



# 2021 WBI U.S. WORKPLACE BULLYING SURVEY

The Fifth National Scientific WBI Study  
Zogby Analytics, Pollster

4.

## GENDER OF PERPETRATORS & TARGETS

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FUNDING FROM GENEROUS GOFUNDME CONTRIBUTORS

#### 4. GENDER OF PERPETRATORS & TARGETS

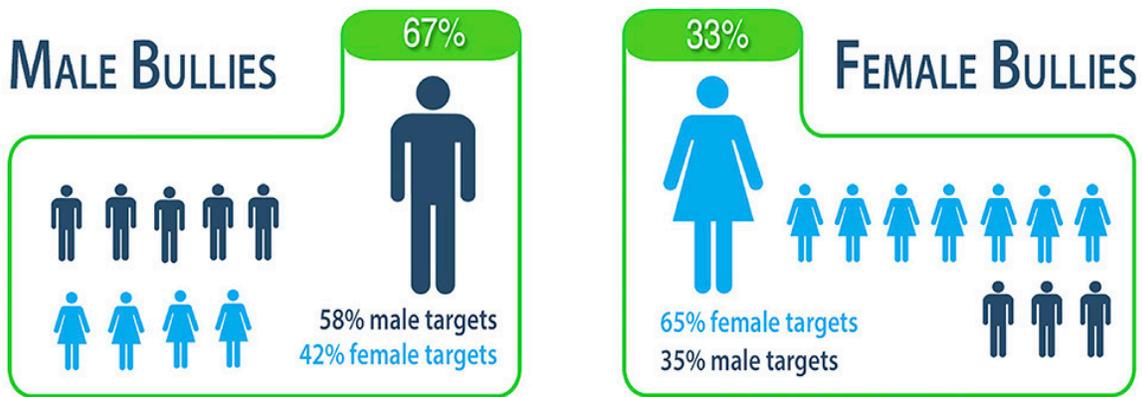
Question: At work, think of the perpetrator and person targeted for repeated mistreatment. What was the gender of each?

Table 10

Gender Pairs - Adult Sample	Proportion	Percentage
Male perpetrator: Male target	.3960	40%
Male perpetrator: Female target	.2836	28%
<i>Male Perpetrator</i>	.6743	67%
Female Perpetrator: Male Target	.1124	11%
Female Perpetrator: Female Target	.2078	21%
<i>Female Perpetrator</i>	.3256	33%
<i>Same Gender Pairs</i>	.6039	60%
<i>Male Target</i>	.5085	51%
<i>Female Target</i>	.4914	49%

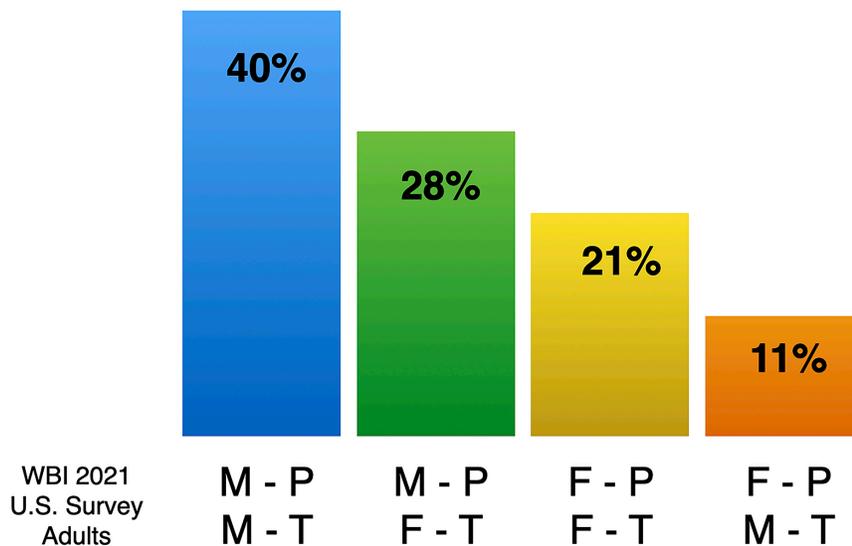
Figure 5

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WBI 2021 U.S. Survey - Adults

Figure 6



**67% of bullies are men**

**51% of bullied targets are men**

**women bullies choose women targets 65% of the time**

The majority of bullies are men (67%, See Table 10). Male perpetrators seem to prefer targeting women (58%) more than other men (42%). Women bullies were less “equitable” when choosing their targets for bullying. Women bullied women in 65% of cases. [In past WBI national Surveys, the woman-on-woman bullying percentages were similarly disproportionately high.]

When considering all four combinations of gender pairs, the two most frequent were both when the perpetrator was male (See Figure 6). Men bullied by men comprised the largest group (40%), followed by women bullied by men (28%), women bullied by women (21%), and the rarest of all, men bullied by women (11%).

Men were targets in 51% of cases (See Figure 6); women were targeted in 49% of cases.

Same gender pairs represented 60% of situations described by Adult respondents (Table 10). Those cases prove practically difficult for bullied individuals to solicit employer support or legal representation to resolve. The civil rights nondiscrimination laws which compel employer policies that prohibit harassment and discrimination technically apply to same gender cases. In other words, a woman may claim sexual harassment by another woman coworker or boss. But it is extraordinarily difficult to prove that the underlying animus for mistreatment was the other person’s gender. Given that difficulty, HR compliance officers routinely discourage same-gender complaints, for both men and women. Likewise, it is nearly impossible to find an attorney willing to take a same-gender harassment case.

Thus, bullying cases, the majority of which can be same-gender, tend to fall outside the protections afforded both by federal and state laws as well as employer anti-harassment policies. The U.S. remains the sole western industrialized nation to not have laws or health and safety regulations addressing bullying in addition to status-based harassment. Some progressive employers and unions have created policies and collective bargaining agreement provisions to protect employees and members from abusive conduct.



An additional analysis crossed the *respondents’ gender* with the range of experiences with bullying. See Table 11. Male survey respondents were directly bullied at twice the rate (39%) that female survey respondents reported.

As we said in the discussion of results found in Table 1 in Chapter 1, individuals admitted to being perpetrators (bullies) themselves at a higher rate than in previous WBI national surveys. In 2021, the overall national rate was 4%. Table 11 reveals that 6% of men declared themselves bullies; while 2% of women said they were bullies.

The other major gender difference among respondents was the lack of awareness by women about workplace bullying more than double the unawareness of men.

Table 11

Adult Respondents	Women	W %-age	Men	M %-age
Bullied	.1982	20%	.3885	39%
Witnessed	.1568	16%	.2060	21%
Bully	.0236	2%	.0574	6%
Believer	.2278	23%	.1773	18%
Unaware	.3934	39%	.1706	17%