



RESEARCH STUDIES

workplacebullying.org

Effectiveness of Bullied Target Resolution Strategies April 2012

Purpose

Disbelievers in the phenomenon of workplace bullying and critics of proposed legislation to curb bullying insist that bullied individuals have many existing options to resolve their problem. They imply that attempts to end the bullying will be successful if the target will only try. This study asks bullied targets what they attempted and if those resolution strategies resulted in the cessation of the bullying.

Gary Namie, PhD - Research Director

Do not cite findings without crediting WBI

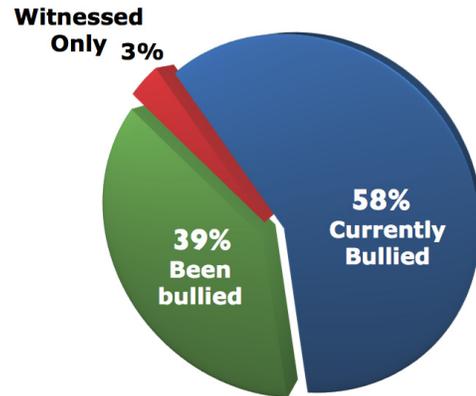
© 2012 Workplace Bullying Institute, All rights reserved

WBI periodically conducts online surveys that rely upon self-selected samples of individuals bullied at work. WBI online surveys 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 total of 1604 respondents completed this survey. Six individuals claimed to have had no direct or indirect experience with bullying. The final sample size was 1598. The sample was overwhelmingly female (80%).

Respondents were asked: *What is your experience with mistreatment at work? We define mistreatment as repeated incidents against an individual employee by a person or a group that take the form of verbal abuse, behaviors that are humiliating, threatening, intimidating, or sabotage of the targeted person's work.*

- a) *It is happening to me now*
- b) *It has happened to me before, but is not happening now*
- c) *I have no personal experience, but have witnessed it happen to others*
- d) *I've never experienced or witnessed it (chosen by the 6 excluded respondents)*



To illustrate the special nature of this sample, in the 2010 WBI National Survey 9% of adult Americans were currently bullied, 26% had been bullied, and 15% were witnesses only.

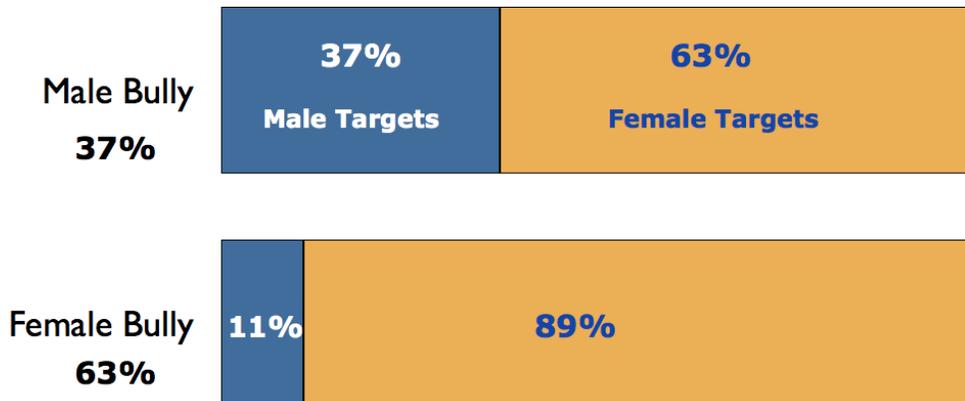
Respondents were asked: *What was the gender of the person targeted for mistreatment (the target)?*

- a) Female 79.2%
- b) Male 20.8%

Respondents were asked: *What is the gender of the person primarily responsible for the mistreatment (the perpetrator)?*

- a) Female 62.8%
- b) Male 37.2%

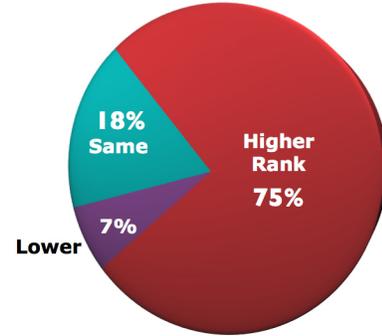
Compared to the national statistics, the ratio is completely reversed: Males were 62% of bullies, women were 38%.



The pattern of women-on-women bullying (89% here) matched the 80% statistic in the national survey.

Repondents were asked: *What was the primary perpetrator’s rank relative to the targeted person (you, if you were the target)?*

- a) Ranked higher than target
- b) Ranked lower
- c) The same rank



In the 2010 WBI National Survey 72% were higher, an identical 18% were peers or coworkers, and 10% were of lower rank.

Respondents were asked: *Harassment is illegal if based on discrimination (membership in a protected class, such as gender, disability, religion, age or veteran status). Did the employer have a policy to address workplace mistreatment separate from discrimination?*

Yes 30.4% No 42.7% Not sure 26.9%

In a prior online 2010 WBI Instant Poll, respondents said that only 3% of employers had a specific policy and enforced it, and another 12% had a policy but failed to enforce it.

It appears that respondents to this 2012 survey allowed the word “harassment” as it appeared in the question to influence their overestimation of the percentage of employers with a policy. Every employer has an anti-harassment policy to comply with laws. The question was intended to separate discrimination and harassment from mistreatment that met the definition of bullying. Obviously the respondents interpreted the question differently.

Respondents were asked: *Now consider a variety of responses by the target to stop the mistreatment. Which methods were tried? Did any stop the mistreatment?*

Target seemed to not do anything

Yes	38.2%	No	61.8%	The ‘Not Sure’ option was eliminated from analysis	
Effective?		Yes	3.1%	No	96.9%

Target directly confronted the perpetrator

Yes	69.5%	No	30.5%	The ‘Not Sure’ option was eliminated from analysis	
Effective?		Yes	3.3%	No	96.7%

Target asked perpetrator’s boss to intervene & stop it

Yes	70.7%	No	29.3%	The ‘Not Sure’ option was eliminated from analysis	
Effective?		Yes	3.2%	No	96.8%

Target told senior management/owner expecting support

Yes	73.9%	No	26.1%	The ‘Not Sure’ option was eliminated from analysis	
Effective?		Yes	3.6%	No	96.4%

If union present, asked union to intervene & stop it

Yes	60.3%	No	39.7%	The ‘Not Sure’ option was eliminated from analysis	
Effective?		Yes	7.6%	No	92.4%

Target filed a formal complaint with HR alleging a policy violation

Yes	42.8%	No	57.2%	The ‘Not Sure’ option was eliminated from analysis			
Effective?		Yes	3.8%	No	96.2%		
Effective?		Yes	3.3%	No	84%	Not Sure	12.7%

Target filed a complaint with an external state agency, human rights commission, or federal EEOC

Yes	18.7%	No	81.3%	The 'Not Sure' option was eliminated from analysis	
Effective?		Yes	6.5%	No	93.5%

In the 2010 WBI National Survey 4% of adult Americans said they had filed a complaint with an external entity.

Target tried to find an attorney to file a lawsuit

Yes	33.7%	No	66.3%	The 'Not Sure' option was eliminated from analysis	
Effective?		Yes	8.9%	No	91.1%

Target did file a lawsuit (n=379)

Yes	8.9%	No	91.1%	The 'Not Sure' option was eliminated from analysis	
Effective?		Yes	6.1%	No	93.9%

In the preceding section the number of respondents who expressed certainty that the strategies were pursued by targets to stop their personal bullying should have limited the number of respondents with an opinion about the effectiveness of that strategy. However, it seems more respondents evaluated the efficacy than expected.

Therefore, the subsequent analyses were conducted. Effectiveness ratings were limited to only the respondents who answered 'yes' to the adoption of a particular strategy. The results appear below.

<i>Target seemed to not do anything</i>	Effectiveness = 3.25%
<i>Target directly confronted the perpetrator</i>	Effectiveness = 3.57%
<i>Target asked perpetrator's boss to intervene & stop it</i>	Effectiveness = 3.26%
<i>Target told senior management/owner expecting support</i>	Effectiveness = 3.69%
<i>If union present, asked union to intervene & stop it</i>	Effectiveness = 8.84%
<i>Target filed a formal complaint with HR alleging a policy violation</i>	Effectiveness = 4.66%
<i>Target filed a complaint with an external state agency, human rights commission, or federal EEOC</i>	Effectiveness = 11.9%
<i>Target tried to find an attorney to file a lawsuit</i>	Effectiveness = 11.2%
<i>Target did file a lawsuit (n=379)</i>	Effectiveness = 16.4%

The purpose of this study was to have individuals intimately familiar with bullying (those directly experiencing it or witnessing it) describe the effectiveness of various adopted tactics or strategies to stop the bullying. The results are clear. Letting time pass (doing nothing) stopped bullying 3% of the time, an obviously ineffective tactic. However the other tactics -- confronting, imploring the bully's boss, filing an HR complaint, or telling senior management -- were as ineffective as doing nothing. When discrimination is part of the bullying, it does pay to use current laws (the effectiveness rises to double digits). For the few unionized respondents, the rate was double HR's effectiveness. The most realistic conclusion from these findings is that whatever individuals try, the chances of success are miniscule with failure hovering around 97%.

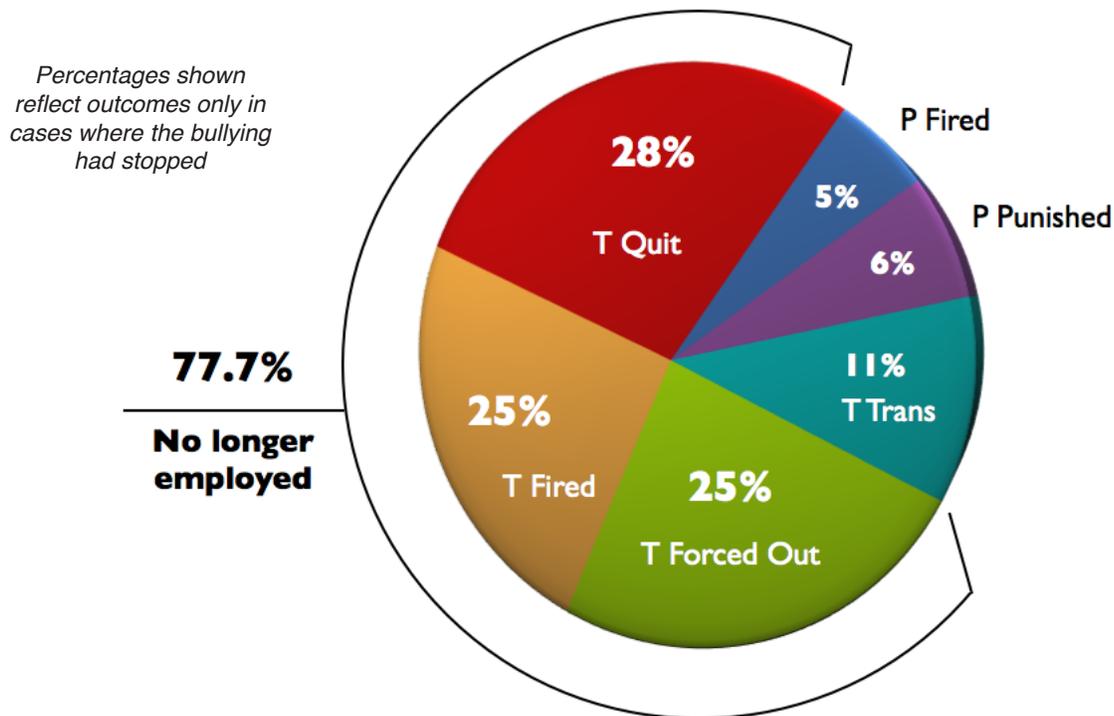
Respondents were asked: *What stopped the mistreatment? (check one)*

a) It has not stopped -- 54% of all respondents said the bullying was ongoing

If the mistreatment has stopped, choose the best description of what happened.

- b) Perpetrator was terminated
- c) Perpetrator was punished
- d) Target transferred within the organization
- e) Target involuntarily quit/was forced out
- f) Target was terminated
- g) Target voluntarily quit, wanted to leave

In the 2010 WBI National Survey, 41% of women targets quit and another 25% were terminated. For men the quit rate was 36% and 13% were terminated. Unfortunately quitting includes voluntary action plus being constructively discharged, forced out. In this 2012 survey we were able to separate the reasons for quitting. Transfer rates in 2010 were 14% for women and 8% for men.



In this 2012 survey, the finding that bullied individuals pay the price for their targethood is repeated. Once bullied, the person has a 78% chance of losing her or his job! The punishment rate for bullies seems to be rising slowly through the years; having 11% of perpetrators experience negative consequences is at an all-time high.

WBI Research Director: Gary Namie, PhD

Support with SPSS analyses, graphics,
online data collection & survey design from
Daniel Christensen, David Phillips & Sean Lunsford

WORKPLACE
BULLYING
INSTITUTE