



**RESEARCH STUDIES**

*workplacebullying.org*

**The WBI Website  
2012 - H Instant Poll  
Workplace Bullying Perpetrators'  
Rank & Numbers**

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## WORKPLACE BULLYING PERPETRATORS' RANK & NUMBERS

### WBI 2012-H Instant Poll

Workplace Bullying Institute 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.

The 806 respondents to this survey were asked:

*When you were bullied, who did the bullying?* Check 1 best answer.

The rank order and percentages for each response option were:

- |   |      |                                                                          |
|---|------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | .344 | <i>One person who held a higher rank than mine</i>                       |
| 2 | .172 | <i>More than one person -- a mix of higher rank &amp; peers</i>          |
| 3 | .156 | <i>More than one person -- all with higher rank than mine</i>            |
| 4 | .136 | <i>More than one person -- a mix of peers, bosses &amp; subordinates</i> |
| 5 | .113 | <i>One person who was a peer, same rank</i>                              |
| 6 | .052 | <i>More than one person -- all peers</i>                                 |
| 7 | .026 | <i>One person who held a lower rank than mine</i>                        |

In the vast majority of cases of bullying, the boss is involved.

- |      |                                   |
|------|-----------------------------------|
| .808 | <i>Bullying by boss</i>           |
| .473 | <i>Bullying by peer coworkers</i> |
| .162 | <i>Bullying by a subordinate</i>  |

Compared to the 2010 WBI U.S. Workplace Bullying Survey, responses are roughly comparable. In that scientific survey, the proportions added to a full 100% because only 3 response options were available to respondents. Bosses comprised 72% of bullies, coworkers 18% and subordinates 10%. Using the results of this Instant Poll, the percentage of bullies who were solely peers and coworkers was 16.5%.

It is easier for a boss to bully a subordinate. Lower-ranking individuals are socialized to not challenge authority. Bosses can have greater impact on their targets' economic livelihood by depriving them of jobs. Coworkers can leverage social exclusion and ostracism to harm targets. Subordinates can tactically destroy careers through sabotage of work of higher-ranking targets.

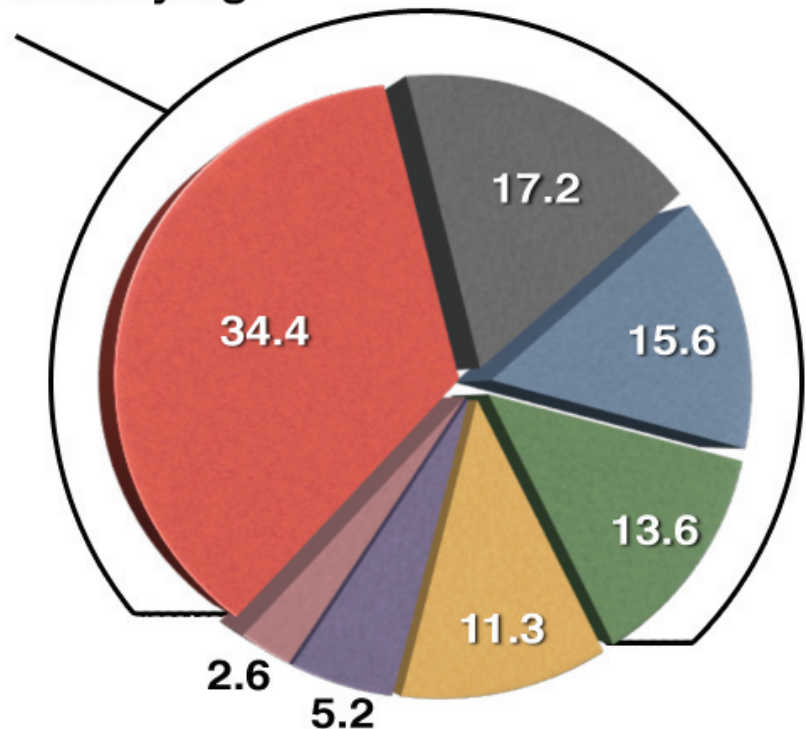
Many people distinguish the concepts of workplace bullying and mobbing. To them, the distinction is that Workplace Bullying (Andrea Adams, England begun in the early 1990's) involves only one-on-one interpersonal mistreatment, while Mobbing (Heinz Leymann, Sweden begun in the 1980's). In line with that thinking, bullying is done by a lone perpetrator; mobbing necessarily has multiple perpetrators who "gang up" on a single victim/target.

Results of this Instant Poll:

.483 *Solo perpetrator*  
 .517 *Multiple perpetrators*

The WBI position is that bullying always begins with a single instigator who nearly immediately recruits the assistance of others. Those who aid and abet the bully do so either through a direct and explicit appeal or through implied coercion. Thus bullying becomes mobbing.

## In 81% of cases bosses participate in bullying



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 2012-H

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