

LMSB Consulting Research

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Ignoring Workplace Bullying...No Longer an Option

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Workplace bullying is repetitive, abusive behavior that devalues and harms other people on the job. It is not usually physically violent but relies instead on the formidable weapons of hostile actions and words. Workplace bullying intimidates and torments the targeted individual, putting his or her self-esteem and overall health at risk.

To explore the topic of workplace bullying further, research was conducted to determine the extent to which employees in Canada and the United States are experiencing bullying behavior in their workplaces. 355 men and women from Canada and the United States completed an online *Workplace Interaction Survey*. Of the participants, 80 percent were women and 20 percent were men. 46 percent of the participants were between the ages of 46 – 65 years old. 41 percent of the participants were between the ages of 31-45 years old and 14 percent of the participants were between the ages of 18 – 30 years of age. 86 percent of the participants identified themselves as being full-time employees and 11 percent as part-time employees. 56 percent of participants had a length of service between 1-10 years and 44% had a length of service between 11-30 years.

The *Workplace Interaction Survey* consisted of common bullying characteristics as outlined by researchers Charlotte Rayner and Helge Hoel. Rayner & Hoel categorized bullying behaviors as follows:

- 1) *Threat to Professional Status* (e.g., humiliating the person in public or sabotaging the person's work).
- 2) *Threat to Personal Standing* (e.g., name calling, spreading malicious rumors about a person, teasing or intimidating a person).
- 3) *Isolation* (e.g., preventing access to opportunities, or isolating the person physically or socially).
- 4) *Overwork* (e.g., imposing undue pressure to produce work and setting impossible deadlines).
- 5) *Destabilization*(e.g., failing to give credit where it is due, assigning meaningless tasks, removing responsibility or setting the person up for failure).

To gain a better perspective of the possible occurrences of workplace bullying, the statistics derived from the *Workplace Interaction Survey* were applied to employed residents of New York State and Ontario, Canada. Table 1 represents the number of residents in New York and Ontario and the number of employed residents in the state and province. The statistics were obtained from Statistics Canada Ontario Labour Force and Empire State Development. As of September, 2009, there were 10,695,300 Ontario residents and 19,541,453 New York State residents. Regarding Ontario residents, 6,525,100 are employed (Table 1). There are 8,862,900 New York State residents currently employed (Table 1).

Residents of Ontario 10,695,300 Statistics Canada Ontario Labour Force (September, 2009)	Employed Residents 6,525,100 Statistics Canada Ontario Labour Force (September, 2009)	Residents of New York 19,541,453 Empire State Development (July, 2009)	Employed Residents 8,862,900 Empire State Development (October, 2009)
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Table 1: Total Number of Employed New York & Ontario Residents

Table 2 represents the number of employed employees in New York and Ontario who may potentially have experienced workplace bullying behavior described by Rayner & Hoel as *Threat to Professional Status*. Based on this information, approximately 2 – 4 million Ontarians and New Yorkers are potentially having their professional status threatened in the workplace either by being publicly humiliated or by having their work sabotage. The *Threat to Professional Status* category includes other behaviors that were not included in this research, which would increase this number significantly.

Threat to Professional Status	Workplace Interaction Survey Findings (n=355)	Statistics Applied to Employed Residents of Ontario	Statistics Applied to Employed Residents of New York State
Public humiliation	47%	3066797	4165563
Sabotage	31%	2022781	2747499

Table 2: Threat to Professional Status

Table 3 represents the *Threat to Personal Standing* category and the potential number of employees in New York and Ontario who could be experiencing various types of behavior representing this category is approximately 1-3.7 million.

Threat to Personal Standing	Workplace Interaction Survey Findings (n=355)	Statistics Applied to Employed Residents of Ontario	Statistics Applied to Employed Residents of New York State
Teasing	42%	2740542	3722418
Intimidation	18%	1174518	1595322
Sarcasm	26%	1696526	2304354
Abusive language	21%	1370271	1861209
Excessively monitored	22%	1435522	1949838
Malicious rumors	27%	1761777	2392983
Verbal or Physical Assault	12%	783012	1063548

Table 3: Threat to Personal Standing

Isolation is another bullying category which was considered in this research. Applying the *Workplace Interaction Survey* results to the statistics for employed residents in New York State and Ontario, between 1.8 – 2.9 million employees may be experiencing physical or social Isolation or are denied opportunities for advancement because of workplace bullying (See Table 4). Applying this statistic to Ontario and New York employees, the number of potential employees in Ontario who could decide to harm themselves or others would be 456757 and for New York employees the number would be 620403.

Isolation	Workplace Interaction Survey Findings (n=355)	Statistics Applied to Employed Residents of Ontario	Statistics Applied to Employed Residents of New York State
Denied promotions/ opportunities	29%	1892279	2570241
Ostracized	33%	2153283	2924757

Table 4: Isolation

Applying the statistics from the *Workplace Interaction Survey* to New York and Ontario employees, the number of potential New York employees and Ontario employees who could be experiencing undue pressure to produce is approximately 3.9 million and 2.9 million respectively (Table 5). Regarding New York and Ontario employees who are seeking to meet unreasonable deadlines the numbers are approximately 1.9 million and 1.4 million, respectively (Table 5).

Overwork	Workplace Interaction Survey Findings (n=355)	Statistics Applied to Employed Residents of Ontario	Statistics Applied to Employed Residents of New York State
Undue Pressure to Produce	45%	2936295	3988305
Unreasonable deadlines	22%	1435522	1949838

Table 5: Overwork

Table 6 represents the *Destabilization* category and the potential number of employees in New York and Ontario who may be experiencing this type of bullying behavior.

Destabilization	Workplace Interaction Survey Findings (n=355)	Statistics Applied to Employed Residents of Ontario	Statistics Applied to Employed Residents of New York State
Failure to give credit	36%	2349036	3190644
Acknowledgement/Reward	37%	2414287	3279273
Meaningless tasks	23%	1500773	2038467

Table 6: Destabilization