



**RESEARCH STUDIES**

*workplacebullying.org*

**The WBI Website  
2013 Instant Poll-B  
Workplace Bullied Targets'  
Perceptions of Business Leaders**

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## WORKPLACE BULLIED TARGETS' PERCEPTIONS OF BUSINESS LEADERS

### WBI 2013-B Instant Poll

Most of the research conducted by the Workplace Bullying Institute (WBI) queries individuals who have declared themselves to be targets of workplace bullying. That is, we are able to see the word through the lens of targets. These surveys are based on self-selected samples, and are necessarily non-scientific.

The portrait of employer activity as told by targets is historically unflattering. We were able, thanks to the resources of Zogby Analytics, to poll business leaders directly in early 2013. [See the *Business Leaders* survey.] The results enable a comparison of target and executive perspectives.

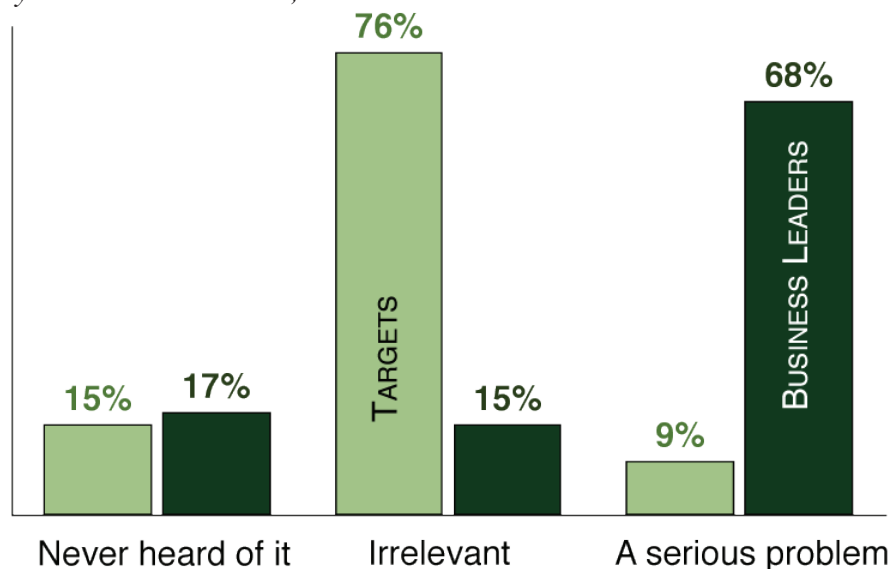
To compare target to executive opinions, WBI conducted its own instant poll survey. WBI Instant Polls are online single-question surveys that rely upon self-selected samples of individuals bullied at work (typically 98% of any sample). No demographic data are collected. Our non-scientific Instant Polls 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.

We asked 285 target-respondents to answer the following question.

*In your organization, which of the following best describes the owner's or senior executive's personally held opinion of workplace bullying?*

Percentages of each response were:

- .09 *They think it is a serious problem*
- .15 *They never heard of it*
- .76 *They think it is irrelevant, a non-issue*



Clearly, the opinions of bullied targets and business leaders differed significantly. Less than 10% of bullied targets believe that executives consider workplace bullying a serious problem. The basis for doubt is that targets typically attempted (unsuccessfully, according to other WBI surveys) to have senior managers act as if it were serious. Similarly targets are dubious about executive opinions, stating that 76% of executives consider bullying irrelevant, thus not deserving attention.

Business leaders reported the obverse in the Zogby survey. They preferred to cast bullying as a serious problem and not irrelevant. From this pair of opinions, we infer that executives chose what they consider “socially desirable” opinions. To report otherwise would make them appear unsympathetic. Targets might interpret the differences as hypocritical, a mismatch of words and actions.

Or perhaps this finding is evidence of a sea change in public opinion about workplace bullying since WBI started its work in 1997 that has even captured business leaders’ attention. It might reflect the new “correct” attitude to adopt. Regardless of the underlying motive, it is reason for optimism.

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