



**RESEARCH STUDIES**

*workplacebullying.org*

**(Still) Bullying With Impunity  
Labor Day Survey**

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## (Still) Bullying with Impunity – Labor Day 2009

*Purpose of the study:* Bullying apologists -- who thrive in the business press -- have been quick to declare the end of workplace bullying because the recession (begun in Sept. 2008) ostensibly gives employers the chance to terminate the bullies.

*Research Question:* Are bullies swept up in layoffs more than bullied targets?

### *Principal Findings*

In only a meager **1.6%** of incidents (n=7) bullies lost their jobs for any reason. By contrast, 31.3% of bullied individuals lost their jobs by layoff, termination, or by quitting. An additional 12.3% were off work due to psychological injury. That's 43.5% of targets losing their jobs for no reason of their own making. Doing nothing to the bully (ensuring impunity) was the most common employer tactic (54%). Whereas retaliation was the most common consequence for bullied targets (37% experienced escalated bullying, ostracism from group, suspension, demotion or being transferred).

*Conclusion:* bullies are not losing their jobs during the recession, are not being purged. As always, targets are the ones banished from employment. Bullies (still) abuse with impunity!

Note: This is a non-scientific study. The 422 people who completed the survey (called respondents) were referred to the survey by the website designed to help people with bullying problems. They do not represent a random sample of adult Americans (as was done in the WBI-Zogby survey). Conclusions are limited to people who believe they are or have been bullied.

### *Results of the Survey*

For the purposes of this survey, Workplace Bullying was defined as repeated sabotage that prevents work from getting done, verbal abuse, threatening conduct, intimidation, humiliation, or exploitation of a known vulnerability (psychological or physical).

1. The main perpetrator's gender: 65% Female 35% Male
2. Targeted person's gender: 79% Female 21% Male
3. As a result of the bullying, what happened to the **BULLY** during the period from Sept. 2008 until now? Choose only the single most severe consequence to the person.

**28.2%** Bully was rewarded or promoted, only positive consequences.

**53.6%** Employer did nothing. The bully experienced no consequences -- positive or negative.

**7.6%** Internal investigation found the bully innocent

**6.6%** Internal investigation confirmed wrongdoing; consequences to bully kept confidential

**2.4%** Bully was punished but kept job (suspended, demoted, transferred or made to apologize)

**0.2%** Bully lost job, either through layoff or termination -- with severance pay

**1.4%** Bully lost job, severance terms unknown

4. As a result of the bullying, what happened to the **TARGETED WORKER** during the period from Sept. 2008 until now? Choose only the single best description of what happened to the person.

**19.2%** Employer did nothing -- positive or negative -- to, or for, the target in response to bullying allegations.

**36.7%** Target was retaliated against for complaining (escalated bullying, ostracized from group, suspended, demoted or transferred)

**16.6%** Target lost job, either through layoff or termination

**7.1%** Target quit under employer threat of termination

**7.6%** Target quit without employer threat

**12.3%** Target is off work, long-term or permanently on disability or workers comp

**0.5%** Target was completely satisfied with the resolution of the problem

#### *Additional Findings*

Female bullies bullied women 86% of the time, men 14%. Men bullies targeted women 64% of the time, 36% men. If you are female and bullied, there is a 71% chance your bully will be a woman. If you are male, there is a 60% chance that your bully will be a man.

Retaliation of targets was highest when the employer did nothing to or about the bully. The second highest retaliation rate occurred when the bully was rewarded or promoted for her or his misconduct.

Impunity (when the bully suffered no consequences for bullying) was twice as common an outcome as being rewarded or promoted. And the percentages of each were nearly identical for both men and women bullies.

Gender of the bully did not affect consequences for the target. Retaliation was most common; having nothing happen was second. Similarly, gender of the target did not lead to different consequences for the bully. Impunity was twice as prevalent as promotion for bullies, regardless of target gender.

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