



# Survey on bullying and harassment in the workplace

November 2023

## Background

Fórsa recently carried out a membership survey to help further the union's research on bullying in the workplace.

The purpose of this research was to gain a more comprehensive understanding of members' experiences of bullying in the workplace or being a witness to same. The survey also set out to inform policy and procedures when raising such matters with respective employers. Members across the union's six divisions were invited to take part.

## Definition

Workplace bullying can be defined as repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another or others, at the place of work and/or in the course of employment, which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individual's right to dignity at work.

An isolated incident of the behaviour described in this definition may be an affront to dignity at work, but, as a once-off incident, is not considered to be bullying. A key characteristic of bullying is that it usually takes place over a period of time. It is regular and persistent inappropriate behaviour, which is specifically targeted at one employee or a group of employees. It may be perpetrated by someone in a position of authority, be employees against a manager, or by employees in the same grade as the recipient.

## Support

This data may lead to some feelings and thoughts which cause you distress or concern, or make you feel uncomfortable. If so, please avail of the below support services:

Fórsa's counselling helpline: 24/7 confidential service at no cost to members	1800 776655	
Samaritans National Helpline	116 123	
Health Service Authority	www.hsa.ie	
Health Service Executive	1800 444925	Email: ask.hr@hse.ie
LGBT Helpline Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender	1800 929 539	
Irish Network against Racism	01 8897110	Email: info@inar.ie
Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission	01 8589601	Email: info@ihrec.ie
Employee Assistance Programme	Please refer to your organisation's EAP Programme or contact your HR Department for details	

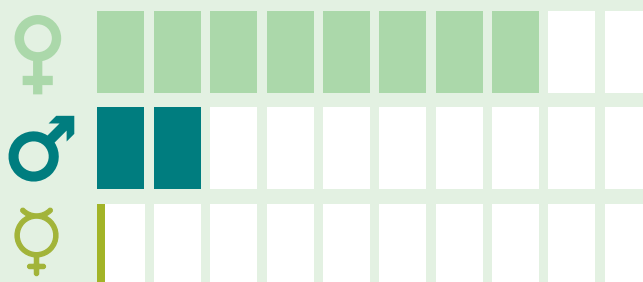
## Engagement

This survey saw very high levels of engagement, with 4,981 members responding to the survey across the union's six divisions.



## Gender breakdown

Of those who responded, 78% were women and 21% were men. We had a small number of respondents identify as non-binary (0.1%) and identify as transgender (0.1%). The gender breakdown of respondents mirrors that seen across the Fórsa membership.

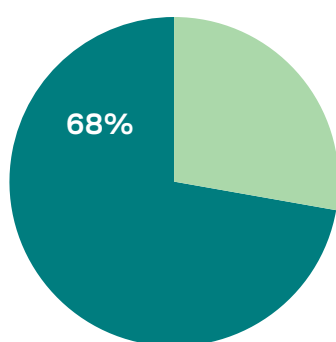


## Age profile

The largest cohort of members who responded to this survey were in the 45-54 age bracket (1887), followed by members in the 55-64 age bracket (1524). 1052 of respondents fell into the 35-44 age category, while 388 young workers (classified as 34 and under) responded to the survey. 109 members over 65 detailed their experiences with workplace bullying.

Age	No of respondents
18-24	22
25-34	366
35-44	1052
45-54	1887
55-64	1524
65+	109

## Members experience of workplace bullying



**68% have experienced workplace bullying**

Over 68% of members surveyed indicated that they had personally experienced workplace bullying, with a further 208 respondents indicating that they would prefer not to say.

Of the 3381 members who have experienced workplace bullying, 29% said they experienced this daily, with 27% indicating that they experienced workplace bullying occasionally.

When examining workplace bullying and members' personal interactions with co-workers and colleagues, 72% of those surveyed said they experienced being ignored or excluded, while 50% said they had experienced gossip, including having insulting remarks made about their person, their attitudes, or their private life.

61% of respondents said that they had experienced humiliation, or had been ridiculed in connection with their work, with 815 members indicating that this occurred on a weekly or daily basis.

55% of those surveyed indicated that they have had key areas of responsibility removed or replaced with more unpleasant or trivial tasks.

Over 64% of those surveyed said that they have experienced an unmanageable workload or were given tasks with unreasonable deadlines. 590 members reported that this occurs daily, while 442 report experiencing this behaviour weekly. 45% of those surveyed said they have been pressured into responding to work related issues outside of normal working hours, with 165 respondents indicating that they experience this daily.

Over half of those surveyed indicated that they had been shouted at or were the target of spontaneous rage, with 191 members indicating that they experience this behaviour daily.

31% of those surveyed reported to have experienced intimidating behaviour (such as finger pointing, invasion of personal space, shouting or physically blocking their path) at some point, with 319 experiencing this either on a daily or weekly basis.

## Workplace bullying and others

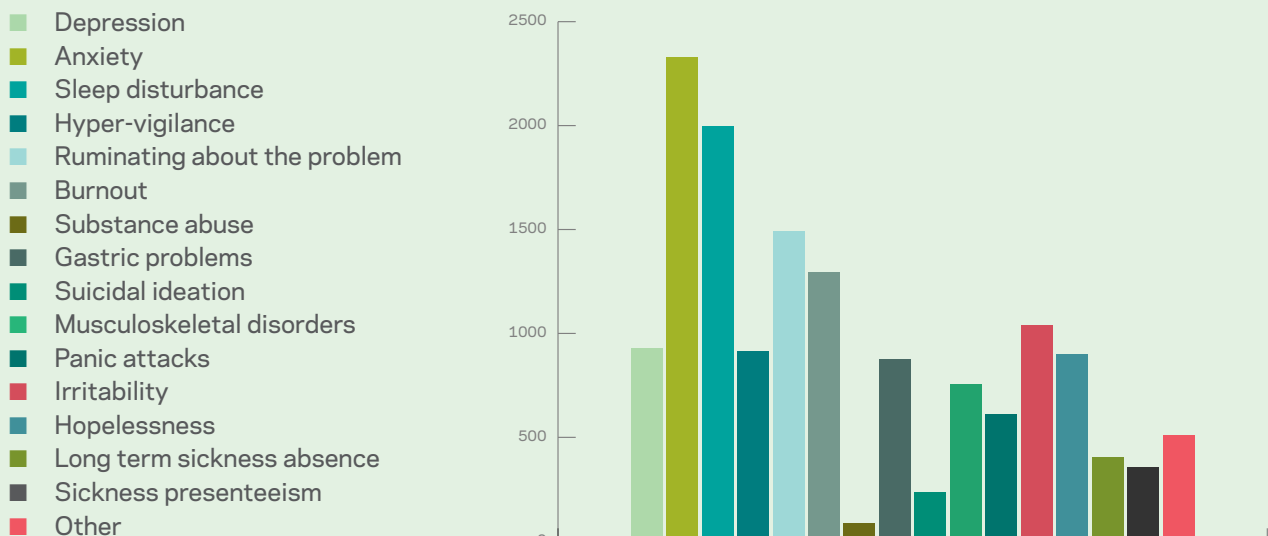
Over 67% of respondents reported that they had witnessed a colleague or co-worker experience workplace bullying.

Of the 3316 respondents who have witnessed this, 69% have witnessed a colleague be ignored or excluded, with 436 reporting that they witness this daily.

54% of respondents said that they have witnessed a colleague be threatened or insulted.

When asked if participants had witnessed a colleague be shouted at or be the subject of spontaneous rage, 54% answered yes, with 41% of members witnessing this occasionally, 246 respondents reported witnessing this weekly, and 144 respondents reported witnessing this daily.

## The psychological and physical impact of workplace bullying



Almost 3,000 (2,992) of those surveyed said they had experienced psychological or physical symptoms because of workplace bullying.

Anxiety and sleep disturbance were the most reported symptoms experienced as a result of workplace bullying. 2327 respondents indicated that they have experienced anxiety and 1999 of those surveyed reported trouble sleeping.

43% of those surveyed said that they have experienced burnout, and 1041 reported feelings or irritability.

Half of respondents said that they ruminate on the issue, and 613 people reported panic attacks.

928 members have experienced depression due to bullying in the workplace, while 898 reported feeling hopeless.

12% of those surveyed said they have experienced sickness presenteeism, while 14% have been out of work on long term sick leave because of bullying.

Over a quarter of respondents said they have experienced musculoskeletal problems, such as neck and back pain due to bullying and harassment, while 874 indicated that they have suffered from gastric issues.

Starkly, 235 members reported feelings of suicide because of workplace bullying, and 89 reported abusing substances.

**We can see from the data above that workplace bullying has extremely serious physical and psychological consequences for those who experience it.**