



2024 WBI U.S. WORKPLACE BULLYING SURVEY

The Sixth National Scientific WBI Study
Zogby Analytics, Pollster

THE COMPLETE REPORT

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workplacebullying.org

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SUMMARY

The organization that became the Workplace Bullying Institute was begun in June 1997 by Drs. Ruth and Gary Namie who then lived in Benicia, California.

Initial “research” was anecdotal information gleaned from talking personally with over 12,000 bullied individuals who called our toll-free hotline to discuss their dilemmas at work. Soon after launching the initial website, we began conducting online surveys with self-selected samples of respondents who defined themselves as bullied individuals, targets. Over the years, 49 online studies were run allowing us to extrapolate the findings to describe the workplace bullying phenomenon as seen through the eyes of targets. This limited external validity of the work.

Thanks to the partnership between WBI and Zogby Analytics, national pollsters, we are able to describe the prevalence and nature of abusive conduct in American workplaces. It is they who provide the stratified random sample of survey respondents who represent the full population of adult Americans. We write the surveys, Zogby conducts them. The survey methodology is described at the end of this report.

Our first national survey was in 2007. This 2024 WBI U.S. Workplace Bullying Survey is our sixth. Previous surveys were conducted in 2010, 2014, 2017, and 2021. We publish the findings online at the WBI website for all visitors to share. It is the most cited survey of its kind in the country.

In 2024, 32% of Americans report being directly bullied which translates to approximately 52.2 million workers. When the number of those who witness it happening to others (14%) is added, the number of affected Americans totals 74.8 million. Bullying afflicts women (51%) slightly more than men, though men comprise the vast majority of perpetrators (71%). The groups targeted at much higher rates of bullying than the national rate are African-Americans (44%), LGBTQ individuals (51%), and Hybrid workers who split time in the office with working remotely (51%).

The power imbalance that is inherent in bullying is captured by the findings that 55% of perpetrators inflict harm top-down (though 29% of it comes from peers) and 54% of targets work in non-supervisory roles. The public’s preferred explanation for bullying dubiously fixes responsibility on the personalities of perpetrators, targets, and coworkers -- downplaying the role of organizational factors. The principal factor that stops bullying is target displacement (in 62% of cases) -- termination, constructive discharge, quitting or transferring.

Current nondiscrimination laws provide limited protection for bullied workers. The vast majority of respondents (87%) support enactment of a new law to extend existing laws. That support transcends ideological and political party differences.

We hope you find the results useful to incorporate in your personal or professional endeavors.

Gary Namie, PhD
WBI Director & Co-Founder

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1. 2024 NATIONAL PREVALENCE

Workplace bullying is repeated mistreatment and a form of “abusive conduct.” We asked respondents to consider only the most serious forms of bullying. Bullying is a non-physical form of workplace violence. Our principal concern is the national prevalence of abusive conduct. The Workplace Bullying Institute (WBI) commissioned Zogby Analytics to conduct the interactive survey on September 23-25, 2024. Their methodology is described in the final chapter of this report. The national representative sample of adult Americans, over the age of 18, included 1,024 respondents.

In this report, the exact wording of each Survey item begins with *Question:* . The respondents’ answer choices are the phrases without italics in all Tables. Subtotals comprised of sets of response categories are *italicized*. Thus this Report contains the complete content of the WBI Survey. We begin with the assessment of the national prevalence.

Question: The following questions are about your current workplace or if temporarily unemployed or retired, the last place you worked. At work, what has been your personal experience with the following types of repeated mistreatment, such as abusive conduct that is threatening, intimidating, or humiliating; work sabotage or verbal abuse? Choose the single best response for your situation.

Table 1. U.S. Prevalence of Experiences with Workplace Bullying

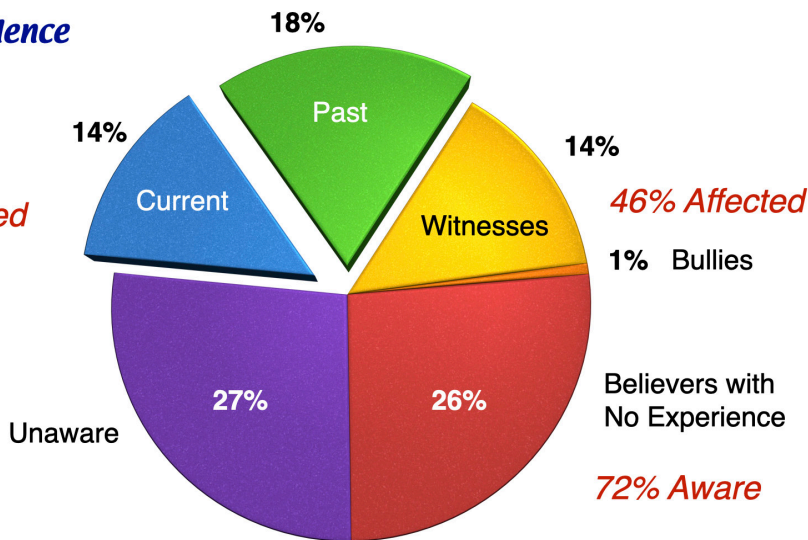
Types of Experiences with Bullying	Proportion	Percentage
I am experiencing it now or have experienced it in the last year	.1378	14%
I have experienced it before in my work life, but not in the last year	.1859	18%
<i>Total of those with Direct Bullying Experience</i>	<i>.3237</i>	<i>32%</i>
I have seen it happen (in-person or via remote work) to others	.1047	10%
I know, but have not seen, that it happened to others	.0353	4%
<i>Total of those who Witnessed It</i>	<i>.1400</i>	<i>14%</i>
<i>Total of Americans Affected by Bullying (Experienced + Witnessed)</i>	<i>.4637</i>	<i>46%</i>
I am, or have been, a perpetrator myself <i>Self-Identified Bullies</i>	.0074	1%
I have not experienced or witnessed it: I do believe it happens in workplaces	.1976	20%
I have not experienced or witnessed it: I believe that what others consider “mistreatment” happens	.0619	6%
<i>"Believers"</i>	<i>.2596</i>	<i>26%</i>
<i>Total of Americans Aware of Bullying</i>	<i>.7233</i>	<i>72%</i>
I have no personal experience or knowledge of, or an opinion about, abusive mistreatment at work	.2692	27%

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**Adult Americans: 32% directly suffer abusive conduct at work,
another 14% witness it,
46% are affected by it, and
72% are aware that workplace bullying happens**

Figure 1. 2024 Prevalence of Workplace Abusive Conduct

**2024 Prevalence
American
Adults**



WBI 2024
U.S. Survey

The Bullied, Targeted Individuals

Nearly one-third of adult Americans (32%) said they directly experienced abusive conduct at work, either currently or at some time in their work life.

Witnesses

Witnesses experience bullying vicariously, indirectly. Research of witnesses found that the severity of emotional injuries were similar in severity to injuries suffered by bullied individuals. It is potentially traumatizing to watch colleagues humiliated and intimidated. However, there are multiple explanations for the unwillingness of witnesses to help their bullied colleagues.

Affected Americans

We define those “affected” by bullying to be those with direct or vicarious experiences with it. In the national sample of Adults, the sum of those bullied (32%) and witnessing it (14%) totals to 46% of Americans.

About Bullies

For WBI’s 27 years, we never could answer the question about the prevalence of predators. Bullies do not make themselves available to be studied, nor do they have to since no U.S. law compels them to be publicly outed. There are limited studies of bullies in other countries where legal violations regarding workplace bullying identify individual perpetrators. However, there still is no credible evidence regarding the prevalence of bullies. In the prior 2021 Survey, for the first time, the self-report by some individuals as perpetrators rose above an infinitesimally small percentage. In the national sample of Adults, 4.1% admitted being bullies. That number declined in 2024, with only 0.74% (rounded up to 1%) of respondents admitting they were perpetrators.

In a subsequent Table we extrapolate the above percentages of each bullying experience group to the American civilian labor force. The self-declared percentage of bullies represents approximately 1.2 million individuals. It is unlikely that only 1 million people are responsible for tormenting over 52 million coworkers. Sadly, the social undesirability of admitting one’s perpetrator status overwhelmed the anonymity granted by the pollsters.

Believers

Respondents were asked to declare if they personally believe bullying happens despite not having any experiences with it. The second response option was to agree that others can be mistreated at work and their perceptions are credible. These two groups of no-experience respondents do not deny it, they are “believers.” In the national sample, they represent 26% of Americans. Believers will need to be drafted to support their bullied colleagues if the culture of organizations are to change from bullying-prone to cultures of psychosocial and psychological safety. Believers are appalled that abuse is so normalized and accepted in the contemporary American workplace.

The percentage of adult Americans aware that abusive conduct/workplace bullying happens at work is the sum of those with direct and vicarious experiences, the self-declared bullies, plus those with no experience but who believe it happens. The sum of the “aware” groups is 72%. That means nearly three-quarters of adult Americans are familiar with workplace bullying -- ranging from a painfully intimate immersion to a superficial recognition of the term without knowing many details.

At the Workplace Bullying Institute, we claim partial credit for this high level of public awareness. Our work began in 1997 with the steadfast commitment to raising public awareness. The myriad of our activities and programs has helped drive that awareness.

The Unaware

The final group to discuss is the one that baffles us most. These are respondents who claim no experience with workplace bullying and do not profess to have an opinion about it. They do not seem to care. We surmise that 27% of Americans deny its existence. They are the fellow workers likely to turn away when asked to help. Similarly, they are the most likely to blame targeted individuals for their fate. It is noteworthy that about one-third of Americans reliably deny science, cling to conspiracy theories, support authoritarians, eschew vaccines for themselves and their children, and, in general, represent the distrustful contrarians among us.



Table 2. Experience with Bullying X Political Ideology

Experience with Bullying	Conservative/ Moderate	Liberal	Populist/ Socialist
Bullied Target	.3083	.3266	.3608
Witnessed	.1347	.1122	.2062
<i>Affected</i>	.4401	.4389	.5670
Believers	.2455	.2918	.2268
<i>Aware</i>	.6856	.7307	.7938
Unaware	.3114	.2693	.2062

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With respect to political ideology in Table 2, self-described Populists or Socialists (the small groups were combined) were the most likely to report being bullied and to have witnessed it. Self-described Liberals were also more likely to be believers. Conservatives and Moderates were the most likely to claim to be unaware.

Table 3. Experience with Bullying X LGBTQ Status

Experience	Hetero- sexual	Homo- sexual	Any LGBTQ
Bullied	.3083	.3571	.5067
Witnessed	.1405	.1786	.1733
<i>Affected</i>	.4488	.5357	.6800
Believer	.2726	.1786	.1467
<i>Aware</i>	.7214	.7143	.8267
Unaware	.2786	.2857	.1733

The rate of bullying experienced by LGBTQ respondents compared to the rate experienced by heterosexuals was 51% vs. 31%, respectively. The Any LGBTQ subset includes the small number of bisexual individuals and transgender people in the pollster’s sample.

Causal conclusions must take into consideration that the heterosexual sample was 11 times larger than the LGBTQ sample.

As the pollster warns, with such small samples the findings are more qualitative than empirical.

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2. THE AFFECTED U.S. WORKFORCE

The 2024 WBI U.S. Workplace Bullying Survey was conducted in September 2024. The most recent prior U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Household Data estimate of the U.S. civilian labor force was in August 2024, approximately 161,384,000 workers. By applying the prevalence proportions from our national sample of Adults (see Table 1), we were able to estimate the equivalent number of working Americans that correspond to each bullying experience category. The results appear below.

Table 4. Number of U.S. Workers Affected by Workplace Bullying

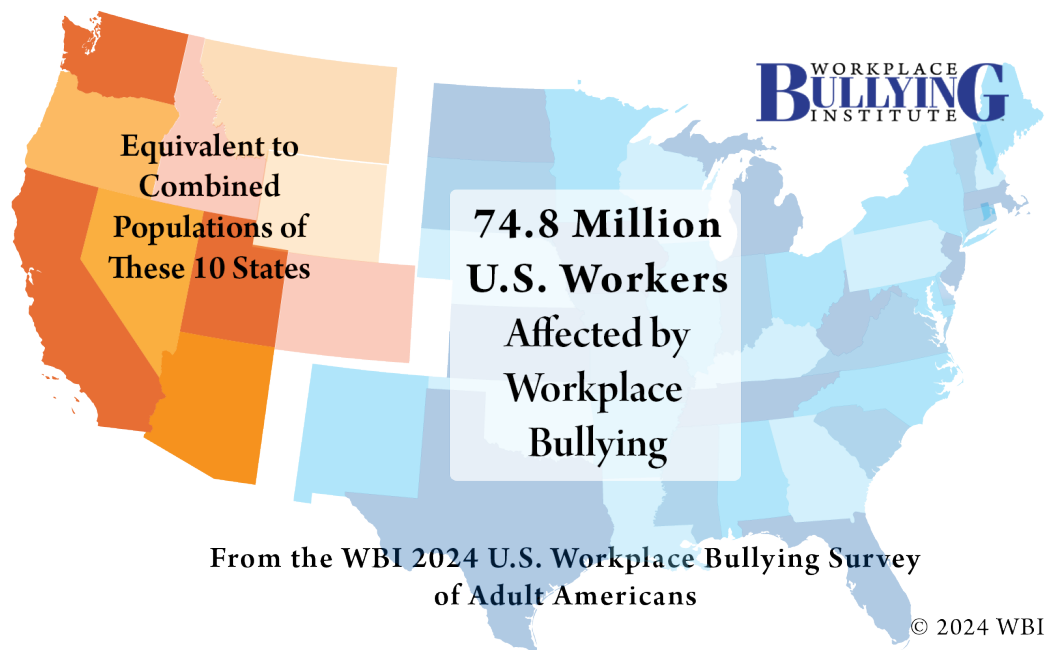
Types of Experiences with Bullying	Proportion	Number
I am experiencing it now or have experienced it in the last year	.1378	22,233,375
I have experienced it before in my work life, but not in the last year	.1859	29,994,593
<i>Total of those with Direct Bullying Experience</i>	<i>.3237</i>	<i>52,228,347</i>
I have seen it happen (in-person or via remote work) to others	.1047	16,893,135
I know, but have not seen, that it happened to others	.0353	5,695,584
<i>Total of those who Witnessed It</i>	<i>.1400</i>	<i>22,588,720</i>
<i>Total of Americans Affected by Bullying (Experienced + Witnessed)</i>	<i>.4637</i>	<i>74,817,067</i>
I am, or have been, a perpetrator myself <i>Self-Identified Bullies</i>	.0074	1,193,975
I have not experienced or witnessed it: I do believe it happens in workplaces	.1976	31,882,364
I have not experienced or witnessed it: I believe that what others consider "mistreatment" happens	.0619	9,987,441
<i>"Believers"</i>	<i>.2596</i>	<i>47,759,008</i>
<i>Total of Americans Aware of Bullying</i>	<i>.7233</i>	<i>116,703,008</i>
I have no personal experience or knowledge of, or an opinion about, abusive mistreatment at work	.2692	43,434,881

Number source: BLS Household Data, Employed Civilian Labor Force, August 2024

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52 million workers bullied; 74.8 million affected; 116.7 million aware of bullying at work

Figure 2.
Number of Affected
Workers Equivalent
to 10 U.S. States



3. REMOTE WORK & BULLYING

The coronavirus pandemic launched remote work for millions of workers. In September 2024 COVID still presents a public health challenge for employers and employees. Several high profile employers demand that workers return on-site; others tolerate a hybrid model allowing part-time at home and on-site; for some employees, remote work is a condition of employment they can require to rent their talents. Compared to our 2021 Survey results, the percentage of remote workers dropped from 47% to 22%.

Question: Have you in the past or are you currently working remotely from home?

Table 5. Remote, Hybrid & On-Site Work

Work Location	Proportion	Percentage
Yes. I choose to work remotely from home	.1859	19%
Yes. Remote work is mandated by employer	.0331	3%
<i>Remote Workers</i>	.2190	22%
Yes. I work remotely and on-site	.1976	20%
<i>Hybrid Workers</i>	.1976	20%
No. I choose to work on-site/in-person	.1368	14%
No. Employer mandates on-site/in-person work	.1218	12%
No. My work cannot be done remotely by computer online	.3237	32%
<i>On-Site Workers</i>	.5823	58%

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Table 6. Bullying Experience X Remote, Hybrid & On-Site Work

Experience with Bullying	Remote	Hybrid	On-Site
Bullied Target	.3252	.5135	.2629
Witnessed	.1262	.1514	.1426
<i>Affected</i>	.4514	.6649	.4055
Believers	.2573	.2162	.2796
<i>Aware</i>	.7087	.8811	.6852
Unaware	.2913	.1189	.3148

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Bullying prevalence, 51%, was worst for hybrid employees who mix remote with on-site work. Remote workers were bullied at a rate equal to the national rate, 32%. The rate for remote workers was higher in 2021 during COVID when employers and coworkers were all just learning how to accomplish work with so many people off-site.

Given the lower than national prevalence of employees who in 2024 work only on-site, 26%, we can speculate that bullying is made worse for hybrid employees on remote working days. It is as if they are being punished or resented for either daring to work from home (if they had the ability to choose) or being allowed to do so (connoting favoritism perceived by jealous coworkers). The Survey alone does not clarify the source of the higher rate of bullying.

The percentage of hybrid workers affected by bullying (bullied + witnessed) was 66%. The national rate was 46%. It is worth repeating that witnessing coworkers are vicariously and adversely affected. It hurts to see colleagues needlessly harmed.

BULLYING RATES

Figure 3.
Remote, Hybrid,
On-Site Work &
Bullying Rates

HYBRID
REMOTE/ON-SITE

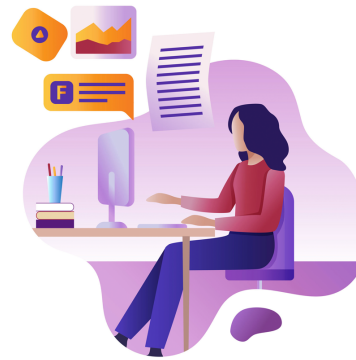
51.3%

REMOTE ONLY

32.5%

ON-SITE ONLY

26.3%



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4. GENDER OF PERPETRATORS & TARGETS

Question: Think about the worst case of repeated mistreatment at work. What was the gender of the perpetrator and person targeted?

Table 7. Gender of Perpetrators & Targets in Worst Case Situations

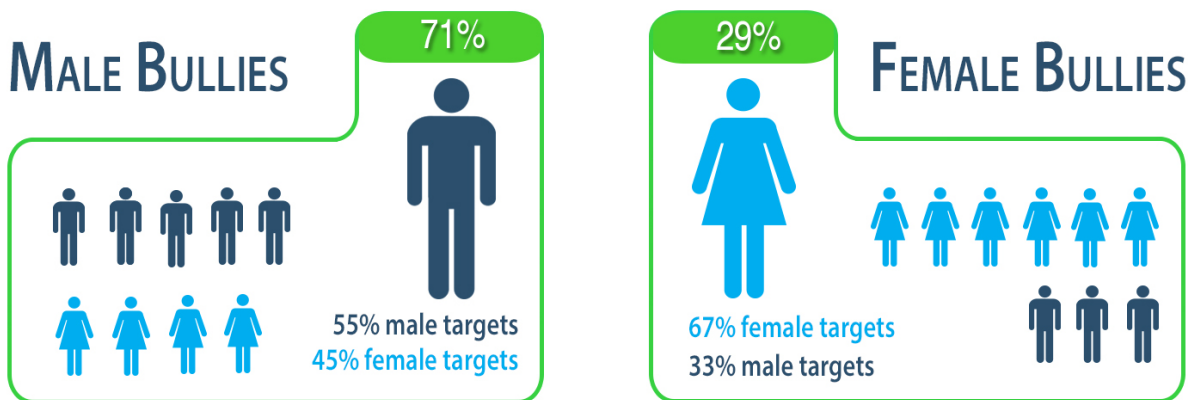
Gender Pairs	Proportion	Percentage
Male Perpetrator: Male Target	.3638	36.3%
Male Perpetrator: Female Target	.2953	29.5%
Male Perpetrator: Non-binary Target	.0249	2.5%
<i>Male Perpetrator</i>	.6840	68.4%
Female Perpetrator: Male Target	.0896	9%
Female Perpetrator: Female Target	.1798	18%
Female Perpetrator: Non-binary Target	.0113	1%
<i>Female Perpetrator</i>	.2807	28%
Non-binary Perpetrator: Male Target	.0113	1%
Non-binary Perpetrator: Female Target	.0045	0.4%
Non-binary Perpetrator: Non-binary Target	.0181	1.8%
<i>Non-Binary Perpetrator</i>	.0340	3.4%
<i>Male Target</i>	.4646	46.4%
<i>Female Target</i>	.4802	48%
<i>Non-binary Target</i>	.0553	6%
<i>Same Gender Pairs</i>	.5858	58.6%

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The pollster allowed survey respondents to declare Non-binary status when describing the gender of both perpetrators and targets. The frequencies were small. From Table 7, Non-binary targets were 6% of the sample while only 3% of perpetrators were Non-binary.

For subsequent gender results, we excluded the Non-binary groups from analyses. The vast majority of bullies are men, 71%. (see Table 7 and Figure 4). Male perpetrators seem to prefer targeting men (55%) more than women (45%). Women bullies were less “equitable” when choosing their targets for bullying. Women bullied women in 67% of cases. [In past WBI national Surveys, the woman-on-woman bullying percentages were similarly disproportionately high.]

Figure 4. Bullying of Women & Men by Men & Women

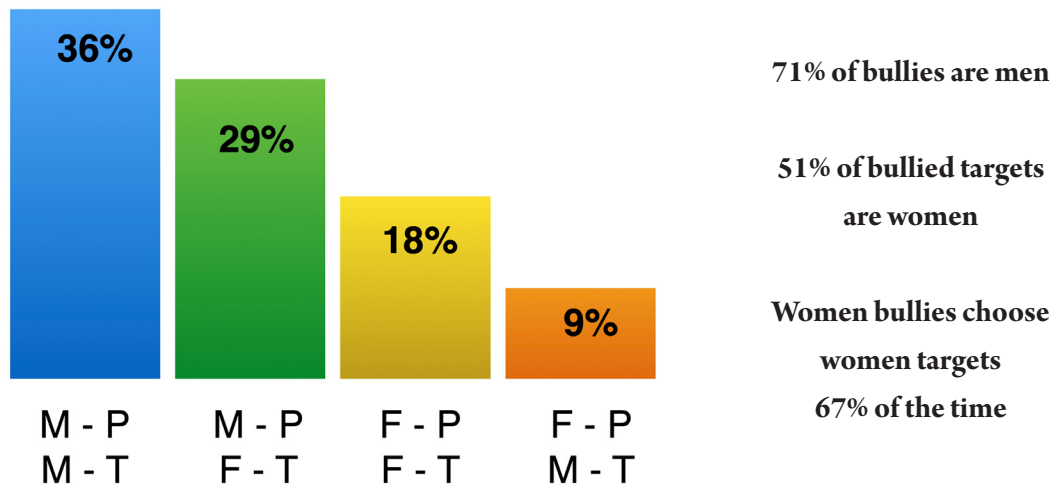


When considering all four combinations of gender pairs, the two most frequent were both when the perpetrator was male (See Figure 5). Men bullied by men comprised the largest group (36%), followed by women bullied by men (29%), women bullied by women (18%), and the rarest of all, men bullied by women (9%).

Same gender pairs represented 59% of situations described by survey respondents. 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. 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 in 2024 the sole western industrialized nation to not have laws or health and safety regulations that address bullying outside the narrowly defined criteria of status-based harassment.

Figure 5. Perpetrator-Target Gender Pairing



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An additional analysis crossed the *survey respondents'* gender with the range of experiences with bullying. See Table 8 below. Male survey respondents were directly bullied slightly more frequently than (39%) that female survey respondents reported, 34% vs. 31%, respectively.

With the higher rate of witnessing bullying, men were more Affected (the sum of being bullied and witnessing it) than women. Over three-quarters of men were aware of bullying in the workplace, over two-thirds for women.

Table 8. Survey Respondents' Gender X Experiences with Bullying

Experience	Women	Men
Bullied	.3057	.3436
Witnessed	.1264	.1534
<i>Affected</i>	.4322	.4969
Believer	.2529	.2720
<i>Aware</i>	.6850	.7689
Unaware	.3149	.2311

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5. RACE & THE BULLYING EXPERIENCE

The pollster Zogby Analytics provided data on four racial groups: Whites, Hispanics, Blacks, and Asians. The 2024 sample of Adult Americans for the survey was 60% White, 17% Hispanic, 12% Black and 6% Asians (and 5% Others). Table 9 shows how people of different races experienced workplace bullying differently. The rate of being directly bullied was highest for African-Americans at 44%. The national rate is 32% (see Table 1). Hispanics were also bullied at a higher than national rate. All three non-white groups were more aware of bullying than whites.

Note the high rate of bullying, a.k.a. “status-blind” harassment, endured by people who are members of so-called “protected status groups” according to nondiscrimination laws and employer policies created to comply with those laws. It was in the 2007 WBI national survey that we discovered that bullying was four times more prevalent than discriminatory misconduct. New laws are needed to address the failure of nondiscrimination laws to address the more common and more harmful forms of misconduct.

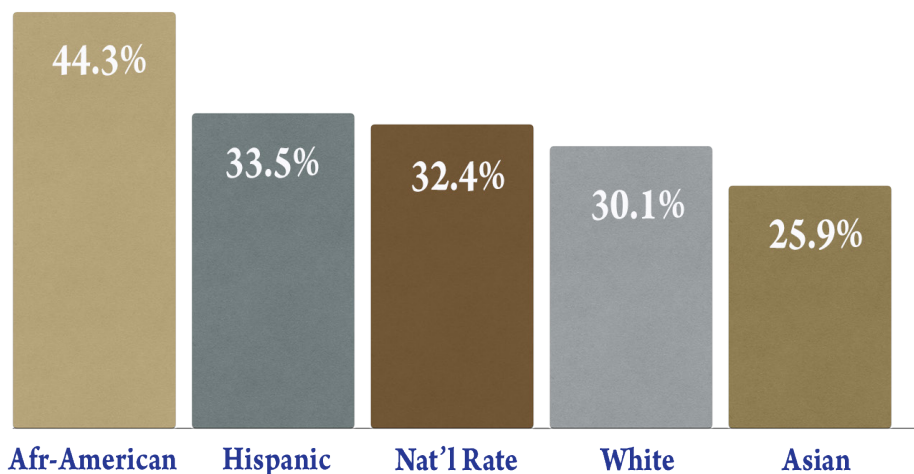
Table 9.
Race X
Experience
with Bullying

Experience	African-American	Hispanic	White	Asian
Bullied	.4435	.3355	.3007	.2586
Witnessed	.1217	.1513	.1449	.1379
<i>Affected</i>	.5652	.4868	.4456	.3965
Believer	.2348	.3355	.2337	.3965
<i>Aware</i>	.8000	.8224	.6793	.7931
Unaware	.2000	.1776	.3206	.2069

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Figure 6. Rate of Bullied Americans by Race

Rate of Bullied Americans by Race



2024 WBI U.S. Workplace Bullying Survey

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6. RANK OF PERPETRATORS

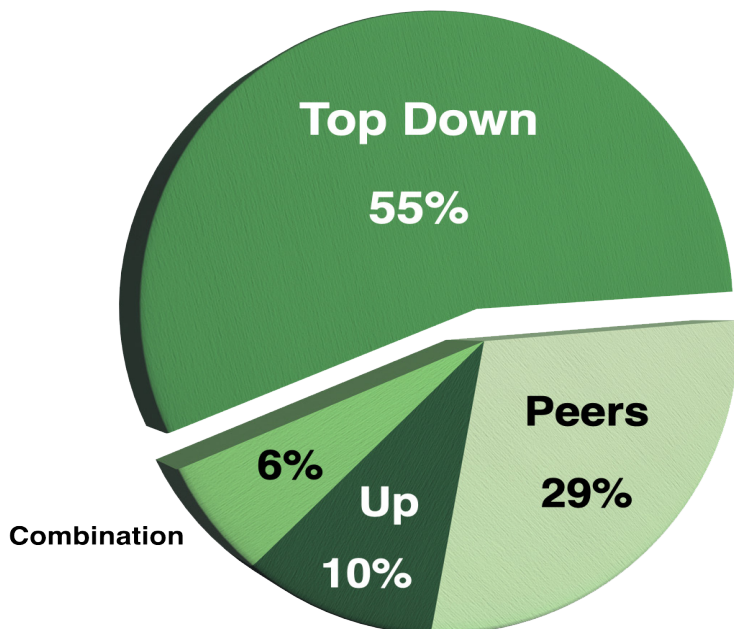
Question: Think about the worst case of repeated mistreatment at work. What was rank of the principal perpetrator(s)?

Table 10. Perpetrator:Target Relative Rank in Worst Case Situations

Perpetrator:Target Rank	Proportion	Percentage
Single individual, higher rank than target, a boss	.4431	44%
Single individual, same rank, a coworker	.2250	22%
Single individual, lower rank, a subordinate	.0835	8%
More than one, higher rank, bosses	.1044	10%
More than one peer, coworkers	.0673	7%
Multiple subordinates	.0186	2%
A combination of bosses & peers	.0302	3%
A combination of bosses, peers & subordinates	.0278	3%
Higher rank than target	.5476	55%
Coworkers/peers	.2923	29%
Lower rank than target	.1021	10%
Combination of ranks	.0580	6%
Lone perpetrator	.7517	75%
Multiple perpetrators	.2483	25%

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Unshaded rows in Table 10 are the response choices seen by survey respondents. The first three shaded rows are the values used in Figure 7. Bosses remain the most frequent perpetrators across all WBI national surveys begun in 2007. There is truth to the alliteration -- Bully Bosses. Bullying originates with peers in nearly a third of situations. Subordinates, lower in rank but not in self-perceived power, bully “up the ladder” in 10% of cases. We now include the combinations of rank present in the table which account for only 6% of situations.

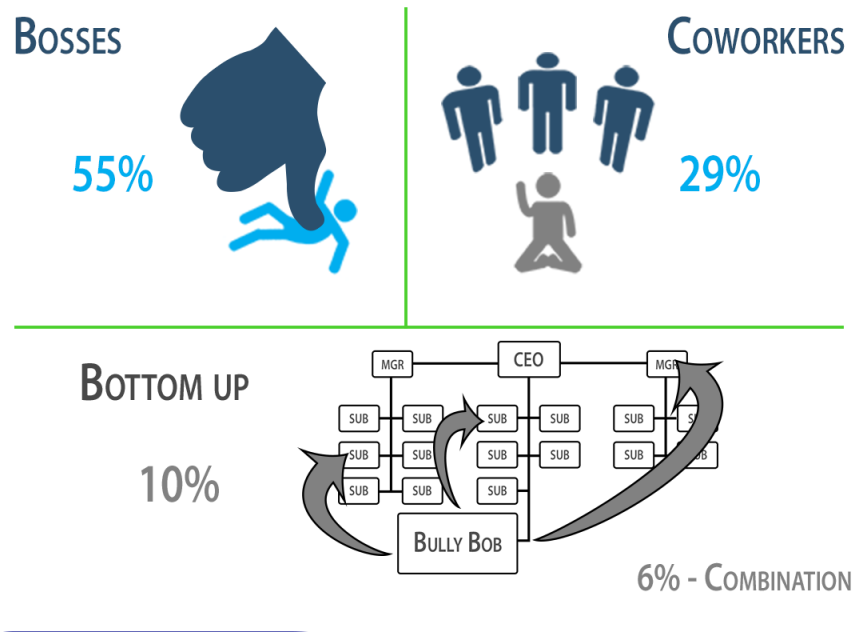


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We also asked respondents if the principal perpetrator worked alone or as part of a group. Many readers will recognize this as a way to distinguish Mobbing (with its requisite multiple perpetrators) from Bullying (by a single instigator). In fact, every lone instigator soon acquires support from others, either explicitly through commands or requests or implicitly as coworkers align with the aggressor. Workplace bullying is rarely a solo act. Respondents said they held a lone person responsible in 75% of cases.

Figure 7. Perpetrator Rank in Worst Case Situations

Figure 8. An Alternative View of Perpetrator Rank



7. ROLES OF TARGETED PEOPLE

Question: Think about the worst case of repeated mistreatment at work. What was the role of the targeted person?

Table 11. Targets' Position in the Organization in Worst Case Situations

Target Position	Proportion	Percentage
Non-supervisory employee	.3697	37%
Lead worker, not supervisor	.1706	17%
<i>Non-supervisory</i>	.5403	54%
First-line supervisor	.0806	8%
Manager	.2417	24%
Senior manager or executive	.0569	6%
<i>Manager</i>	.3791	38%
Owner, president, CEO	.0545	5%
Contractor	.0261	3%

TARGETS
54%
NOT
MANAGEMENT
38%
MANAGERS

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Unshaded rows in Table 11 were response options for survey respondents. There were two categories of positions that were not management and three levels of management positions. One myth about workplace bullying is that managers do all the bullying and non-supervisory workers are their only targets.

WBI 2021 results show that employees who are not management comprised the majority of bullied targets. Bullying thrives in hierarchical organizations. In 2024, the majority (54%) of targeted individuals were non-supervisory workers. However, because managers have bosses, 38% of targets are in management.

Freedom from bullying is one of the prerequisites of being on top of the hierarchy. Of individuals targeted for bullying, only 5% are at the very top. Contractors are rarely bullied (3%). Without the constraints of an employee, contractors are free to escape bullying workplaces. A key component of targethood is the bullied employee's limited ability to flee harmful work environments without financial consequences.

In the 2024 national sample, only 11% of respondents were members of a union. Union workers tend to be non-management. But the pollster did not provide the breakdown of the organizational roles of survey respondents.

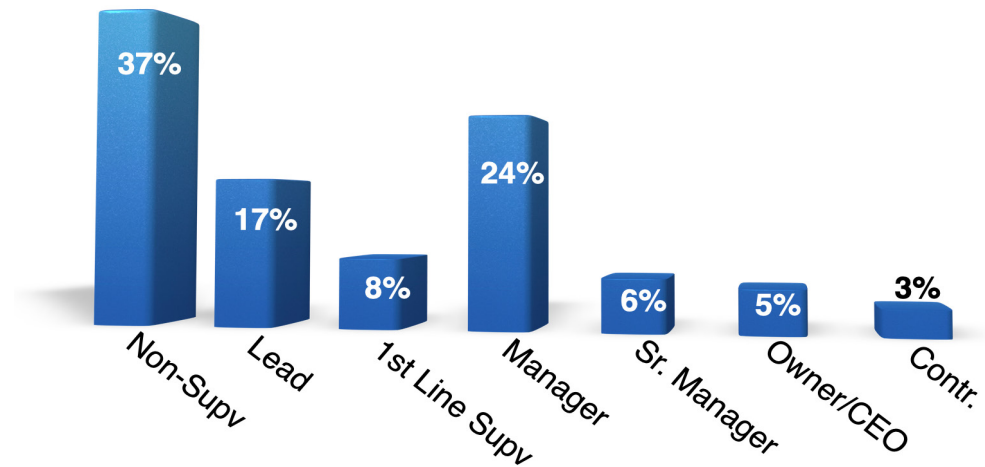


Figure 9. Targets' Roles in Organizations

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8. EXPLAINING TOXIC & ABUSIVE WORKPLACES

Question: Which factor best explains why a workplace becomes toxic and abusive?

Table 12. Explanations for Abusive, Toxic Workplaces

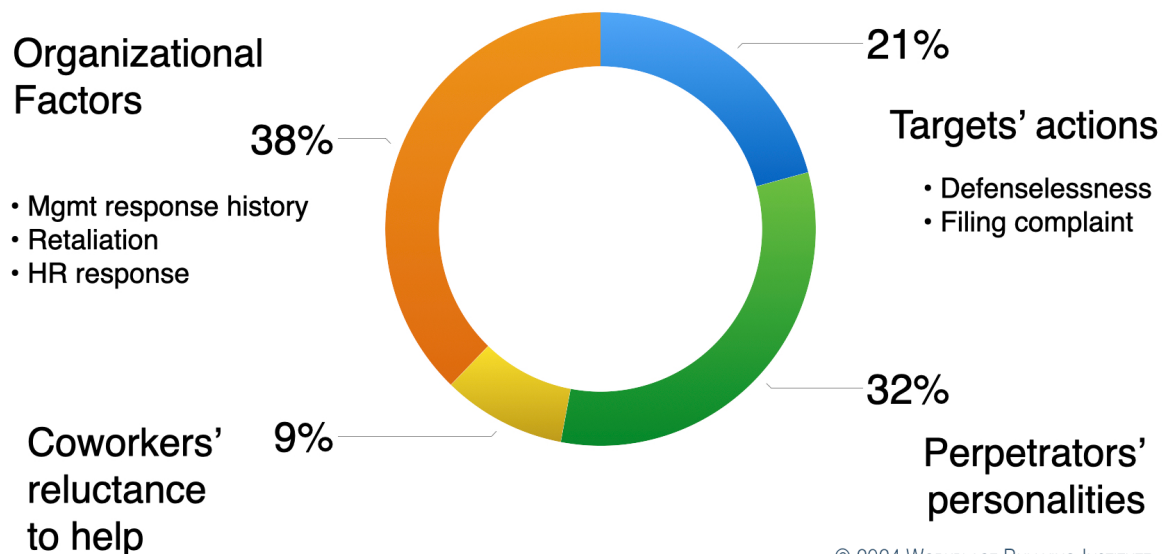
Explanatory Factors	Proportion	Percentage
Targeted people's inability to defend themselves or other personal shortcomings	.1687	17%
Targets' decision to complain about their mistreatment	.0391	4%
<i>Targets' Personal, Dispositional Factors</i>	.2078	21%
Organizational retaliation for filing a complaint	.1151	11%
Management's history of responding to complaints	.1564	16%
HR's response to complaints	.1061	11%
<i>Organizational Factors</i>	.3776	38%
Perpetrators' personalities, they have personal problems	.3218	32%
Coworkers' reluctance to help the targeted person	.0927	9%
<i>People Factors - All Individuals [Perp + CW + Targ]</i>	.6223	62%

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Unshaded rows in Table 12 were response options for survey respondents. The most frequently chosen single factor (32%) to explain workplace toxicity was the personality of the perpetrator. The U.S. is a culture that reveres individuals. Correspondence bias leads us to associate bad behavior with an underlying bad character. With this reasoning, bullies are defective people. This belief convinces employers to reflexively send identified offenders to “anger management” to get “fixed,” assuming personality is reversible by education alone. There can be no change without changing the context of their performance, the work environment.

The U.S. is a society that blames victims for their fate. Respondents assigned targets 21% of the responsibility for their own fate. Summing over all the people factors -- perpetrator and target characteristics coupled with coworker inaction -- made it clear that respondents preferred dispositional (62%), rather than organizational culture, explanations.

Figure 10. Mapping Explanations for Abusive, Toxic Workplaces



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10. EMPLOYER RESPONSIVENESS TO COMPLAINTS

Workplace bullying, abusive conduct, occurs when it is positively reinforced. That reinforcement can be explicit or implicit. Employers may tacitly sustain misconduct by responding to complaints either ineffectively or not at all.

We explored a range of possible responses, including both positive and negative actions. In turn, workers note the responsiveness and it governs the willingness to bother to file complaints in the future. Negative employer responses serve to silence worker complaints, allowing misconduct to continue with impunity.

Question: Thinking of the most flagrant personal or witnessed workplace harassment or mistreatment incidents reported to an employer, either formally or informally, how did that employer respond? (Select all that apply)

Table 13. Employer Responses to Complaints

Employer Responses to Reported Incidents	Proportion	Percentage
I never made, or knew of, such a complaint	.3419	34%
<i>The options below imply that the respondent was aware of a complaint reported</i>		
Employer ignored the complaint, did not acknowledge it, no action taken	.1828	18%
Employer investigated the complaint poorly with an unsatisfactory conclusion	.1867	19%
Employer blamed the complainant who then experienced negative consequences	.0901	9%
Employer gave no negative consequences to the accused harasser	.1005	10%
<i>Negative actions</i>	.5601	56%
Employer investigated the complaint thoroughly, reached a fair conclusion	.2258	22%
Employer held the harasser responsible -- terminated or punished	.1162	12%
Employer stopped the harassment/mistreatment	.0979	10%
<i>Positive actions</i>	.4399	44%

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A third of respondents said they did not make nor knew of complaints of mistreatment. The subsequent analysis relied only on respondents who were familiar with complaints and actions taken by employers.

We consider negative actions to include ignoring or poorly investigating complaints or blaming complainants and making them suffer negative consequences while failing to hold perpetrators accountable. Thorough and fair investigations, accountability for perpetrators or stopping the mistreatment all constituted positive actions.

Negative employer responses (56%) were more frequent than positive actions. According to our survey, employers do a better job of responding positively to complaints so that employee trust can be boosted.

11. PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

There are two significant forms of non-physical safety in the workplace -- psychosocial and psychological. Aspects of workplace culture are engaged -- both the “freedom-from” and the “freedom-to.” In workplaces characterized by a psychosocial safety climate, workers can perform without risk of suffering emotional injuries from emotionally abusive practices.

When psychological safety operates, workers are free to speak and behave in ways commensurate with moral, ethical, and rational certainty without reprisal from others. Unfortunately expressing freely and openly one’s position, however honest and accurate it may be, poses risks in workplaces populated by envious, jealous others more willing to harness the power of the group to subordinate open-minded individuals than to do “the right thing.” Thus psychological safety is the freedom to take interpersonal risks.

We asked the question about psychological safety. Respondents could answer Yes, No or Not Sure.

Question: Have you ever worked where you and others felt free to dissent -- to disagree with the status quo or to state what changes could improve the workplace - or to complain about illegal or unethical practices without fear of retaliation or reprisal?

Table 14. Perceptions of Psychological Safety

Type of Survey Respondent	Yes	No
National Sample (n=824)	.6323	.3677
Generation Z (b. 1997-2010)	.6712	.3288
Millenials (b. 1981-1996)	.6371	.3628
Generation X (b. 1965-1980)	.6124	.3876
Baby Boomers (b. 1946-1964)	.6343	.3657
Working	.6783	.3217
Retired	.5618	.4381
Male	.6758	.3242
Female	.5825	.4175

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From the National Sample results shown in Table 14, nearly two-thirds of Americans believe they had the freedom to dissent. The majority believed that they enjoyed psychological safety in their workplace.

We also looked at whether differences in perceptions of psychological safety surfaced across the generations of workers. Generation Z workers felt the safest.

The contrast between perceptions of working vs. retired respondents suggests that older generation workers were less likely to have experienced this form of safety, 68% vs. 56%, respectively. However, when sorted by generations, 63% of Baby Boomers, those who are most likely to be retired, reported to have felt free to dissent.

The second largest gap in psychological safety emerged between men and women. Women had the lowest perception of psychological safety (58%) among all groups assessed.

12. WHAT STOPPED THE BULLYING

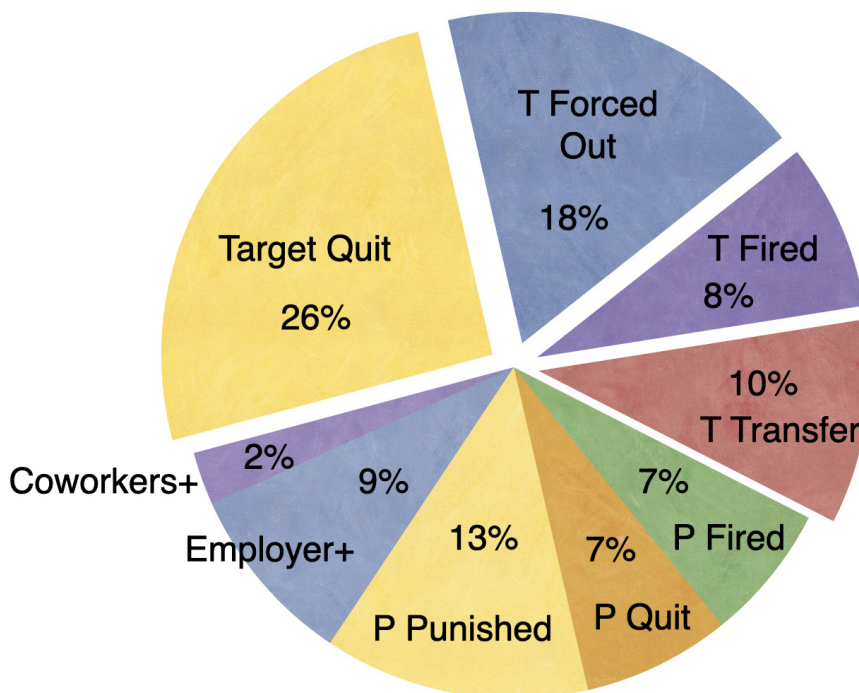
Question: Think about the worst case of repeated mistreatment at work. What stopped the abusive mistreatment?

Table 15. What Made the Bullying Stop in Worst Case Situations

	Proportion	Percentage
Target voluntarily left the job to escape more mistreatment	.2556	26%
Target was forced to quit when work conditions were deliberately made intolerable	.1796	18%
Employer terminated the target	.0815	8%
Target transferred to different job or location with same employer	.1000	10%
<i>Negative outcomes for target</i>	<i>.6167</i>	<i>62%</i>
Perpetrator was punished but kept job	.1296	13%
Perpetrator was terminated	.0667	7%
Perpetrator voluntarily quit	.0722	7%
<i>Negative outcomes for perpetrator</i>	<i>.2685</i>	<i>27%</i>
Positive actions by employer stopped it	.0889	9%
Positive actions by target's coworkers stopped it	.0259	2%
<i>Positive actions by others</i>	<i>.1148</i>	<i>11%</i>
It did not stop	.1000	10%

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Unshaded rows in Table 15 were response options for survey respondents. For 10% of respondents, the bullying had not stopped. All remaining proportions were calculated based on the number of respondents for whom the bullying had stopped.



**TARGETED EMPLOYEES
HAVE A 62% CHANCE
OF LOSING THE JOBS
THEY LOVED FOR
NO LEGITIMATE
REASON**

Figure 11. What Stopped the Bullying in Worst Case Situations - Graph

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We have asked this question in various forms over the years.

Remarkably, the share of negative outcomes is starting to rise for perpetrators. The 2021 rate of 23% has risen from 2% in 2003 to 11% in 2010 to 27% in 2024. Of course, the targets' rate of quitting (44%) is six times the rate of perpetrators quitting (7%). But progress toward accountability is being made.

It is also admirable that some employers are taking positive action to eliminate bullying.

However, the price to stop bullying is still paid overwhelmingly by targets themselves. Through no fault of their own, targets have a 62% risk of losing a job they once loved. Not only are targets terminated (8%), constructively discharged (18%) (which is made to look like a voluntary quit), convinced to quit to save their mental and physical health, but 10% of them transfer to stay employed. We consider a transfer a negative outcome. Though it preserves income, it most likely is work that differs significantly from the responsibilities held before the bullying. It is often ostracizing by virtue of physical or social isolation. Tasks are often belittling and demeaning. A paycheck alone does not offset the losses endured by a transfer. Furthermore, the transferred bullied employee is greeted by the new boss with the admonition to not act as she or he did in the last position. The bully's defamation precedes the transfer.

It is unconscionable that employers compel victims to suffer job loss in addition to months or years of unremitting episodes of abuse.

13. EMPLOYER/WORKPLACE DESIRABILITY FACTORS

Recent interest in toxic workplaces is exemplified by the 2022 five-attribute model from MIT researchers. The toxicity-defining factors included abuse, disrespect, and unethicity. If we flip the negative characteristics, we create a list of positive aspects of a non-toxic workplace culture, one we call a Thriving Workplace.

For this 2024 national survey, we listed 11 factors, asking respondents to rate the importance of each on using a 4-point Likert scale -- Very important, Somewhat important, Not too important, Not at all important.

The factors include traditional incentives for employees -- salary, benefits, paid leave -- but also tap more contemporary concerns believed necessary for U.S. employers to recruit and retain talented professionals. The newer factors include Respect, Non-Toxic Bosses, Ethical Practices, Meaningfulness, Time to balance life with work, and Responsiveness to Complaints (also explored by a stand-alone item in this 2024 survey).

Question: Please rate the importance of each factor that would make an employer desirable.

Responses: Very important, Somewhat important, Not too important, Not at all important

Table 16. Factors That Make Employers Desirable

Employer Factor	Very Important	Percentage
Respect from coworkers & managers	.7297	73%
Good, non-toxic bosses	.7575	76%
Meaningful work, doing important things	.6303	63%
Ethical practices & honest leaders	.7211	72%
Responsive to workers' complaints, no retaliation	.6709	67%
Caring about workers' health & safety	.7489	75%
Paid sick leave	.6581	66%
Benefits (health, dental, vacation)	.7404	74%
Competitive salary	.7479	75%
Time available to live fully outside work	.6976	70%
Organization's reputation or profitability/sustainability	.5032	50%

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Workplace bullying advocates and business consultants implore employers to better understand the huge cohort just entering the workforce, the youngest generation of workers -- Generation Z. They are a group born between 1997-2010. They have been taught to be less tolerant of bullying than older generations.

We tapped demographic data to cross generations of workers with six of the 11 desirability factors in order to detect patterns in perceptions of the importance of that subset of factors.

Table 17. Employer Desirability Factors X Generation of Workers

Employer Factors - "Very Important" rating	Gen Z	Millenials	Gen X
Respect from coworkers & managers	.6904	.6428	.7585
Good, non-toxic bosses	.7440	.6746	.8178
Meaningful work, doing important things	.6786	.5635	.6186
Ethical practices & honest leaders	.6309	.6905	.6949
Competitive salary	.6607	.7063	.7924
Time available to live fully outside work	.7143	.6706	.7288

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Gen Z respondents assigned top priority to Good Bosses and Time. Millenials rated Salary and Ethicality equally high, with Good Bosses and Time tied for third. It was Gen X respondents who gave overall higher ratings to all factors, with Good Bosses and Salary top of their list. Gen X considered more important the cluster of Respect, Good Bosses, Salary, Ethicality, and Time than their younger counterparts.

When respondents were grouped into Working and Retired (Table 18), it was the Retired group that rated all six desirability factors highest. Did this retrospective view reflect a longing for what they did not experience? Or was it an accurate portrayal of their past experiences that currently workers can only imagine?

Finally, women value the five non-economic factors more than do men. The practical implication of this trend is that employers had better be Respectful, Be Non-Toxic Bosses, Provide Meaningful not menial Work, Behave Ethically, and grant women the Time to balance work and home life.

Table 18. Employer Desirability Factors X Workers' Status & Gender

Employer Factors - "Very Important" rating	Working	Retired	Women	Men
Respect from coworkers & managers	.6987	.8181	.7826	.6822
Good, non-toxic bosses	.7312	.8318	.7986	.7226
Meaningful work, doing important things	.6209	.6636	.6613	.6032
Ethical practices & honest leaders	.6860	.8363	.7597	.6862
Competitive salary	.7242	.8181	.7345	.7631
Time available to live fully outside work	.6945	.7045	.7048	.6882

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13. SOCIETAL BULLYING & WORKPLACES

We asked in 2021, for the first time, if coarsening public discourse, bullying writ large, primarily by politicians would “trickle down” to workplaces. The assumption was that workplaces are embedded in society. When bullying behaviors and verbal assaults are prominent in media accounts, it seemed a reasonable hypothesis that workplaces would be affected adversely. The 2021 survey was administered at the end of the Trump presidency. The 2024 survey was administered at the height of Trump’s third campaign to be elected president. Bullying and disrespect were on display daily.

Question: In your opinion has the display of bullying, disrespect and intolerance of the opinions of others by politicians and public figures affected workplaces?

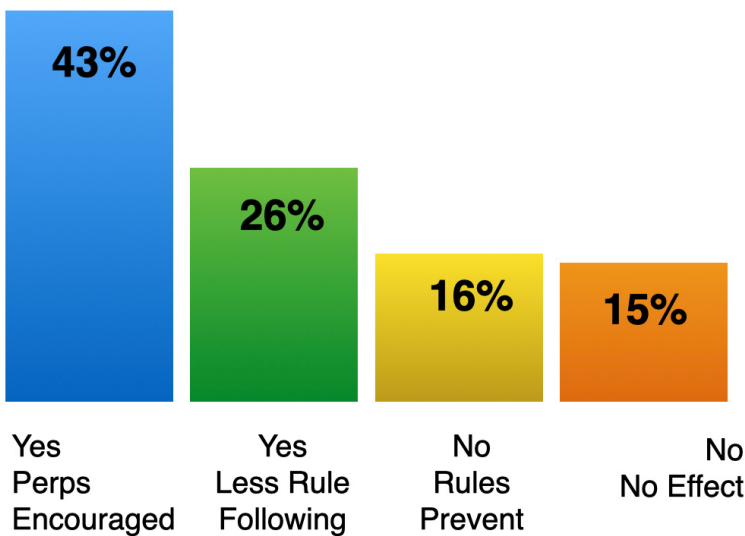
Table 19. Effects of Public Bullying on Workplaces

	Proportion	Percentage
Yes. The public disrespect encourages workplace perpetrators	.4284	43%
Yes. Fewer people believe they should follow rules or laws	.2566	26%
<i>YES it does affect workplaces</i>	.6850	69%
No. Rules and policies prevent the mistreatment of others	.1627	16%
No. Actions by politicians do not affect workplaces	.1523	15%
<i>NO it does not affect workplaces</i>	.3150	31%

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Unshaded rows in Table 19 were response options for survey respondents. There was a preference (69%) for believing that actors in the public sphere did adversely affect the American workplace. The two methods described in this question were disruption by encouragement of aggression (43%) and granting permission to ignore rules (26%). A minority (31%) of respondents disagreed. They concluded that employers had guardrails to prevent deviant behavior from taking over (16%) or that what politicians do is irrelevant to the workplace.

Figure 12. Society’s Impact on Bullying at Work



This question posited that a factor external to organizational life might influence the internal workplace culture.

An argument can be made that workplace cultures are inextricably embedded in the national culture where organizations call home. The 58% of respondents seem to have acknowledged this immersion.

When public discourse returns to a moderate degree of civility, if it ever does again, we will ask the question to explore if public and political comity positively affects workplace cultures.

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14. SUPPORT FOR A NEW LAW

Question: Do you support or oppose enactment of a new law (in addition to existing nondiscrimination & harassment laws) that would require employers to protect their workers from repeated, harmful, abusive mistreatment and give abused workers a right to sue for failing to do so?

Table 20. Support for a New Law

	Proportion	Percentage	Proportion	Percentage
Not needed. Existing laws are adequate	.0826	8%		
			Ignoring	not needed
Strongly support	.6349	64%	.6921	69%
Somewhat support	.2333	23%	.2543	25%
<i>Support</i>	.8682	87%	.9464	95%
Somewhat oppose	.0324	3%	.0353	3%
Strongly oppose	.0167	1%	.0182	2%
<i>Oppose</i>	.0492	5%	.0536	5%

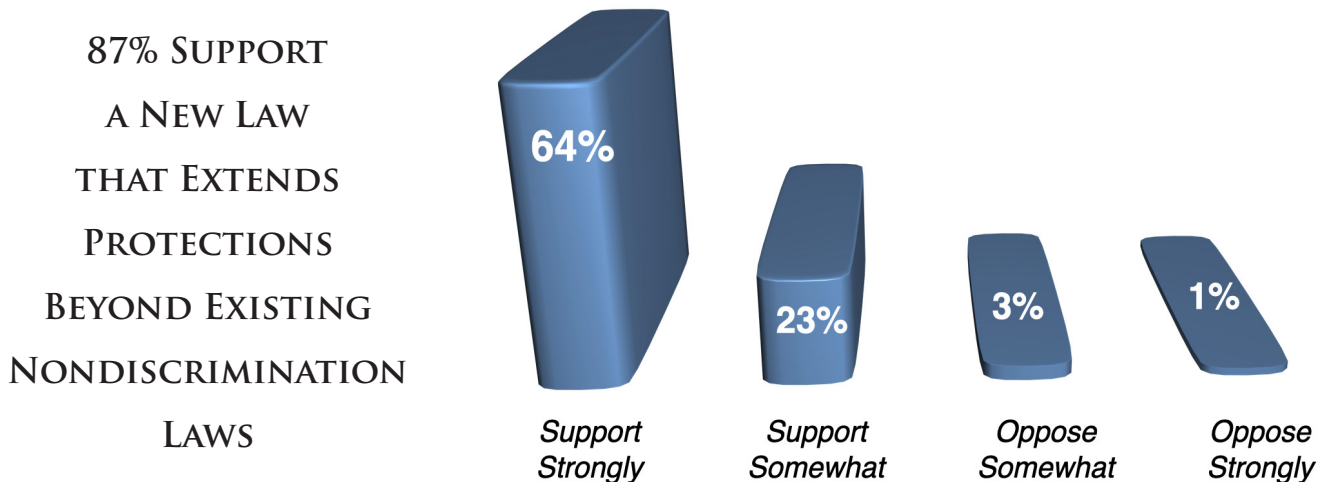
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WBI has been lobbying for its anti-bullying legislation for 21 years, having introduced our bill multiple times in 32 states and two territories. Pro-business groups, including SHRM - the HR trade association, have opposed our legislation. In each jurisdiction, opponents argue that the HWB is not necessary. However, this survey documents the rate of same-gender mistreatment, demonstrating the need to supplement existing nondiscrimination laws which are inadequate.

We built a question within the question. We asked the American public about the adequacy of current employment law. The result is that only 8% of respondents agree with the Not Needed business lobby argument.

Levels of support and opposition for a new law, were calculated by omitting and including the “Not Needed” responses. Support for a new law, explicitly described as additional to nondiscrimination laws, is certainly overwhelming (87-95%).

Figure 13. Support for a New Law - Graph



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We have always believed the HWB to be non-partisan legislation. The bill gives employers liability exemption as an incentive to do the right thing and take steps to prevent and correct abusive workplace conduct (the term “workplace bullying” does not appear in the bill). Attentive lawmakers, regardless of party affiliation, should see value for their business constituents.

Table 21 shows that support for a new law is strong across the Conservative to Populist/Socialist continuum.

Table 21. Support for a New Law Across Ideologies

Ideology	Support	Oppose	Not Needed
Conservative	.8181	.0496	.1322
Moderate	.7522	.1081	.1396
Liberal	.9150	.0267	.0583
Populist+Socialist	.9307	.0297	.0396

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Support for a new law also is consistently strong across political party membership.

Table 22. Support for a New Law Across Political Parties

Political Party	Support	Oppose	Not Needed
Republican	.8367	.0356	.1276
Democratic	.9162	.0475	.0363
Independent	.8494	.0656	.0849

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15. ZOGBY ANALYTICS POLL METHODOLOGY

U.S. Adults over 18 years of age
Survey period: 9/23/24 – 9/25/24

Zogby Analytics was commissioned by Workplace Bullying Institute to conduct an online survey of 1,024 adults in the U.S.

Using internal and trusted interactive partner resources, thousands of adults were randomly invited to participate in this interactive survey. Each invitation is password coded and secure so that one respondent can only access the survey one time.

Using information based on census data, voter registration figures, CIA fact books and exit polls, we use complex weighting techniques to best represent the demographics of the population being surveyed. Weighted variables may include age, race, gender, region, party, education, and religion.

Based on a confidence interval of 95%, the margin of error for 1,024 is +/- 3.1 percentage points. This means that all other things being equal, the identical survey repeated will have results within the margin of error 95 times out of 100.

Subsets of the data have a larger margin of error than the whole data set. As a rule we do not rely on the validity of very small subsets of the data especially sets smaller than 50-75 respondents. At that subset we can make estimations based on the data, but in these cases the data is more qualitative than quantitative.

Additional factors can create error, such as question wording and question order.



Characteristics of the nationally representative sample

- Gender: 49.8% female; 49.8% male
- Region: East-19%; South-32%; Central/Great Lakes-25%; West-24%
- Dwelling: City, Lg-24%; City, Med-20%; City, Sm-12%; Suburbs-29%; Rural-15%
- Age: 18-29: 21%; 30-49: 33%; 50-64: 24%; 65+: 22%
- Race: Hispanic-17%; AfrAmerican-12%; Asian-6%; White-60%; Other-5%
- Political party: Democratic-37%; Republican-35%; Independent-28%
- Education: No college degree-67%; College degree+ - 33%
- Employment: Working/Looking-69%; Retired-21%; Unemployed/at home/student-7%; Not working-3%

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