



**RESEARCH STUDIES**

*workplacebullying.org*

**The WBI Website  
2012 Instant Poll  
C - Aftermath of  
Requesting Help  
from Human Resources**

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## AFTERMATH OF REQUESTING HELP FROM HR

### WBI 2012-C Instant Poll

We are saddened by the consistency of our own research about the failure by human resources (HR) staff to stop workplace bullying when such complaints are filed. Each complaint is a plea for help. We don't want to believe that HR folks are unwilling to help. It's natural to have an empathic bond with someone in pain (sometimes emotional and less apparent than physical wounds). However, the empirical findings are clear from two recent 2012 Workplace Bullying Institute studies (the *Strategies Effectiveness Study* and this 2012-C-IP). HR does not stop bullying when it is reported to them.

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 372 respondents:

*How effective was HR at resolving a workplace bullying complaint in which there was NO illegal discrimination (no sexual harassment, no racial discrimination) ?*

The response choices were:

*HR actions were not helpful to target, retaliation followed -- chosen by 37.3%*

*HR did nothing, took no action -- chosen by 30.9%*

*HR actions were not helpful to target, job was lost -- chosen by 18.2%*

*HR was not told -- chosen by 11.5%*

*HR stopped the bullying fairly & completely for target, justice achieved -- chosen by 1.9%*

In our book, *The Bully-Free Workplace*, we made it clear that bullying, i.e., psychological violence, is leadership's problem, not just for HR. "HR Issues" are considered non-essential by corporate executives and senior managers. They think all the fuzzy psychobabble stuff should be handled by the subordinated HR department. The trouble is that executives should care deeply about the fiscal losses attributable to bullying. To act otherwise is an abdication of responsibility.

So, with an inattentive C-suite, the burden falls on HR whose staff actually interact with employees. HR's hands are tied because executives don't have the will to stop the bullying until a law passes in America. HR doesn't have the authority to craft policies with the requisite power and credibility to hold everyone in the organization accountable. It is also troubling that HR staffers are victims of bullying themselves. Victims cannot help other targets.

As this survey shows, bullied targets (the real customers of bullying resolution processes) are satisfied with HR's role in just **under 2% of cases**. Not nearly good enough.

