



## 2014 WBI U.S. WORKPLACE BULLYING SURVEY

### Gender and the Bullying Experience

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## GENDER AND THE BULLYING EXPERIENCE

**69% of bullies are men; 60% of bullied targets are women;  
women bullies choose women targets 68% of the time**

*Question:* Think of the perpetrator and target of repeated abusive mistreatment at work. What as the gender of each?

Table 3

Gender	Proportion	Percentage
<b>Male perpetrators</b>	.6851	69%
<b>Male perpetrator: Female target</b>	.5672	57%
<b>Male perpetrator: Male target</b>	.4328	43%
<b>Female perpetrators</b>	.3149	31%
<b>Female perpetrator: Female target</b>	.6753	68%
<b>Female perpetrator: Male target</b>	.3247	32%
<b>Female Targets</b>	.6012	60%
<b>Male Targets</b>	.3988	40%

Figure 3

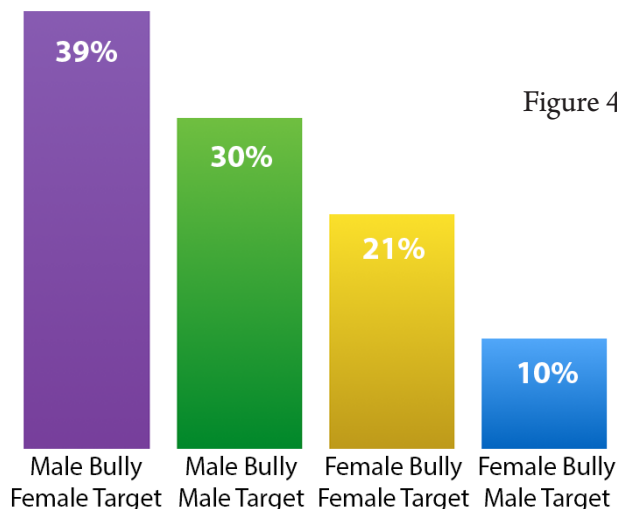
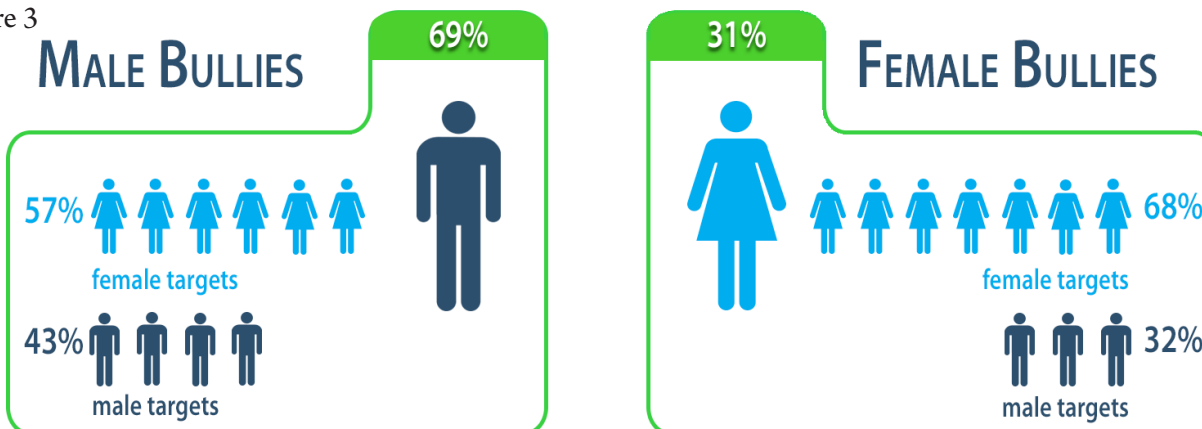


Figure 4

The vast majority of bullies are men (69%, See Figure 3). Male perpetrators seem to prefer targeting women (57%) more than other men (43%). Women bullies were less “equitable” when choosing their targets for bullying. Women bullied women in 68% of cases. [In past WBI national Surveys, the woman-on-woman bullying percentages were similarly disproportionately high.]

When considering all four combinations of gender pairs, the two most frequent were both when the perpetrator was male (See Figure 4). Female targets bullied by men comprised the largest group (39%), followed by men bullied by men (30%), women bullied by women (21%), and the rarest of all, men bullied by women (10%).

Women were targets in 60% of cases (See Figure 5).

An alternative analysis is to cross the *respondents' gender* with the experiences of being bullied and witnessing it. The result then showed that 51% of the men Survey respondents were either directly bullied or witnessed it, a higher rate than was true for women Survey respondents.

Figure 5

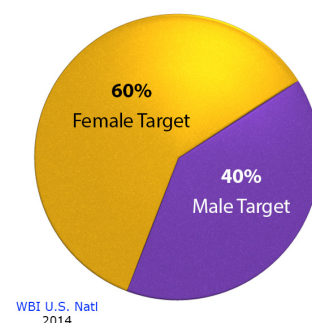


Table 4

Respondent Gender	Direct	Witnessed	Affected
<b>Male</b>	25.2%	25.8%	51.0%
<b>Female</b>	28.5%	16.1%	44.6%

We investigated the interaction between gender pairs and the direct experience categories of currently bullied and having been bullied. A difference emerges between situations based on perpetrator gender (See Table 5). Only when the bully is male, do male targets report over three times the rate of being currently bullied relative to female targets (51% vs. 15%). Male targets are only half as likely to report having been bullied in the past as currently bullied (27% vs 51%). Female targets bullied by men are nearly three times as likely (39%) to have been bullied than to report being currently bullied.

Table 5

Gender Pairs	Currently Bullied	Been Bullied
<b>Male Perpetrator: Male Target</b>	51%	27%
<b>Male Perpetrator: Female Target</b>	15%	39%
<b>Female Perpetrator: Male Target</b>	10%	10%
<b>Female Perpetrator: Female Target</b>	27%	25%
<b>Overall Male Targets</b>	16%	27%
<b>Overall Female Targets</b>	11%	47%

The explanation might be twofold. First the fact that men report a higher current rate of bullying may be due to a willingness to “tough it out” and stay in abusive situations not wanting to allow the male bully to “win.” Perhaps this poses a challenge to American men’s “rugged individualism.” If stubbornness is not an explanation, then the pattern might be understood by saying that women targets are quicker to leave, or be forced out of, bullying situations when the bully is male. In those cross-gender pairings, women may have a legitimate sexual harassment complaint.

Regardless of the explanation it seems women report more historical bullying by men than men. Their memories may be more resistant to extinction.

The pattern does not occur when the perpetrator is female. However, when we sum over perpetrator gender, female targets still report a higher historical rate of bullying than their male counterparts. The higher frequency for historical bullying emerged for both men and women targets.

## THE CHALLENGE OF SAME-GENDER BULLYING

The final analysis of gender tells us that 77% of *currently bullied* targets are bullied by perpetrators of the same gender, *ie.*, man-on-man and woman-on-woman (See Figure 6).

Same gender bullying presents a challenge for targets who would like to file a claim of discrimination. With few exceptions (cases of explicit sexual coercion), sexual harassment requires that the perpetrator be a member of the opposite sex. In same sex cases the human resources department and most employment lawyers will describe the difficulty that same-gender harassment presents. Our 2014 findings (See Figure 4) show that in 30% of cases the bully was male and the target was female. A simplistic interpretation suggests that the target could claim sexual harassment. However, discrimination law requires that the target demonstrate that gender was the *basis* of the animus that the perpetrator held against the target.

Figure 6

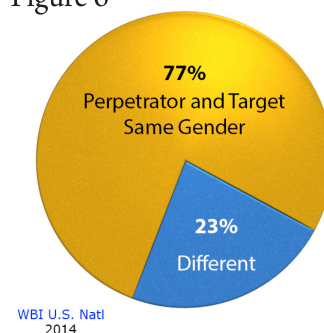
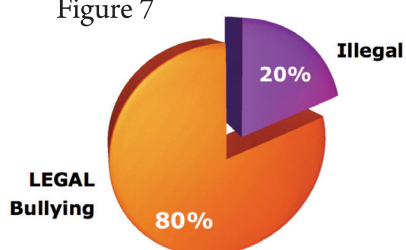


Figure 7



Bullying is cruelty and much more frequently “status-blind.” In the 2007 WBI U.S. Workplace Bullying Survey, we asked a question about bullied targets’ membership in protected groups. That is, were targets protected by gender, race, age, disability, religion, or another class. The same was asked about perpetrators. In only 1 of 5 cases was the target the only one who enjoyed protected status (See Figure 7). The remaining 80% of situations did not lend themselves to a simple violation of state or federal anti-discrimination laws.

The narrowly worded 2014 question that listed gender pairs did not address the fuller discriminatory nature of illegal harassment contained in the 2007 question. But, the 30% man-on-woman category closely approximated the 20% result in the 2007 survey. In conclusion, same gender pairings render complaints of illegality nearly impossible.

## GENDER AND JOB LOSS

For each of the gender pairs we calculated the rates of job loss for both targets and perpetrators. Job loss percentages were derived from responses to a separate question (See What Stopped the Bullying) for which we summed quitting, termination, and constructive discharge as reasons for a loss.

The first observation is that targets lose their jobs at a much higher rate than perpetrators (82% vs. 18%). When bullies are men regardless of the targets gender the loss rate is equally high. However, when bullies are women, women targets lose their jobs 89% of the time. Notably women bullies, as perpetrators, suffer the highest job loss rate (30%) of any gender pairing.

Table 6

Gender Pairs	Target Loses Job	Perpetrator Loses Job
Male Perpetrator: Male Target	80%	20%
Male Perpetrator: Female Target	83%	17%
Female Perpetrator: Male Target	70%	30%
Female Perpetrator: Female Target	89%	11%
Overall	82%	18%

## ZOGBY ANALYTICS SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The Workplace Bullying Institute commissioned Zogby Analytics to conduct an online survey of 1,000 adults in the US. All interviews were completed January 27 and 28, 2014. Using trusted interactive partner resources, thousands of adults were invited to participate in this interactive survey. Each invitation is password coded and secure so that one respondent can only access the survey one time.

Using information based on census data, voter registration figures, CIA fact books and exit polls, Zogby uses complex weighting techniques to best represent the demographics of the population being surveyed. Weighted variables may include age, race, gender, region, party, education, and religion.

Based on a confidence interval of 95%, the margin of error for 1,000 is +/- 3.2 percentage points. This means that all other things being equal, the identical survey repeated will have results within the margin of error 95 times out of 100. Subsets of the data have a larger margin of error than the whole data set. Additional factors can create error, such as question wording and question order.

One of the conventions used in Zogby surveys is to allow respondents a response option of “Not Sure.” WBI chose to eliminate the “Not Sure” responses from the sample in all questions. Below are the sample characteristics.

Table 18

Sample Characteristics	Frequency	Valid Percent*
<b>Sample size</b>	1,000	100
<i>Region</i>		
<b>East</b>	220	22
<b>South</b>	260	26
<b>Central/Great Lakes</b>	300	30
<b>West</b>	220	22
<i>Age</i>		
<b>18-29</b>	220	22
<b>30-49</b>	360	36
<b>50-64</b>	250	25
<b>65+</b>	170	17
<i>Race</i>		
<b>White</b>	680	68
<b>Hispanic</b>	130	13
<b>African American</b>	120	12
<b>Asian/Pacific</b>	41	4.1
<b>Other/mixed</b>	29	2.9
<i>Religion</i>		
<b>Catholic</b>	260	26
<b>Protestant</b>	530	53
<b>Jewish</b>	30	3
<b>Other/None (religion)</b>	180	18
<i>Respondent Gender</i>		
<b>Male</b>	485	48.5
<b>Female</b>	515	51.5
<i>Employment Status</i>		
<b>Working</b>	532	53.6
<b>Unemployed – Looking for work</b>	63	6.3