

Key Findings: Extent and Effects of Workplace Bullying Survey, 2010

ABOUT THE KNOW BULL! WORKPLACE BULLYING SURVEY...

A survey titled, *Extent and Effects of Workplace Bullying* was posted on a dedicated page within the Know Bull! website late 2008-09, and visitors to the website were requested to participate. The survey consisted of 25 questions, and a number of 'sub questions'. (Number of respondents: N=54).

The 'type' of information being sought from the *Extent and Effects of Workplace Bullying Survey* was both quantitative and qualitative, and included: a. Do workplace bullies employ 'preferred' tactics; b. What are the predominant health effects of workplace bullying on targets; c. When workplace bullying is brought to the attention of organisations – are they dealing with it effectively; d. Can increasing trends in workplace bullying be identified; e. Does the information provided by participants in this survey correlate with the key findings of other research into workplace bullying; and f. What are the implications of the findings of the Survey on businesses and organisations in general?

KEY FINDINGS – THE MOST SALIENT POINTS...

Workplace bullies are predominantly female

94.5% of survey respondents indicated they had been bullied, with the 'workplace bully' being predominantly female (52.9%), as opposed to a male (47.05%).

Workplace bullies don't always act alone

23.5% of those who indicated they had been bullied stated that the bully did not act alone and that accomplices were involved (mobbing).

Workplace bully 'targets' experience reduced productivity

52.94% of bully 'targets' stated that as a result of the workplace bullying their productivity was reduced by 50-70%.

Workplace bullying 'witnesses' experience reduced productivity

Those who 'witnessed' a workplace-bullying incident in

either a former, or current workplace (100% of respondents), also stated their productivity levels were affected, with the majority (66.7%) estimating a 10-40% decrease.

An 'active' bully in 66.6% of workplaces - and more likely to be a 'boss'

66.6% of all respondents stated that a workplace bully was currently 'active' in their workplace, while 49.9% of these respondents estimated that this bully had been responsible for at least 4 to more than 7 staff leaving their workplaces over the past 1-2 years. Further, this active bully was less likely to be a co-worker (16.6%), and more likely (58.2%) to be a 'boss' such as a Manager, Senior Manager, or CEO/Executive Director. Alarming, 83.3% of these 'boss bullies' don't act alone – preferring to operate as a bully group, or 'mob'.

Workplace bully 'actions' have a strong, negative effect on staff morale

100% of respondents who indicated there was an 'active' bully in their workplace, also stated the 'actions' of this person/persons was having a negative effect on staff morale.

1 out of 2 report workplace bullying, but 9 out of 10 say the result isn't good

While 52.9% of bully targets said 'Yes' to having previously reported workplace bullying to a supervisor or manager...88.9% stated that the situation had not been dealt with satisfactorily. Of these, 50% stated that the bully remained, and that nothing was done by their employer to address the workplace bullying.

7 out of 10 leave their job due to workplace bullying

72.2% of all respondents, whether the 'target' of a workplace bully, or a 'witness' stated they had left a job as a direct result of workplace bullying.

Workplace bullying increases stress levels at work in 9 out of 10 staff

88.8% of all respondents stated that workplace bullying had 'most definitely' added to their stress levels at work.

Workplace bullies exhibit a 'pattern' of identifiable behaviours

83.3% of all respondents stated that 'intimidating behaviour' was the most prevalent behaviour exhibited by workplace bullies. This was closely followed by 'humiliating behaviour' (72.2%); 'public' displays (61.1%); 'decisions constantly undermined' (61.1%); 'threatening behaviour' (55.5%); 'verbal abuse' (55.5%); and, 'mobbing' (55.5%).

4 out of 5 bully targets suffer depression and sleeping problems after bullying

Of those respondents who indicated they had been the target of a workplace bully, 82.5% stated they had suffered or had been diagnosed with both 'sleeping problems', and 'depression' after being targeted by a workplace bully. This was closely followed by 'anxiety' indicated by 76.47% of bully targets, and 'constant fatigue' (58.82%). Of greater concern, is that 5.5%, or (1 in 20) bully targets had 'suicidal thoughts' after having been exposed to workplace bullying.

Staff suicide and the workplace bully

16.6% of respondents said that they had known of, or worked with a staff member who, after being targeted by a workplace bully, later committed suicide.

Legal accountability for bully effects after failure/refusal to address bullying

94.4% of all respondents agreed that organisations and senior personnel who fail/refuse to address workplace

bullying should be held legally responsible i.e. prosecuted for the actions/effect a workplace bully has on other staff.

Support for statutory changes regarding 'hostile work environments'

100% of respondents who agreed that organisations and senior personnel should be prosecuted for the effects of workplace bullies resulting from failure/refusal to address bullying in the workplace – also stated they would support the introduction of a 'new' statutory course of action encompassing the notion of 'the deliberate and/or intentional infliction of a hostile work environment', under which organisations, and bullies could be held legally accountable.

'Targets' of workplace bullies have identifiable traits

From a list of work ethic and personality traits, 72.2% of all respondents indicated that the most prevalent traits in 'targets' prior to encountering a bully attack, as being 'skilled' and 'hard working'. These traits were followed closely by 'truthful' (66.6%), 'very competent' (66.6%), 'intelligent' (61.1%), 'professional' (55.5%), and 'ethical' (55.5%).

There's a 1 in 2 chance that staff aged 46+ will become a bully 'target'

52.9% of respondents that indicated they had been the target of a workplace bully, were aged 46 years and over.

