



RESEARCH STUDIES

workplacebullying.org

**The WBI Website
2013 Instant Poll - F
Protecting Workplace Bullies**

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PROTECTING WORKPLACE BULLIES

WBI 2013-F Instant Poll

At WBI, we have documented how bullies rarely face personal negative consequences for their misconduct. Too often, complaints about bullying are discounted, dismissed or completely ignored. This indifferent response by the organization implicitly rewards the bullying. The uncoupling of bullying from negative sanctions outrages bullied targets. It is injustice.

WBI national American studies show that the vast majority of perpetrators (72%) are bosses. Organizational support for managers trumps support for non-supervisory workers. In this survey, we sought to clarify the sources of support, or protection, for bullies. Protective support prevents punishment for bullies and blocks accountability. Of course over time, protecting bullies sustains a workplace culture that is bullying-prone and unsafe for prospective targets. Protection ensures that bullying continues with impunity.

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.

For this survey, 593 target-respondents answered the following question:

Did (does) the bully have someone who provides protection against punishment?

Percentages of each response were:

- .346 Yes. Protection comes from a higher-ranking manager
- .319 Yes. Protection comes from an executive or owner.
- .153 Yes. Protection comes from HR.
- .118 Yes. Protection comes from a supervisor.
- .040 Not sure.
- .024 No. My bully has been punished.

First, the good news from the perspective of a bullied target. In 2% of cases, the bully was not protected and was punished for her or his misdeeds. Unfortunately bad things happened to bullies about half as frequently as survey respondents said they were not sure about anything!

Individuals with a higher rank than the bully provided 66.5% of the support. We call them “executive sponsors” of the perpetrators. Without their ability to shield the bully from accountability, bullies would be stopped because of the obvious harm they bring to employers. Another role of the sponsor is to override the outcome of an honest investigation or to interfere with, and corrupt, an investigation in its early stages.

A supervisor was credited as the source of support in 12% of cases, suggesting that that was the proportion of cases involving worker-on-worker bullying. The supervisor took sides, aiding and abetting one of the two actors, and it wasn't the target.



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