

# A BETTER MAN

discussion guide for unions



Congrès du travail du Canada  
Canadian Labour Congress



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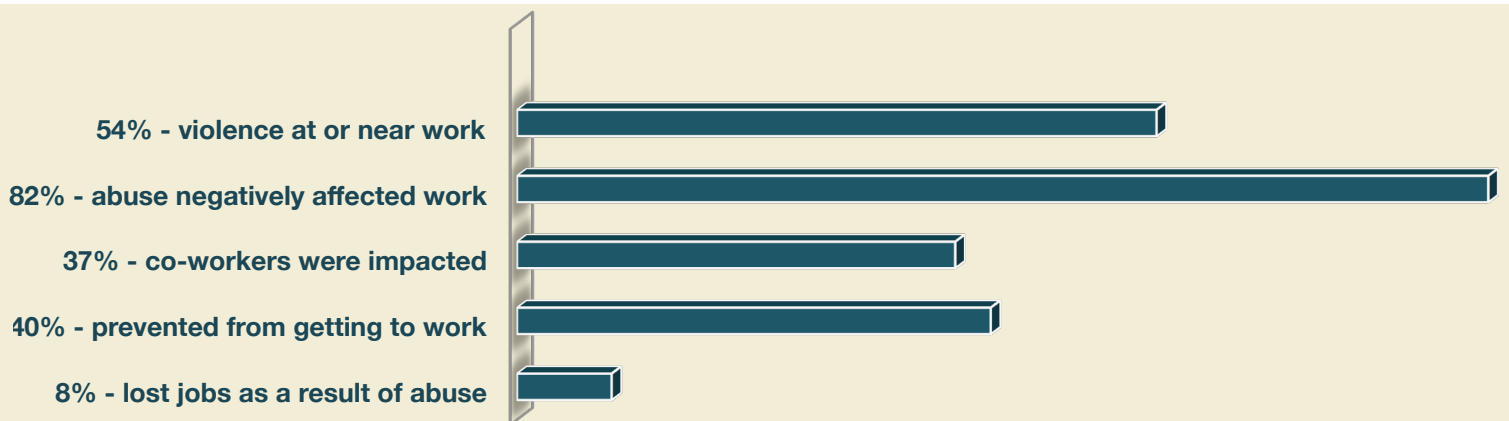


## FIRST, SOME BACKGROUND:

In 2014, the Canadian Labour Congress and our research partners at Western University released the results of a groundbreaking national survey on the impact of domestic violence on workers and workplaces.

The results were clear. **Domestic violence has a significant impact on workplaces and workers, putting jobs and workplace safety at risk.**

We heard that **one third** of Canadian workers experience domestic violence in their lifetime. Of these workers:



## IT IS A WORKPLACE ISSUE

Canada's unions work hard to ensure that work happens in a safe, healthy and supportive environment.

This work includes addressing domestic violence when it comes into the workplace. We do it by educating and empowering union members and representatives to recognize and respond to it – for people who are experiencing violence and those who are using it.

Talking with workers about domestic violence in a safe and supportive environment facilitates both learning and the ability to take action.

It is with this in mind that we prepared this guide to help union members and representatives prepare and stage a discussion on the topic, in tandem with the public release of the documentary film *A Better Man*.

## A BETTER MAN

The release and in-depth examination of *A Better Man* by TVO offers an opportunity for unions to engage workers in a discussion about domestic and gender-based violence and the role that unions can play to support those experiencing it, address those who use it, and advocate for change.

To date, much of the labour movement's focus on the issue of domestic violence has been on supporting workers (most of whom are women and transgender people) who experience violence, or whose safety may be at risk because of ongoing domestic violence.

*A Better Man* offers unions a way to address the other, critical piece of the domestic violence problem: those (most of whom are men) who use violence, with a view to their rehabilitation and the prevention of future instances of abuse.

## SHOWING A BETTER MAN IN YOUR WORKPLACE OR UNION

The documentary's producers have prepared an [excellent community screening guide](#) for public showing and public discussions of the film and its subject matter. Please refer to the tips and advice it offers for planning and preparing your own screening.

What follows is a guide for unions interested in screening *A Better Man* to spark discussion about domestic violence and the actions that unions and workers can take to address it in the workplace.

## GETTING READY

Discussions about domestic violence can be painful and triggering for some. It is important that those engaging in the discussion treat each other with care and compassion, recognizing that our opinions about intimate partner violence may be rooted in our own experience.

Find a calm, quiet space to show the documentary and then hold your discussion. People should be able to listen and think about what they hear, without worrying that others will overhear the conversation.

Ensure there is space for people to sit apart from the group, if needed, to gather their thoughts or go for a walk. People should not feel trapped.

Be prepared to help anyone who needs support. Consider having one or more people available for private conversations during or after the discussion. Reach out to anyone who needs to step away from the screening and discussion.

A template is available in the **Community Screening Guide** [abettermanfilm.com/engage](http://abettermanfilm.com/engage)

Prepare a list of local support services and resources for people to take away.

Before things get formally underway, make some brief opening remarks about the film and the issues, and guide the participants through a quick brainstorm to make a list of “ground rules” for the screening and the discussion.

## Ground rules could include:

- **What is said in the room, stays in the room;**
- **speaking and sharing is voluntary;**
- **responses from women and transgender people are prioritized;**
- **language – gender neutral (they/them/their) and using terminology such as “people who have experienced/used violence” instead of “victim” or “abuser”;**
- **stepping away from the discussion or leaving the room is okay;**
- **etc.**

## GETTING STARTED

Before you introduce the documentary and hit the “play” button, taking participants through an “ice-breaker” exercise will help them get comfortable in the space, with the topics, and with each other.

Ask participants to consider, individually or as a group, how comfortable they are, maybe on a scale of 1 to 5, talking about:

- domestic violence;
- violence against women;
- male violence against women;
- violence against transgender people.

Ask them what they need to be part of the upcoming discussion. Ideas can include:

- sitting with someone you trust;
- being able to listen without speaking;
- being able to leave the room;
- being able to share private thoughts with someone on paper;
- having someone to talk to afterwards, right away or later.

In order to frame the discussion, put what participants are about to experience into context:

- Tell them what the documentary is about – a short and a long synopsis of the film is available in the film’s [press kit](#);
- Then tell them why they are going to watch it.

*“A Better Man gives us an opportunity to look at how unions can address domestic violence at work. Before now, much of the labour movement’s focus has been on supporting people who experience violence, or whose safety may be at risk because of ongoing domestic violence.”*

(Hand out the description of the CLC’s Domestic Violence at Work Initiative)

*“How can unions support people who are experiencing violence? What is your union doing?”*

*“How can unions provide assistance to people who are using violence? What is your union doing?”*

## SHOWING THE DOCUMENTARY

### AIRDATES

***A Better Man* will be broadcast on TVO on the following dates:**

November 25, 9PM  
November 26, 11PM  
November 29, 9PM  
December 6, 9PM

**The film will also be streaming on [tvo.org](http://tvo.org) starting from Nov 26<sup>th</sup>**

TVO's broadcast and online streaming of *A Better Man* makes it possible to show the documentary to an entire room, or to allow people to watch it individually on their own devices.

Regardless of how you want people to experience it, access to a reliable Internet connection, wireless or hard-wired, will be vital to the success of your event if you plan to screen the online stream. Ensuring the equipment you have – laptop, tablets, speakers, television, projectors – are up to the job is also something you will want to test ahead of time.

When participants have finished watching, this is a good time to take a short break (10 to 15 minutes) so people can process, gather themselves, or tend to any personal needs.

## STARTING THE DISCUSSION

Even after a break, it will be important to acknowledge the heavy nature of what your participants have just experienced. You should also do a quick review of the ground rules established earlier.

As you lead your group through their discussion, it is the facilitator's job to keep things on topic and moving in the right direction. In general, the discussion should guide participants in considering how the topics explored in the film may apply in the context of their own lives, reflecting on what needs to change, and taking action to bring about that change. Here are some questions to generate a discussion:

- Why does this documentary matter?
- What did you learn?
- Is there someone or a group in your community, your workplace, or your union who would benefit from watching this documentary?
- Are there other questions you want Steve to answer?
- If you could say one thing to Steve, or to Attiya, what would it be?
- After watching this, do you have more thoughts about how unions can support people who are experiencing violence?

- What about how unions can provide help to people who are using violence?
- How can unions engage men to take action to address gender-based violence?
- What can we ask our governments and communities to do?

## ENCOURAGE ACTION

After your discussion, offer participants some ways to put their newfound knowledge into action. Here are some suggestions:

- Expand our conversation. Share your reaction to *A Better Man* and your ideas for addressing domestic violence on social media using #16Days and #DVatWork. Tag @abettermanfilm in your posts!
- If you are a man, gather with other men and watch the documentary. Use this discussion guide, the *A Better Man* [discussion guide](#), or the *A Better Man* [men's viewing group guide](#) to help you process the experience together.
- Make a list of support services and programs in your community.
- Start the conversation in your union.
- Attend a [December 6 vigil](#) in your community.
- Send a message to your elected representatives – federal, provincial, territorial – that asks them to support legislative change, like paid domestic violence leave.

### BREAK THE SILENCE

If you are worried about someone, have a caring conversation. Open the door to support and listen without judgment. Here are [some tips](#) to help you.

## WHAT CAN UNIONS DO?

Unions can do many things to start and guide an ongoing discussion about how to address domestic violence at work. They can:

- Host an information session on domestic violence at work for members;
- Bargain with employers for paid leave and other workplace supports;

- Train union stewards and other representatives to recognize and respond to domestic violence at work;
- Be ready to support workers by keeping a list of community resources;
- Build relationships with local shelters, local service providers, and local organizations working to end gender-based violence;
- Support or organize local December 6 or 16 Days events.

## CLOSING YOUR DISCUSSION

Some participants may wait until after your event to seek support. When wrapping up, be sure to remind them about the list of community resources (if available) as well as who they can contact and how.

*A Better Man* focuses on a deeply rooted social problem that will not be resolved overnight. Close the event by encouraging audience members to continue thinking and talking about possibilities for action and change in their workplace, their union and community.

