isolating the woman by preventing her from seeing family and friends, destroying her social contacts, locking her in or preventing her from having a job.

Material abuse
Violence against things/objects, destruction of inventar and personal property by throwing furniture, tearing clothes to pieces, forcing the woman to leave home without her things, etc.

Financial abuse
Control over the woman’s income and consumption, for example by taking her wages and giving her “pocket” money, by forcing her into debt so she will end in poverty, etc. The woman becomes more and more dependent on the man when she is subjected to financial abuse, becoming isolated without the means with which to engage in public life or to participate in social activities.

Sexual abuse
This term covers rape and attempted rape and other forms of sexual coercion. The sexual abuse is perpetrated by the partner, but the victim of these forced sexual acts can be the partner or another person.

The following sources are the background for this section: When violence happens every day– a study of male violence against women in their intimate relationships V FC Danish Centre for Research on Social Vulnerability and LOKK, 2005. Caught in violence Aalborg University, 2006. How can we help the abused family. Danish Centre for Research on Social Vulnerability, 2002.
The characteristics of domestic violence
Domestic violence is characterized by an emotional relationship and attachment between persons. There can be love, children, home, shared finances, family relations, etc. that binds the couple together. No one consciously chooses a violent relationship – domestic violence characteristically starts with small things and develops over time.

The spiral of violence
A well known way of understanding the violence is Eva Lundgren’s\(^6\) theory of the spiral of violence. Violence is understood as a process that becomes normalized over time. During the process there are several mechanisms that work individually and together\(^7\).

Phases of the process
- An act of violence. The incident is explained as an accident that will not be repeated. The woman protests, is shocked and recognizes that the act was wrong.
- Second phase occurs when the violence happens again. The woman begins to find reasons for the abuse within herself (internalization), and if the violence continues, the woman gradually loses her concept of reality and her sense of right and wrong. The same thing happens to the perpetrator. The woman attempts to adjust in order to avoid the abuse. In the end, the woman accepts the abuse as something to be expected.
- In the final phase, the man dominates the woman’s world and she loses her sense of reality. The woman loses her ability to differentiate between right and wrong, good and bad. She does everything to please so the abuse will stop. The man changes his demands constantly and in the end the women gives up believing that the violence will stop if she only adjusts. Then she simply tries to survive the abuse. The woman loses herself and is no longer the person she was\(^8\).

Strategies
The following is a description of the strategies the man and woman develop to handle the situation in an abusive relationship. The strategies are not necessarily conscious for the partners.

The man's strategies
The following strategies are characteristic for the spiral of violence:
- Controlled violence
- Isolation
- Switching between caring and abuse.

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\(^6\) Researcher at The Sociology Institute of Uppsala University

\(^7\) The report When violence happens every day— a study of male violence against women in their intimate relationships V FC Danish Centre for Research on Social Vulnerability and LOKK, 2005 presents an in depth view of the women in shelters and describes and supports the theory of the spiral of violence in violent relationships. This report does as well.

\(^8\) How can we help the abused family. Danish Centre for Research on Social Vulnerability, 2002.
Controlled violence
The violence is controlled in such a way that it often happens at home without witnesses and the man decides the degree and extent of the violence. He hits her in places that can not be seen when the woman is clothed.

Another form of controlled abuse is threats and degradation of the woman. Threats about what will happen if the woman does not do what he says, or if she does something he doesn't like. The woman's behavior can be controlled by threats. Likewise there is latent abuse which is violence that is effective because of the fear of what will happen if she does not do what he wants. The latent abuse can have an effect even after the woman has left the man. For example, the fear of going out in public and running the risk of meeting the man can control the woman's behavior whether the threat is real or not⁹.

In connection with the controlled violence, the man's understanding of the abuse can be justified by the woman not doing what she “should” do. The abuse is seen as a legitimate punishment that helps the woman find her "place", because she isn't where she should be, from his perspective. The woman tries to adjust to the man's understanding which finally becomes her own. This internalization gives the man control over the woman while the woman loses her identity and sees herself only through the man's eyes. The woman loses both her feeling of self-esteem and her judgment.

The controlled abuse can also be emotional violence which includes putting down the woman's appearance, intelligence, way of being or abilities, with the purpose of making the woman feel worthless and useless. It can also be intended to convince the woman that she is sick or "crazy" and to manipulate her through psychological games. This behavior results in the woman changing her view of herself and her self-esteem breaks down.

Isolation
Through isolation, the man refuses or denies the woman any contact with friends, family or the job market. The man isolates the woman by locking her in (robbing her of freedom of movement), thereby insuring that she can not escape. He may also prevent the woman from coming in contact with anyone by taking the phone with him. The isolation hides the abuse and makes it more difficult for others to discover and do something about it. The woman becomes more and more dependent on the man, who in the end is her only social contact. By isolating the woman, the man gets physical control over the woman and makes sure that the woman’s reference point is reduced to his view of the world. This results in the abuse being normalized. The fact that the one who hurts the woman is also the only one in the woman’s life is very destructive. The woman needs a reference point in order to understand that what she is being subjected to is wrong. If she doesn't have anything to refer to, she will in time experience the violence as normal. A part of the isolation can also include following her to and from work, reading her private mail, listening to her telephone conversations or interrogating the woman about where she has been and to whom she has spoken, etc.

⁹ When violence happens every day— a study of male violence against women in their intimate relationships V FC
Danish Centre for Research on Social Vulnerability and LOKK, 2005
Switching between care and violence
Switching between abuse and care is yet another strategy to achieve power and control. Switching between the opposite poles increases the effect of the abuse described above. The man is both the abuser and the caretaker, and the woman ends up not being able to distinguish between abuse and love. When the man is loving and does everything for the woman after he has been violent, it is possible to avoid facing the fact that it actually was the man that was the cause of the suffering. In that way they are both involved in maintaining the view of the man as caring and good instead of violent and abusive.

The woman's strategies
The following are characteristics of the woman's adjustment strategies:

- Denial or minimizing the violence
- Changing her understanding of the man's behavior
- Isolation from the outside world

Denial or minimizing the violence
In the beginning, the woman can rationalize the violence as an accident, but after a while she can not explain the violence - unless it is her own fault. The woman's limit for what she will accept disappear. The woman takes the blame for the abuse, is ashamed and rationalizes or sees the violence as a one-time event. The woman may also excuse the violence as being caused by the man's childhood or life situation which, may or may not have been difficult.

Changing her understanding of the man's behavior - from violent to normal
When the woman is broken down psychologically, it can be difficult to distinguish between normal behavior and abusive behavior. Her point of reference eventually becomes the same as the man's, who she tries to appease and submit to. The appeasing exhausts and drains the woman, who feels inadequate and that the violence is her own fault. When the man dominates her universe, the abuse becomes normalized. The women has nothing with which to compare her experiences so she could understand that what she is being subjected to is wrong. Without this, she will experience the violence as normal after a while.

Isolation from the outside world
The woman may choose to isolate herself from the outside world, because she wants to keep the abuse a secret, or because she is ashamed about being abused. She does not want to be confronted with the violence by meeting others. The woman may fear the reaction of others or of being judged negatively because she doesn't leave the man. It can sometimes feel "easier" for her to isolate herself, and she may also do it out of fear of what the man will do if she does not. The thought of abuse as a possibility can result in the woman isolating herself in order to avoid abuse. Isolation can be physical, mental and psychological, and is part of the normalization of abuse process.

Low self-esteem and weakened judgment
Throughout the whole process the woman gradually loses her self confidence and her self-esteem. The woman develops a negative self-image and becomes emotionally dependent on the man. This depletes the woman's strength, and appeasement can exhaust the woman so much that she does not have the energy or strength to change the situation. A consequence of the spiral of violence is then the breaking down of self-worth. The quicker the woman gets out of the relationship the better. It is easier to break out in the first phase before the violence has been normalized and
internalised. If the woman has first normalized the abuse, it makes no sense to ask about why she does not leave the man\textsuperscript{10}.

When the violence is normalized and internalized, the woman is no longer an actor but a victim. The woman no longer has the strength to choose for herself, but remains in the relationship and is dependent on outside help in order to escape from it. It is very important to help her to see what is happening to her, and to support her in finding the strength to change her situation\textsuperscript{11}.

\textsuperscript{10} Caught in violence, Aalborg University, 2006.

\textsuperscript{11} When violence happens every day— a study of male violence against women in their intimate relationships V FC Danish Centre for Research on Social Vulnerability and LOKK, 2005. The section is also based on the following sources : LOKK adult statistics 2008, Caught in violence. Aalborg University, 2006, Lundgren, Eva, 2001: ‘Normalizing violence: Two parties— Two strategies’. ROKS, How can we help the abused family. Danish Centre for Research on Social Vulnerability, 2002.
Extent and characteristics of violence in Denmark

In Denmark it is possible to give a general/broad description of the character and extent of the violence though data from the national violence database. The first report based on the statistics came in 2004. This report was followed up in 2007, so it is possible to follow the development of the violence. The statistics in the violence database are, as mentioned in the introduction, the official source which the government uses as an indicator of whether it is achieving its goals in relation to reducing the violence.

The national violence database is based on several data sources such as:

- Public surveys based on interviews or questionnaires which reveal the women’s experiences with abuse. This includes the country-wide health and disease research project from 2000 and 2005 by the National Institute of Public Health, The Danish National Police victim reports of 95/96 and 2005, the international report on violence against women IVAWS 2003, DANCOS’ Danish National Cohorte Study, Health and sickness report from 1986 and after.
- The data register of the Central Crime Register, The Danish National Police's Report and Victim Register, The Cause of Death Registry, The National Patient Registry, Statistics Denmark's Integrated Database for Work-related Research (IDA), The Cause of Death Registry in the National Board of Health, the police administrative system (POL-SAS) and Statistics Denmark, all of which give an overview of the violence that is known and registered by the authorities. The annual statistics from shelters and rape crises centers have also provided information.

There is a difference between the extent of violence when it is looked at through the data register covering the more serious forms of violence which are reported to the police or that result in hospitalization, then when looked at though the self-reported violence that covers both the lesser and more serious physical violence, sexual abuse and assaults that are based on the women’s own experiences of the events and abuse. The data from the shelters reveals a group of women who are especially socially disadvantaged.

In combination, these sources create a varied picture of violence against women. The different data sources concerning violence against women cover non-physical violence only in a minor way. We can therefore say that the extent of the violence against women is a matter of great uncertainty, as the statistics do not give a complete picture of the non-physical violence. Many abused women are not registered in the system because they do not seek help, but manage on their own or use their networks. The following official statistics should therefore be seen as minimum numbers, as they only cover the known and registered instances of domestic violence.

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12 Research reports that ask about different forms of violence, tend to uncover a greater amount of violence than reports that only ask about being subjected to physical violence.
The national violence database
The national violence database shows the following, based on the different sources in 2007/2008:

**Extent of violence**
- Approx. 70,000 women in the age group 16-64 years old – or just under 4 out of 100 adult women – are annually subjected to one type of violence.
- Approx. 32,000 women experience severe physical violence annually.
- The extent of domestic violence has decreased from 42,000 to 28,000 women that are annually subjected to violence from a current or former partner.
- 8,900 men are subjected to domestic violence.
- Around 20-22,000 children grow up in a family with domestic violence.

Based on the data register and public report.

**Murder, hospital contact and police reports**
- Approx. 25 women over the age of 15 years are murdered every year in Denmark.
- 6,000 women contact a casualty ward as a result of abuse injuries yearly. Emergency room contact has risen from just under 5,000 in 2006 to 6,000 in 2005. The increase is largest among younger women.
- 60 % of all injuries among women with hospital contact occurred at home, and just under 40 % of these injuries are localized to the head and neck - which is characteristic for domestic violence.
- Just under 5,500 women report violence or threats yearly.
- Domestic violence seems to be relatively more severe than other forms of violence, as this type of police-reported crime requires emergency room contact more frequently than other forms of violence.

Based on data register

**Sexual abuse and rape**
- It is estimated that approx. 26,000 women under the age of 60 experience forced sex yearly. The frequency is highest among young women.
- Among younger women aged 16-29, the violence was perpetrated by a former partner, and among women aged 40-49, it was primarily perpetrated by a current partner.
- From 2002-2006, there were an average of 400 police-reported rapes and attempted rapes a year reported by women over the age of 15. The majority of the reports were regarding young women.
- There is no increase in the number of police reports, but an increase in the number of women who contact rape crisis centers. In 2006, 330 women contacted the rape crisis center at Copenhagen University Hospital, in contrast to 234 in 2001, an increase of 30 %. The center in Århus Hospital was contacted by 130 women in 2006, in contrast to 105 in 2001, an increase of just under 25 %. About 70 % of these assaults were reported to the police in 2006, a slight increase compared to 2005.
- In half of the cases, the attacker was a stranger or someone only slightly known to the victim.
- 10 % of the perpetrators were current or former lovers or husbands.
Approx. 40% of the perpetrators were a friend or an acquaintance.

Based on data from the rape crisis centers, public surveys and the data register

**Work-related violence**
- Work-related violence against women has risen from 10% to 20% from 2000 to 2005.
- Just under 15,000 women were subjected to violence at work.

Based on a public survey

**Victims**
- Young women are six times as likely as middle-aged women to be subjected to violence.
- Domestic violence occurs more often amongst women over 30 years old.
- 2/3 of the women who reported domestic violence to the police have children.
- Married women have the lowest risk of being subjected to violence, while women living with a partner have a greater risk of severe violence than both married and single women.
- Single women have a three times greater risk of some form of physical violence than married women.
- There is no clear connection between length of education and being abused.
- Women who are victims of violence drink alcohol more often than non-abused women, but do not have a larger self-reported medicine use.
- Abused women report more often than non-abused women of:
  - long term marriage problems
  - lack of influence at work
  - childhood problems
  - psychological problems
  - suicide attempts
  - anxiety and depression
  - general fatigue and stress symptoms

Significantly more women who were subjected to severe physical violence last year (2005), regard their health as being poor or very poor.

Based on the registered data, public surveys and shelter statistics

The numbers above are based on the following sources:

**Summary of the key numbers from the national database**

The statistics show that approx. 70,000 women experience violence every year, and that at least 28,000 women are subjected to domestic violence every year. There is a decrease in violent

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injuries as a result of domestic violence, but an increase in violence-related emergency room contacts. Work-related violence against women has risen from 10% to 20%, which means that in 2005 just under 15,000 women were subjected to violence at the workplace.

The numbers also show that there is no clear connection between length of education and being the victim of physical violence.

Abused women's health is poor, both physically and mentally. Compared to the rest of the population, these women have more long-term marriage problems, childhood problems, psychological problems, suicide attempts, anxiety and depression. The women are also plagued by fatigue and stress symptoms. The abused women report a lack of influence at their workplaces and have more problems collaborating with their colleagues.

Annual statistics from shelters 2008

There are 45 shelters spread out over the whole country where abused women can seek refuge. 40 of these shelters are organized under LOKK\(^1\). LOKK collects information about the women in the shelters through questionnaires. LOKK's adult statistics for 2008 are based on the answers from 1,476 women who lived in a shelter in 2008.

During 2008, the number of contacts to the shelters increased by 14%. 15,256 inquiries were registered at 37 shelters. 79% of the contacts were by telephone and 20% were in person. 51% of the inquiries were about available space, and 48% of the contacts were requests for advice/consulting.

53% of the women who contacted a shelter about available space were given the opportunity to move into the shelter – 3% more than in 2007. 3,656 women were referred to an option other than moving into the shelter, primarily due to lack of available space.

- **In 2008, 89% of the women in shelters had been subjected to abuse.** For 73% of these cases, the abuser was their current husband or common-law husband, while an ex-spouse/housemate or former boyfriend is responsible for the abuse in 18%.
- **40% of the women in the shelters were born in a country other than Denmark.**

Among immigrant women, the violence in every fourth case was perpetrated by an ethnically Danish man. The violence was therefore most often perpetrated by a Danish man.

\(^1\)LOKK is an interest organisation whose general purpose is to put focus on, and strengthen the work of the individual shelter to prevent and fight physical and mental abuse of women and their children. www.LOKK.dk
LOKK’s questionnaire research also reveals the types of violence to which the women have been subjected, as well as the frequency of the assaults.

**Types of violence**

- **76 % of the women had been subjected to physical violence during 2008. In 2007 it was 96 %.
- Of the women who experienced physical violence, 87 % had been pushed, scratched, shaken, hit with a flat hand or the likes.
- 56 % of the women had been kicked, beaten with a fist or with an object.
- 40 % had been thrown into furniture, walls, down stairs or the like.
- 37 % had been subjected to choking attempts, attacked with a knife or with a firearm.
- 7 % had been subjected to other forms of physical violence such as having arms, legs/collarbone broken, being spitted at, hair pulled or cut off, been burned, restrained, kicked, stepped on, stalked, attempted thrown over a balcony, tied up, held down, whipped, dragged down stairs, things thrown at, thrown out of their home in underwear, or forced to witness violence against a child/children.
- 15 % had been sexually abused.
- 28 % had experienced destruction of property. These include smashed furniture and staircase, destruction of personal items, break-ins, theft of clothes, passport, or cell phones, and the loss of an apartment due to neighbor complaints.
- 28 % of the women had been subjected to financial control such as losing their right to decide over their finances, forced loan-taking, refused money, the partner not contributing to the common expenses, bank account being emptied.
- **94 % of the women had experienced psychological violence such as threats, domination, control, put-downs, humiliation, isolation, stalking, etc.**

The women had experienced one, several, or all of the above types of violence.

**Frequency of violence**

- 13 % had been subjected to physical violence, sexual violence and other forms of control and expressions of power once, while 34 % had experienced violence many times a month. For 53 %, the violence occurred several times a month or daily.
- 83 % experienced psychological violence at least once a week, several times a week or daily. 15 % experienced psychological violence several times a month, monthly or less often, while 2 % had been subjected to psychological violence a single time.
- 54 % of the women had been subjected to violence for at least three years before their present shelter visit and 20 % of the women had been subjected to violence at least five years prior to their present shelter stay.
- Every fourth woman had been subjected to violence for less than a year and 23 % of the women had been subjected to violence for two years before their shelter stay in 2008.
- 34 % had, apart from the current violence, also been abused in one to several earlier relationships.
- 58 % had been to a shelter before
**Education and connection to labor market**

- Every fourth woman (25%) worked during her shelter stay.
- 11% received unemployment benefits or sick pay. Many women were on sick leave during their stay at the shelter.
- 32% received welfare benefits or were in job training. This especially applied for younger women between 18-39 years old and women suffering from long-term illness (81%) who were receiving welfare/job-training.
- 7% reported something else as their source of income. This could be maternity-leave, no income, flexibility-job or self employment. Some attempted to support themselves through loans, savings, parents or children.
- 52% married or cohabiting women were working, while only 30% single, divorced or widowed women had a job.
- In the shelters there were more who received welfare benefits than were in employment.
- 53% had either not completed primary school or had primary school as their only education.

**Summary of statistics from shelters**

The newest statistics from the shelters show that 89% of the women staying at shelters have been subjected to domestic violence. 94% report that they have been the victims of psychological violence and 76% have been subjected to physical violence. There has been a 20% reduction in the number of women who have been subjected to physical violence. Over half of the women were subjected to violence at least once a week, several times a week or daily. Over half of the women were subjected to violence at least three years and 20% had been victimized for over five years before their shelter stay. 58% of the women have repeated visits. The women's connection to the labor market is weak, as only one out of four are working while 11% receive unemployment benefits or sick pay. 32% receive welfare or are in job training. That means that there are more women who are receiving welfare benefits than are in employment. Over half of the women in the shelters have not completed primary school or have primary school as their only education.

The statistics from the shelters show that abused women have a low labor market connection. The report "When violence happens every day– a study of male violence against women in their intimate relationships" 2005 documents how violence can be part of what makes the women socially vulnerable and marginalized. The lower connection to the labor market influences the women's financial situation and makes the women even more marginalized by infringing on their social possibilities, future and their ability to be part of a social network at work. The report also shows that unskilled women, single mothers and women without Danish citizenship staying at shelters have the highest risk of being marginalized on one or more areas of life. The report's results point to the importance of an effort to insure the abused women maintain a connection to the labor market as this has both a personal, human and financial costs.

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15 Marginalization is described as "an involuntary, incomplete participation in one or more of the areas of life where there are normative expectations prevailing from society's side of participation such as employment, education, leisure time activities, family and social networks, having a place to live, - these are all such life areas". "When violence happens every day", 2005
Abused women's work life

This section focuses exclusively on the abused women's working life.

When women are subjected to domestic violence, it influences their whole life – and thereby also their work life. All reports point out that domestic violence can have extensive consequences. The women are influenced physically, psychologically and socially and have both decreased well-being, quality of life and health.

Data from the shelters show that abused women risk being rejected from the labor market and of being socially marginalized because of their lack of or weak attachment to the labor market. The women in the shelters are not representative of the general population of women in relation to their workplace attachment, but represent a special, socially burdened group. As a group, the women in shelters represent 2,000 out of the estimated 28,000 women who are abused each year. The statistics from the national database show, however, that abused women tend to be unemployed more often than the general population. One of the reasons for this may be that abused women take too much sick leave.

The National Board of Social Services is currently preparing a report about abused women's work life. The report is based on answers from 162 abused women and shows among other things that out of the 162, only 44 of these women had a job at the time that the report was made. 84 women had worked sometime during the last three years prior to the report. Of the 84 women, 40 % had been steadily employed, while 60 % had been periodically unemployed. 24 % of the women who had been working during the last three years had lost their jobs – either by getting fired or by quitting. 83 % of the women experienced that the after-effects of the violence made it difficult for them to keep a job and 30 % experienced extra sick leave because of the abuse. If the situation for abused women is not addressed, these women run the risk of missing work because of sickness, and they also risk being rejected from the labor market, thereby losing their income and their life foundation.

Domestic violence can therefore result in being fired because of absenteeism. If the situation is handled properly at the workplace, there is a large hidden employment reserve to be retrieved in the absentee statistics caused by domestic violence.

The report now being prepared by The National Board of Social Services 2009 also shows that abused women develop psychological and social problems that influence their contribution at work. 35 % experience difficulty finishing their work assignments as a result of the violence. And 77 % of the women who have worked during the last three years, have experienced the perpetrator extend his abuse to their work situation for example in the form of: putting down their work,

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17 Newsletter A4, no. 41 / 2006, published by The Danish Confederation of Trade Unions

18 Newsletter A4, no. 41 / 2006. Report from The National Board of Social Services, 2009 (not yet released)
jealousy, control of wages and harassment/abuse at the workplace. 55% of the women are worried about what their colleagues think. The future report from The National Board of Social Services supports this report's results and conclusions.

The statistics from the national database show that abused women have bad health, poor quality of life, less influence at work and strained relationships with their colleagues. The women can be outside, even though they are inside – and that influences the work environment. Karin Helweg-Larsen thinks that it is important for abused women to come out in the open at work, so their colleagues do not think that they are simply strange and therefore isolate or bully them.

The National Board of Social Services' report of 2006 on the work life of abused women shows that women hide the violence at work, and that workplaces are in doubt about what they should do if they suspect that an employee is being subjected to domestic violence. The consequences of this uncertainty can be that the issue is never addressed, and this will affect the women's health, quality of life, cooperation skills, working climate, effectiveness and productivity, as well as the overall work environment.

**Private problem vs. social problem**

One perspective on the domestic violence issue is that there has been a shift in the perception of domestic violence from being a personal problem to being seen as a societal problem which can be addressed. That is according to Karin Helweg-Larsen, who points out that there has been an increase in the number of reports of violence from women. She explains that the family was previously seen as a private unit, and emphasizes that it is only 10 years since Denmark prohibited parents from hitting their children. The prevailing attitude, according to Helweg-Larsen, was that what parents did to their children was their own business. She explains:

Likewise, if a colleague can handle her work, it is of no consequence what happens to her at home. But the problem is that she can not handle her work very well if she is abused. And therefore it is in the interest of the workplace.

Others are of the opinion that movement has been in the other direction, and that the family unit is becoming increasingly closed. Some companies regard domestic violence not as a private matter, but as a matter relating to the colleague's quality of life, the work environment and the costs that are connected to it. Crucial to quality of life is the woman's health, which is poor because she is abused. This results in company expenditures in the form of sick leave for shorter or longer periods, and the woman's poor well-being limits both her quality of life and her opportunities for self expression.

The report from The Danish Centre for Research on Social Vulnerability 2006 shows that having a job gives a significant sense of purpose to these women. It gives them the possibility to take care of themselves and to be a good role model for their children.


21 Discussed by the project's reference group.

22 LOKK 2007.
The interview persons in this report emphasize that having a job means the opportunity to be independent, and at the same time it offers security and social contacts.

Some abused women lose their network and circle of friends because they are isolated – for them the workplace is their last link to a social network. If colleagues, trade union representatives and employers can tackle a domestic violence situation, they can help a woman to free herself from the violence and in that way make a difference for her, insuring improved health, fewer sick days and a better work environment\(^2\). Not to mention making a difference to the company’s bottom line.

**Problems at the workplace**
Problems with domestic violence can show themselves in the following ways in the working lives of women:

- The woman hides bruises and swelling with scarves, extra clothes and make up
- The woman can have difficulty going to work the day after being abused
- The woman is plagued by insomnia because she is kept awake or is repeatedly awakened during the night. The woman is too tired to come to work or to do her work properly.
- The woman has problems concentrating, learning or focusing on her work
- The woman can often forget or cancel appointments
- The woman is controlled and frequently disturbed at work by telephone or email contact from the partner
- The woman is isolated or she isolates herself. The woman can stay and talk with others after work, but she does not participate in social events
- The woman defends or makes excuses for her partner’s behavior
- The partner follows the woman to and from work
- The partner seeks her out at work and threatens or bothers her
- The partner can destroy the woman’s transportation possibilities so she can not get to work on time
- The woman suffers from insomnia/sleep disturbances and extreme fatigue
- The woman has many sick days
- The woman suffers headaches and stomach pain
- The woman suffers from anxiety and nightmares
- The woman suffers from sadness, mood swings and outbursts of anger
- The woman’s self-respect is gradually undermined
- The woman is increasing vulnerable and depressed

The National Board of Social Services, 2006

The National Board of Social Services' report 2006 shows that the violence lasts longer than the women’s relationship.

The above mentioned suffering in the women's working lives, continues to influence them also after the abuse. The latest report from The National Board of Social Services 2009 shows that 64 %

\(^2\) Newsletter A4, no. 41/ 2006, LO
of these women have problems concentrating at work, and that 71% suffer from fatigue. The interviewees in this report describe how their behavior and ability to function at work has been affected:

- Often on sick leave
- Difficulty concentrating, thinking and remembering
- Depressed, reclusive, vulnerable
- Avoids conflict, evasive
- Apologetic and seeking to please
- Introverted, retreats into herself, doesn't have the energy to talk to colleagues
- Tells less and less about herself
- In denial – defends the man
- Very tired and suffering from headaches
- Flash backs of the violence while at work
- Stress
- Loss of self esteem

Work as a stress factor

An interviewee told how she spent her entire working day communicating with her former boyfriend so that she got behind in her work assignments:

*I covered up how far behind I was – some times I was up all night trying to sneak in some work after he fell asleep. So I worked hard, but I could never get ahead, - on the contrary, I was getting more and more behind. I spent my work day writing text messages to him, answering his emails or talking to him on the phone – he’d go berserk if I didn’t answer. When I was off, I had to start working at home in order to complete my assignments. It became a question for him of whether I put my work before him and didn’t want to be with him. In the end he asked me to give up my career so I didn’t have to work at all. I considered it, just to get some peace.*

*Interview person 1*

She said that her partner had no understanding of the fact that she had to work when she was off, representing this as her rejection of him and as proof that she would rather work than be together with him. She ended by having to get up while her husband slept, working though the night and then going directly to work – incoherent from lack of sleep.

Several of the interviewees had been interrupted by text messages and emails during their work time, which meant that they had difficulty doing their work properly. For these women, there was a tendency for work to be a stress factor.

An interviewee said that in the end she couldn't work and she was forced to go on welfare.

*Finally I didn't have the energy for anything. I received welfare because in the end I didn't have the strength to work. I tried to work, but I had the telephone on me all the time. I couldn't concentrate or forget the cell phone. I go out and cut elderly people's hair.*
Normally I love to talk and hear their life stories – but I wasn’t attentive, just lost in my own thoughts. Interview person 3.

Broken down with stress

An interviewee told how she ended up not being able to come to work and broke down from stress. She did not tell her workplace about the violence, so they think her stress is work-related:

I needed some peace and in reality I wasn’t competent at work. I couldn’t handle both - being abused and a full-time job. I really needed a time out, which I got when I had a stress breakdown. But I didn’t tell anyone – they think the stress is work-related.

Interview person 1

Both interviewees have either been forced to give up their job or report in sick. They both feel that abused women should be given some time-off for a while and that workplaces should accept that domestic violence means that the woman may not always be able to deliver at work.

Offer these women a less demanding job – they are not at a full capacity. They can not be at work 8 hours every day. But it is important to be connected to a workplace – you have to have something to get out to daily. You have to take care of yourself in the long run. But you react psychologically in different ways and some may break down at a later time.

Interview person 3

Work as a survival factor

One of the abused women has an approach and an understanding of work that stands out from the others. She used work – in this case her studies, - as a means of survival in the situation. She delved into the books and forgot time and place, – at least for a while.

I was a student, I buried myself in this and used it to survive. I have to have something in which to immerse myself into, otherwise I would begin to think too much about it. I can’t use sports, but have to immerse my mind in something. It works for me. Interview person 2.

The woman also said that her current work reminds her daily that she is not psychologically ill, as her ex-husband claims. She believes that the job is helping to normalize her and that it makes a big difference.

The above shows very different ways of handling working life as an abused woman. From breaking down/becoming sick because it is not possible to handle the work, to using work as a tool to forget the abuse and create a “free space”.

All the interviewees agree that it is important for abused women either to be in the labor market, or to be getting an education, but they point out that some women do not have the energy to do what it takes to get or keep a job when they are abused. The interviewees think that abused
women should be offered help. Either the workplace should keep the women on the job or help them, or the social workers/employment centers should help them to get into the labor market again.

Some women cannot work at the same levels as others for a period of time. It may take time for the woman to come back to work and it can be difficult for her to handle the work load while she is being abused. The interviewed women would on the one hand like to have time and peace to get over the abuse, and on the other hand they would like to work and get on with their lives. Both the report from The National Board of Social Services 2006 and this report show that the violence can continue after the break up and doesn't necessarily stop even if the woman moves. Consequently the woman is often subjected to threats, harassment and accusations. All of which are a burden on the woman's work life.

The following quote shows how extensive the abuse can be – also in the time after the break up.

> It was almost two years before I was left alone – he refused to accept that I wanted to leave him. He called and sent text messages all the time – he begged and begged for me to take him back. That's how the first year went. Then he began to show up and follow me around. He is now blocked so he can't send emails anymore and I have a new telephone number now. I had finally closed all channels – erased him, his family and the friends we had together on Facebook. I was still stressed and didn't dare go out because of the fear of meeting him. I still feel unsafe when I am out and about, and I avoid the places I know he frequents. I want my freedom back. Interview person 1.

Signs that women are abused

According to one of the experts interviewed for this report, it is not immediately possible to point out the women who are subjected to violence. Apart from the fact that they do not thrive, there are no clear characteristics. The tendency is that the women are not as badly beaten as before, but there is more psychological violence and restriction of movement. Women who are subjected to psychological violence can overreact to reprimands or criticism and isolate themselves.

> They, for example, are not allowed to go out, while the men are. This is a form of terror that does not leave marks on the body. It may, however, be possible to notice whether they react differently to reprimands. If there is an exaggerated reaction, this can be a sign of someone who is already experiencing a lot of bad things. But it can not be concluded that because two signs are present, a person might be a victim of violence, while four signs denote certainty. Maybe the clearest sign of violence is that the women isolate themselves and have an exaggerated or strange reaction to criticism. Interview with Karin Helweg-Larsen
The abused women who participated in this report do not think that it is easy to recognize an abused woman at work. But they emphasize that being reserved and isolated are characteristics. *It is difficult to identify an abused woman. If she has been in several violent relationships, she may simply be stand-offish and not very social to begin with – so there aren’t any signs of abuse that suddenly appear.*

*Interview person 2.*

One of the experts said that abused women can find it difficult to say no in relation to work assignments:

*The women's working lives are often greatly influenced by the fact that they are abused. They can be very vulnerable and anxious and do not have the ability to say no and clearly express that I cannot handle this work.*

*Interview with Karin Helweg-Larsen*

**Not only focus on the abused women, but also on the abusers**

One of the abused women also thinks that the women are difficult to spot. She emphasizes that it is not only a question of picking out the abused women at work; it is equally a question of spotting the men who are perpetrating the abuse.

*What about finding the men that use violence? They maybe under the influence of alcohol, have a short fuse. They can be sarcastic, manipulating, aggressive, controlling. They praise the woman at first and charm their way in so as to gain complete control. The men are also in denial and have a distorted view of the situation. They lie and stir up fights with people. They are judgmental towards others, often defensive and feeling attacked. And they have a different sense of humor – no sense of humor, if you laugh at them anyway. They lack self irony.*... *Interview person 3.*

**Need for knowledge and information**

This report shows that there is a need for knowledge at workplaces about domestic violence and its short and long term consequences. There is also a need to inform about how to handle a situation as a manager, trade union representative or colleague. In this report the abused women describe their experiences at work with both insecurity and fear of getting involved in relation to the phenomenon of domestic violence.

**Information**

All the people interviewed agree that the workplace should provide information about what it means to be abused and the possibilities for seeking help. Two of the women had not regarded themselves as abused because the violence was not physical. They wanted information that makes clear that it is in fact violence that they have been subjected to, as well as a website/telephone number where they could get help. One of the interviewees said that there is a lack of folders about this subject:

*We lack small folders – they should be laying around everywhere. I didn’t know if I had called the right place when I called the shelter. I hadn’t been beaten, but I had*
had enough. You don’t need pills for this. So I think there is a lack of information about what it is and what the possibilities for help are. 

Interview person 2.

Wondering whether she is the one at fault
All the interviewees had thoughts about the violence being their own fault. All the women have wondered if they were sick, or if there was something wrong with them.

I was also in doubt about whether I was sick – maybe a folder could confirm that you aren’t sick by giving information about the symptoms one gets og how one reacts – that it can be violence even if he doesn’t hit you physically. It is so good to know that my reactions were normal. And write threatened or vulnerable on the front instead of abused. I didn’t see myself as abused – that breaks you down psychologically.

Interview person 2.

This interviewee thinks that it would be a good idea to provide informative folder which takes into consideration the fact that the women do not necessarily see themselves as victims of violence when they are subjected to psychological violence. The interviewee suggests using the word exposed/subjected or threatened rather than abused.

The doubt about whether it is the women themselves who are sick is important to these women.

I had not been abused before and I didn't know if I was responsible for it. He was badly treated as a child and I was understanding and felt sorry for him. I felt I had to give him more. She goes on to say: The violence started in small ways when we moved together and escalated when we had children. He was so sweet and caring in the beginning, but he became more and more jealous and aggressive.

Interview person 3.

I suggested that we should talk to someone about it, but he refused to admit that it had anything to do with him. He thought, that I was sick, and in the end I had no idea what was up or down and I thought the whole thing was my fault. Interview person 2.

He pulled me down little by little. I had a lot of power, I thought, but I ended up appeasing and conforming to his wishes. Finally I couldn't recognize myself, I wasn't myself, but a shadow of who I once was. I tried to please at work too – that cost me something, too. Interview person 1.

I began to wonder and think: was he really right? It was like having a net wrapped around you and getting caught in it. You don’t notice until you are trapped in it. I thought: Is this wrong? And I asked friends and family. They said he wasn’t completely normal, but I wouldn't see it and I made excuses for him. Interview person 3.

The women hide the violence and fear the reactions of those around them
One of the characteristics of domestic violence is the woman's denial and defense of the partner. The woman hides the violence and hopes that it will stop. She believes she is responsible for it and is ashamed of being abused. The women may hide the violence behind a facade, for example because she doesn’t want to be seen as weak. Abused women have different ideas about how colleagues will react to the fact that they are abused, and these ideas are a barrier to telling anyone about the violence.
Fear of people's prejudices and reactions
The women are ashamed of themselves and think it is embarrassing to be abused. They have an unrealistic picture of the situation and hope that the man will change, if they just try harder, love more or change themselves. The woman chooses to believe that the man will not do it anymore and believe it is their own fault. Some women do not leave the man because they are afraid of being alone or because they are afraid of what the man will do to them if they leave him. The women end up perceiving the violence as normal, or they are tired, drained, lack strength and fear what will become of them. One interviewee said that it was embarrassing to admit that she had made the wrong choice, but when you have made your bed, you must lie in it:

It was embarrassing to admit that it was the wrong decision - because we moved in together after just two months. I believed at the time if you made your be, you must lie in it – now that I had moved in with him. Interview person 2.

Another interviewee did not tell the workplace about the violence at home, because she thought it was embarrassing and she feared what they might think of her:

It was embarrassing enough to come down and not be able to finish the assignments I said could do. I didn’t dare to say anything at work – what would they think of me?
Interview person 1.

Choices and responsibility
One interviewee said it is difficult to ignore there is a current focus on choosing and creating your own life - a life neither based on traditions or limited possibilities. The dominating philosophy is that everyone has the opportunity to create the life they desire. This gives the individual person responsibility for making the right choice, and it gives the woman the feeling that she has chosen the violence and has therefore confirmed her guilt. Two of the interviewees said that it is embarrassing to acknowledge having chosen such a thing, admitting it and standing by it. But as one of the women points out:

I didn't choose it consciously – I was in love and didn't see it coming. He was wonderful in the beginning – I was definitely better at focusing on my own bad judgment and choices instead of looking at him as the problem. Interview person 2.

One of the experts thinks that abused women are victims, but that they also have responsibility - even though it is difficult to accept.

A lot of people have been subjected to bad things in their childhood, but you get some advantages, too, making believe that you are a victim all the time. We shouldn’t just nurse the women – we can make them strong, empower them, and make them able to take care of themselves. In the end it is their choice to stay in a violent relationship or not, but it is a difficult choice. It is a choice that is so difficult because it also involves children and financial questions as well as a fear of retaliation. And there is also love involved, so we shouldn’t forget that at least 1/3 go back to the man. And it is not just a matter of “convenience”. It is also, because there was a reason why they moved in together – there was also something good. Interview with Karin Helweg-Larsen.
We should also remember that violent men can also be more than just violent. The men can also be nice, and you can get praise after they have been bad to you. There is a secondary gain, not to be forgotten. There may be a kind of symbiosis between the victim and the abuser. We who are not victim-minded can have difficulty understanding it – that you don’t react the first time you are hit or put down. Say clearly no and set a limit and act on it if someone crosses it. But some women are brought up to submit to unreasonable things and have seen this in their own families. 

Interview with Karin Helweg-Larsen.

The abused women think and fear that colleagues will say that they should leave the man, and don’t understand if she doesn’t do so. But it is difficult for the women to break free and many end up staying with the man or going back to him again after a while. The man often promises to stop his violence, and the women choose to believe it. The women in the report think there is a lack of understanding for why it is so difficult for the women to break off with the man. The National Board of Social Services report from 2006 shows that some women see themselves as being indirectly weak or “asking for it”. The woman can experience the reactions as an attack on her judgment and choice of husband and end up defending the man. Or they explain away or repress the violence and hold on to the good moments. 

It does not happen to well-educated women (or our employees)

One of the women said that she met prejudices about abused women in the form of people believing that it is only uneducated women at the bottom of society who are subjected to domestic violence. If well-educated women are the victims of domestic violence, it is their own fault because they should know better. She said:

I was told by his lawyer that you cannot be a university graduate and be abused. If you are well-educated and are the victim of domestic violence, then it is your own fault and you should know better, because you are smarter and have more resources. Same women says more: My psychologist told me that the more highly educated the man is, the more subtle are his methods. He is better at the psychological game.

Interview person 2.

The myth that only women at the bottom of society are subjected to violence can also show its self at the workplace, when employers don’t think that their employees could be the target group for domestic violence. This is of course a mistake. Domestic violence can strike in all levels of society.

The importance of colleagues

The National Board of Social Services’ report from 2006 shows that colleagues play an important role for the abused women and this is supported by the interviews done for this report. Colleagues are the ones who are closest in daily life and they often have a feeling for how others are doing. Their reactions mean a lot - they can be of great help and support, and can help the woman break free of the violence. But the woman’s relationship to her colleagues can change if the woman is abused, and some abused women do not always experience understanding and support from colleagues.

The woman changes and “loses” her self

One of the interviewees told how she changed when she first got involved in the relationship:
I was not so smiling, yeah, a shadow of myself and I closed off. I didn't call my friends when he was here. I hung up the phone when he was home because he became jealous and I couldn't take it. He made it sound like it was more important for me to talk to my friends than to be with him. So I felt guilty about taking time from him to talk to others. I was about to give up my network because I couldn't deal with anything else. It was easier not to have them in my life. Interview person 3.

The relationship between colleagues changes
The report from The National Board of Social Services (2006) shows that relationships at a workplace can change when a colleague is subjected to domestic violence. The interviews that were done for this report show that the women can change and have difficulty being part of the social network at work because they are abused.

You find it difficult to be with your colleagues if there is something hidden or forbidden. Interview with Karin Helweg-Larsen.

One of the interviewees hid the violence from her colleagues and withdrew into herself. Her colleagues withdrew from her also.

My colleagues withdrew and left me alone. It was fine for me because I didn't have the energy for them. Some asked me if I was ok – I convinced them that I was, but I was a big mess inside. Interview person 1.

The National Board of Social Services' report from 2006 describes how colleagues can experience the abused woman as a burden and become irritated when she has to go to court. In this report there is, on the other hand a description of flexibility that allows the woman to get time off in order to go to appointments without anyone getting irritated with her. Her work hours are planned so she does not come home late out of concern for her children. Everyone at work is very understanding about this.

The role of shop stewards/trade union representatives
All interviews as well as The National Board of Social Services’ report (2006) show that it is a good idea to create awareness among trade union representatives that will enable them to put violence on the agenda and give them knowledge about domestic violence and how to handle it. None of the interviewed women used their shop stewards in relation to being abused. One woman said that the union representative was sick, but that all the colleagues take care of each other, so she hasn't missed it. Another woman said that she did not contact her representative because she thought it was too embarrassing to admit to. The last woman stressed that the union representative is not necessarily someone you see and refer to on a daily basis, so we should focus on raising everyone's awareness about domestic violence.

It depends on the person, whether you want to share something with them or not. If the union representative is not a person who can get you to be open, then it becomes a bit difficult. If they don't have a lot of contact, it can take a long time just getting the contact and getting the woman to be open. Abused women are closed, in denial and protective of the man. Interview person 3.
The role of the workplace

In 2005 Amnesty International and The Danish Center for Research on Social Vulnerability examined how 28 large Danish companies, municipalities and institutions handle the problem of domestic violence. The report showed that even though half of the companies had experienced cases of domestic violence, none of the companies had a policy on the issue.24

The National Board of Social Services' report 2006 shows that despite the significance for the abused women, there is no knowledge or understanding among colleagues, union representatives or leaders of the women's reactions and the problems that follow. Nor do they know what to do, if they suspect that a colleague is being subjected to abuse at home. And the subject is taboo and difficult to handle.

In the municipalities' 2009 action plan in relation to violence, it is mentioned that the coming report on women's work life from The National Board of Social Services will show that workplaces need knowledge about the possibilities and solutions for the individual women.

HK Denmark (a trade union for clerical and commercial employees, amongst others) has done research among its members about abused women's working lives anno 2009 that shows that 86% of employers do not deal with domestic violence. The report shows that 77% of the abused union members have not received help at work and that 48% of the employees do not know what signals they should be aware of in relation to an abused colleague. 41% do not feel prepared to help an abused colleague.25

This report shows that it is a good idea to discuss which policies can be put into action at the workplace in order to support the employees and to insure their safety. Being able to identify domestic violence at work, informing the women of the possibilities for help that the workplace has to offer and giving a clear message in relation to the risk of being fired, can all help give the women a sense of security and safety. That the workplace delivers a clear message on how they view domestic violence, because the risk of getting fired is important to the interviewed women – especially if she cannot handle her work for a while because she is traumatized. The interview persons find it crucial that the workplace takes a social responsibility, emphasizing that if the workplace will help the women, it can actually also help attract and retain the work force because it provides security.26

Being told that you won't get fired is really nice and knowing that you have support and understanding – that makes a tremendous difference.

24 Press release, April 19, 2007, Amnesty International


Summary of the research results

Domestic violence is a serious problem in Denmark – it is estimated that at least 28,000 women yearly are victims of domestic violence. The actual number of battered women is surrounded by a great deal of uncertainty, as many women hide the violence and do not tell anyone about it. Although there is a decrease in partner violence in Denmark, violence against women in general has increased. It is estimated that 70,000 women are victims of violence every year. While there has been a decrease in violence-related injuries as a result of domestic violence, there has been an increase in violence-related hospital visits. This report finds that although there has been a decrease in physical violence, there are no statistics about psychological violence, except from the shelters, where 94% of the women were victims of psychological abuse in 2008. There has been a doubling of the work-related violence from 10% to 20%. Just under 15,000 women were abused at work in 2005.

Low level of workplace contact
The statistics also show that victims of domestic violence are more often without work than the general population and that only every fourth person in a shelter has a job. There are many more shelter residents who receive unemployment benefits and welfare than there are employed. Domestic violence can lead to being thrown out of the work force and being marginalized in several areas of life. The report shows that employment has great significance for the women. It gives them, amongst other things, independence and increased opportunities.

Poor health and prosperity
One of the consequences of domestic violence is poor health and quality of life. Women who are abused report more often than non-abused women of long-term marital problems, psychological problems, suicide attempts, anxiety and depression, tiredness and stress symptoms. Among the women who were severely physically abused in 2005, were many more who meant that their health was bad or very bad. The report also shows that victims of domestic violence lack influence at their workplaces.

More sick leave
Along with the women's bad health comes increased sick leave. The women are placed in a vulnerable position where they risk being fired and losing their connection with the work force. This has major consequences for the women (and their children), because besides losing their source of income, they also lose an important source of social contact as a result of domestic violence. One of the consequences of domestic violence is isolation of the woman, and the workplace can very well be the only social contact other than the husband.

Influence on the workplace
The report shows that domestic violence has a broad and far reaching effect on the workplace – both physically, psychologically, socially and financially. If the women do not thrive, it also effects their ability to produce, their productivity and their attention span. There is a risk that the women are both absent-minded and unfocused when they are at work. Some women are so psychologically broken down and victimized that they are not able to work for a period of time. This requires flexibility on the part of the employer. The company will experience therefore increased costs because of absenteeism, lower productivity, workers who do not thrive and who have a negative influence on the work environment. And society has expenses as a result of sick leave.
There is also a lack of knowledge and understanding of domestic violence. This can also apply to 
the women themselves. 
Research shows that some women are not aware that they are the victims of violence if they are 
not physically abused. They don’t see themselves as victims and are not conscious of what is 
happening to them. A folder was suggested that defines what domestic violence is so the women 
can recognize it and be conscious of the violence and know that it is not their fault.

**How to identify a victim of domestic violence**
The report shows that you can not just make a list with characteristics to identify women who 
have been victims of violence. The report does, however, point towards three things to be on the 
lookout for:

- the woman isolates herself and is reclusive.
- the woman has difficulties setting limits - also in relationship to work tasks.
- the woman can overreact to criticism and reprimands.

It should be emphasized that it is also important to learn to identify men who are perpetrators of 
violence.
The women in this report mention the following ways in which the workplace is influenced:

- they are often absent because of illness
- they have difficulties concentrating, thinking clearly and remembering
- they are depressed, reclusive, sensitive
- they are afraid of conflict and evasive
- they are appeasing and seek to please
- they become introverted – retreat into themselves, don’t feel up to talking to colleagues
- they tell less and less about themselves at work
- they are in denial and defend their partner
- they are tired and have headaches
- they have flashbacks of the violence while at work – are traumatized
- they experience stress because they are behind with work assignments
- they lose their self-esteem

**Work time is occupied by the man's behavior**
The report shows that the man's behavior can occupy a large portion of the woman's time at 
work. The man often contacts the woman at work by text messages, email, cellphone or personal 
contact.

Some women spend a large part of their time at work communicating with their partner which can 
result in the women not finishing their work assignments while at work. The work can thereby 
become a source of stress and pressure for some women. One woman saw her work as a safe 
place and used the assignments as a survival tactic by becoming engrossed in them and forgetting 
time and place. According to her, the workplace was partially responsible for keeping her “normal” 
and reminded her daily that it was not her that was sick, even though her ex-husband insisted that 
she was.
The women hide the violence
The report shows that some women hide the violence while at work, because they find it embarrassing to be a victim of violence. The women are ashamed and fear that their colleagues will find out about it. The women feel that it is their fault that they are abused and are in doubt about what is right and wrong and whether they are the ones something is wrong with.

Responsibility and choice
One of the explanations for why the women find it hard to admit that they are victims of abuse is that they see the situation as a result of their own bad choices and are therefore responsible for what happens to them. The women experience that they live in a society where they have all the possibilities to create a life just as they wish it to be and that they themselves are responsible for choosing how to make that life meaningful.
Although the women feel it is an embarrassing situation to end in, none of them consciously chose to be in a violent relationship. It doesn't usually start with violence but with falling in love and powerful emotions that make things more complicated.
The women may be victims of domestic violence, but they have a responsibility to change their situation and choose something better for themselves. The problem is that the mechanisms of domestic violence are such that the women are not able to change the situation. The women are isolated, broken down and have lost their self esteem, believing that it is their fault and repressing or minimizing the violence – while it quickly becomes the norm. The woman hopes that the man will change and remembers primarily the good things in order to survive.

Myth: Only women from society's lower end are abused - and not any of our employees
A myth/misconception that is mentioned is that only women from poor backgrounds are at risk of being victimized and that well-educated women should be wise enough to choose something else. So if you are abused it must be your own fault. Companies may perhaps think therefore that their female employees are not a part of the social group that are likely to be abused and cannot see why they should have to deal with the issue. There is no clear relationship between level of education and the likelihood of physical abuse, according to the statistics.

The vital role of colleagues
The report shows that colleagues can play a vital role in terms of helping an abused woman. But abused women can be isolated, and that can have a negative influence on her relationships with colleagues. The women have problems collaborating and talking to colleagues. Some colleagues pull away from the woman and she becomes on the “outside”. Some colleagues can become irritated with the woman because they have to do her work assignments if she is often sick.
Karin Helweg-Larsen thinks that most people are preoccupied with themselves and don’t feel like taking on a colleague if it can end with being a burden. This point of view can be debated - it can just as well be that the colleagues don’t know how to handle the situation and therefore keep away from the abused woman. It requires both knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon of domestic violence, as well as a clear idea of how to best handle the situation. It also requires empathy and altruism on the side of the workplace and colleagues.

The shop stewards/union representatives
The report shows also that it is a good idea to educate the shop stewards about abuse issues so that they can put them on the agenda of workplaces. It is also pointed out that an abused woman can be more closed and difficult to approach, so it is not necessarily the shop steward that the
woman wishes to talk to. Therefore everyone at work should be educated in dealing with domestic violence - both stewards and managers.

The report shows that the workplace can make a difference by helping the women, and it makes sense that the workplace takes on its social responsibility, both on a human and a financial level. There is increasing focus on domestic violence and its consequences for the workplace, yet not very many Danish companies have a clear policy about violence. If companies do deal with domestic violence and help women get past it, it will not only make a tremendous difference to the women, it will also improve the productivity, economy and reputation of the workplace.
Literature list


*Hvordan kommer vi den voldramte familie i møde* (2002). Formidlingscenteret for socialt arbejde.


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Appendix 1

Danish law

The Danish law criminalizes every assault on a person. The penal code's stipulations also cover assaults that take place in the family and rape in marriage.

§ 216. Den, der tiltvinger sig samleje ved vold eller trussel om vold, straffes for voldtægt med fængsel indtil 8 år. Med vold sidestilles hensættelse i en tilstand, i hvilken den pågældende er ude af stand til at modsætte sig handlingen.

Stk. 2. Straffen kan stige til fængsel i 12 år, hvis voldtægten har haft en særlig farlig karakter eller der i øvrigt foreligger skærpende omstændigheder.

§ 217. Den, som skaffer sig samleje ved anden ulovlig tvang, jf. § 260, end vold eller trussel om vold, straffes med fængsel indtil 4 år.

§ 236. Når nogen dømmes efter §§ 216, 217, 218, stk. 1, 222 eller 223, stk. 2, eller efter §§ 224, 225 eller 226, jf. en af fornævnte bestemmelser, eller efter § 232, kan der ved dommen gives den pågældende pålæg om ikke at indfinde sig i offentlige parker eller anlæg, på fælleder, ved skoler og legepladser, ved opdragelseshjem, ved sindssygehospitaler og institutioner for personer med vidtgående psykiske handicap, i bestemt angivne skove og på bestemt angivne badeanstalter og strandbredder.

§ 244. Den, som før vold mod eller på anden måde angriber en andens legeme, straffes med bøde eller fængsel indtil 3 år.

§ 245 a. Den, som ved et legemsangreb af særlig rå, brutal eller farlig karakter eller gør sig skyldig i mishandling, straffes med fængsel indtil 6 år. Har et sådant legemsangreb haft betydelig skade på legeme eller helbred til følge, skal dette betragtes som en særlig skærpende omstændighed.

Stk. 2. Den, som uden for de i stk. 1 nævnte tilfælde tilføjer en anden person skade på legeme eller helbred, straffes med fængsel indtil 6 år.

§ 247. Begås nogen af de lovovertrædelser, der er nævnt i §§ 244-246, af en person, der tidligere er dømt for forsætligt legemsangreb eller for en forbrydelse, der har været forbundet med forsætlig vold, kan straffen forhøjes med indtil det halve.

§ 499. Bortvisningsloven. Formålet med loven er at sikre muligheden for, at politiet i visse tilfælde kan bortvise en voldelig eller truende person fra det fælles hjem i en periode med henblik på at hindre (yderligere) vold mv. mod andre medlemmer af husstanden.

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Appendix 1

Danish law

Den danske lovgivning kriminaliserer ethvert overgreb mod en person. Straffelovens bestemmelser dækker også overgreb inden for familien og voldtægt i ægteskabet.

§ 216. Den, der tiltvinger sig samleje ved vold eller trussel om vold, straffes for voldtægt med fængsel indtil 8 år. Med vold sidestilles hensættelse i en tilstand, i hvilken den pågældende er ude af stand til at modsætte sig handlingen.

Stk. 2. Straffen kan stige til fængsel i 12 år, hvis voldtægten har haft en særlig farlig karakter eller der i øvrigt foreligger særligt skærpende omstændigheder.

§ 217. Den, som skaffer sig samleje ved anden ulovlig tvang, jf. § 260, end vold eller trussel om vold, straffes med fængsel indtil 4 år.

§ 236. Når nogen dømmes efter §§ 216, 217, 218, stk. 1, 222 eller 223, stk. 2, eller efter §§ 224, 225 eller 226, jf. en af fornævnte bestemmelser, eller efter § 232, kan der ved dommen gives den pågældende pålæg om ikke at indfinde sig i offentlige parker eller anlæg, på fælleder, ved skoler og legepladser, ved opdragelseshjem, ved sindssygehospitaler og institutioner for personer med vidtgående psykiske handicap, i bestemt angivne skove og på bestemt angivne badeanstalter og strandbredder.

§ 244. Den, som øver vold mod eller på anden måde angriber en andens legeme, straffes med bøde eller fængsel indtil 3 år.

§ 245. Den, som udøver et legemsangreb af særlig rå, brutal eller farlig karakter eller gør sig skyldig i mishandling, straffes med fængsel indtil 6 år. Har et sådant legemsangreb haft betydelig skade på legeme eller helbred til følge, skal dette betragtes som en særlig skærpende omstændighed.

Stk. 2. Den, som uden for de i stk. 1 nævnte tilfælde tilføjer en anden person skade på legeme eller helbred, straffes med fængsel indtil 6 år.

§ 245 a. Den, som ved et legemsangreb med eller uden samtykke bortskærer eller på anden måde fjerner kvindelige ydre kønsorganer helt eller delvis, straffes med fængsel indtil 6 år.

§ 246. Har et legemsangreb, der er omfattet af § 245 eller § 245 a, været af en så grov beskaffenhed eller haft så alvorlige skader eller døden til følge, at der foreligger særdeles skærpende omstændigheder, kan straffen stige til fængsel i 10 år.

§ 247. Begås nogen af de lovovertrædelser, der er nævnt i §§ 244-246, af en person, der tidligere er dømt for forsætligt legemsangreb eller for en forbrydelse, der har været forbundet med forsætlig vold, kan straffen forhøjes med indtil det halve.

Stk. 2. Det samme gælder, når en lovovertrædelse som nævnt i §§ 244-246 begås over for en person, der efter karakteren af sit arbejde er særlig udsat for vold.

§ 260. Med bøde eller fængsel indtil 2 år straffes for ulovlig tvang den, som 1. ved vold eller ved trussel om vold, om betydelig skade på gods, om frihedsberøvelse eller om at fremsætte usand sigtelse for strafbart eller ærerørigt forhold eller at åbenbare privatlivet tilhørende forhold tvinger nogen til at gøre, tåle eller undlade noget,