

Recession & Workplace Bullying: 2010 WBI Survey

It's a no-brainer prediction that the economic recession escalates bullying at work. Be careful it may not be as clearcut as it appears. It seems that once again experience with bullying is required. From an online WBI summer 2009 survey of 454 respondents, 28% reported an escalation. In that sample, 97% said that they were now or were previously bullied. Thus, this was a snapshot of the world through the lens of bullied individuals, but not representative of the broader population (the other 65% who have not been bullied).

By contrast, the respondents to the 2010 WBI U.S. Workplace Bullying Survey (n=4,210) reported a much different story about the recession's impact. The large scientific (nationally representative) sample included lots of people who either deny bullying's existence or have a limited experience with it. Here is the comparison of results from the two studies.

2010 survey question: Has the bullying problem at your workplace changed since the recession (approx. Sept. 2008)?

2009 survey question: Did the bullying change since the economic downturn (Sept. 2008)?

Response Categories	2010 WBI U.S. Workplace Bullying Survey (scientific)	2009 WBI Online Survey
Yes. It is more of a problem/It became MORE abusive	8.6%	27.5%
No change. It is the same problem as before/Mistreatment was common and still is	26%	67%
Yes. It is less of a problem/It became LESS abusive	11.9%	3.4%
No change. It was not a problem at my workplace before/Mistreatment was rare and still is	22.9	2%
Not sure	30.7%	n/a

The reader can see the striking difference experience with being bullied makes — 9% vs. 28% who believed that due to the recession, bullying worsened.

In addition to the sampling differences, there were slight variations in definitions used in the two surveys. For the national survey, we stated that: “For the purposes of this survey, workplace bullying is defined as the repeated mistreatment of an individual employee by a person or a group directed that takes the form of verbal abuse, behavior that is humiliating, threatening, intimidating, or sabotage of the targeted person’s work.” For the online 2009 survey, we defined bullying as: “sabotage that prevents work from getting done, verbal abuse, threatening conduct, intimidation, humiliation, or exploitation of a known vulnerability (psychological or physical).” This is the definition used by WBI and codified in the anti-bullying Healthy Workplace Bill.

You can download the results of the [Summer 2009 survey — The Economic Crisis and Bullying](#).

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Zogby International was commissioned by the Workplace Bullying Institute to conduct an online survey of 4,210 adults from 8/4/10 to 8/11/10. A sampling of Zogby International’s online panel, which is representative of the adult population of the U.S., was invited to participate. Slight weights were added to region, party, age, race, religion, gender, education to more accurately reflect the population. The margin of error is +/- 1.5 percentage points.