

The Workplace Bullying Institute (WBI)
2003 Report on Abusive Workplaces

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October, 2003

Source: Data gathered in 2003 from anonymous and confidential online surveys posted at bullyinginstitute.org. A "nonscientific" sample of 1,000 volunteer respondents who visited the website seeking solutions to their vexing problems at work attributed to a directly experienced cruelty from one or more persons. The research was necessarily done from the perspective of targeted individuals. Participants had the option of completing all or some of the 22-section survey.

Key sections included information that described Targets and their Bullies/Perpetrators, detailed destructive tactics experienced, and the impact of bullying on their health. The results of those analyses appear below.

[Subsequent analyses will describe psychological and workplace conditions that predict who among the Targets is likely to be traumatized and will explore in-depth characteristics of the hyperaggressive perpetrators.]

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WBI defines Workplace Bullying as:

- the repeated, health-endangering mistreatment of a person (the Target) by a cruel perpetrator (the bully).
- bullying behaviors--acts of commission and omission--which are all driven by the perpetrator's need to control other people.
- illegitimate, not "tough," behavior; which interferes with an employee's work production and the employer's business interest
- an escalation from 1:1 harassment eventually engulfing an entire work unit in fear, paralyzing productivity in the absence of an adequate mitigating response.

The WBI 2003 Report on Abusive Workplaces

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A. About Survey Respondents, Individuals Targeted

Women: 80% Men: 20%

Age: average (the mean): 43

Education: 84% college educated

Work experience: mean = 21.4 years in the workplace, mean = 6.7 years for employer where bullying occurred.

[Targets are predominantly 40-ish, educated and veteran employees, specifically people who have experience with the employer before the bullying interfered with their careers.]

Type of employer: 36% corporate; 31% government; 12% nonprofit orgs; 11% small business

Duration of the bullying: mean = 23 months (men targets endured an average of 25.6 months and men bullies sustained 25.3 months of aggression)

[Targets cannot be called thin-skinned. They stay for a long time working under conditions rational people would consider intolerable.]

How does the bullying end?

The majority of WBI survey respondents (61%) reported that bullying was current and ongoing.

The survey respondents for whom the bullying has ended reported what made it stop:

37% of the Targets were fired or involuntarily terminated

33% of Targets quit (typically taking some form of constructive discharge)

17% of Targets transfer to another position with the same employer

[Once targeted, bullied individuals face a 70% chance of losing their job.]

4% of Bullies stopped bullying after punishment or sanctions

9% of Bullies were transferred or terminated

[Bullying is done with impunity. Perpetrators face a low risk of being held accountable. Targeted individuals pay by losing their once-cherished positions.]

B. About Perpetrators, the Bullies

1. A different kind of harassment:

a.) Women bullies: 58% Men bullies: 42%

In only 25% of cases was the target a member of a 'protected status' group and the bully was not. This is the minimal requirement for filing a harassment or discrimination claim based on civil rights violations. In 15% of cases, the bully is the one who was 'protected.' [Bullying or 'status-blind' harassment is three times more prevalent its illegal variety, which itself is a subset of the more general variety.]

b.) Bullying -- unaddressed by state or federal civil rights protections:

Women bullies choose Women targets 87% of time; choose Men targets 13%.
Men bullies choose Women targets 71% of time; choose Men targets 29%.

Woman-on-Woman bullying represents 50% of all workplace bullying
Man-on-Woman bullying = 30%
Man-on-Man = 12%
Woman-on-Man = 8%

Probability for Women targets to be bullied by a Woman bully is 63%
Probability for Men targets to be bullied by a Man bully is 62%.

[Bullying is same-sex harassment, most of the time, and therefore invisible when seen through the lens of anti-discrimination laws. Existing civil rights laws in the U.S., believed by the general public to prohibit harassment, do not apply to same-sex cases (except when unwanted sexual overtures are involved).]

2. Bully's Rank relative to the target:

Bully has higher rank than target: 71% (men bullies were more top-down, 76%, than were women bullies, 67%)

Bully is a co-worker, peer, colleague of the target: 17%

Bullies from the bottom-up: 12% (women targets experienced slightly more bottom-up and peer bullying than men, 36% vs., 23%, respectively)

3. Spreading the misery among other targets:

Women bullies were more likely to torment more than a single target in the work unit (68%) than were men (63%).

4. Bullies enlist the help of others:

a.) Only 23% of bullies chose to do the bullying by themselves; 77% enlisted others to help -- by alternately bullying the target alone (32%) and at other times having help from others (45%).

The target's co-workers frequently became the bully's allies (48%). Women bullies recruited co-workers a bit more than did men bullies (53% and 42%, respectively).

The majority of bully backers came from the bully's peer group in 28% of cases. Remember that in 71% of cases this would be other managers, at least one level rank above the target. Higher level managers assist in the bullying of targets in 24% of cases. Men bullies tend to rely upon management (57%) supporters as frequently as women bullies enlist the help of the target's co-workers (53%).

[Men bullies tend to use the organization's hierarchy; women bullies use the social network of peers to accomplish the bullying.]

b.) Size of the bullying group:

Targets report an average of 3.5 people eventually being involved with the bullying. Men bullies and their allies number 3.9 on the average; women bullies and cohorts, 3.2.

[The survey results validate WBI's definition of bullying. The phenomenon begins with a single person who then orchestrates the campaign of hate with the help of allies. Thus, the semantic difference between workplace bullying and "mobbing " disappears. They are identical phenomena.]

C. What Do Bullies Do?

1. Top 25 Tactics Adopted by All Bullies

1. falsely accused someone of "errors" not actually made (71%)
2. stared, glared, was nonverbally intimidating and was clearly showing hostility (68%)
3. discounted the person's thoughts or feelings ("oh, that's silly") in meetings (64%)
4. used the "silent treatment" to "ice out" & separate from others (64%)
5. exhibited presumably uncontrollable mood swings in front of the group (61%)
6. made up own rules on the fly that even she/he did not follow (61%)
7. disregarded satisfactory or exemplary quality of completed work despite evidence (58%)
8. harshly and constantly criticized having a different 'standard' for the Target (57%)
9. started, or failed to stop, destructive rumors or gossip about the person (56%)
10. encouraged people to turn against the person being tormented (55%)
11. singled out and isolated one person from co-workers, either socially or physically (54%)
12. publicly displayed "gross," undignified, but not illegal, behavior (53%)
13. yelled, screamed, threw tantrums in front of others to humiliate a person (53%)
14. stole credit for work done by others (47%)
15. abused the evaluation process by lying about the person's performance (46%)
16. "insubordinate" for failing to follow arbitrary commands (46%)
17. used confidential information about a person to humiliate privately or publicly (45%)
18. retaliated against the person after a complaint was filed (45%)
19. made verbal put-downs/insults based on gender, race, accent or language, disability (44%)
20. assigned undesirable work as punishment (44%)
21. made undoable demands-- workload, deadlines, duties -- for person singled out (44%)
22. launched a baseless campaign to oust the person and not stopped by the employer (43%)
23. encouraged the person to quit or transfer rather than to face more mistreatment (43%)
24. sabotaged the person's contribution to a team goal and reward (41%)
25. ensured failure of person's project by not performing required tasks: signoffs, taking calls, working with collaborators (40%)

2. Different Tactics Chosen based on Bullies' Gender

a.) **Men perpetrators were more likely**(& showed a statistically significant greater likelihood) than women perpetrators to adopt the following tactics:

- Public screaming (#13 above), 66% of men vs. 58% of women perpetrators
- Illegal verbal tactics (#19), 55% vs. 47%
- Sabotaging a person's contribution (#24), 54% vs. 42%
- Post-complaint retaliation (#18), 57% vs. 47%
- Timing mistreatment to correspond with medical or psych vulnerability, 53% vs. 39%
- Withholding resources for success, then blaming the target, 52% vs. 40%
- Name calling, 48% vs. 35%
- Threatening job loss, punishment, 45% vs. 32%
- Interfering with paycheck or earned benefits, 37% vs. 28%
- Blocking access to equipment & resources for success, 34% vs. 26%
- Discriminating so as to be illegal & potentially actionable, 22% vs. 10%
- Assigning person to unsafe work environment, 19% vs. 12%
- Threatening to do physical harm, 22% vs. 9%
- Engaging in physical sexual aggression, 14% vs. 8%
- Boasting about owning & proficiency with a weapon, 10% vs. 4%

b.) **Women perpetrators were more likely** (with similar statistical significance) than men perpetrators to adopt the following tactics:

- Silent treatment, icing out individuals (#4), 76% vs. 68% by men
- Encouraged colleagues to turn against the target (#10), 67% vs. 59%

3. Different Tactics Chosen based on Targets' Gender

a.) **Women targets were more likely**(& showed a statistically significant greater likelihood) than men targets to be recipients of the following tactics:

- Having contributions to meetings discounted, 74% of women vs. 61% of men
- Being mistreated when medically or psychologically vulnerable, 45% vs. 35%
- Denied training or time to succeed in new job, 43% vs. 34%
- Blocked access to equipment & resources for success, 30% vs. 21%
- Uninvited invasion of office space & scrutiny of e-mails, 22% vs. 14%

b.) **Men targets were more likely**(& showed a statistically significant greater likelihood) than women targets to be recipients of the following tactics:

- Tormented because of disability, 26% of men vs. 18% of women
- Threatened with physical harm, 21% vs. 12%

D. Why Targets Were Chosen (Bullies' motives as seen by Targets)

1. Ranking of the 14 Reasons (provided by the survey itself), most to least frequent

1. I remained independent, refused to be controlled or to be subservient (70%)
2. My competence and reputation were threatening (67%)
3. The bully's personality (59%)
4. My being liked by co-workers and customers (47%)
5. In retaliation for my reporting unethical or illegal conduct, whistleblowing (38%)
6. I was focused solely on work and ignored the politics (36%)
7. Bully had personal problems (35%)
8. I am nonconfrontive and easily overrun by others (33%)
9. It was at a time of personal med or life vulnerability or changes (30%)
10. I could not afford to leave the job and the bully knew it (30%)
11. It was my turn in the rotation among co-workers (29%)
12. No apparent reason; I do not know (28%)
13. Result of the bully's promotion or newness to my workplace (25%)
14. The bully was following either explicit or 'understood' instructions from boss above (19%)

2. Different Selection Reasons based on Bullies' Gender

a.) From the respondent targets' perspective, **men perpetrators were more likely**(& showed a statistically significant greater likelihood) than women perpetrators to select their targets for the following reasons:

- Targets' asserted independence, 75% of men bullies vs. 66% of women bullies
- Targets focused on work, ignoring workplace politics, 38% vs. 31%

b.) From the respondent targets' perspective, **women perpetrators were more likely**(& showed a statistically significant greater likelihood) than men perpetrators to select their targets for the following reasons:

- Threat posed by targets' competence & reputation, 68% vs. 61%
- Co-worker/customer liking the targets, 49% vs. 40%
- Ease of overrunning non-confrontive targets, 36% vs. 25%
- Simply the target's turn in the bully's rotation among targets, 31% vs. 22%
- Newness of the relationship, 25% vs. 19%

3. Different Selection Reasons based on Targets' Gender

From the respondent targets' perspective, **women targets were more likely**(& showed a statistically significant greater likelihood) than men targets to be selected for only the following reason:

- The bully knew that the target could not afford to leave the job, 29% vs. 19%

4. Another view of the 14 potential reasons

The above 14 potential reasons were collapsed into three categories and the proportions of reasons designated by respondent targets within each category were calculated. In other words, the respondents gave more or less explanatory weight to the three factors by choosing to explain reasons for being targeted within each category.

Explanatory Categories

- Characteristics of Targets themselves (above items: 1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 9)
Women targets' proportion: 45.1% Men targets' proportion: 46.9%
- Characteristics of Bullies (above items: 3, 5, 7)
Women targets' proportion: 42.7% Men targets' proportion: 40.6%
- The Situational context of the bullying (above items: 10, 11, 12, 13, 14)
Women targets' proportion: 24.5% Men targets' proportion: 22.1%

5. An Attributional Approach to Understanding Why Bullies Bully

In a separate section of the WBI survey, people were asked to explain why the bullying happened in a second, more direct, way. Survey respondents divided 100% of the total responsibility across five (5) categories. When people assigned responsibility for events in this way, they were making "causal attributions." They attributed, or designate, the cause of events from the perspective of a bullied target.

The Potential Causes, Attributions

- Bad luck to be in the wrong place and wrong time or it simply was my turn.
- The work environment was hostile, sometimes breaking internal policies or laws.
- The harasser's responsibility -- by virtue of job skills or lack of them, or personality, or interpersonal style or some combination of each.
- My responsibility -- by virtue of job skills or lack of them, or personality, or interpersonal style or some combination of each.
- I did not try hard enough to fit in.

a.) Overall Rankings based on average respondent percentages to each cause

1. The harasser, the bully -- 54.6%
2. Hostile work environment -- 31.8%
3. In the wrong place at wrong time -- 16.6%
4. Personal (the target's) skill or personality-- 14.1%
5. Personal (the target's) insufficient effort -- 9.9%

[Note that the total is not 100% but closer to 127%. Averaging distorts the process and respondents had difficulty limiting their total to 100% across the five categories.]

[Targets principally blamed the harasser and the work environment for the bullying. This makes sense in the context of attribution theory because from the targets' (actors') point of view, they see how the bully controls the onset, manner and duration of the bullying and that it takes a bullying-tolerant or bullying-rewarding environment to sustain, rather than to stop, the mistreatment. Targets do accept personal responsibility nearly one-quarter of the time. Though this sounds laudable, it must be remembered that when individuals blame themselves for the bad things that happen to them, their mental health suffers. Self-blame and the overattribution of internal reasons for negative outcomes is well documented in people with clinical depression. Research has shown that observers/witnesses of events commit the mistake of blaming victims for their fate. This is called the Fundamental Attribution Error. It is partly due to an outsider's focus on the individual while not attending at all to situational factors to which the target (actor) may be reacting. When co-workers are part of the bullying environment, they make the Error choosing to rationalize their conduct by portraying the target as somehow deserving or inviting the mistreatment endured. When targets turn on themselves, it seals their fate among witnesses who see targets as accepting their plight and begins the downward spiral of personal emotional health.]

b.) Gender Differences in Attribution

There were no statistically significant differences in attributions made with respect to women and men targets. Both women and men ranked the causes identically to the overall pattern seen above.

However, targets differed in the percentage of cause assigned to the Hostile Work Environment and Personal Responsibility attributions based on gender of the bully. Men bullies were perceived as making the workplace more hostile than women bullies (35.5% vs. 29.3%). Men perpetrators also led targets, both women and men respondents, to blame their own skills or personalities more than did women bullies (15.7% vs. 12.6%).

[This attribution result confirms the role that targets who see themselves as independent and not subservient incur the wrath of workplace bullies. Independence is an aspect of one's personality. Thus, targets could see their strength as a cause for bullying by an insecure, emotion-challenged bully. And it is men bullies who create a more hostile workplace when targets dare to threaten their will to control them.]

6. The Threats Targets Pose to Bullies

a.) Among the most prevalent reasons targets reported for being bullied was that they had been seen by their bullies as threatening, either because of superior skills (2nd ranked reason) or social skills (being liked was 4th ranked). The WBI survey asked respondents to make compare on several characteristics themselves to their assailant. The response options were to declare either a superiority (target had more of a particular characteristic than the bully), a deficiency (bully had more), or an equivalence (both were approximately equal).

The comparative dimensions included technical skills, organizational politics, social skills, identification with job, ethicality, independence, and some physical characteristics.

As for Technical Job Skills, a vast majority of men targets (74%) believed they were better than their bully, but only slightly over half of women targets (55%) felt superior. Women bullies were held in slightly lower regard than male bullies (61% of targets felt superior to women bullies, 56% felt superior to men bullies). On related characteristics, targets said they were slightly better at Planning and Prioritizing Work Tasks (54% superiority by men, 52% by women), Time Management (58% superiority by women, only 43% by men), and Flexibility, having an openness to change (79% superiority by women, 75% by men).

Both women and men targets reported that they had the advantage in the Ability to Get Along Well with Others (74% of women, 84% of men), thus supporting the 4th highest ranked reason for being targeted. On related dimensions in this section of the WBI survey, targets saw themselves possessing a greater Ability to Get Others to Do Work Without Resentment (84% men, 74% women), more Empathy (95% women, 91% men), more Social Ability (79% women, 74% men), better able to keep Long-Term Relationships (65% by both women and men), more Emotional Control (59% women, 52% men), and better able than bullies to Separate Family from Work (55% women, 49% men).

b.) When asked to compare themselves on "Independence, Strength of Personality," 54% of both women and targets claimed superiority. Perceived equality was reported by 31% of women and 24% of men; bullies were rated as showing more Independence by 15% of women and 22% of men. This finding stands in marked contrast to the top ranking given to target Independence as the top reason for being targeted.

[In one section of the WBI survey, independence was defined as refusing to be controlled or to be subservient. In another, it was defined as strength of personality. The former is a positive, dignity-asserting definition, while the latter "strength" could also describe an intimidating, battering, abusive individual who uses her or his strength to harm others. Therefore, the construction of the separate views of Independence tapped different aspects of the phenomenon and respondents were appropriately particular about how they answered.]

c.) Bullies were also rated by targets as having less Integrity (92% women target superiority, 87% men target superiority), less Ethicality (3% bully superiority as rated by both women and by men targets), a superiority in Organizational Politics (62% by women targets, 63% by men), more committed to Personal Career Advancement (46% by women, 44% by men), having inferior Emotional Control (29% by men, 24% by women), and having more of their Identity Defined by the Job (59% by women, 58% by men).

Some physical dimensions illustrated differences between targets and bullies. Targets saw themselves as slightly more Attractive (55% superiority by women, 51% by men). Men bullies had a Height advantage over women targets (49%), but men targets were taller than their bullies in 49% of cases. Bullies of women targets had a greater Physical Size in 60% of the cases. For men targets, the size difference was evenly split--43% of the time the target was larger, 40% of the time the bully was larger.

E. Impact on Targets' Health

A critical defining characteristic of workplace bullying, according to the WBI definition, is that it harms the health of the targeted individual. Health endangerment distinguishes bullying from routine office politics, teasing, roughhousing, prickliness, incivility, and boorishness.

1. The WBI Health Symptoms List

The list is 33-item set of symptoms that survey respondents evaluated. The responses were analyzed in two ways. First, if the items were checked at all, and any or all of the items could be checked, the percentages of target-respondents who experienced each symptom were calculated.

a.) Overall Ranking of the Prevalence of Symptoms, most to least frequent

1. Anxiety, stress, excessive worry (76%)
2. Loss of concentration (71%)
3. Disrupted sleep (71%)
4. Feeling edgy, irritable, easily startled and constantly on guard (paranoia) (60%)
5. Stress headaches (55%)
6. Obsession over details at work (52%)
7. Recurrent memories, nightmares and flashbacks (49%)
8. Racing heart rate (48%)
9. Needing to avoid feelings, thoughts, and situations that remind you of trauma or a general emotional "flatness"(47%)
10. Body aches--muscles or joints (45%)
11. Exhaustion, leading to an inability to function (41%)
12. Compulsive behaviors (40%)
13. Diagnosed depression (39%)
14. Shame or embarrassment that led to dramatic changes in lifestyle (38%)
15. Significant weight change (loss or gain) (35%)
16. Chronic fatigue syndrome (35%)
17. Panic attacks (32%)
18. TMJ (jaw tightening/teeth grinding) (29%)
19. Skin changes, e.g., shingles, rashes, acne (28%)
20. Use of substances to cope: tobacco, alcohol, drugs, food (28%)
21. Asthma or allergies (27%)
22. Thinking about being violent towards others (25%)
23. Suicidal thoughts (25%)
24. Migraines (23%)
25. Irritable bowel syndrome (colitis) (23%)
26. Chest pains (23%)
27. Hair loss (21%)
28. Fibromyalgia--inflamed joints and connective tissue (19%)
29. High blood pressure/hypertension (18%)
30. Ulcers (11%)

31. Angina (11%)
32. Heart arrhythmia (5%)
33. Heart attack(s) (3%)

One theme shared by nearly all the symptoms in the list is that most are Stress-Related Health Diseases. Dominating the top 13 symptoms are those that generally define General Anxiety Disorder (ranked items 1, 3, 4, 5 & 8), Clinical Depression (ranked items: 2, 3, 6, 11 & 13), and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD: ranked items 4, 7 & 9, see the PTSD section below).

It is noteworthy that the 25% likelihood of committing violence against others (in line with the simplistic notion that physical workplace violence is perpetrated by those once bullied) is equal to the probability that suicide (violence against the self) was contemplated.

[This suggests that whenever workplace disputes go unresolved, the traditional and reflexive fear that the victim will lash out against those perceived as failing to pursue resolution is generally unfounded. A parallel and equally justified fear is that the disadvantaged party in such disputes will commit suicide. But suicide rarely garners headlines in the press and do not pose risks to employers.]

Women targets, who comprise 80% of the respondents to the survey, were diagnosed (ostensibly by a mental health professional) slightly more frequently with Depression (41%) than men targets (37%).

There are only slight variations between overall rank order of symptom prevalence and the lists for women and men targets. Anxiety remains ranked first in both lists, Depression is 12th on both lists and the three PTSD symptom categories are among the top 10 problems.

b.) The research team also calculated the proportion of health symptoms checked. The number was simply the number out of 33 possible symptoms experienced. It was expected to be a reverse index of wellness; the higher the proportion, the sicker the person. However, the diversity of the symptoms rendered the interpretation of such a summary index meaningless. It matters little if the only symptom is survival of a heart attack. The proportion of 1 out of 33 is very small, but the severity of a heart attack undermines the utility of the intended index.

Before abandoning the proportional index, gender comparisons among targets and bullies were analyzed. No significant differences emerged. Women targets had a slightly higher number of symptoms (43.4% of the 33 symptoms) than did men (42.2%). Men bullies did cause targets to suffer a slightly higher number of symptoms (44.9%) than did women bullies (42%), which is consistent with other findings from the survey that show men to inflict greater cruelty.

2. Newness of Health Problems

a.) The second way in which WBI Health Symptoms List data were analyzed used the scale given to respondents. For each symptom, people declared if they had the symptom before the bullying, and if so, did the bullying not affect the problem (scored as "0") or did it worsen the health problem (scored as "1"). The third response option was to state that the symptom was new (scored as "2"); it had not been experienced before the bullying.

Newness could indicate that the mistreatment from bullying is responsible. An absence prior to encountering the bully and allies coupled with onset only after the bullying began is the basis for inferring a causal connection. Reasonable observers would say that bullying most probably caused health problems.

Remarkably, the relevant health impact reviewers -- Workers' Compensation and Disability Insurance -- tend to deny claims of stress-related diseases when it can be shown that conditions were pre-existing, even when medically managed. Denial of the causal link is important to employers and the not-so-impartial pro-employer WC and disability systems.

The table below shows that most of the health problems in the List were experienced for the first time after being targeted for mistreatment at work. The pre-existing percentages are obtained simply by subtracting the newness percentage from 100.

1. Heart arrhythmia (82%)
2. Use of substances to cope: tobacco, alcohol, drugs, food (82%)
3. Avoidance of feelings, thoughts, and situations that remind you of trauma (81%)
4. Recurrent memories, nightmares and flashbacks (80%)
5. Chronic fatigue syndrome (80%)
6. Shame or embarrassment that led to dramatic changes in lifestyle (79%)
7. Feeling edgy, irritable, easily startled and constantly on guard (paranoia) (78%)
8. Obsession over details at work (77%)
9. Panic attacks (77%)
10. Exhaustion, leading to an inability to function (76%)
11. Compulsive behaviors (75%)
12. Ulcers (74%)
13. Thinking about being violent towards others (73%)
14. Hair loss (73%)
15. Fibromyalgia--inflamed joints and connective tissue (71%)
16. Racing heart rate (70%)
17. Loss of concentration (69%)
18. Skin changes, e.g., shingles, rashes, acne (69%)
19. Irritable bowel syndrome (colitis) (69%)
20. Angina (69%)
21. Disrupted sleep (68%)
22. Stress headaches (68%)
23. Suicidal thoughts (68%)
24. Anxiety, stress. excessive worry (66%)
25. Diagnosed depression (65%)
26. Significant weight change (loss or gain) (65%)
27. High blood pressure/hypertension (62%)
28. Migraines (57%)
29. Body aches--muscles or joints (55%)
30. Chest pains (55%)
31. Asthma or allergies (54%)

32. TMJ (jaw tightening/teeth grinding) (54%)
33. Heart attack(s) (50%)

The ranked list of new symptoms reveals two trends. First, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD: symptoms 3, 4 & 7) was new to about 80% of all targets. That means that they had never before been overwhelmed by psychological distress as they strongly experienced it after the bullying.

b.) The second set of observations is about pre-existing conditions and gender.

1. We looked for differences in pre-existing conditions based on target gender. Depression was new to both men and women targets, with exactly 35% having had prior bouts of it.

All three symptom categories of PTSD had been experienced by men more than women targets. Recurrent memories, nightmares and flashbacks (hereafter called *Thought Intrusions*) prior to bullying were reported by 30% of men but only 18% of women. Feeling edgy, irritable, easily startled (called *Hypervigilance*) was familiar to 27% of men and 21% of women. Avoiding previous thoughts, situations and locations to escape the fear (called *Avoidance* in the PTSD lexicon) was something 25% of men and 18% of women had done before being bullied. Of course, the vast majority experienced these PTSD symptoms for the first time.

2. When analyzing differences in newness of health problems attributed to gender of the bullies, several statistically significant differences emerge. According to the target respondents, women bullies more than men bullies were responsible for greater interference with concentration (74% women bullies vs. 62% men bullies, respectively), for more anxiety (70% vs. 59%), racing heart rate (75% vs. 61%), depression (70% vs. 58%), onset of asthma (63% vs. 40%), TMJ (63% vs. 44%), hair loss (80% vs. 55%), and heart arrhythmia (68% vs. 30%).

Additionally without meeting the strict standard of statistical significance, women bullies, more than men, were found to have triggered the following health problems: Hypervigilance (one of the PTSD symptoms), sleep disturbances, stress headaches, skin problems, compulsive behaviors, panic attacks, thinking about violence toward others, suicidal thoughts, body aches, Fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue syndrome, exhaustion, colitis, ulcers, chest pains, angina, hypertension and heart attacks.

Men bullies more than women bullies were responsible for a statistically higher rate of obsession by targets (84% vs. 73%, respectively). Other non-significant differences were that men bullies generated more first-time shame and embarrassment, Thought Intrusions and Avoidance (two of the PTSD symptoms), and migraines.

Women and men bullies equally affected targets' lives such that 65% of target weight changes accompanied the bullying experience.

3. Bullying and PTSD

- a.) Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder may be diagnosed by the presence of one or more of three commonly accepted symptom categories, each of which was represented directly in the survey with a single item on the WBI Health Symptoms List :
- Hypervigilance (feeling edgy, irritable, easily startled) characterized by 60% of all survey respondents as indicative of their current health status
 - Thought Intrusions (recurrent memories, nightmares and flashbacks) -- 49%
 - Avoidance (avoiding previously fearful thoughts, situations and locations) -- 47%
- b.) Gender differences in PTSD symptomatology were reported in Section 2b1 above.
- c.) We included in our survey, a limited set of subscales derived from the Trauma Symptom Inventory (TSI) written by John Briere. The TSI is a statistically reliable and valid instrument with 100 brief descriptions of emotional experiences or behaviors asking respondents to rate the frequency of their experiences (never to often) during the last 6 months. Sample items were "periods of trembling and shaking," "suddenly remembering something upsetting from your past," "trying to block out certain memories," and "feeling afraid you might die or be injured." TSI subscales most relevant to the WBI research were:
- Anxious Arousal (AA): 8 items measuring symptoms of anxiety, especially those associated with posttraumatic hyperarousal
 - Intrusive Experiences (IE): 8 items measuring thought intrusions
 - Defensive Avoidance (DA): 8 items measuring both cognitive (pushing painful thoughts and memories out of one's mind) and behavioral (avoidance of stimuli reminiscent of a traumatic event)

We scored the subscales in an unorthodox way. We calculated each individual's proportion of the total possible scores on each of the subscales. That is, if 24 points was the maximum possible, the individual's score was the raw score divided by 24. Of the 1,000 WBI survey respondents, only 119 completed the TSI subscale section, therefore limiting the conclusions that can be drawn from the data.

Target gender and PTSD as measured by the TSI. Bullied men had a higher and statistically significant greater proportion of trauma on all three indices. Men experienced more anxious arousal (hypervigilance) (75.6%) than women (63.7%); men had more intrusive experiences (64.4% vs. 48.4%); men had showed more avoidance (77.5% vs. 53.9%).

Bully gender and trauma as measured by the TSI. Though women bullies tended to cause more trauma as defined by the AA, IE and DA scales, the proportions of impact when compared to men bullies were not statistically significantly higher.

WBI Health Symptom List items and the TSI. Each of the relevant TSI subscales contained 8 items depicting aspects of the three PTSD symptom categories. There was a 1:1 correspondence between the three PTSD items on our Health Symptom List and the three categories. Clearly the TSI should yield a more complete picture of PTSD symptomatology. The correlations between proportion scores on the TSI subscales and the WBI individual PTSD items were weak (showing a nearly zero association) and not significant. This could be explained by the small sample of respondents who completed the TSI subscales. However, the strong interitem correlations within

the TSI subscales suggest that the more trustworthy measure of PTSD symptoms was the TSI even with the small sample.

4. Acute Anxiety

Based on the anecdotal history of callers to the WBI seeking help, bullied targets experience high levels of anxiety. Severe anxiety was reported by the highest percentage of survey respondents (76%). So, we included in the survey a reliable instrument that assesses anxiety in a non-clinical sample (people not psychiatrically hospitalized) -- the Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI). The BAI is more a measure of anxiety as a state (a temporary condition) than a measure of a stable, relatively constant, personality trait or characteristic. That is, anxiety induced by bullying can pass if conditions change.

The BAI is a 21-item list of adjectives rated by respondents with regards to how "bothered" they were "during the past week, including today." Bothered ratings ranged from "not at all" to "severely bothered." Some descriptors of anxiety included "wobbliness in legs," "terrified," and "fear of losing control."

Target gender and the BAI. Both women and men targets' average BAI scores fell into Beck's standardized "Moderate to Severe" Anxiety score range. Bullied women average BAI score was 24 (out of 63 maximum); bullied men's average was 21. However, the BAI traditionally finds that women score an average of four points higher than men. This pair of BAI results confirms that anxiety is a major component of the health impact of bullying.

Bully gender and the BAI. Men bullies induced a slightly higher level of acute anxiety (mean BAI score of 25) than did women bullies (23.4). Note that women bullies generated more trauma but men created more general anxiety.

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