

Employer Workplace Bullying Policies

WBI 2012-B Instant Poll

In 2010, the Workplace Bullying Institute asked a national sample of respondents, representing all adult Americans, if their employers had an explicit anti-bullying policy. Based on the high estimate, we were certain that they confused an anti-discrimination policy (written to comply with state and federal laws) with the need for additional protections for workers against abuse in same-gender and same-race situations. So, we asked the question much more specifically for this single-item survey using our Instant Poll methodology.

WBI Instant Polls are online single-question surveys that rely upon self-selected samples of individuals bullied at work (typically 98% of any sample). No demographic data are collected. Our non-scientific Instant Polls accurately depict the perceptions of workers targeted for bullying at work as contrasted with the views of all adult Americans in our scientific national surveys.

Policies without enforcement and accountability for all abusers are insufficient. When special people (e.g., high-ranking bullies) are allowed to bully with impunity from punishment, the policy is not worth the paper it's printed on. So, we offered survey respondents the chance to make a statement about the existence of a policy by any name and to further qualify the breadth of its enforcement.

Of the original 311 respondents, 38 chose the option: "Not sure if policy exists"

We eliminated them, leaving a sample of 273 individuals who were sure about the presence or absence of policies relating to workplace bullying and the quality of enforcement.

The question we asked was:

Does (did) your employer have a specific policy prohibiting workplace bullying? [It can be part of another policy, but there must be protections for everyone, regardless of sex, age, religion, etc.]

Respondents could choose one of the following choices:

No. There are only anti-harassment or anti-violence policies -- chosen by 61.9%

Yes. [An anti-bullying] Policy exists, but not applied to everyone (some are immune from enforcement) -- chosen by 17.9% -- this counts as an employer failure to credibly stop abusive conduct.

Sort of. [The policy is] Named Respect or Incivility, too weak to stop bullying -- chosen by 14.6% -- also an employer failure to credibly stop abusive conduct.

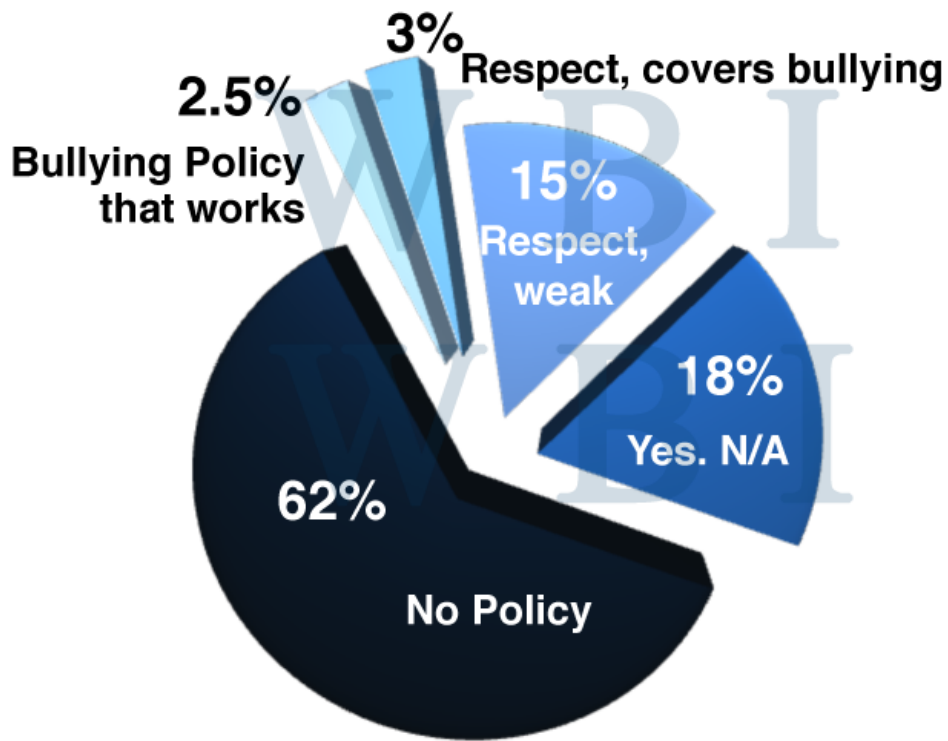
Sort of. [The policy is] Named Respect or Incivility but strong enough to stop bullying -- chosen by 2.9% -- this counts as employer success.

Yes. [An anti-bullying] Policy exists, and is applied to everyone (good enforcement) -- chosen by 2.5% -- this counts as employer success.

According to the customers of internal employer anti-bullying protections, approximately only 5% of employers have adequately addressed workplace bullying. Within the good employer group, **less than 3%** have the courage to call bullying what it is and to craft explicit policies with credible enforcement procedures.

About one-third of employers (32.5%) created something but either the policy or its enforcement is considered by targets to be too weak to prevent or correct workplace bullying.

The majority of employers (61.9%) simply ignore bullying. In a recent survey of HR professionals conducted by the HR trade association SHRM, 44% said they had no plans to create an anti-bullying policy in the future. Until there are laws, myopic employers may believe that bullying costs them nothing. This is a myth. Bullying is very expensive.



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