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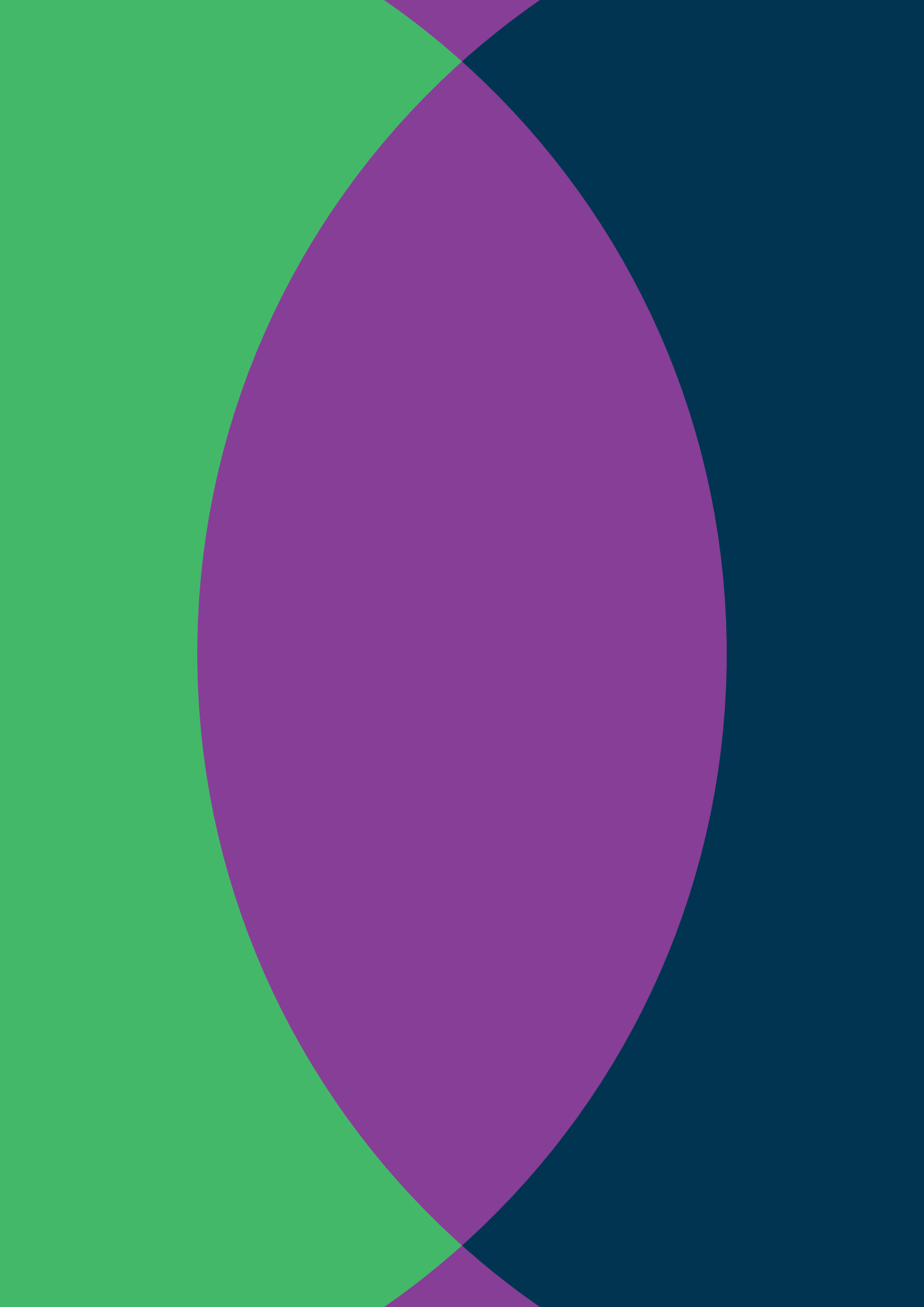
Report on the National Survey of Staff Experiences of Bullying in Irish Higher Education Institutions

Authors

Dr Angela Mazzone, Mr Éamon Jones,
Prof. Yseult Freeney and
Prof. James O'Higgins Norman

**DCU Anti-Bullying Centre,
Dublin City University**





Overview

What is Workplace Bullying?

The Health and Safety Authority (HSA) defines workplace bullying as the repeated, inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more employees 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 this behaviour 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, by employees against a manager or by employees in the same grade as the recipient.

What is this Study about?

This survey study examined the prevalence and impact of enduring and witnessing workplace bullying among staff members in 20 publicly funded Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Ireland. The study also investigated employees' awareness of anti-bullying policies and their perception of the anti-bullying culture within their institutions.

The research study employed an anonymous online survey. A total of 3,835 higher education employees aged between 18 and 65+ filled out the online survey (65.1% female, 31.7% male, 0.5% non-binary, 2.7% did not disclose their gender identity; 82.8% Irish; 12.2% belonged to another White ethnic group; 3% belonged to an ethnic minority group, and 2% did not disclose their ethnicity).

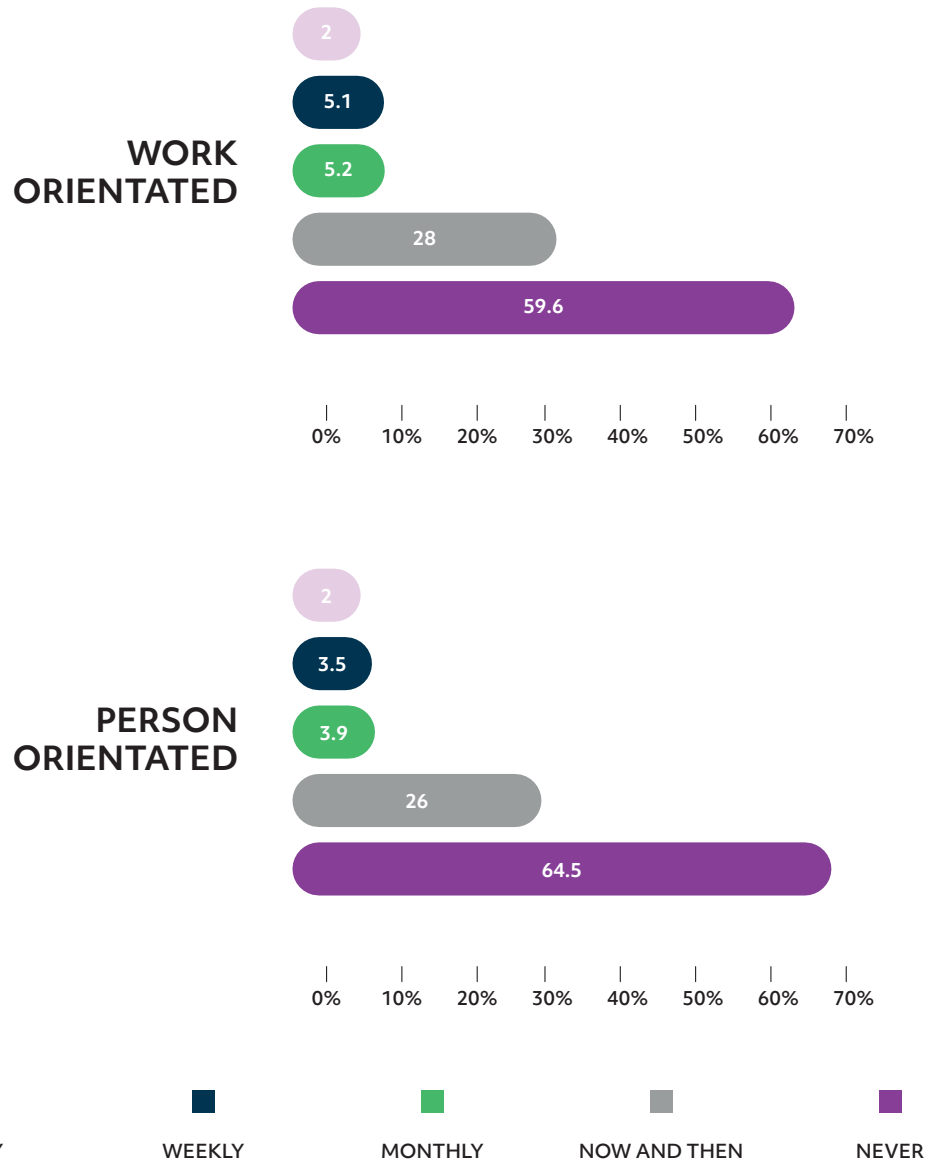
This booklet provides an overview of the study findings and identifies some key aspects to be addressed to prevent and tackle bullying within HEIs.



How Prevalent is the Issue?

Negative Acts at Work

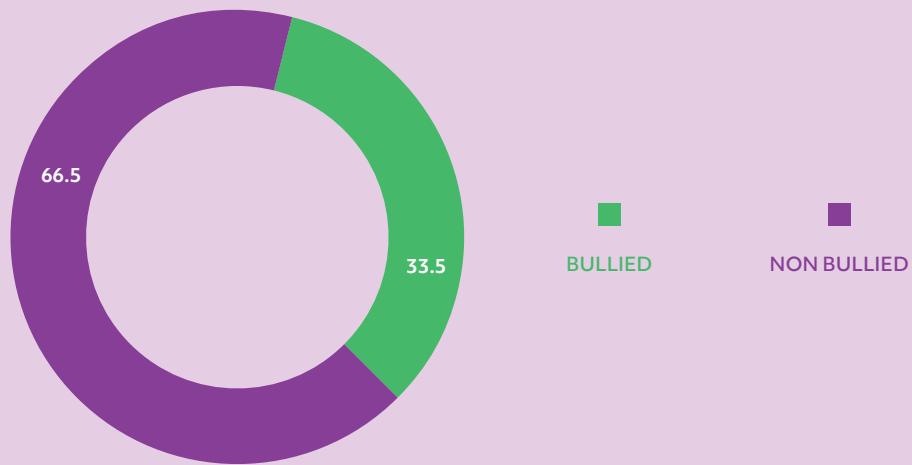
Twenty-eight percent (28%) of respondents reported having endured work-orientated negative acts (targeting an employee's professional standing), whereas 26% reported experiencing person-orientated negative acts (targeting an employee's personal standing).



Respondents Enduring Work-Orientated and Person-Orientated Negative Acts at Work in the Past Three Years

Workplace Bullying

Once participants were presented with an established definition of workplace bullying, 33.5% of the same reported being bullied at work in the last 3 years, with 70.6% of bullied employees claiming that the bullying lasted for several months.



Percentages of Respondents who Endured Bullying at Work in the Past Three Years

Perpetrator of Bullying

55% were bullied by a senior colleague

24.6% were bullied by a peer

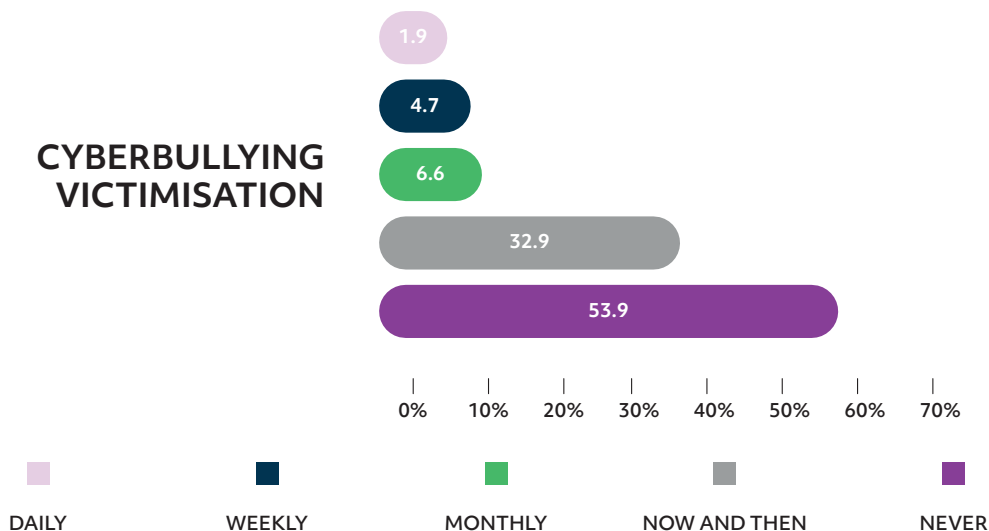
8.8% were bullied by a junior colleague

8.4% were bullied by other employees

3.2% were bullied by a student

Cyberbullying Victimization

Cyberbullying victimisation was relatively common in our sample, with almost a third of respondents (32.9%) being cyberbullied at least "now and then". Please refer to the below figure for a detailed representation of the findings.



Who Gets Bullied?

Minority groups such as LGBTQ+ respondents, ethnic minorities and those with disabilities were particularly likely to experience negative acts at work, bullying and, cyberbullying compared to majority groups (that is, heterosexual respondents, White Irish respondents and those without a disability).

Those who did not disclose their gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity or work area were more likely to experience negative acts in the workplace and cyberbullying than those who did disclose this information.

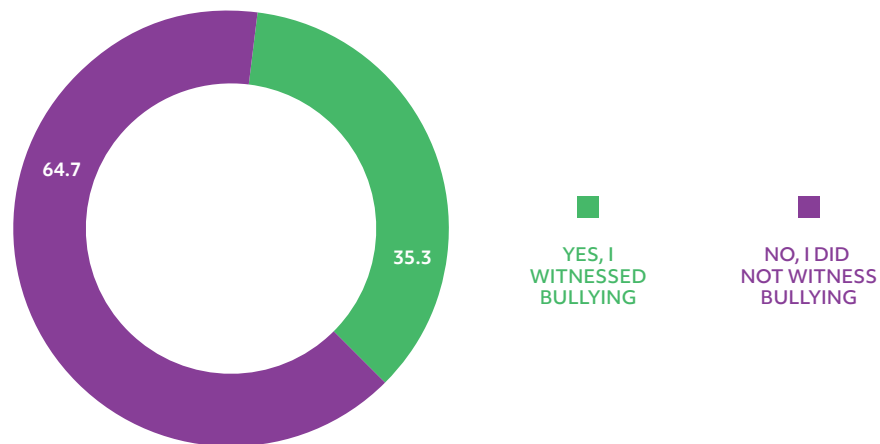
Impact on Mental Health and Wellbeing

Being the target of negative acts at work and cyberbullying affected negatively the mental health and wellbeing of respondents. Overall, between 5.3% and 38.5% of respondents (with different backgrounds) reported that the negative acts at work had “often” a negative impact on their general wellbeing, and between 7.4% and 38.5% were negatively affected “always”.

Witnessing bullying was detrimental for the mental health of respondents, with 36.6% of bystanders reporting that witnessing bullying had a negative impact on their mental health and wellbeing.

Witnessing Bullying at Work

Over one third of respondents (35.3%) indicated that they had witnessed bullying at work in the past three years, with 50.5% reporting that they had taken action when witnessing bullying.



Percentages of Respondents who Witnessed Bullying at Work in the Past Three Years

Organisational Policy

While 64.5% of respondents reported being aware that their institution had an anti-bullying policy, only 20.8% of participants agreed that the anti-bullying policy and procedures in place were effective in protecting staff members.

On a positive note, 36.2% of survey respondents claimed that they felt valued in their workplace and 47.6% of respondents claimed that members of their team can bring up problems and difficult issues without fear of repercussion.

Key Recommendations

The findings of this survey study are important for policymakers at the national and organisational level as they assist in focussing towards potential strategies to prevent workplace bullying among HEIs employees. Some of the key recommendations following from this survey study are outlined below.

- Awareness, education and training
- Evidence-based intervention programmes to prevent and tackle bullying
- Counselling and mental health services for targets of bullying and bystanders
- Anti-bullying policies developed in consultation with employees
- Ongoing research to further explore and monitor the prevalence of workplace bullying in HEIs





More Information

This is an overview of the DCU Anti-Bullying Centre (ABC) publication: Report on the National Survey of Staff Experiences of Bullying in Irish Higher Education Institutions.

This survey study was commissioned by the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.


The full document is available online at:


<https://antibullyingcentre.ie/publications/scientific-reports/>


DCU Anti-Bullying Centre
All Hallows Campus
Grace Park Rd, Drumcondra,
Dublin 9, Ireland

T: +353 1 700 9139

W: dcu.ie/abc

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