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**U.S. WORKPLACE BULLYING SURVEY
SEPTEMBER, 2007**

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Waitt Institute for Violence Prevention
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**WAITT INSTITUTE
FOR VIOLENCE PREVENTION**

Zogby International conducted 7740 online interviews of a panel that is representative of the adult population of the U.S. This is the largest national scientific survey of the phenomenon in the U.S. to date. [Section 1, page 2]

Key Findings

- **Workplace Bullying is an Epidemic**
37% of American workers, 54 million people, have been bullied at work. It affects half (49%) of American adults, 71.5 million workers. [Section 2, page 4]
 - **Bullying is Same-Gender/Same-Race Harassment Ignored by Current Laws**
Bullying is 4 times more prevalent than illegal forms of "harassment."
[Section 4, page 9]
 - **American Employers Can and Do Ignore Bullying**
In 62% of the cases, when made aware of bullying, employers worsen the problem or simply do nothing [Section 4, page 10] **despite losing an estimated 21-28 million workers because of bullying** [Section 8, page 16]
- There Oughta Be A Law** [The Workplace Bullying Institute Legislative Campaign at BullyBusters.org 13 states that have introduced the WBI anti-bullying Healthy Workplace Bill since 2003.]
- **Most Bullies are Bosses -- the Stereotype is Real**
72% of bullies are bosses. 55% of those bullied are rank-and-file workers.
[Section 5, page 10]
 - **Bullying Most Strongly Affects Women**
Women are targeted by bullies more frequently (in 57% of cases), especially by other women (in 71% of cases). [Section 3, page 7]
 - **Bullying is a Public Health Hazard**
For 45% of bullied targets, stress affects their health. 33% suffer for more than one year [Section 7, page 15]
 - **Bullied Individuals are not "sue-crazy," Many Fail to Even Complain**
Only 3% of bullied targets file lawsuits. 40% never complain. [Section 7, page 14]
 - **Perpetrators Suffer Little Despite Inflicting Suffering**
Targets have to stop the vast majority of bullying (77%) by losing their jobs despite being the ones harmed. [Section 8, page 16]

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1. Methodology and Sample Characteristics

Methodology

Zogby International conducted online interviews of 7,740 adults. A sampling of Zogby International's online panel, which is representative of the adult population of the U.S., was invited to participate. The online poll ran from 8/10/07 through 8/13/07. The margin of error is +/- 1.1 percentage points. Margins of error are higher in sub-groups. Slight weights were added to region, party, age, race, religion, and gender to more accurately reflect the population.

Sample Characteristics	Frequency	Valid Percent*
Sample size	7,740	100
East	1,721	23
South	1,946	26
Central/Great Lakes	2,320	31
West	1,497	20
Did not answer region	256	--
18-29	1,543	20
30-49	3,087	40
50-64	1,775	23
65+	1,312	17
Did not answer age	23	--
White	5,728	75
Hispanic	764	10
African American	840	11
Asian/Pacific	153	2
Other/mixed	153	2
Did not answer race	103	--
Roman Catholic	2,033	27
Protestant	3,765	50
Jewish	226	3
Other/None (religion)	1,506	20
Did not answer religion	210	--
Member of union	1,440	19
Not member of union	6,179	81
Parent of child under 17	2,026	27
Not parent of child under 17	5,599	73

Sample Characteristics (continued)	Frequency	Valid Percent*
Married	4,615	61
Single, never married	1,642	22
Divorced/widowed/separated	1,052	14
Civil union/domestic partnership	284	4
Did not answer marital status	147	--
Less than \$25,000	468	7
\$25,000-\$34,999	604	9
\$35,000-\$49,999	967	14
\$50,000-\$74,999	1,612	24
\$75,000-\$99,999	1,208	18
\$100,000 or more	1,848	28
Did not answer income	1,034	--
Male	3,664	48
Female	3,938	52
Did not answer gender	138	--
Women - works outside home	2,297	59
Women - not work outside home	1,578	41
Works full time	3,925	51
Part-time	483	6
Self-employed	855	11
Unemployed	360	5
Retired	1,496	19
Student not working	293	4
Other employment/Not sure	329	4

* Numbers have been rounded to the nearest percent and might not total 100.

Which of the following best describes your employment status?

Full time	51%
Retired	19
Self-employed (Survey ends)	11
Part-time	6
Unemployed	5
Student not working (Survey ends)	4
Other/not sure (Survey ends)	4

2. U.S. Prevalence Statistics

2a.) **37% of American Workers have been bullied at work; nearly half (49%) of adult Americans are affected by it, either through direct experience or by witnessing it**

Question: At work, have you experienced or witnessed any or all of the following types of repeated mistreatment: sabotage by others that prevented work from getting done, verbal abuse, threatening conduct, intimidation, humiliation?

Responses	Percentage	Rounding
Yes, I am experiencing it now or have in the last year	12.6%	13%
Yes, it has happened to my in my work life, but not now or in the last year	24.2	24
I've only witnessed it	12.3	12
I've been the perpetrator myself	0.4	(n=22)
Never had it happen to me and never witnessed it	44.9	45

Bullying affects individuals who are directly, currently under assault. However, it also continues to affect them unless the mistreatment is corrected in a way that is perceived as just and fair. [Unfortunately, employers tend to ignore it or worsen the problem for the targeted individual. See Section 4] Thus, the bullying experience lingers. It is fair to say that **37% of American workers have been bullied, combining the current + ever bullied categories.**

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (US DOL) 146 million Americans were employed in July, 2007. An estimated **54 million Americans have been bullied at work** using the 37% rate. Even the more conservative 13% rate (those currently or within the last year experiencing it) places 19 million American workers at risk. It's an epidemic.

Witnessing the humiliation and degradation of others can be vicariously traumatizing. Therefore, it is a conservative statement to say that **bullied individuals and witnesses** are all affected by bullying. In our survey, **nearly half of adult Americans (49.1%)** reported these experiences.

Extrapolating the BLS employment estimate to the total of bullied people + witnesses -- **71.5 million workers** can be estimated to be affected by bullying.

Significant differences in reported experiences of different racial groups emerged. The comparison of combined bullying (current + ever bullied) prevalence percentages reveals the pattern from most to least:

Combined Bullying	Percentage	Rounding
Hispanics	52.1%	52%
African-Americans	46	46
Whites	33.5	34
Asian-Americans	30.6	31

The reported rates of only witnessing bullying were:

Witnessing Only	Percentage	Rounding
African-Americans	21.1%	21%
Hispanics	14	14
Whites	10.8	11
Asian-Americans	8.5	9

The percentages of those claiming to have neither experienced nor witnessed mistreatment were among:

Never Experienced It, Never Witnessed It	Percentage	Rounding
Asian-Americans	57.3%	57%
Whites	49.7	50
Hispanics	32.2	32
African-Americans	23.4	23

Slight differences in bullying experience rates occurred across age groups. The likelihood that a person ever experienced bullying naturally increased with age:

Bullied in Worklife	Percentage	Rounding
50-64	29.7%	30%
30-49	25.5	26
18-39	18.7	19

Conversely, the rates of currently experiencing bullying or within the last year were:

Currently Bullied (<12 mths)	Percentage	Rounding
18-29	18.5%	19%
30-49	16.8	17
50-64	9.9	10

The rates of never witnessing or experiencing bullying were relatively constant across the groups.

A pattern of differences across U.S. geographical regions also emerged. The combined prevalence rates were as follows:

Combined Bullying	Percentage	Rounding
West	41.1%	41%
South	37.5	38
East	34.9	35
Central/Great Lakes	26.3	26

Self-identification by political party seemed to affect prevalence reporting rates. The comparison of combined bullying (current + ever bullied) prevalence percentages reveals this pattern:

Combined Bullying	Percentage	Rounding
Democrats	42.8%	43%
Independents	39.1	39
Republicans	28.9	29

There was wide variation among the never saw it or experienced it rates across political party self-identification:

Never Experienced It, Never Witnessed It	Percentage	Rounding
Republicans	56.6%	57%
Independents	43.2	43
Democrats	35.8	36

The overall finding that 45% of Americans claim to not have experienced or seen workplace bullying emboldens the Institute's resolve that more public education must occur. As was true in the domestic violence movement, observers stayed in denial because of the personal discomfort or fear that acknowledging battering a spouse can arouse. After DV's criminalization, people felt freer to talk, appropriately blaming the perpetrator. Anecdotally, we believe Workplace Bullying is a "silent epidemic," a view confirmed by the ILO (International Labor Organization, a UN agency). It is an "undiscussable" topic at work because of its career-jeopardizing potential. Eventually, the shame and fear associated with it will diminish and bullying will lose its taboo status. Over time, it will be easier to speak about its occurrence and to shame its perpetrators to stop.

2b.) Most (54%) bullying involves public humiliation of targets; 32% of bullying happens behind closed doors

Question: Where did the majority of the mistreatment occur?

Responses	Percentage	Rounding
Out in the open, in front of others	53.9%	54%
Behind closed doors, in silence	31.6	32
Behind doors kept open so others could hear	10.2	10
Not sure	4.3	4

Perhaps the choice by bullies to hide much of the bullying accounts for the 45% of the public who report to have never seen it.

Gender differences among bullies emerged. Men bullies more than women bullies prefer public bullying (57.8% vs. 48.6%). And women bullies prefer to bully behind closed doors (47.2% vs. 38.3%).

3. Gender and Bullying

3a.) Both men and women are bullies; women are targeted more frequently.

Question: What is the gender of the person primarily responsible for the mistreatment?

Question: What is the gender of the person targeted for mistreatment?

	Men	Women
Gender of the Perpetrators, Bullies	60%	40%
Gender of Targeted Individuals	43.3	56.7
When the bully is a woman, she targets	28.7	71.3
When the bully is a man, he targets	53.5	46.5

Note that women prefer to bully other women, 2.5 times more frequently than they target men. Men divide their cruelty showing a slight preference toward same-gender harassment.

In rank order, from most to least frequent, these are the gender pairings with respect to bullying at work.

Categories	Percentage	Rounding
Male who bullies a male target, Man-on-Man , same gender	32.1%	32%
Female who bullies a female target, Woman-on-Woman , same gender	28.5	29
Male who bullies a female target, Man-on-Woman	27.9	28
Female who bullies a male target, Woman-on-Man	11.4	11

3b.) Most, 68% of bullies, operate alone, at least in the beginning.

Question: Did the harasser work alone or were there several people involved in the mistreatment?

Responses	Percentage	Rounding
Solo harasser	68.4%	68%
Several harassers	26.7	27
Not sure	4.9	5

Slight gender differences apply. Women bullies are slightly more likely than men bullies to enlist the help of others to "gang up" on their targets.

4. Bullying: A Different Kind of Harassment

When we say "harassment," most of us automatically think of sexual harassment, which we all know is illegal by state and federal laws. In order for harassment to be illegal and actionable in court, the recipient/victim/target's civil rights must be violated. Further, that person must be a member of a recognized "protected status" group. In the U.S. there are seven Civil Rights protected status groups (with gender & race most prominent) to which a person may belong in order to file a discrimination complaint or lawsuit. In addition, discrimination is prohibited if age or disability can be shown to be the reasons for the harassment. Illegal harassment is status based.

Bullying cuts across boundaries of status group membership. Bullying is status-blind harassment. It must be distinguished from illegal varieties of harassment. Bullying happens when harassment is same gender or same race or when the bully enjoys potential legal protection because he or she is a member of a status protected group.

4a.) Bullying is 4 (four) times more prevalent than illegal, discriminatory harassment.

(Based on the 80:20 ratio in which only 20% of cases would the targeted person have been eligible for a potential discrimination complaint or lawsuit. **Bullies enjoy civil rights protection in 31% of all cases.** And from WBI's anecdotal experience, they are the ones to threaten employers with lawsuits to stop investigations or attempts to curb the mistreatment.

Question: Sometimes mistreatment is based on discrimination due to race, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, or age. Based on those categories, some people enjoy protected status by law. Now considering the mistreatment you endured, witnessed, or participated in, compare the target's status regarding membership in a protected group with that of the harasser's status.

Responses	Percentage	Rounding
The target only is in a protected group	20.2%	20%
Neither harasser and target are in protected group	40.2	40
Harasser and target were/are both in protected group	16.7	17
The harasser only is in a protected group	14	14
Not Sure	9	9

4b.) Employers must respond appropriately when employment laws exist. Since bullying is not currently illegal, how do employers react to bullying? **In 62% of cases when employers are made aware of bullying, they escalate the problem for the target or simply do nothing.** Doing nothing is not a neutral act when an individual explicitly asks for help. When nothing is done, the employer becomes the bully's accomplice, whether deliberately or inadvertently, by allowing it to continue unabated. In less than a third of situations, employers rendered help.

Question: When the mistreatment was reported, what did the employer do? (Asked only of those who said the targeted person filed a complain or lawsuit, or complained informally.)

Employer Action	Percentage	Rounding
Did nothing	43.7%	44%
Worsened the problem for the target	18.4	18
Completely or partially resolved the problem in a way that helped the target	31.9	32
Not sure	6	6

Gender differences occurred. Men bullies were more likely than women bullies to enjoy employer protection by having the organization do nothing in response to reported mistreatment (47.5% vs. 38.8%).

5. Bullying is Top-Down

5a.) Not all bosses are bullies, but most bullies are bosses. **72% of bullies are bosses.** The bully boss stereotype is real.

Question: What was the principal harasser's rank relative to the targeted person? (You if you were the target?)

Responses	Percentage	Rounding
Harasser ranked higher (Boss)	72.3%	73%
Target and Harasser same rank (Peer)	17.7	18
Harasser ranked lower (Subordinate)	8.5	9

Slight gender differences surfaced. Women targets were bullied more by bosses (74.7% vs. 69%) and less by subordinates (6.1% vs. 11.6%) than men targets. Of the subordinate bullies, a higher percentage were women than men (9.5% vs. 7.8%) and men bullies were more likely to be bosses than women bullies (72.9% vs. 71.3%).

5b.) Bullies operate with confidence that they will not likely be punished because they enjoy support from higher-ups who can protect them if and when they are exposed. For those bullies to whom support is given (excluding the "No one" and "Not sure" categories), **43% of bullies have an executive sponsor**; 33% thrive because of support from their peers, mostly fellow managers; and 14% get help from human resources.

Question: Who supported the harasser? (Check all that apply)

Responses	Raw Percentage	Rounding	Adj. Percentage
One or more senior managers or executives or owners	35.2%	35%	43%
The harassers' peers	26.7	27	33
Human resources	11.2	11	14
The target's peers	7.8	8	10
No one	30.2	30	
Not sure	13	13	

There were no gender differences in support for bullies.

5c.) Bullying is primarily top-down. **Non-supervisory employees are the most frequently bullied, accounting for 55% of the total**, with managers (from supervisors to mid-level to senior-level) second most frequently bullied (35%). Temps and contractors (whose livelihood is less vulnerable to an employer's control) represent only 5% of the bullied. Executives, Board members and owners represented 4.8% of the bullied.

Question: What was the targeted person's position?

Respondent Rank	Currently	Ever Bullied	Combined	Witness
Non-Supervisory Employees	57.1%	54.3%	55.3%	62.6%
Supv/Mid/Senior Managers	31.2	36.8	35	29.1
Executives & Owners	4.4	4.8	4.8	3.7
Temps/Contractors	7.3	3.8	5	4.6

6. Tactics of Bullies

6a.) Bullies can be cruelly innovative. They often vary their tactics hour to hour, day to day. So, survey respondents were asked to choose any or all families of tactics from the list provided.

Question: Please describe the forms of mistreatment (Choose all that apply).

Responses	Percentage	Rounding
Verbal abuse (shouting, swearing, name calling, malicious sarcasm, threats to safety, etc.)	53.3%	53%
Behaviors/actions (public or private that were threatening, intimidating, humiliating, hostile, offensive, inappropriately cruel conduct, etc.)	52.5	53
Abuse of authority (undeserved evaluations, denial of advancement, stealing credit, tarnished reputation, arbitrary instructions, unsafe assignments, etc.)	46.9	47
Interference with work performance (sabotage, undermining, ensuring failure, etc.)	45.4	45
Destruction of workplace relationships (among co-workers, bosses, or customers)	30.2	30
Other (See list below)	5.4	5
Not sure	0.5	1

Other responses: (Number in parentheses denotes frequency of similar response.) Sexual harassment, inappropriate contact/conduct/favors (39); Slander, lying misrepresentation, false accusation (20); Physical assault, battery, fighting (12); Reduced income, denying benefits (11); Fired, terminated employment without cause (10); Invasion of privacy, email abuse, identity theft (6); All of the above (6); Threaten job loss (5); Passive-aggressive, perform no work, incompetent (5); Religious prejudice/discrimination (4); Racial prejudice/discrimination (4); Age (2); Theft, took lunch money (2); Property damage, arson (2)

One each: Alcohol created unsafe work environment; Headhunting; Illegal drugs planted in targets vehicle; Subverted OSHA regulations

Slight gender differences surfaced. Men targets were more likely than woman to experience verbal abuse (60.1% vs. 48.1%); women targets were sabotaged more frequently (47.1% vs. 43.1%). Women bullies more frequently than men engaged in sabotage (53.7% vs. 39.9%) and abuse of authority (50.2% vs. 44.7%); men bullies were more frequently verbally abusive than women bullies (57.5% vs. 47.1%).

6b.) Why does bullying happen? The preferred explanations focus on personality, the bully's and the target's. It's the American culture firmly rooted in individualism and myopia about invisible factors that have little to do with the players in the bullying drama. The overall result is **56% because of the bully's personality, 20% because of the target, only 14% because of the system, the work environment run by the employer.**

Question: Why was the target mistreated? Primarily because of ...?

Responses	Percentage	Rounding
Some aspect of the target's personality	12.8%	13%
The target's unacceptable level of performance	7	7
Some aspect of the harasser's personality	56.3	56
The tolerance for, or admiration of, aggression in that particular workplace	8.6	9
Orders or suggestions from senior managers or executives or owners	5.7	6
Not sure	9.7	10

Systemic causes of bullying include whether or not hyper-aggression is rewarded by promotions or forbidden. Survey respondents, however, only credited these types of factors with 14% responsibility.

The 20% responsibility attributed to the target is lower than the bully's responsibility (56%). There is still a tendency, however, to blame the victim somewhat for her or his fate, much like what was historically done for victims of domestic violence. The 20% could also reflect a societal desire to define bullying as a form of conflict with shared responsibility by the two parties. But in violent incidents, we do not make that assumption. Society realizes that perpetrators determine who is targeted, when, and by what method, and for how long. Control is unilaterally driven by the aggressor. And so it is with bullying.

There were gender differences in the attribution of responsibility for bullying. Survey respondents held men more than women bullied targets more responsible for their fate (24.4% vs. 16.1%). When the bully was a woman, her negative personality was given more weight as a causal factor than when the bully was a man (62.4% vs. 52.1%). Also the blame was shifted to systemic factors (see above) that were assigned more responsibility when the bully was a man than when the bully was a woman (16.9% vs. 10.3%).

7. Targets' Reactions

7a.) **Bullied individuals rarely confront or act in an adversarial manner. They sued in only 3% of cases and filed a formal complaint in only 4% of cases, 38% *informally* notified their employers, and 40% did not even tell their employer.**

Question: What action did the targeted person undertake to solve the problem?

Target Action	Percentage	Rounding
Took no action, formal or informal	40.1%	40%
Complained informally to employer/superior	38.4	38
Filed a formal complaint with human resources, senior management or owner	14.6	15
Filed a formal discrimination complaint with a state or federal agency	3.5	4
Filed a lawsuit in court	2.7	3

Other actions not counted in the percentages above: Retired, resigned, quit (64); Complained to union, filed grievance (45); Confronted harasser, attempted resolution (39); Stood up, fought back (28); Transferred, requested reassignment (22); Sought legal counsel, advice (15); Initiated job search, got a new job (14); Coped, minimized interaction, ignored harasser (13); Complained informally to peers (13); Worked hard/improved performance/good attitude (11); Joined class action group effort (11); Complained informally to state or federal agency (10); Harasser was fired, terminated (9); Sought support, EAP, outside help (8); Took responsibility, changed ways (7); Documented thoroughly, compiled copious notes (7); Medical leave, under dr.'s care (6); Covert actions to expose harasser, make him look bad (4); Target fired, terminated (4); Called police, filed report (4); Truce, cease-fire, uneasy peace (3); Severely reprimanded/punished for complaining (2)

One each: Partied "when the bitch transferred"; He died

Some gender differences surfaced. Men targets were more likely than women to take no action (37% vs. 45.5%). Targets were more likely to informally complain to their employer when the bully was a woman than when a man (42.6% vs. 35.6%) and to do nothing when the bully was a man than when a woman (43.8% vs. 36%).

7b.) Bullying can occur with or without harming the health of the bullied individuals. However, when proposing legislation, WBI Legislative Campaign State Coordinators, insist on the proof that health has been harmed to provide a high standard to meet before legal action should be initiated. **For 45% of bullied targets, stress affected their health.**

Question: Did the mistreatment result in stress-related health complications, psychological or physical, for the targeted person?

Stress-Related Health Impact?	Percentage	Rounding
Yes	45.2%	45%
No	35.9	36
Not Sure	18.9	19

Large gender differences resulted. A higher percentage of bullied women suffered stress-related health harm than did men targets (52.6% vs. 35.6%). And women bullies inflicted more health harm than did men bullies (55.1% vs. 38.6%).

7c.) How long does the bullying last? In 75% of bullying cases, mistreatment was experienced repeatedly by targets. When the 25% of respondents who reported only non-repeated mistreatment (only "once or twice") the adjusted percentages reflect that **73% of bullied targets endure bullying for more than 6 months, 44% for more than one year**

Question: How long did the mistreatment continue?

Responses	Percentage	Rounding	Adj. Percentage
More than 12 months	33.4%	33%	44%
6-12 months	21.6	22	29
Less than six months	20.3	20	27
Just once or twice	24.8	25	
	n = 3101		n = 2187

Critics of the phenomenon of workplace bullying and of bullied targets, in particular, posit that targets are "thin-skinned," "whining complainers." In reality, targets endure mistreatment for long periods of time. They do not readily flee. Staying in harm's way can contribute to the onset of emotional injuries from unremitting exposure to a stressful work environment.

8. *Stopping It*

8a.) Targets lose their jobs to make the bullying stop in 77% of cases. Bullies bully with near impunity, experiencing negative consequences in only 23% of cases.

Question: What stopped the mistreatment?

Response	Percentage
It has not stopped	17.2%

The following response percentages exclude the 17% of respondents for whom the bullying is ongoing and the 26% of respondents who checked either "Not Sure" or "Other" (remaining n = 1763). Therefore, for the individuals for whom the bullying stopped, here is their report about what stopped it.

Responses	Percentage
Target was terminated, driven out	24.2%
Target voluntarily left the organization	40
Target transferred and stayed with the same employer	13

Target lost job, combined percentages =	77
Target fired or quit, combined percentages =	64

Harasser stayed but was punished	9%
Harasser was terminated	14
Negative consequences for the bully, combined percentages	23

Bullying generates turnover. When 40% of bullied individuals quit, that represents the **preventable loss of 21.6 million workers** [based on the estimated 54 million who are bullied, Section 2, page 4] for employers at a time when employers face critical shortages of skilled workers. Further, if one makes the conservative estimate that half of the bullied employees' terminations are the result of a bullying boss and not just cause separations, an additional 6.5 million employees lose their jobs to preventable bullying. The **total turnover estimate** attributable to bullying can be reasonably stated to be **28 million American workers**.

One gender difference in what stops bullying is that bullied women targets were more likely to quit than men (45% vs. 32.3%). WBI has found that the sooner targeted individuals restore safety by any means, the healthier they remain or the more quickly they recover from their injuries.

Other Responses Reported	Percentage
Harasser voluntarily left company	79
Harasser transferred, stayed with employer	44
Target fought back	36
Confrontation, worked for resolution	30
I retired/quit	30
Issue resolved, it stopped	24
Harasser reprimanded, given serious warning	18
Medical leave, disability retirement	17
Legal action, lawsuit initiated	16
Truce, cease-fire, uneasy peace	14
Harasser was promoted	14
Target worked hard, improved performance, changed	12
Company closed	11
Minimized interaction, ignored harasser	11
Coworker intervention/counseling	10
Complained to union, filed grievance, arbitration	10
Equal treatment/Both fired/left/reassigned/disciplined	9
Reorganized/new management	8
Contract ended, project canceled	7
Time passage	6
I was promoted, transferred	5
Target was promoted	5
Sought help, EAP, rehab, time-off	4
Harasser died	4

One each: Target died; Target committed suicide; Harasser arrested by police