Ollscoil Chathair
Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City University

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

Summary of Survey Findings

DCU Anti-Bullying Centre

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

Summary of Survey Findings

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

This report is published by DCU Anti-Bullying Centre (ABC), Dublin City University

ISBN 978-1-911669-37-1

© DCU Anti-Bullying Centre (2022)

www.dcu.ie/abc

DCU Ionad Frithbhulaíochta Anti-Bullying Centre

An Roinn Breisoideachais agus Ardoideachais, Taighde, Nuálaíochta agus Eolaíochta
Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science

Trigger Warning

This survey study investigated employees' experiences of bullying in 20 publicly funded Irish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Please avail of the below support services in case the content of this report is distressing to you or makes you feel uncomfortable.

Service	Phone	Webpage
Text 50808	Free 24/7 Support in a Crisis – Text "**HELLO**" to **50808**	https://text50808.ie/
Samaritans	National Helpline – 116 123	https://www.samaritans.org/ireland/samaritans-ireland/
HSA		https://www.hsa.ie/eng/Workplace_Health/Bullying_at_Work/Are_you_being_Bullied/
HSE		https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/mental-health/dealing-with-bullying-at-work.html
Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)		If you need professional advice, please refer to your institution's Employment Assistance Programme (EAP) for further support and counselling. If you are not registered with your institution's EAP, or you are not sure if your institution has an EAP, please contact your Human Resources department for further information
LGBT Ireland	National LGBT Helpline 1800 929 539	https://lgbt.ie/

Contents

Preface 6
Executive Summary....7
1. Aims of the Present Survey Study 9
2.1.1 Procedure 9
2.1.2 Survey....10
SECTION 1: Demographics 10
3. Sample 10
4. KEY FINDINGS 11
SECTION 2: Negative Acts at Work, Bullying and Cyberbullying 11
4.1.1 Negative Acts at Work 11
4.1.2 Negative Acts Across Different Gender Identities 12
4.1.3 Negative Acts Across Different Sexual Orientations....13
4.1.4 Negative Acts Across Different Ethnic Identities 14
4.1.5 Negative Acts Among Respondents With and Without a Disability 15
4.1.6 Negative Acts Across Different Age Groups 15
4.1.7 Negative Acts Across Respondents With Managerial and Non-Managerial Roles....16
4.1.8 Work Area 17
4.1.9 Impact of Negative Acts on Respondents' Wellbeing 19
5. Self-Labelled Bullying Victimisation....20
5.1.1 Bullying Victimisation Experiences: Professional Status of the Perpetrator 20
5.2.2 Bullying Victimisation Experiences Across Different Gender Identities 22
5.2.3 Bullying victimisation Across Different Sexual Orientations 22
5.2.4 Self-labelled Bullying across Different Ethnic Identities 23
5.2.5 Bullying victimisation across different age groups 23
5.2.6 Bullying Victimisation Experiences Among Respondents With and Without a Disability 23
5.2.7 Bullying Victimisation Among Respondents With Managerial and Non-Managerial Roles....25
5.2.8 Self-Labelled Bullying Across Different Work Areas 25
5.2.9 Repetition and Duration of Bullying Victimisation 27
6. Cyberbullying Victimisation 28
6.3.1 Cyberbullying Victimisation Across Different Gender Identities 29
6.3.2 Cyberbullying Victimisation Across Different Sexual Orientations 29
6.3.3 Cyberbullying Victimisation Across Different Ethnic Groups 29

6.3.4 Cyberbullying Victimisation across Different Age Groups 31
6.3.5 Cyberbullying Victimisation across Respondents with and without a Disability 31
6.3.6 Cyberbullying Victimisation for Respondents with Managerial and Non-Managerial Roles 32
6.3.7 Cyberbullying Victimisation Across Different Work Areas 34
6.3.8 Cyberbullying: Professional Status of the Perpetrator 34
6.3.9 Impact of Cyberbullying on Respondents' Wellbeing 34
SECTION 3: Bystander Behaviour 36
7. Bystander Behaviour 36
8. Employee Voice and Silence 38
9. Reasons for Taking Action: Employee Voice and Silence 40
SECTION 4: Anti-Bullying Culture and Awareness of Anti-Bullying Policies 41
10. Anti-Bullying Culture and Policy 41
SECTION 5: Team Psychological Safety and Work Demands 43
11. Team Psychological Safety 43
12. Pressure to Produce 43
13. Work-Life Balance 43
RECOMMENDATIONS 45
References 48

List of Figures

Figure 1. Work-Orientated and Person-Orientated Negative Acts in the Overall Sample 11
Figure 2. Work-Orientated and Person-Orientated Negative Acts Across Different Genders 12
Figure 3. Work-Orientated and Person-Orientated Negative Acts Across Different Sexual Orientations 13
Figure 4. Work-Orientated and Person-Orientated Negative Acts Across Different Ethnic Identities 14
Figure 5. Work-Orientated and Person-Orientated Negative Acts Among Respondents With and Without a Disability 15
Figure 6. Work-Orientated Negative Acts Across Different Age Groups 16
Figure 7. Person-Orientated Negative Acts Across Different Age Groups 16
Figure 8. Work-Orientated and Person-Orientated Negative Acts Among Respondents Covering a Managerial Role and Respondents With no Managerial Role 17
Figure 9. Work-Orientated Negative Acts Among Respondents Working in Different Areas. 18
Figure 10. Person-Orientated Negative Acts Among Respondents Working in Different Areas 18
Figure 11. Professional Status of the Perpetrator of Negative Acts at Work 19
Figure 12. Impact of the Negative Acts at Work in the Overall Sample 20
Figure 13. Respondents who Reported Being Bullied in the Past Three Years 21

Figure 14. Prevalence of Bullying from Different Perpetrators After Reading the Bullying Definition 21
Figure 15. Bullying Victimisation Experiences Across Different Genders.....22
Figure 16. Bullying Victimisation Experiences Across Different Sexual Orientations 23
Figure 17. Bullying Victimisation Experiences Across Different Ethnic Identities.....24
Figure 18. Bullying Victimisation Prevalence Across Different Age Groups.....24
Figure 19. Bullying Victimisation Among Respondents With and Without a Disability 25
Figure 20. Bullying Victimisation Experiences Among Respondents With Managerial and Non-Managerial Roles 26
Figure 21. Bullying Victimisation Experiences Across Respondents Working in Different Areas 26
Figure 22. Repetition of Bullying Victimisation in the Overall Sample.....27
Figure 23 Duration Bullying Victimisation in the Overall Sample.....28
Figure 24. Cyberbullying Prevalence in the Overall Sample.....29
Figure 25. Cyberbullying Victimisation Prevalence Across Different Gender Identities 30
Figure 26. Cyberbullying Victimisation Prevalence Among Different Sexual Orientations.....30
Figure 27. Cyberbullying Victimisation Prevalence Across Different Ethnic Groups.....31
Figure 28. Cyberbullying Victimisation Prevalence Across Different Age Groups.....32
Figure 29. Cyberbullying Prevalence Among Respondents With and Without a Disability 33
Figure 30. Cyberbullying Victimisation Among Respondents With Managerial and Non-Managerial Roles 33
Figure 31. Cyberbullying victimisation across different work areas.....34
Figure 32. Professional Status of the Cyberbullying Perpetrator 35
Figure 33. Impact of Cyberbullying Victimisation in the Overall Sample 35
Figure 34. Prevalence of Bystander Behaviour.....36
Figure 35. Impact of Witnessing Negative Acts at Work on Respondents' Mental Health and Wellbeing 37
Figure 36. Prevalence of Negative Acts Witnessed at Work from Different Perpetrators.....38
Figure 37. Percentages of Respondents Who Witnessed or did not Witness Bullying in the past Three Years.....39
Figure 38. Rates of Respondents Who Reported Taking Action When Witnessing Bullying Versus not Taking Action 39
Figure 39. Respondents' Awareness of Anti-Bullying Policies at Their Institution.....41
Figure 40. Perception of Anti-Bullying Policy and Anti-Bullying Culture 42
Figure 41. Pressure to Produce in the Overall Sample 44
Figure 42. Work-Life Balance in the Overall Sample 44

Preface

The following report has been prepared by Dublin City University (DCU) Anti-Bullying Centre (ABC), a national centre for education and research on bullying and online safety, for the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. The main aim of this report is to investigate the prevalence of workplace bullying among staff members in higher education institutions (HEIs) in Ireland. ABC is a University designated research centre located in DCU Institute of Education, dedicated but not limited to researching bullying in different contexts, including the workplace, school and the cyberspace. The Centre was the first of its kind in Ireland to conduct research on different forms of bullying, including school bullying workplace bullying, homophobic bullying and cyberbullying. The Centre works to solve the real-world issue of bullying and promote online safety through the extensive collaboration of academic, community and industry partnerships. ABC is an internationally renowned research centre and hosts the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Chair on Tackling Bullying in Schools and Cyberspace.

Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of an anonymous online survey examining the prevalence and impact of workplace bullying among staff in 20 publicly funded Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Ireland. This survey study was commissioned by the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. The survey included five sections covering: 1) Demographics and work arrangements; 2) Negative acts at work, bullying and cyberbullying; 3) Bystander behaviour; 4) Anti-bullying culture and awareness of anti-bullying policies; 5) Team psychological safety and work demands. A total of 3,835 HEI staff (11.5% of employees working in the HEIs that were invited to participate in this study) aged between 18 and 65+ (65.1% female, 31.7% male, 0.5% non-binary, 2.7% did not disclose their gender identity) engaged with the online survey. Data were collected during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thirty-point-five-percent (30.5%) of staff engaging with the survey was working remotely at the time of the data collection.

Findings showed that 28% of the sample occasionally ("now and then") endured work-orientated negative acts (targeting someone's professional standing) and 26% were subjected to person-orientated negative acts (targeting someone's personal standing). An average of 32.9% respondents in the whole sample endured cyberbullying at work. After being prompted to read the bullying definition, about one third of respondents (33.5%) reported having been bullied at work in the past three years, with 70.6% of them having been bullied for several months. In the majority of cases, the perpetrator of bullying was a senior colleague (55%) or a peer (24.6%). Minority groups, such as LGBTQ+ respondents, ethnic minorities and respondents with a disability were more likely to endure negative acts at work, bullying and cyberbullying compared to majority groups (i.e., heterosexuals, ethnic majority groups and respondents with no disabilities). Managers were more likely to endure negative acts and cyberbullying at work compared to respondents who did not cover a managerial role. The rates of negative acts at work were comparable across respondents working in different work areas. However, academics in the field of Social Sciences and Business and Law and those who did not disclose their work area endured higher levels of negative acts and cyberbullying compared to respondents working in other areas. Interestingly, those who did not disclose their demographic information (gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, work area) were more

likely to endure negative acts at work, bullying and cyberbullying compared to those who disclosed their demographic information. These findings suggest that employees who endure bullying at work might be afraid of reporting their negative experiences even when data are collected anonymously.

Overall, enduring negative acts at work and cyberbullying had a negative impact on respondents' mental health and wellbeing, with a slightly higher rate of female respondents and respondents belonging to minority groups reporting negative mood end emotions.

Incidents of negative acts at work were witnessed occasionally ("now and then") by 34.5% of respondents. 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. 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.

On a positive note, the majority of survey respondents (64.5%) were aware that their institution had an anti-bullying policy. However, only 20.8% of respondents agreed that the anti-bullying policy and procedures at their HEI contributed to effectively protecting all staff members. Finally, this survey assessed some organisational factors that might contribute to bullying, including pressure to produce, work-life balance and team psychological safety. Heavy workloads constituted an issue for a consistent proportion of the sample, with 35.8% of respondents agreeing that their workloads were very demanding and 34% reporting that their personal life suffered because of work. On a positive note, over a third of respondents (36.2%) reported that they felt valued in their work team and 47.6% agreed that members of their team can bring up problems and difficult issues.

Overall, findings of this survey study provide an overview of the bullying experiences endured by staff within HEIs in Ireland. Providing HEI staff with awareness raising initiatives and training opportunities, along with a sustained effort towards a more inclusive organisational culture are among the recommended strategies to tackle workplace bullying in HEIs.

1. Aims of the Present Survey Study

This survey study has been commissioned by the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. The study aims to:

1. Establish the prevalence and impact of workplace bullying among survey respondents with different backgrounds in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, professional status (managers versus employees with non-managerial role) and work areas.
2. Establish the prevalence and impact of cyberbullying among survey respondents with different backgrounds in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, professional status and work areas.
3. Investigate the professional status of the perpetrators of bullying and cyberbullying.
4. Examine respondents' experiences of witnessing bullying.
5. Examine bystanders' response to bullying (employee voice versus silence).
6. Investigate respondents' perception of the anti-bullying culture at their HEI and their awareness of the anti-bullying policies.
7. Examine respondents' work-life balance, pressure to produce and team psychological safety (i.e., individual perception to be working in a supportive team).

2. Methods

2.1.1 Procedure

This report draws on the results of an anonymous survey conducted with a sample of employees working in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Ireland. Twenty (20) publicly funded HEIs were invited to participate in this study. Contact points for each of the 20 HEIs were given information concerning the objectives of this survey study, which was then circulated to their employees.

2.1.2 Survey

The survey consisted of five sections[1] covering 1) Demographics; 2) Negative acts at work, bullying and cyberbullying 3)Bystander behaviour; 4)Anti-bullying culture and awareness of anti-bullying policies ; 5) Team psychological safety and work demands.

SECTION 1: Demographics

3. Sample

A sample of 3,835 employees (11.5% of employees working in the 20 HEIs sampled in this survey study) aged between 18 and 65+ (65.1% female, 31.7% male; 0.5% non-binary and 2.7% did not disclose their gender identity) filled out the online survey. Most respondents (82.8%) identified themselves as Irish; 12.2% belonged to another White ethnic group; 3% belonged to an ethnic minority[2]; 2% preferred not to disclose their ethnic group. Nine-point-two percent (9.2%) of survey respondents identified themselves as LGBTQ+[3] (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and other sexual orientations not listed in the survey). Overall, 4.7% reported a disability.

[1] The actual survey sections followed a different order. However, for ease of readability, this report combines the sections assessing similar constructs.
[2] Given the low number of survey respondents with a non-Irish background, respondents belonging to ethnic minority groups were combined into a single group (Ethnic minority) including: Chinese, Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi, any other Asian background, African, any other Black background, Arabic, Mixed background, Irish Traveller, Roma, Other.
[3] Given the low number of LGBTQ+ survey respondents, those who identified themselves as: Asexual, Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian, Queer and “other” were combined into a single group (LGBTQ+).

4. KEY FINDINGS

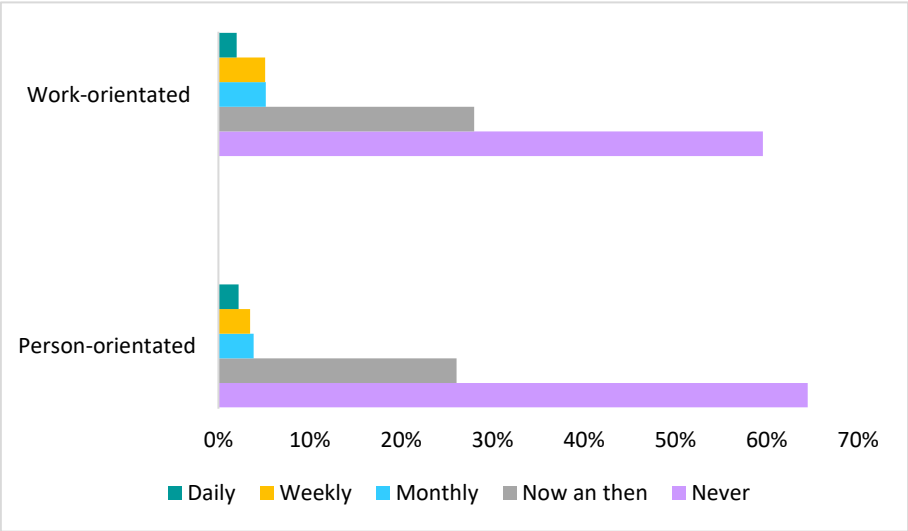
SECTION 2: Negative Acts at Work, Bullying and Cyberbullying

4.1.1 Negative Acts at Work

Respondents were asked if they endured any negative acts at work in the past three years, including any periods of remote working. The survey assessed both work-orientated negative acts (targeting an employee's professional status, such as professional discredit and denigration) and person-orientated negative acts (targeting an employee's personal standing).

- Overall, 28% of respondents (on average[4]) reported experiencing work-orientated negative acts "now and then", whereas less than 5% (on average) were subjected to these negative acts monthly, weekly and daily.
- On average, 26% of respondents reported experiencing person-orientated negative acts "now and then", whereas only a small proportion (less than 5%) of respondents were subjected to these negative acts monthly, weekly and daily.

Figure 1. Work-Orientated and Person-Orientated Negative Acts in the Overall Sample

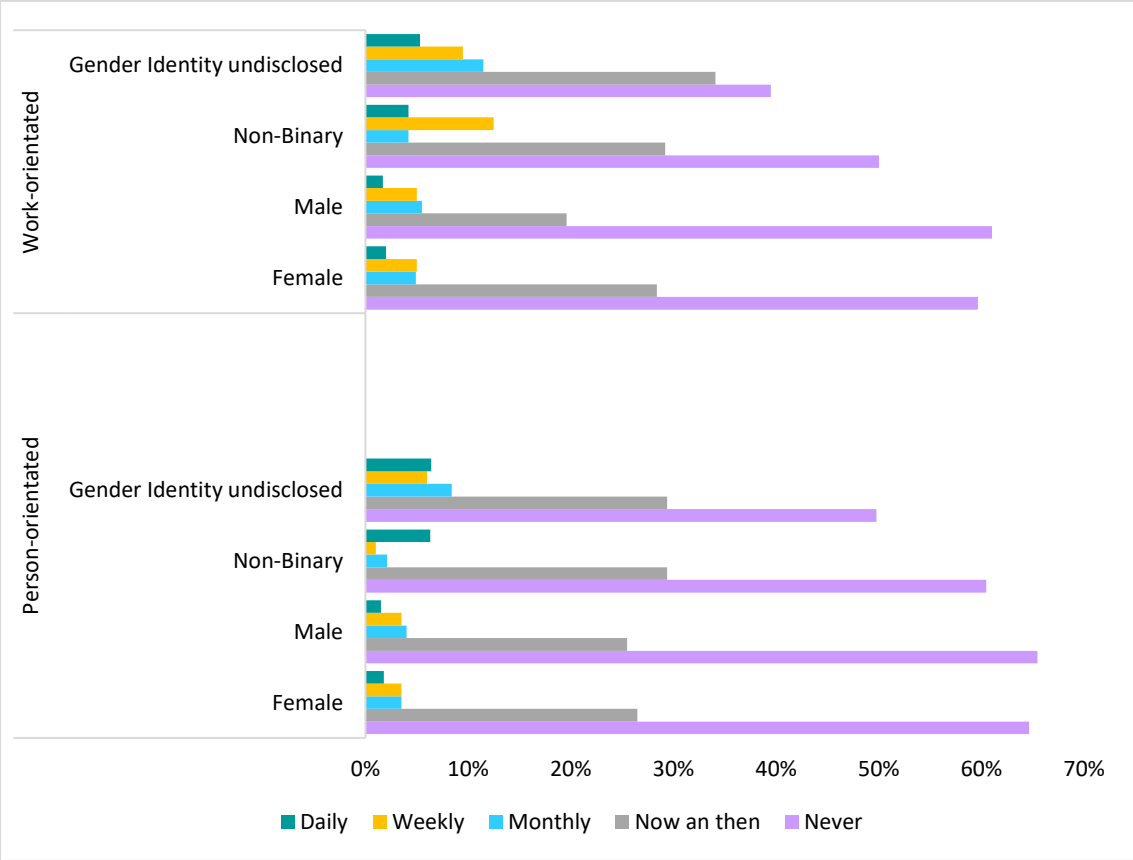


[4] The findings presented in the text and in the figures were obtained by averaging the rates of respondents selecting respectively "now and then", "monthly", "weekly" and "daily" across the items assessing respectively work-orientated and person-orientated negative acts.

4.1.2 Negative Acts Across Different Gender Identities

- Respondents who did not disclose their gender identity reported significantly higher levels of negative acts at work[5] compared to both females and males. The average rates across work-orientated negative acts and person-orientated negative acts for different gender identities are presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Work-Orientated and Person-Orientated Negative Acts Across Different Genders

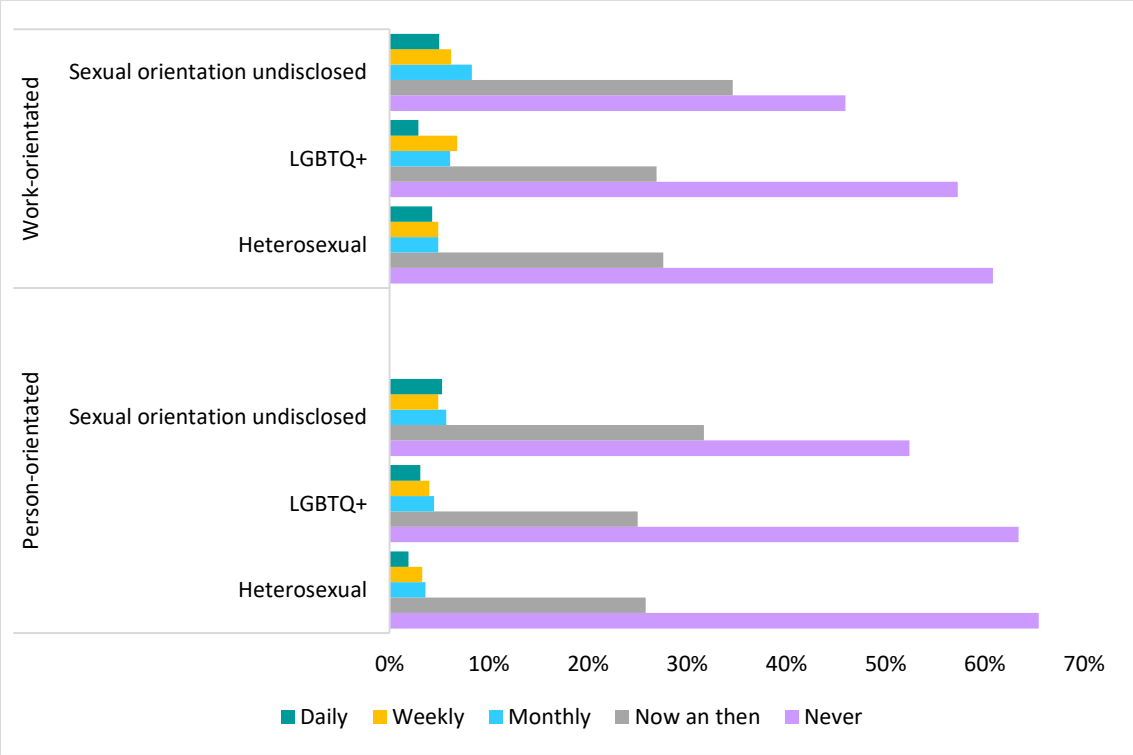


[5] Significant differences were tested on the nine negative acts (a composite score was obtained by averaging the nine items assessing both work-orientated and person-orientated negative acts at work). All significant findings in the text refer to the results of the inferential statistics. See the full version of this report for more details.

4.1.3 Negative Acts Across Different Sexual Orientations

- LGBTQ+ respondents experienced significantly higher levels of negative acts at work compared to heterosexuals. Those who did not disclose their sexual orientation experienced higher levels of negative acts at work compared to both heterosexuals and to LGBTQ+ respondents. The average rates across work-orientated negative acts and person-orientated negative acts for different sexual orientations can be found in Figure 3.

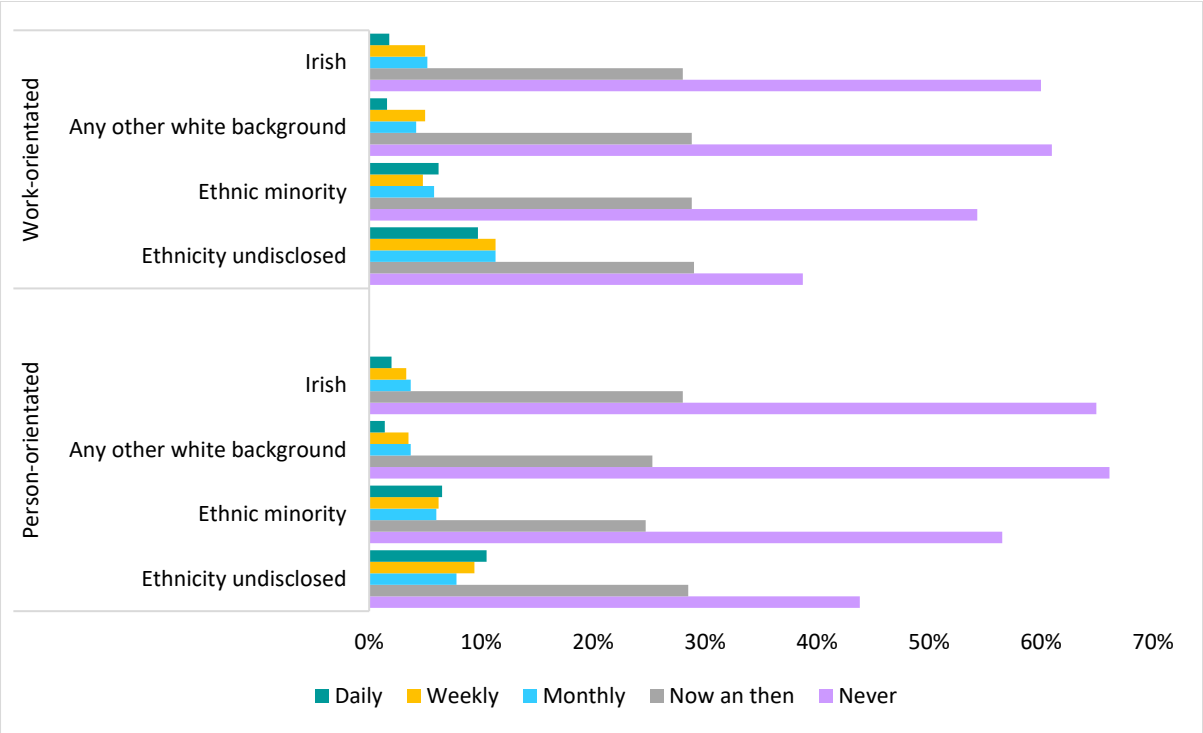
Figure 3. Work-Orientated and Person-Orientated Negative Acts Across Different Sexual Orientations



4.1.4 Negative Acts Across Different Ethnic Identities

- Respondents who identified themselves as belonging to an ethnic minority group endured significantly higher levels of negative acts at work compared to both Irish respondents and to respondent with any other White background. Respondents who did not disclose their ethnicity were significantly more likely to report higher scores in terms of negative acts at work compared to all other ethnic groups. The average rates across work-orientated negative acts and person-orientated negative acts for different ethnic identities can be found in Figure 4.

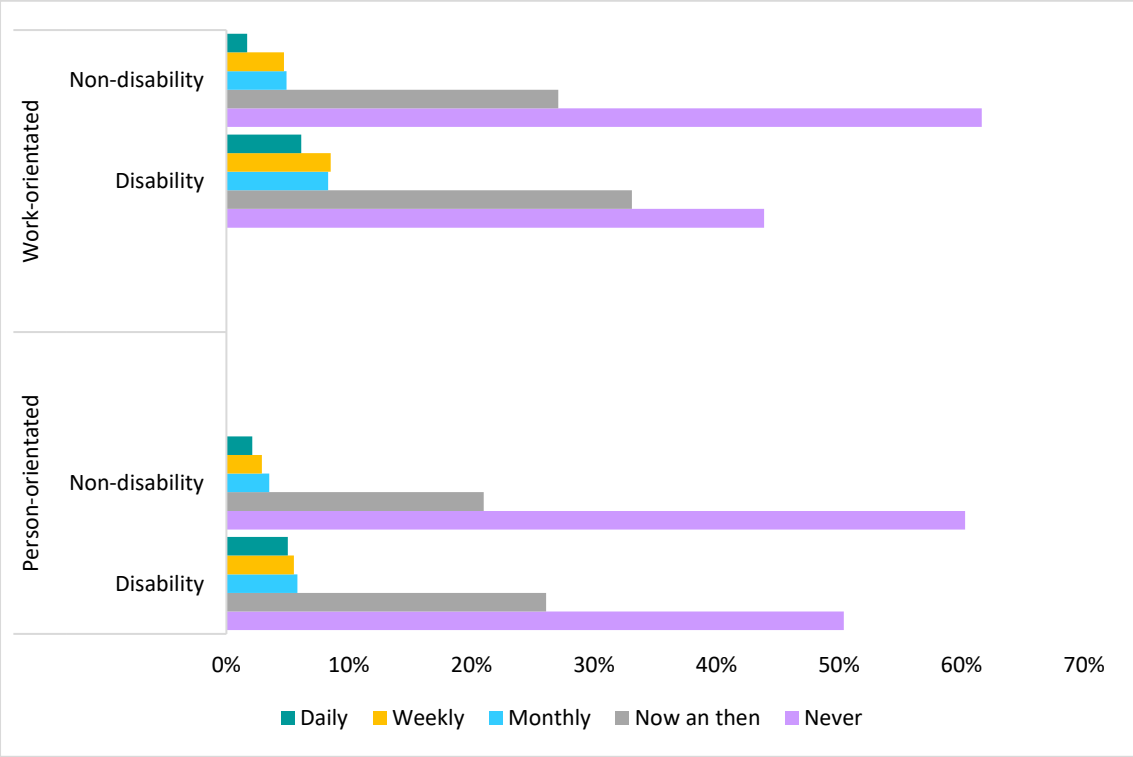
Figure 4. Work-Orientated and Person-Orientated Negative Acts Across Different Ethnic Identities



4.1.5 Negative Acts Among Respondents With and Without a Disability

- Respondents who presented a disability endured significantly higher levels of negative acts at work compared to those with no disabilities. For a breakdown of the average rates across work-orientated negative acts and person-orientated negative acts see Figure 5.

Figure 5. Work-Orientated and Person-Orientated Negative Acts Among Respondents With and Without a Disability



4.1.6 Negative Acts Across Different Age Groups

- In terms of age differences, respondents aged 45-54 endured significantly higher levels of negative acts at work compared to both respondents aged 18-24 and 25-34. A breakdown of the average rates of work-orientated and person-orientated negative acts for different age groups can be found in Figures 6 and 7.

Figure 6. Work-Orientated Negative Acts Across Different Age Groups

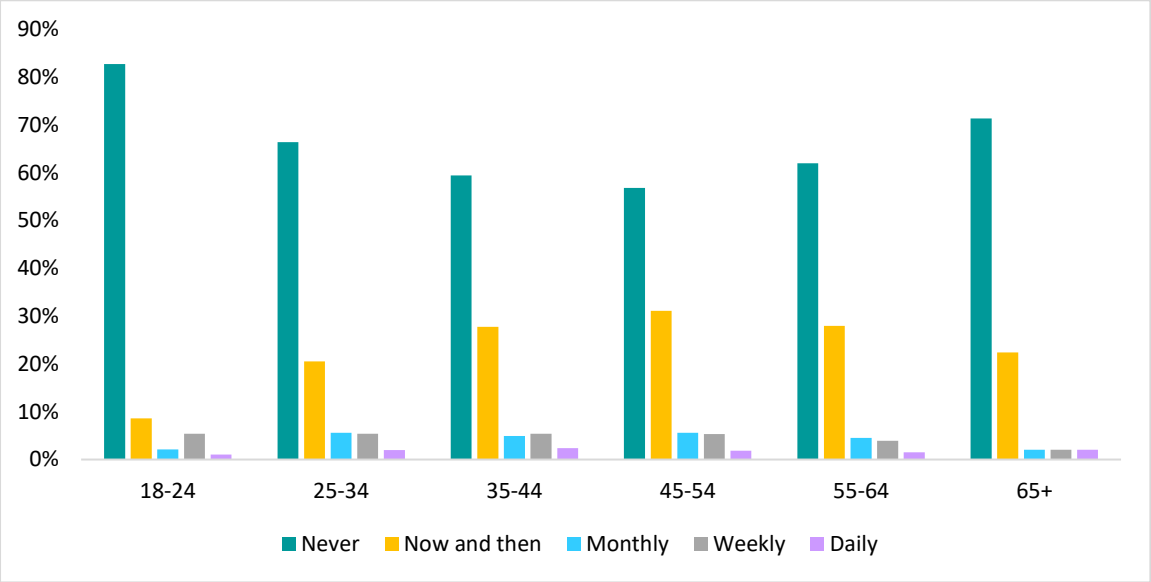
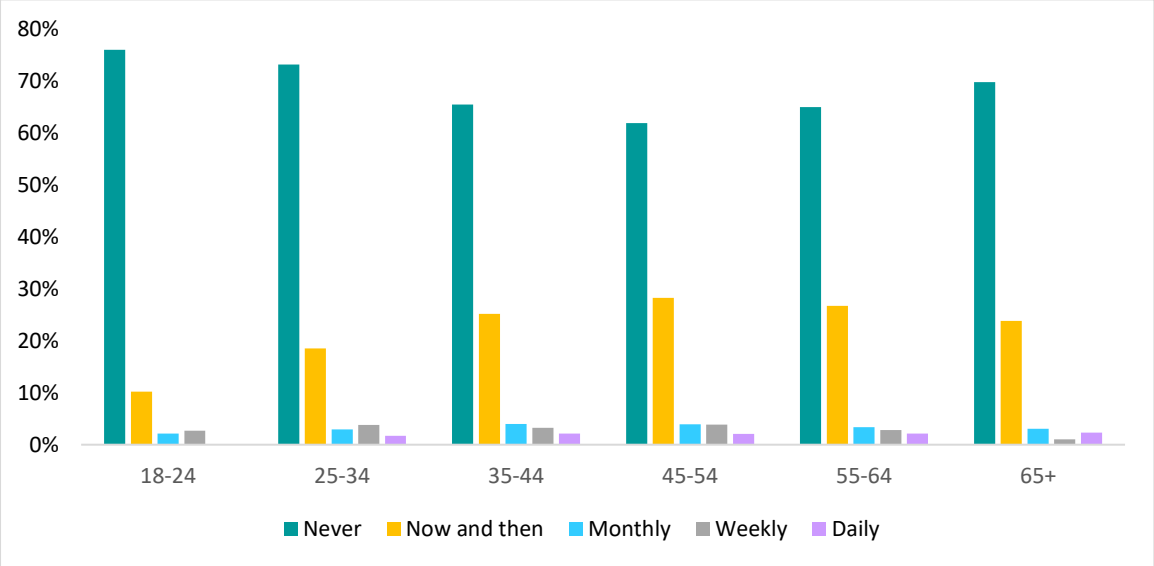


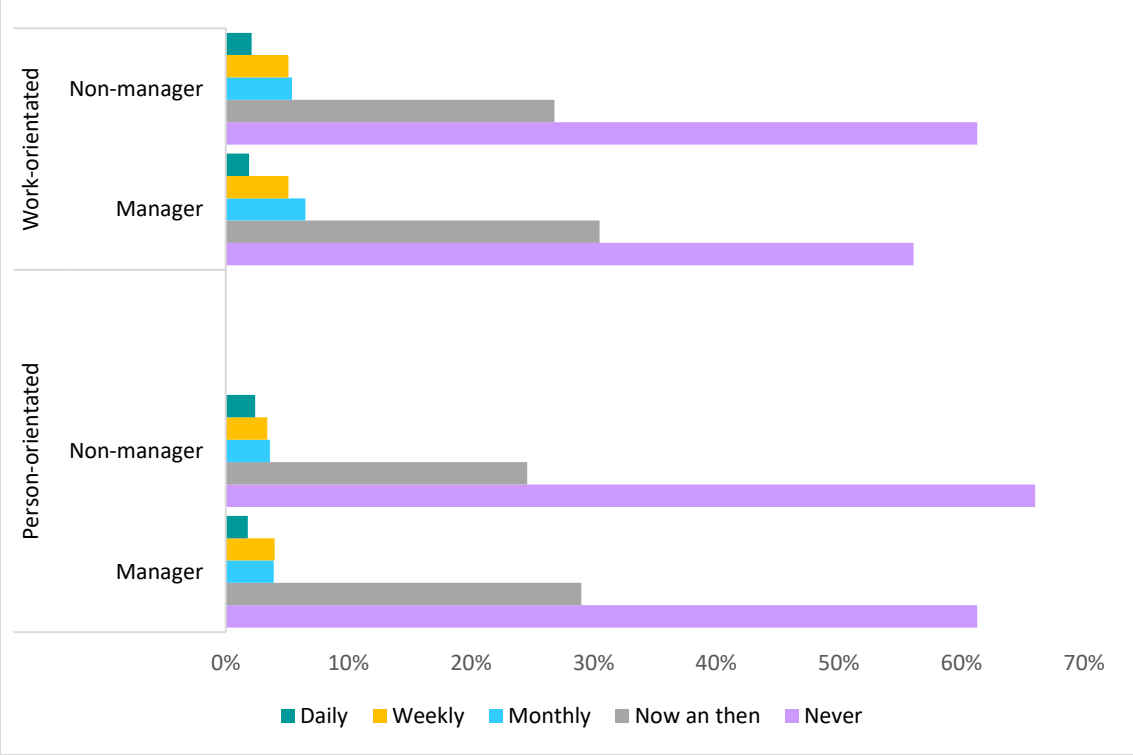
Figure 7. Person-Orientated Negative Acts Across Different Age Groups



4.1.7 Negative Acts Across Respondents With Managerial and Non-Managerial Roles

- Respondents with managerial duties endured significantly higher levels of negative acts at work compared to those with no managerial duties (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Work-Orientated and Person-Orientated Negative Acts Among Respondents Covering a Managerial Role and Respondents With no Managerial Role



4.1.8 Work Area

- The average rates of work-orientated and person-orientated negative acts for different work areas are presented in Figures 9 and 10.
- Academics working in the area of Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences and Business and Law (AHSS-BL[6]) and those who did not disclose their work area reported significantly higher levels of negative acts at work compared to respondents in the Professional/Technical Area.

[6] The following labels were used for the different work areas sampled in this survey study. AHSS-BL= Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences and Business and Law; STEM-MH= Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine and Health; Professional/Technical= Professional, Managerial and Support Services and Technical Support; Research= Research Fellow and Research Centre/Institute; Prefer not to say/Other= Work area undisclosed or not listed in the survey.

Figure 9. Work-Orientated Negative Acts Among Respondents Working in Different Areas

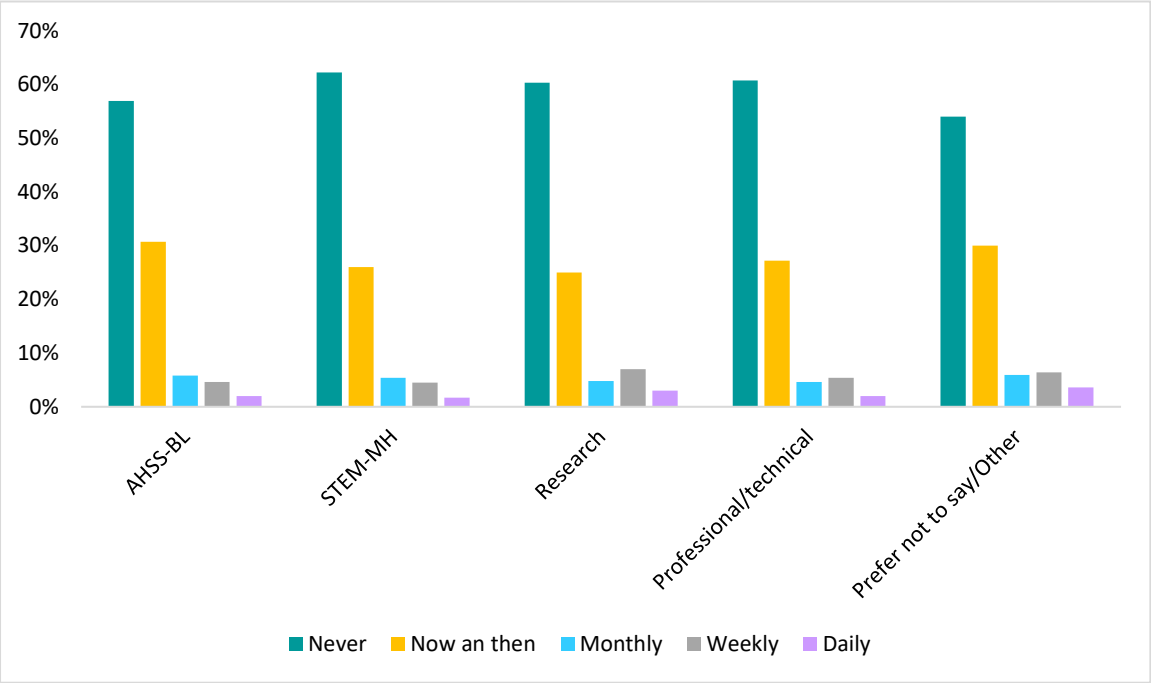


Figure 10. Person-Orientated Negative Acts Among Respondents Working in Different Areas

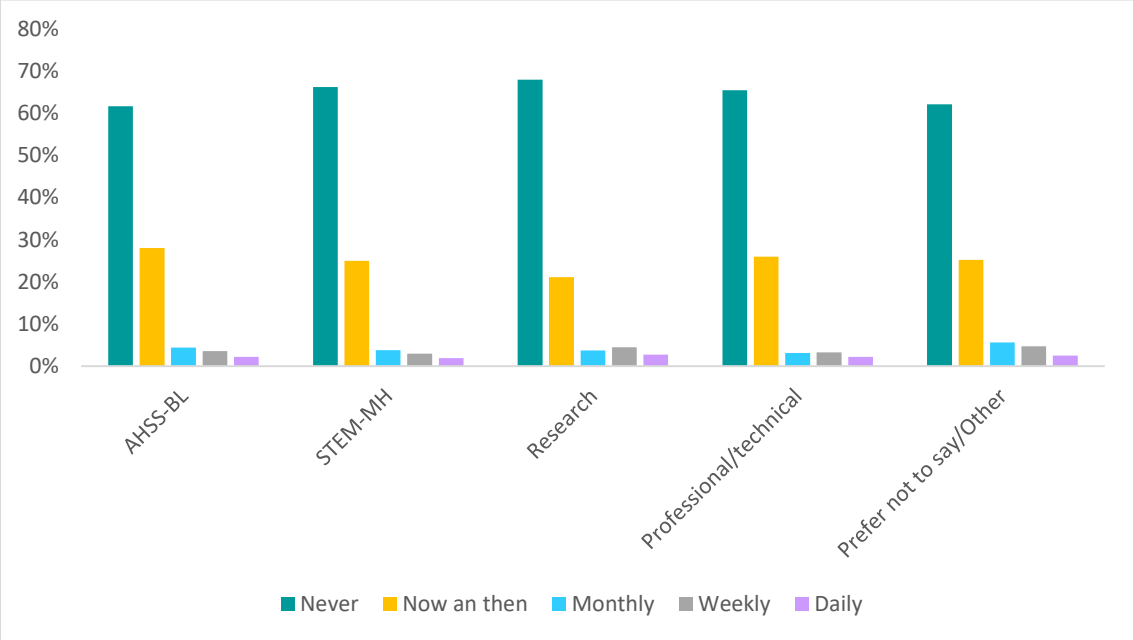
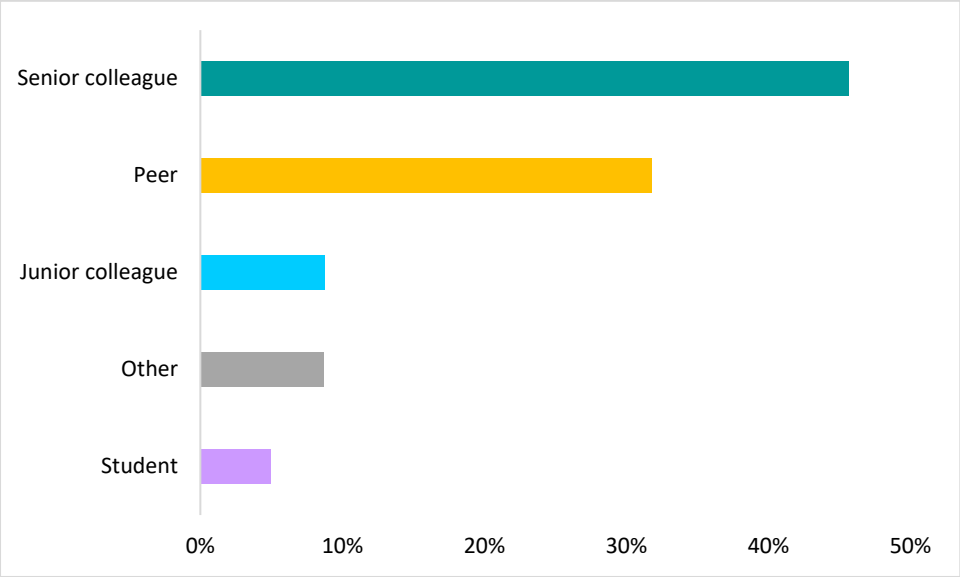


Figure 11. Professional Status of the Perpetrator of Negative Acts at Work

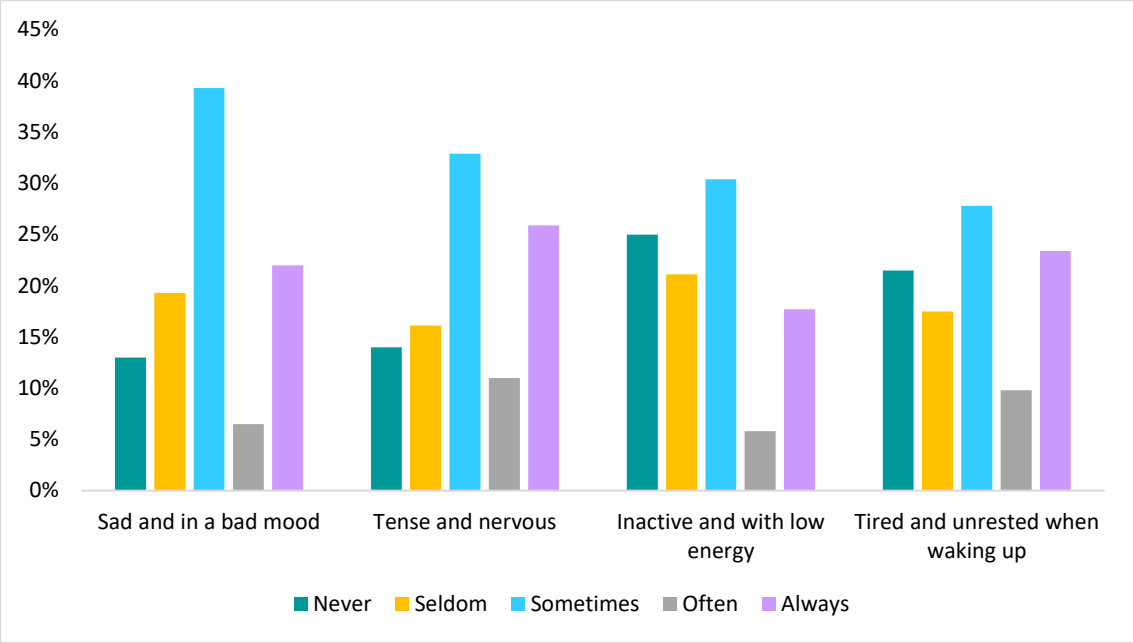


4.1.9 Impact of Negative Acts on Respondents' Wellbeing

Survey respondents were asked to what extent enduring negative acts at work had a negative impact on their mental health and wellbeing.

- As it can be seen in figure 12, approximately 20% of respondents were likely to "always" experience sadness and a bad mood and about 25% felt "always" tense and nervous because of enduring negative acts at work. Approximately 15% felt "always" inactive and with low energy and approximately 20% felt "always" tired and unrested when waking up due to enduring negative acts at work.

Figure 12. Impact of the Negative Acts at Work in the Overall Sample



5. *Self-Labelled Bullying Victimisation*

Survey respondents were asked to read the HSA bullying definition[7] (2021) and indicate if they had been bullied in the past three years, including any period of remote working.

- Over a third of respondents (33.5%) indicated that they had been bullied, while 66.5% indicated that they were not bullied (Figure 13).

5.1.1 Bullying Victimisation Experiences: Professional Status of the Perpetrator

- In terms of the professional status of the perpetrator, a consistent proportion of respondents were bullied by a senior colleague (55%), or by a peer (24.6%). Please see Figure 14 for a graphical representation of the rates of bullying from different perpetrators.

[7] Workplace bullying is repeated inappropriate behaviour either 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 a once-off incident is not considered to be bullying.

Figure 13. Respondents who Reported Being Bullied in the Past Three Years

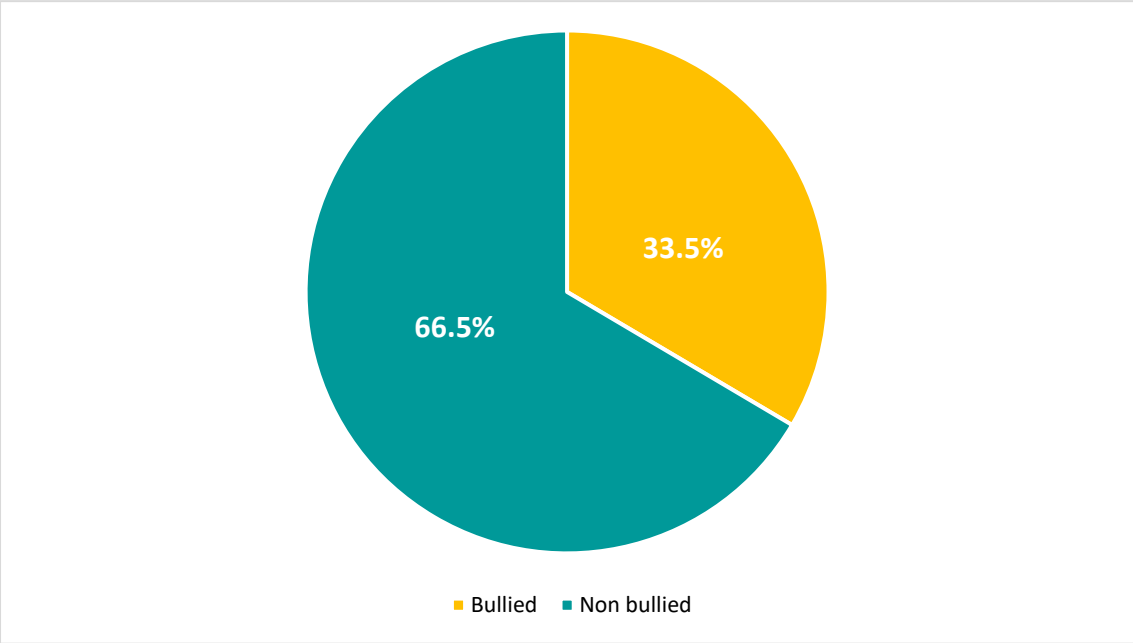
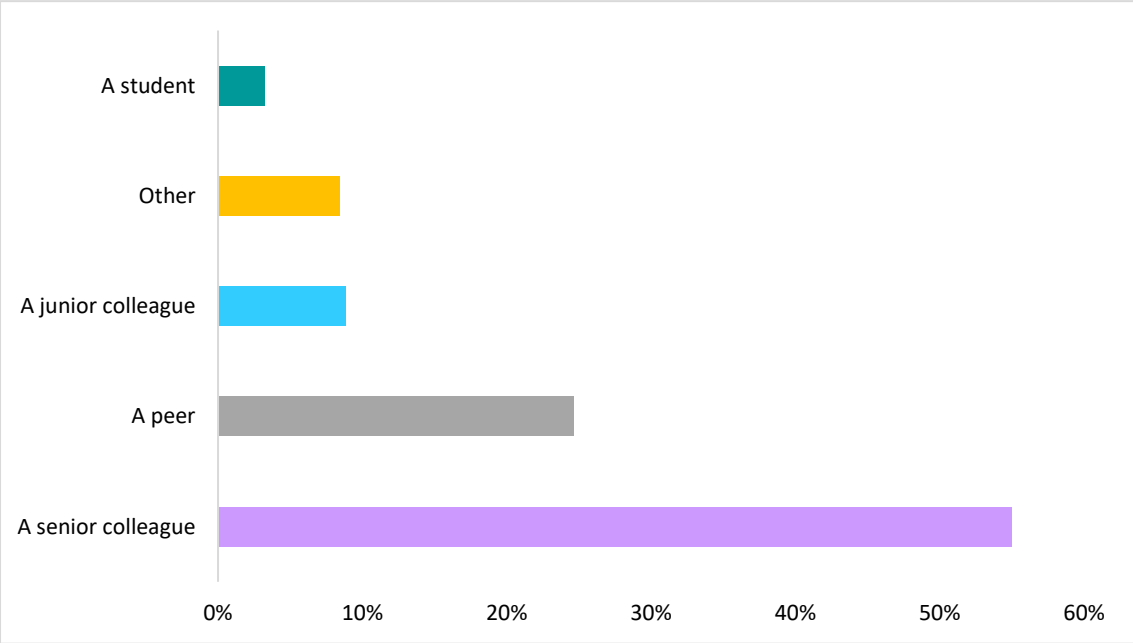


Figure 14. Prevalence of Bullying from Different Perpetrators After Reading the Bullying Definition



5.2.2 Bullying Victimisation Experiences Across Different Gender Identities

- A higher rate of non-binary respondents (50%) and of those who did not disclose their gender (50%) endured bullying compared to female and male respondents (Figure 15).

5.2.3 Bullying victimisation Across Different Sexual Orientations

- A higher proportion of respondents who did not disclose their sexual orientation (46.7%) reported having endured bullying in the past three years, compared to LGBTQ+ and heterosexual respondents (Figure 16).

Figure 15. Bullying Victimisation Experiences Across Different Genders

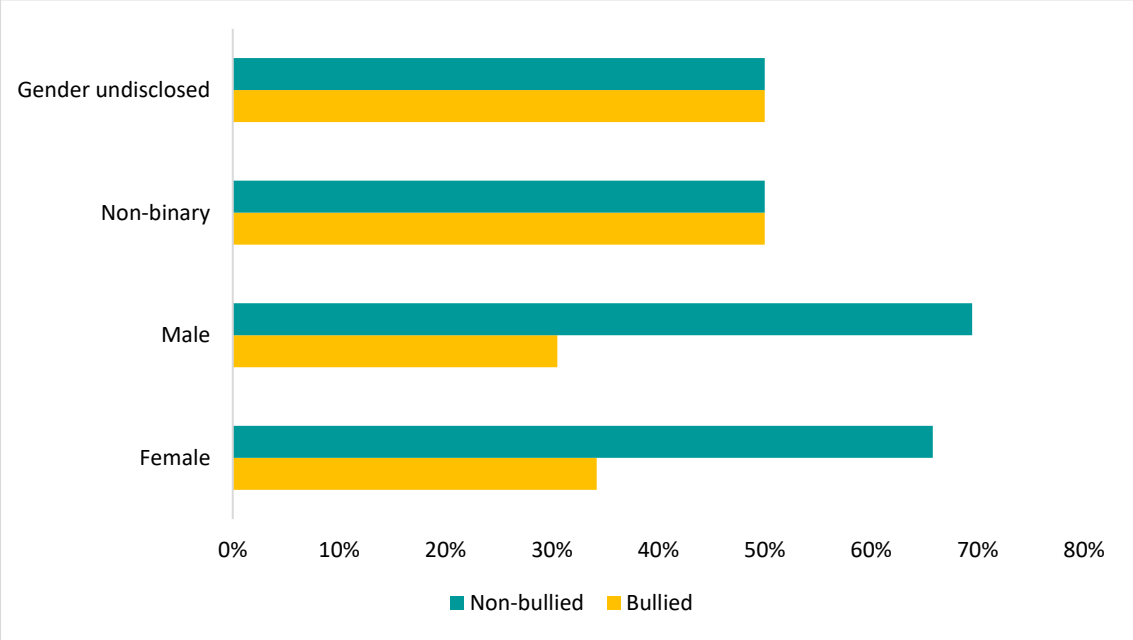
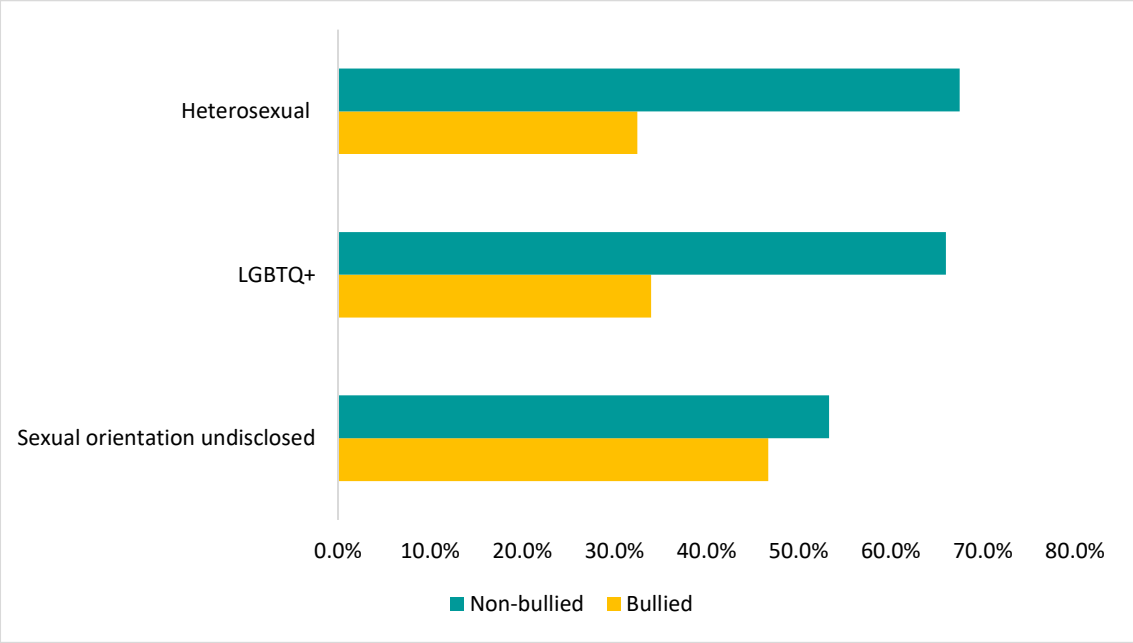


Figure 16. Bullying Victimisation Experiences Across Different Sexual Orientations



5.2.4 Self-labelled Bullying across Different Ethnic Identities

- A higher rate of respondents who did not disclose their ethnic identity and answered the item inquiring about bulling victimisation experiences reported having being bullied at work in the past three years (51.8%), compared to respondents who disclosed their ethnic identities (Figure 17).

5.2.5 Bullying victimisation across different age groups

- A higher proportion of respondents in the 45-54 age group (36.8%) endured bullying, compared to the other age groups. For a graphical representation, see Figure 18.

5.2.6 Bullying Victimisation Experiences Among Respondents With and Without a Disability

- Almost half of respondents with a disability (48.1%) and 31.9% of those with no disabilities were bullied at work in the past three years (Figure 19).

Figure 17. Bullying Victimisation Experiences Across Different Ethnic Identities

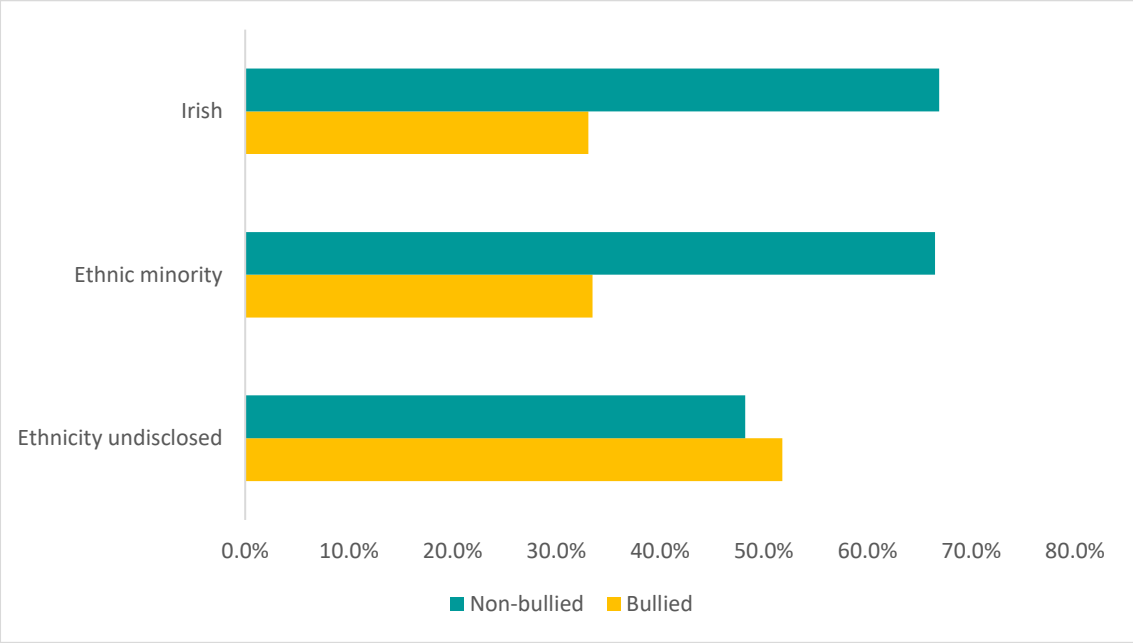


Figure 18. Bullying Victimisation Prevalence Across Different Age Groups

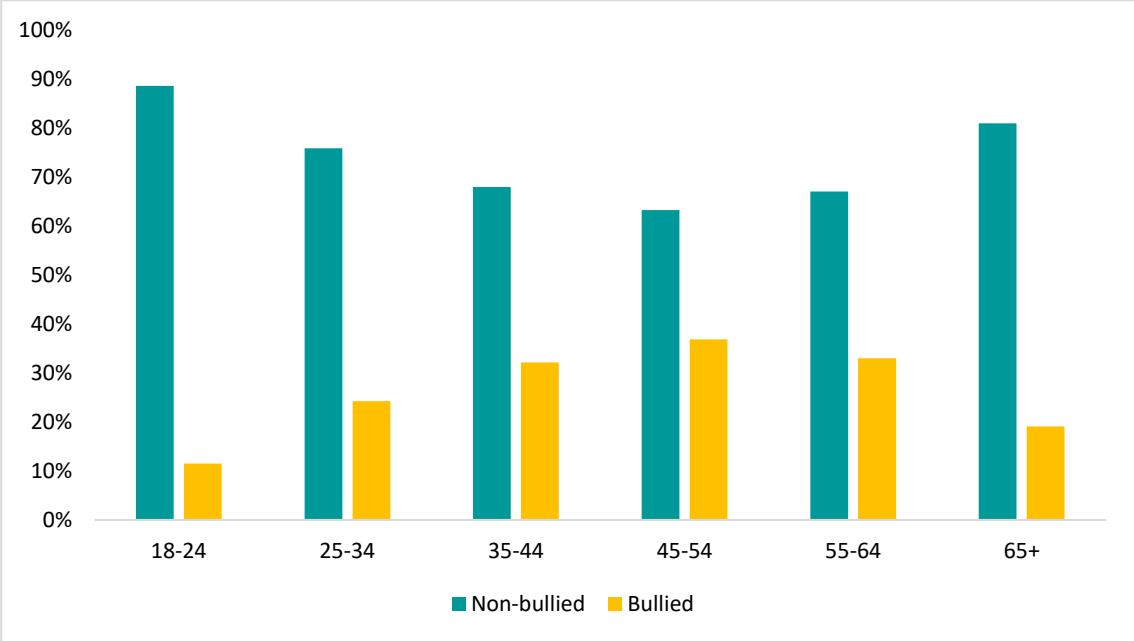
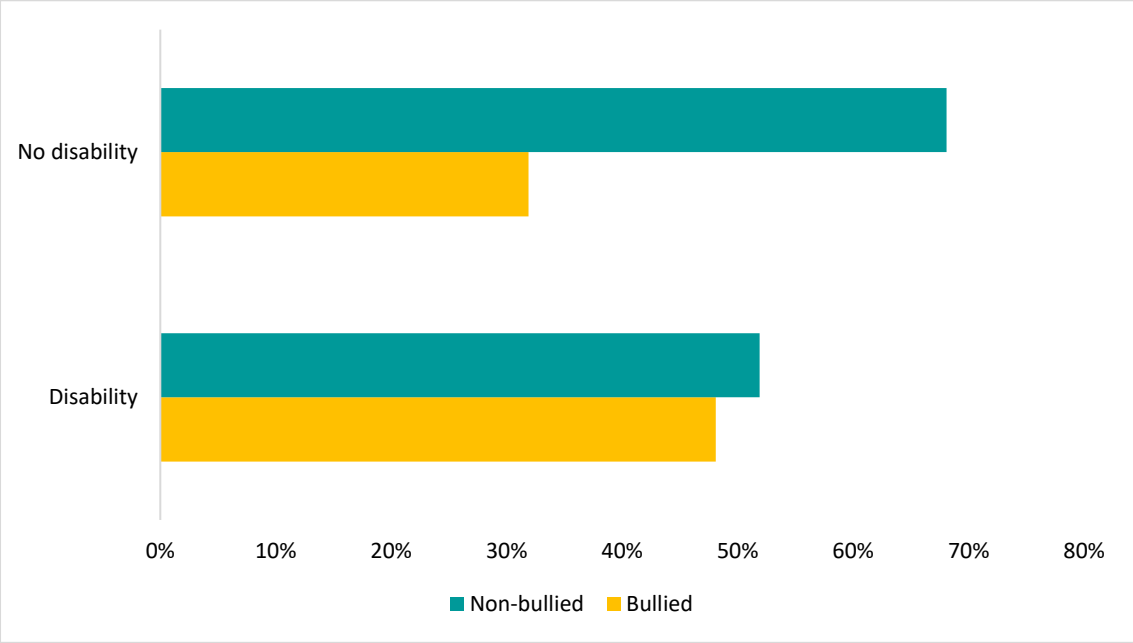


Figure 19. Bullying Victimisation Among Respondents With and Without a Disability



5.2.7 Bullying Victimisation Among Respondents With Managerial and Non-Managerial Roles

- A slightly higher rate of respondents with a managerial role (35.8%) endured bullying in the past three years, compared to 32.3% of respondents with no managerial duties (Figure 20).

5.2.8 Self-Labelled Bullying Across Different Work Areas

- A higher rate of respondents who did not disclose their area of work or whose area of work was not listed in the survey (38.8%) were bullied at work in the past three years, compared to the respondents in the other work areas (Figure 21).

Figure 20. Bullying Victimisation Experiences Among Respondents With Managerial and Non-Managerial Roles

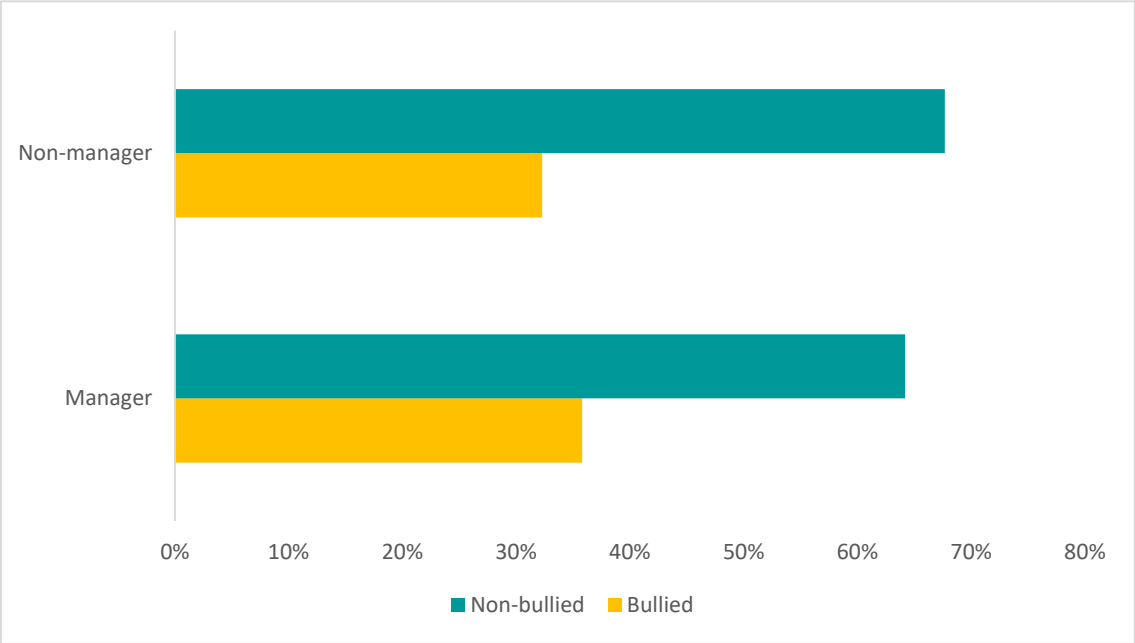
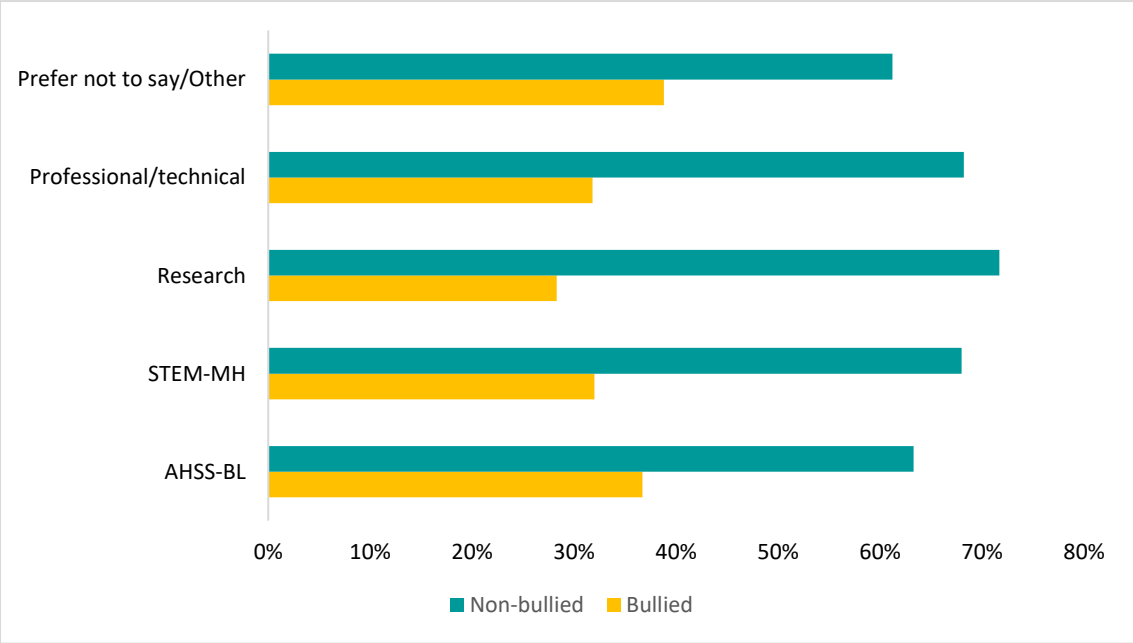


Figure 21. Bullying Victimisation Experiences Across Respondents Working in Different Areas



5.2.9 Repetition and Duration of Bullying Victimisation

Survey respondents were asked to indicate how often they endured bullying at work (repetition) and how long the bullying incidents lasted (duration).

- As it can be seen from Figure 22, approximately one third of respondents endured bullying "now and then" (32%), 33.3% were subjected to bullying "several times per semester" (33.3%) and 15% endured bullying "several times per month".
- Weekly and daily bullying victimisation experiences were endured by a smaller proportion of respondents.
- As it can be seen in Figure 23, the vast majority of respondents (70.6%) were subjected to bullying for "several months".

Figure 22. Repetition of Bullying Victimisation in the Overall Sample

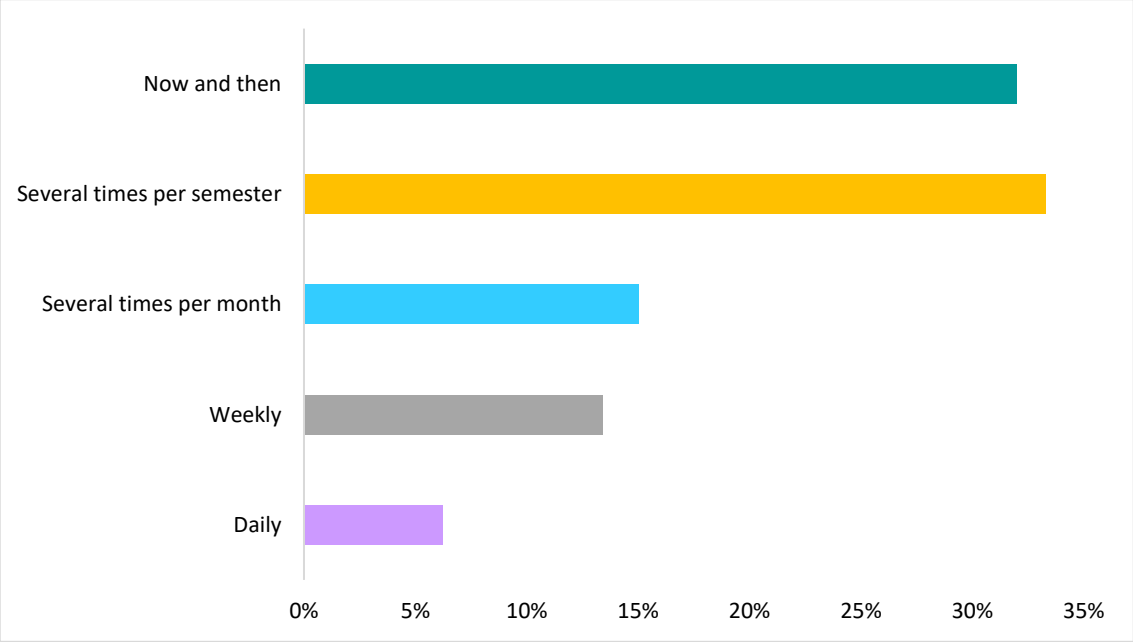
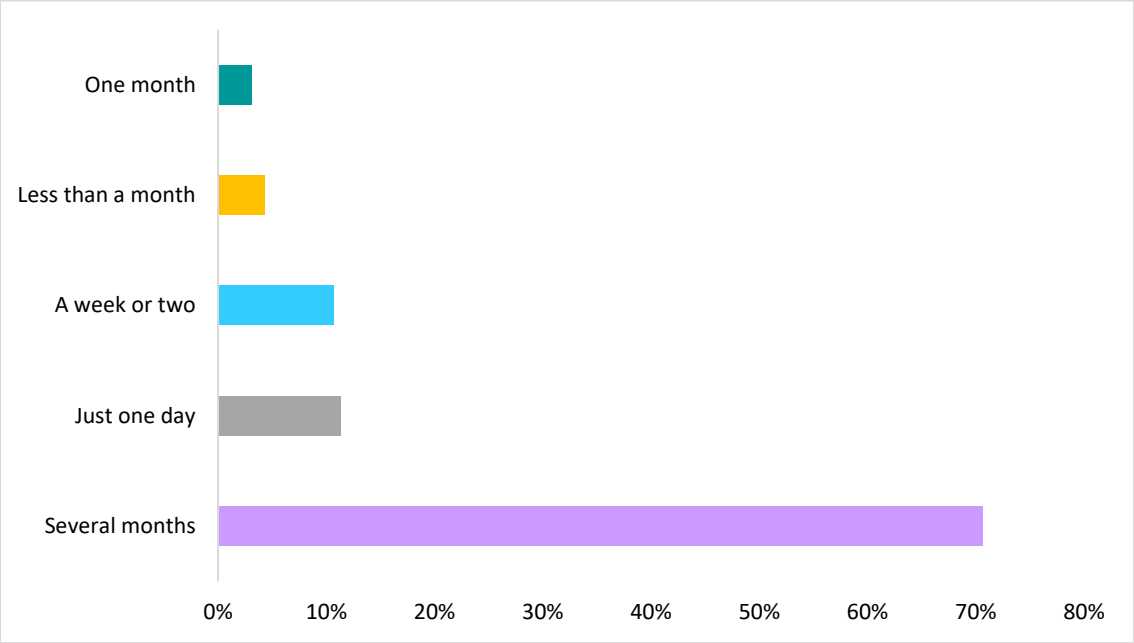


Figure 23 Duration Bullying Victimisation in the Overall Sample



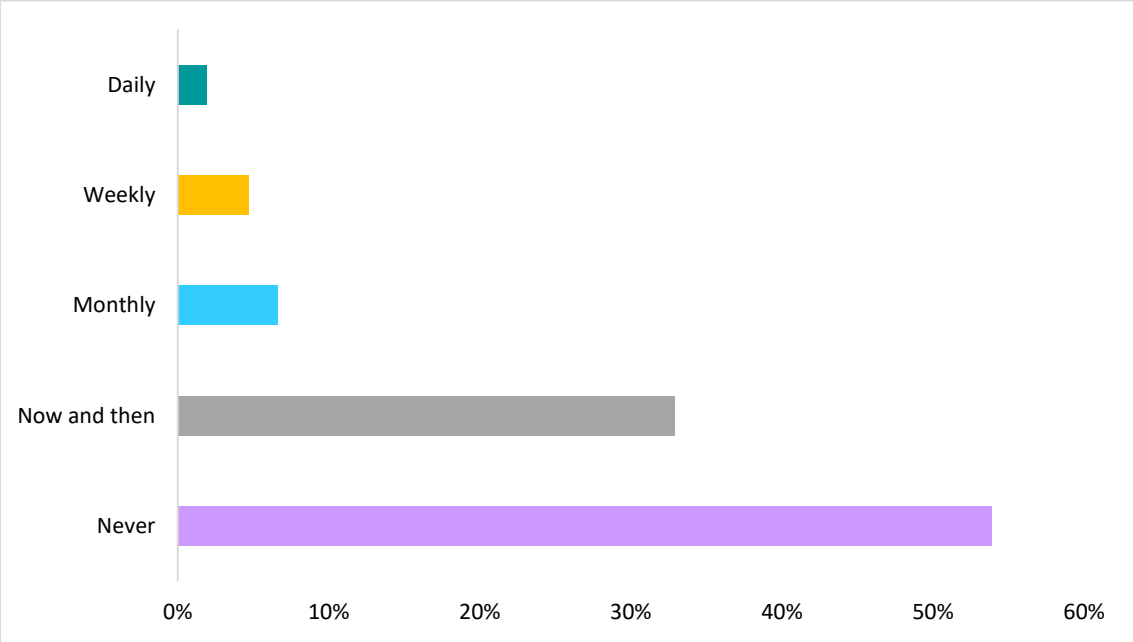
6. Cyberbullying Victimisation

Survey respondents were asked to indicate if they endured any cyberbullying behaviours at work in the past three years, including any periods of remote working.

- An average[8] of 32.9% respondents (in the overall sample) reported experiencing the cyberbullying behaviours assessed in this study "now and then". A small proportion of respondents reported enduring cyberbullying respectively monthly, weekly and daily (Figure 24).

[8] The cyberbullying findings presented in the text and in the figures were obtained by averaging the rates of respondents selecting respectively "now and then", "monthly", "weekly" and "daily" across the cyberbullying items.

Figure 24. Cyberbullying Prevalence in the Overall Sample



6.3.1 Cyberbullying Victimisation Across Different Gender Identities

- Findings showed that females were significantly more likely to be cyberbullied compared to males. Respondents who did not disclose their gender were more likely to be bullied compared to both male and females.

6.3.2 Cyberbullying Victimisation Across Different Sexual Orientations

- LGBTQ+ respondents reported significantly higher levels of cyberbullying victimisation compared to heterosexuals. Respondents who did not disclose their sexual orientation reported higher levels of cyberbullying victimisation scores compared to both heterosexuals and LGBTQ+ respondents.

6.3.3 Cyberbullying Victimisation Across Different Ethnic Groups

- Respondents who did not disclose their ethnicity reported significantly higher levels of cyberbullying victimisation scores compared to all ethnic groups.

Figure 25. Cyberbullying Victimisation Prevalence Across Different Gender Identities

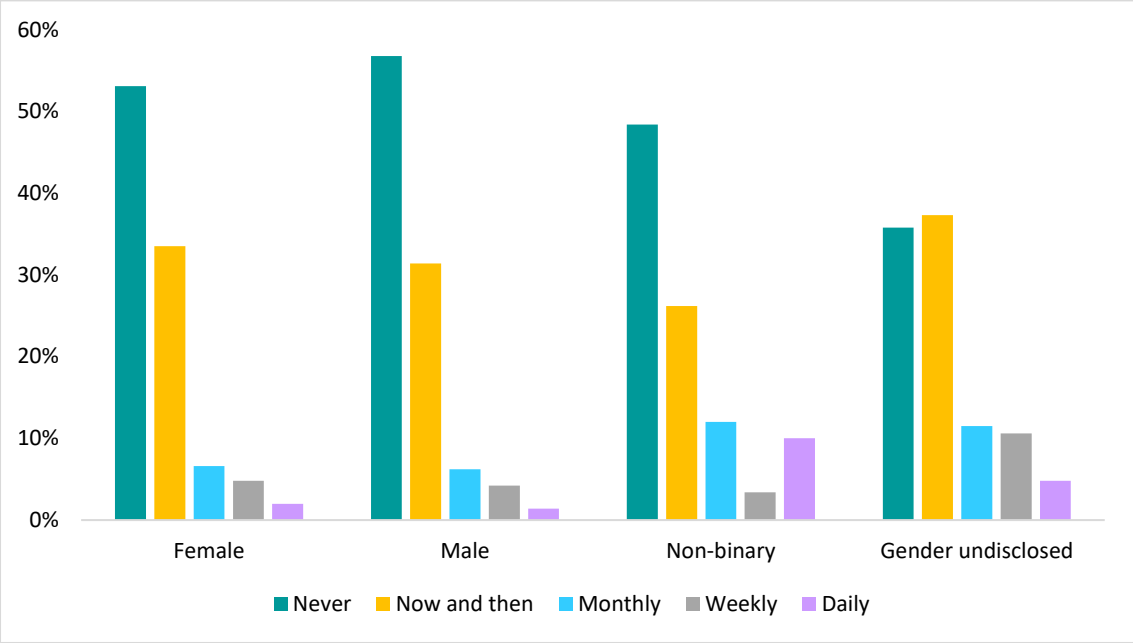


Figure 26. Cyberbullying Victimisation Prevalence Among Different Sexual Orientations

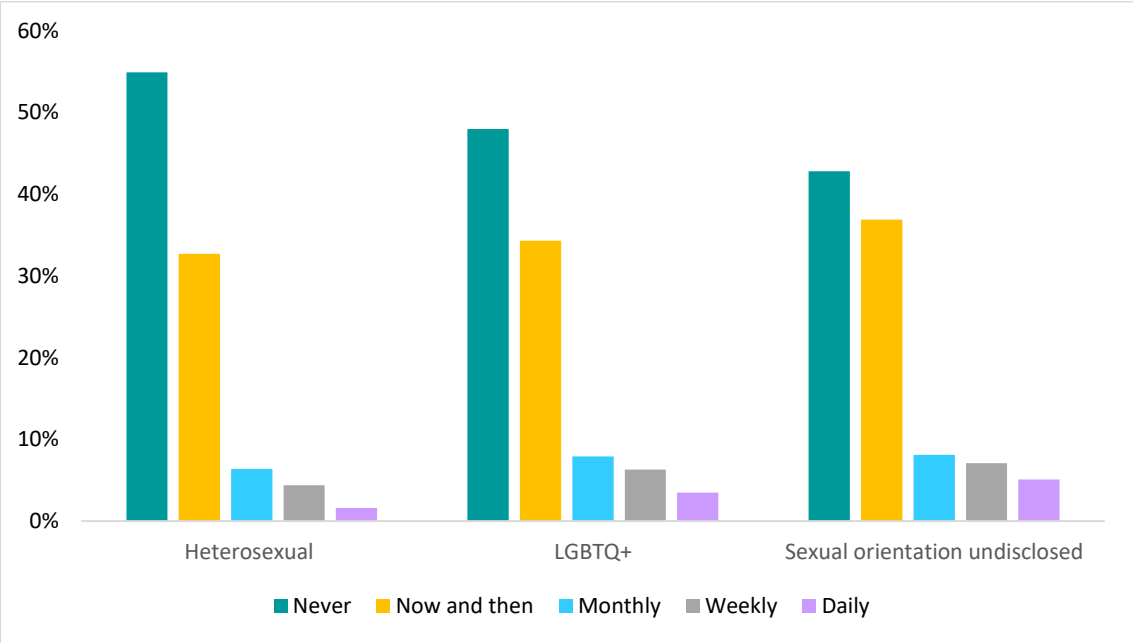
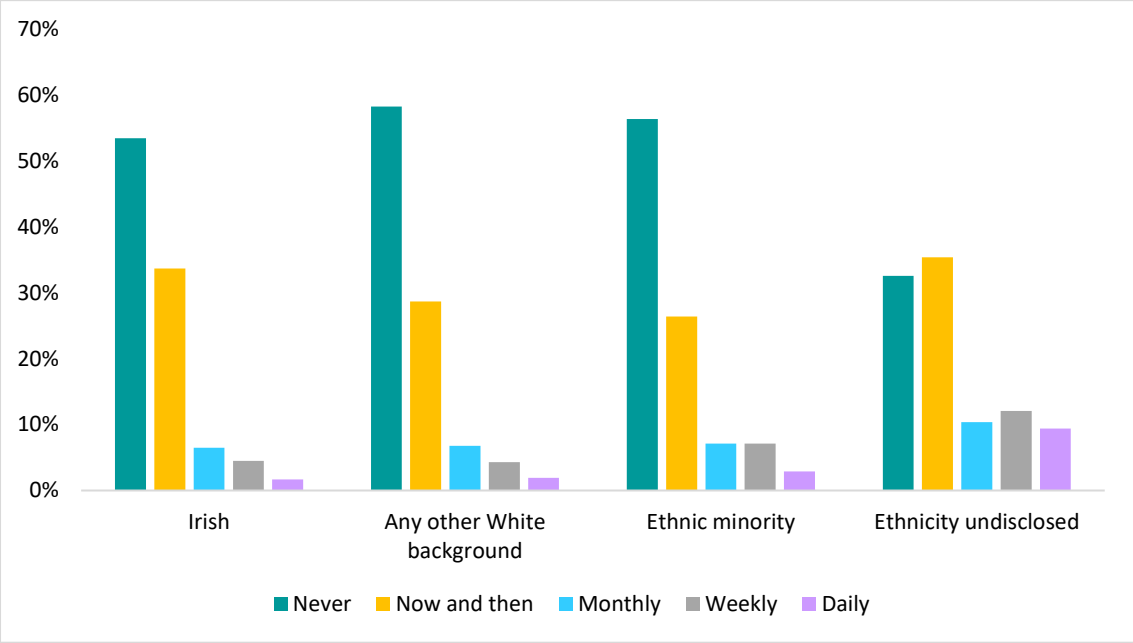


Figure 27. Cyberbullying Victimisation Prevalence Across Different Ethnic Groups



6.3.4 Cyberbullying Victimisation across Different Age Groups

- With regard to age, overall, respondents aged 18-24 reported significantly lower levels of cyberbullying victimisation compared to respondents aged 25-34, 35-44 and to those aged 45-54. Respondents aged 65+ reported lower levels of cyberbullying victimisation compared to respondents aged 35-44 and 45-54. Finally, the groups aged 35-44 and 45-54 endured higher levels of cyberbullying victimisation compared to the 55-64 age group.

6.3.5 Cyberbullying Victimisation across Respondents with and without a Disability

- Respondents with a disability endured significantly higher levels of cyberbullying compared to those with no disabilities.

6.3.6 Cyberbullying Victimisation for Respondents with Managerial and Non-Managerial Roles

- Managers reported significantly higher rates of cyberbullying victimisation compared to respondents with no managerial duties.

Figure 28. Cyberbullying Victimisation Prevalence Across Different Age Groups

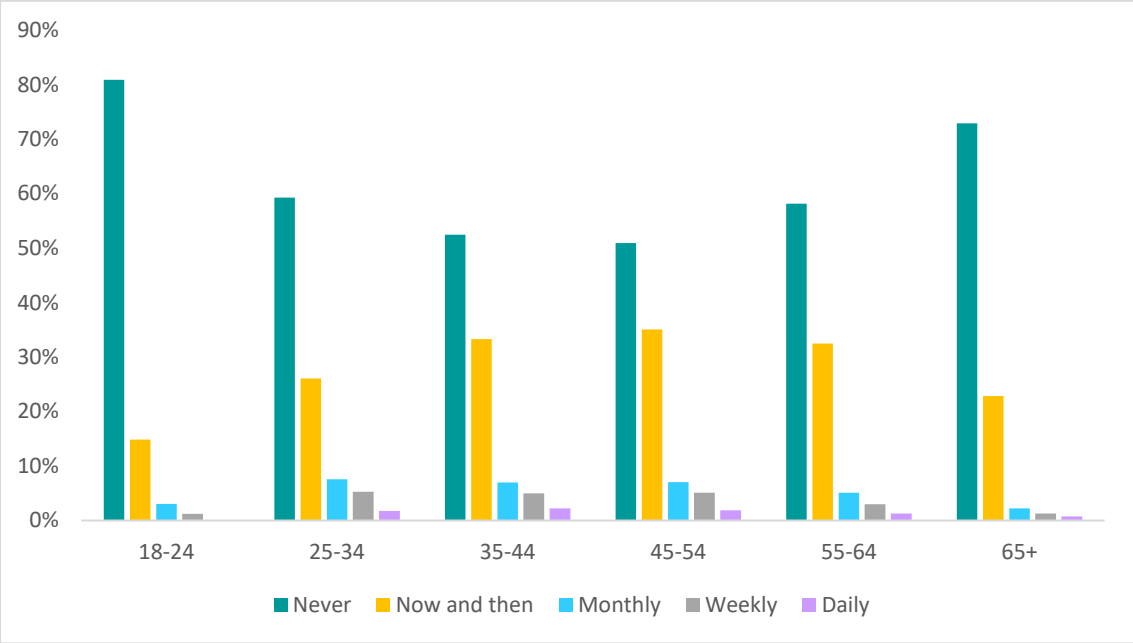


Figure 29. Cyberbullying Prevalence Among Respondents With and Without a Disability

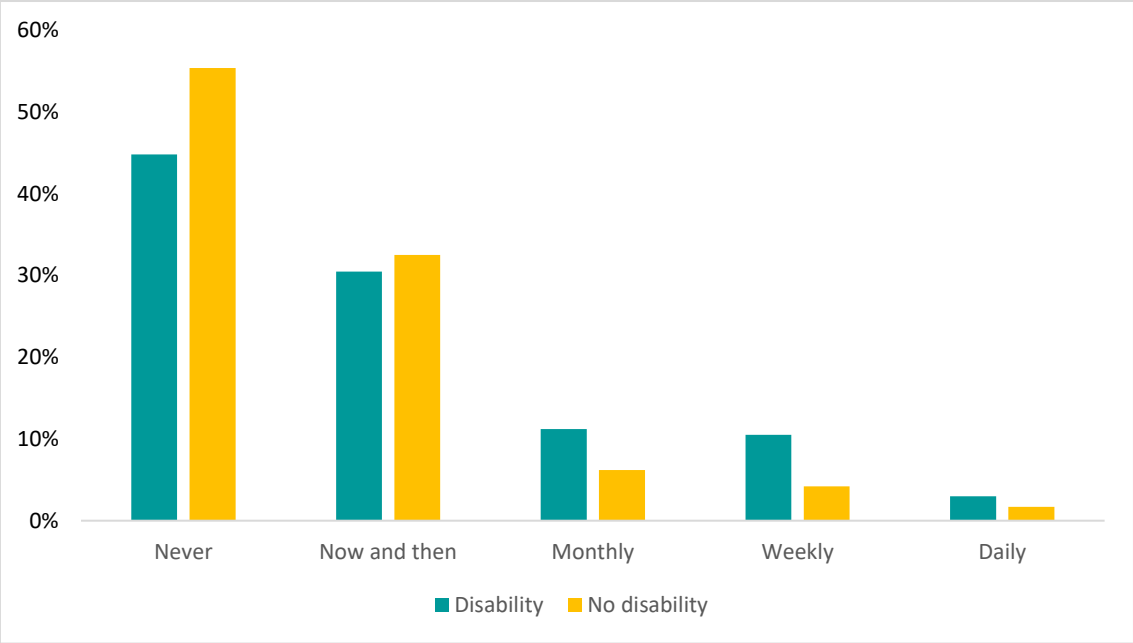
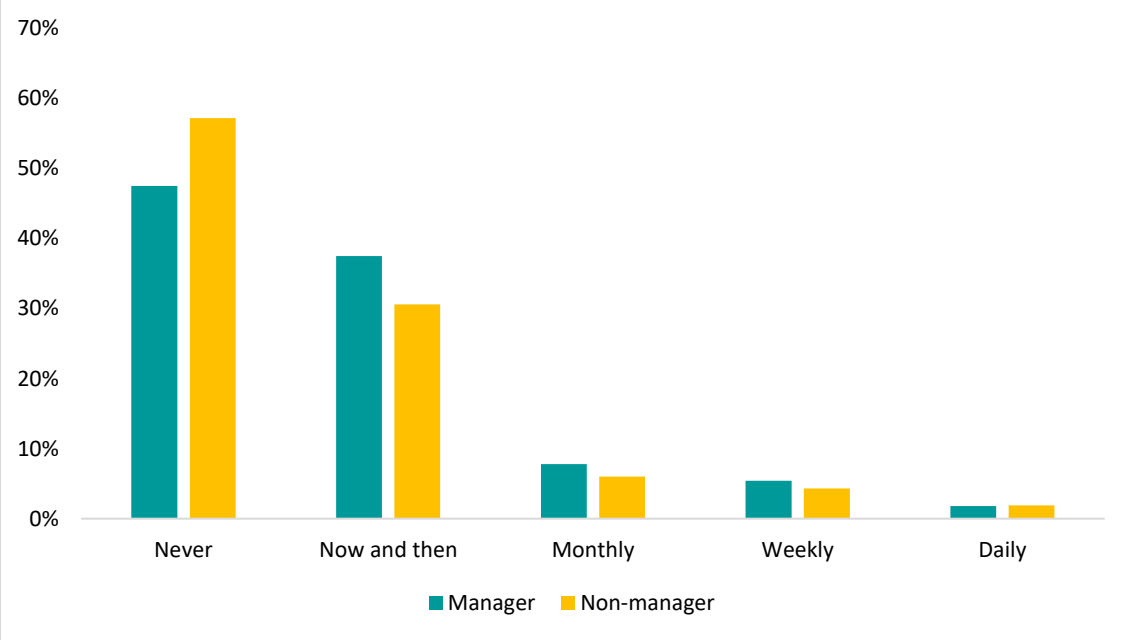


Figure 30. Cyberbullying Victimisation Among Respondents With Managerial and Non-Managerial Roles



6.3.7 Cyberbullying Victimisation Across Different Work Areas

- Respondents working in the AHSS-BL area endured significantly higher levels of cyberbullying compared to both academics in the STEM-MH area and to respondents working in the Professional/Technical area (Figure 31).

6.3.8 Cyberbullying: Professional Status of the Perpetrator

- Of the people who reported experiencing cyberbullying, 43.7% identified a senior colleague as the perpetrator; 29.8% a peer; 10.7% a student; 8.1% a junior colleague, and 7.7% identified another person (other) as the perpetrator of cyberbullying (Figure 32).

6.3.9 Impact of Cyberbullying on Respondents' Wellbeing

- In relation to the impact of cyberbullying victimisation on respondents' general wellbeing, approximately one third of respondents reported experiencing negative emotions either "sometimes" or "often" (Figure 33).

Figure 31. Cyberbullying victimisation across different work areas

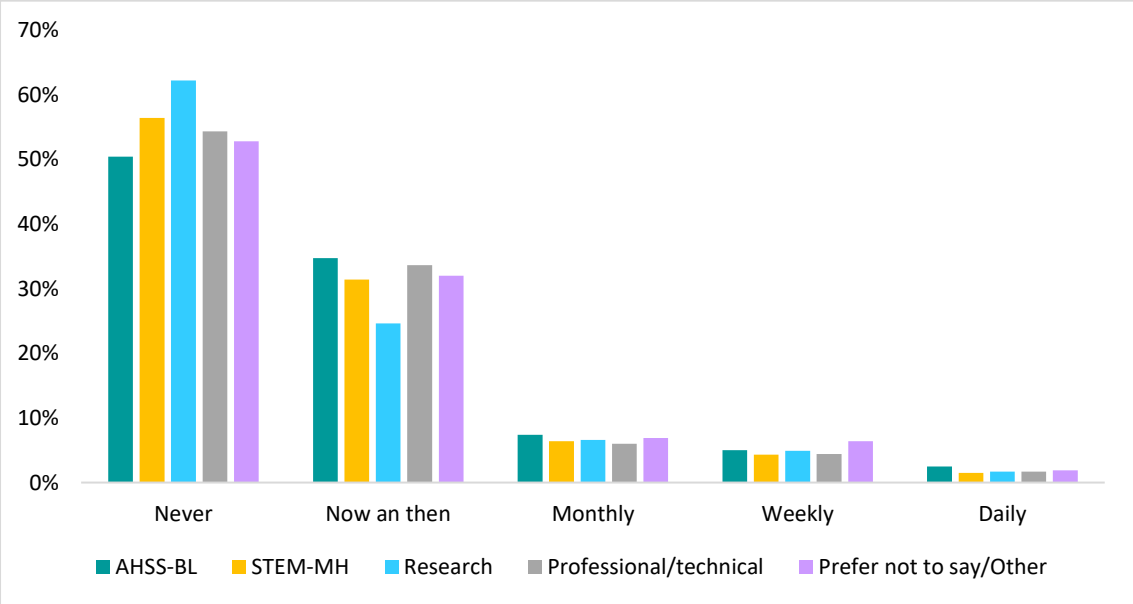


Figure 32. Professional Status of the Cyberbullying Perpetrator

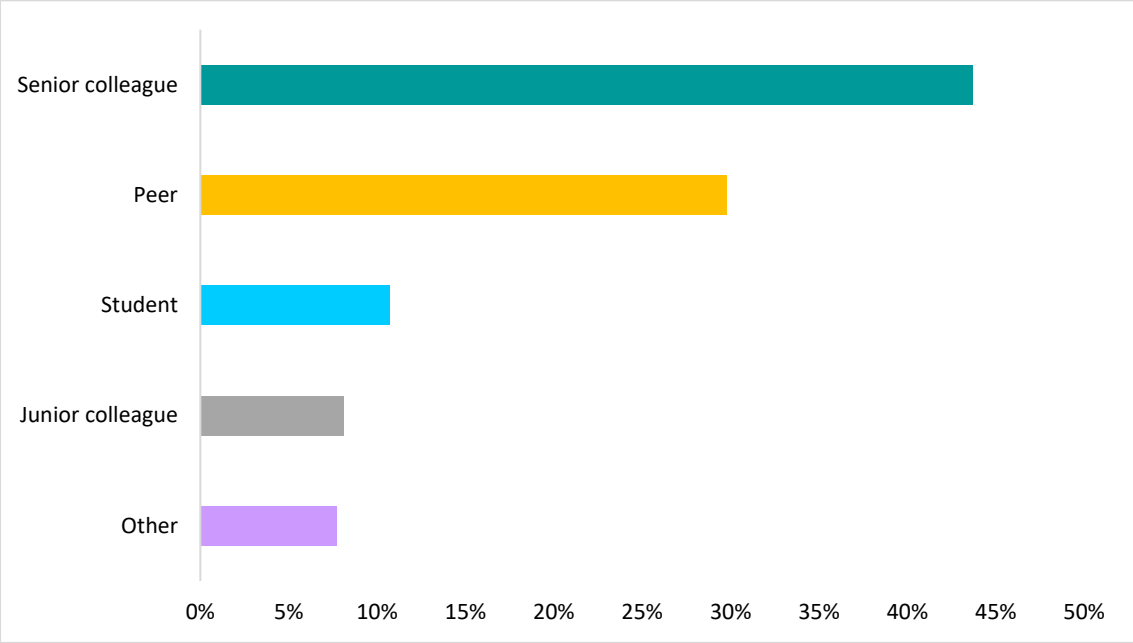
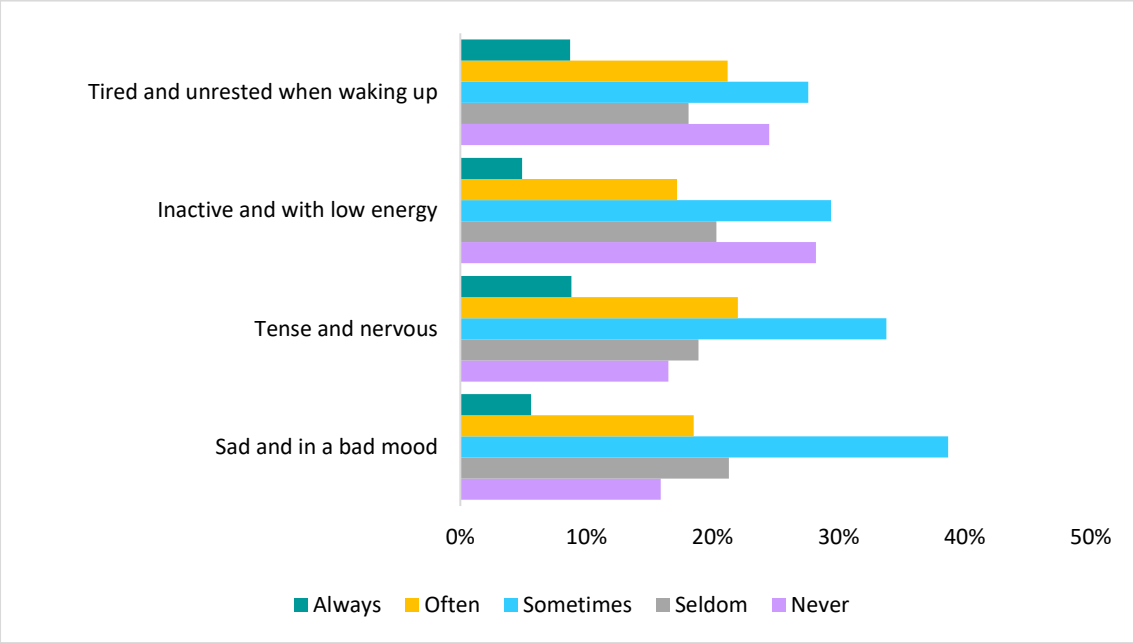


Figure 33. Impact of Cyberbullying Victimisation in the Overall Sample



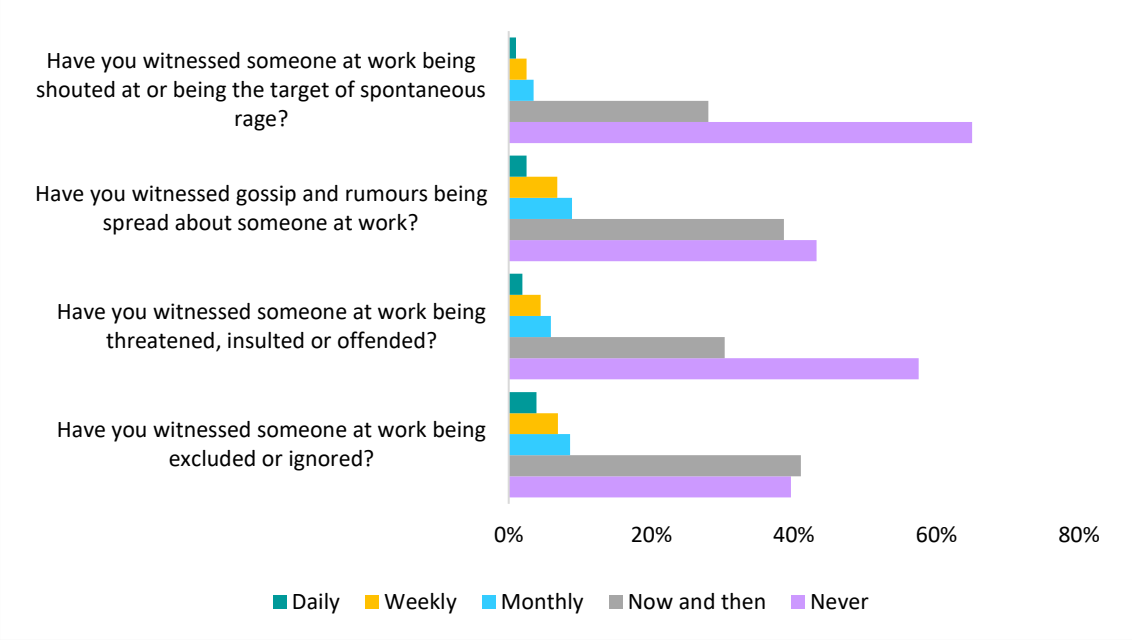
SECTION 3: Bystander Behaviour

7. Bystander Behaviour

Survey respondents were asked if they ever witnessed any negative behaviours at work, in the past three years.

- On average, 34.5% of respondents witnessed negative acts at work at least "now and then".
- Overt negative acts involving shouting at others were witnessed less frequently compared to relational forms of bullying (social exclusion). See figure 34 for a detailed breakdown.

Figure 34. Prevalence of Bystander Behaviour



Respondents who witnessed negative acts at work (involving bullying) were asked if experiencing this had a negative impact on them in terms of their mental health and wellbeing.

- Findings showed that 3.3% of staff members reported that witnessing negative acts at work did not bother them at all; 12.1% were not bothered much; 31.2% reported that witnessing negative acts at work had a mild impact on them; 36.6% reported that it

had a negative impact and 16.8% reported that it had a strong negative impact on them (Figure 35).

- In terms of the status of the perpetrator of the negative acts witnessed in the past three years, 42.7% of respondents reported that the perpetrator was a senior colleague to the targeted employee; 36.5% identified a peer to the targeted employee as the perpetrator of the negative acts. In 8.3% of cases, the perpetrator was a junior colleague to the targeted employee; in 6.9% of cases it was a student, whereas 5.5% reported that someone else (other) was the perpetrator (Figure 36).

Figure 35. Impact of Witnessing Negative Acts at Work on Respondents' Mental Health and Wellbeing

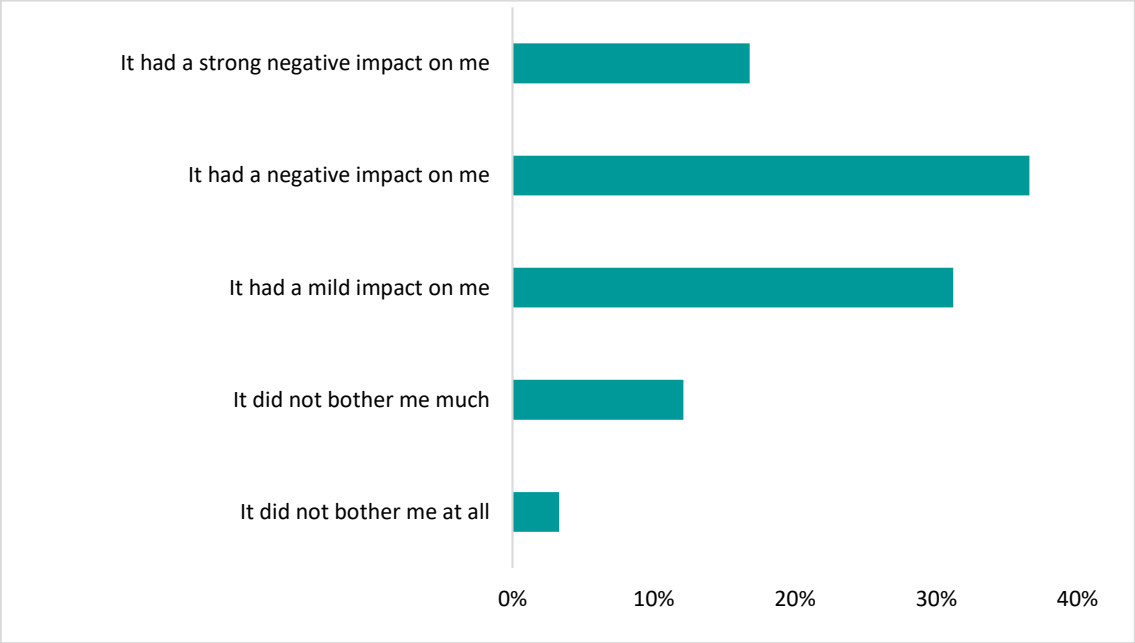
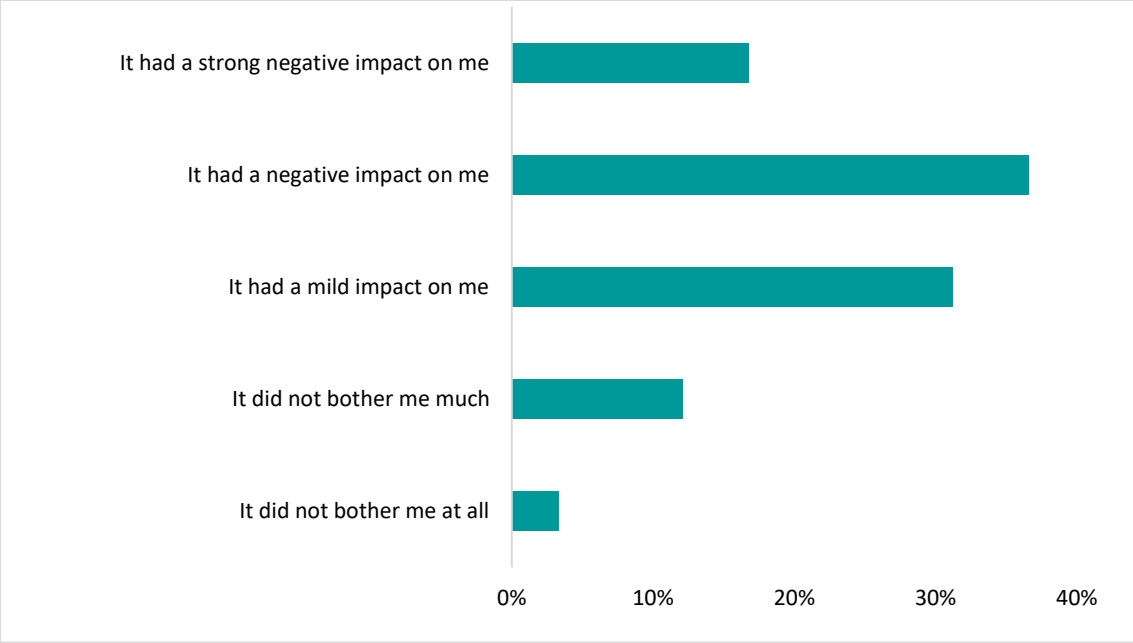


Figure 36. Prevalence of Negative Acts Witnessed at Work from Different Perpetrators



8. Employee Voice and Silence

- After reading the bullying definition, respondents were asked to indicate whether they had witnessed workplace bullying in the past three years including any period of remote working (Figure 37).
- When asked if they had taken any actions to tackle the bullying incidents that they witnessed, 50.5% of respondents indicated that they took action while 49.5% indicated that they did not intervene (Figure 38).

Figure 37. Percentages of Respondents Who Witnessed or did not Witness Bullying in the past Three Years

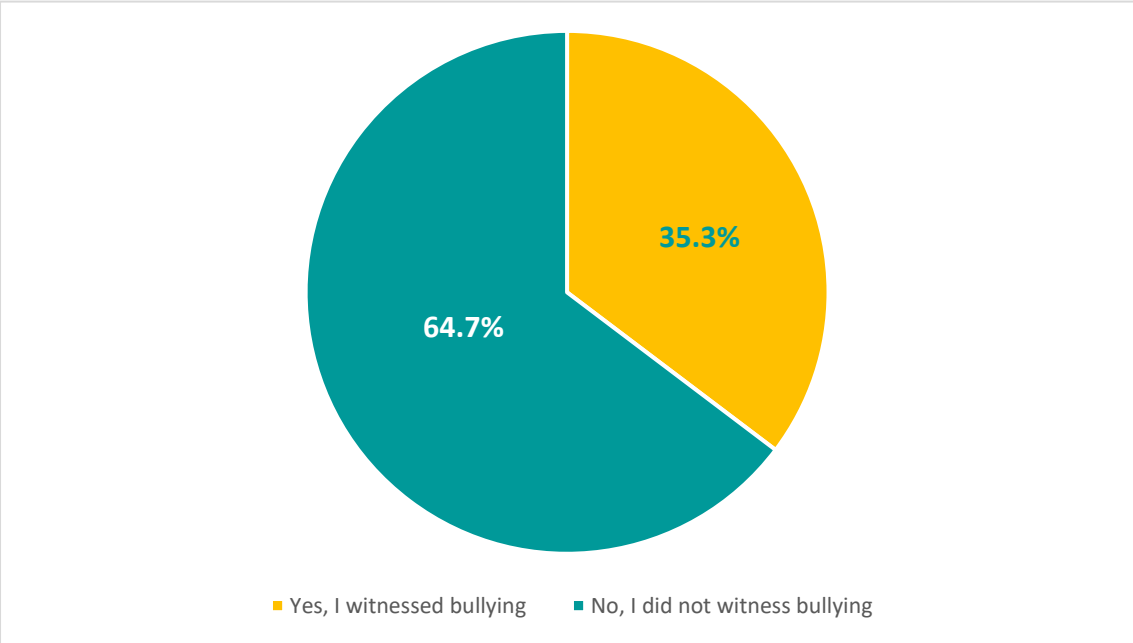
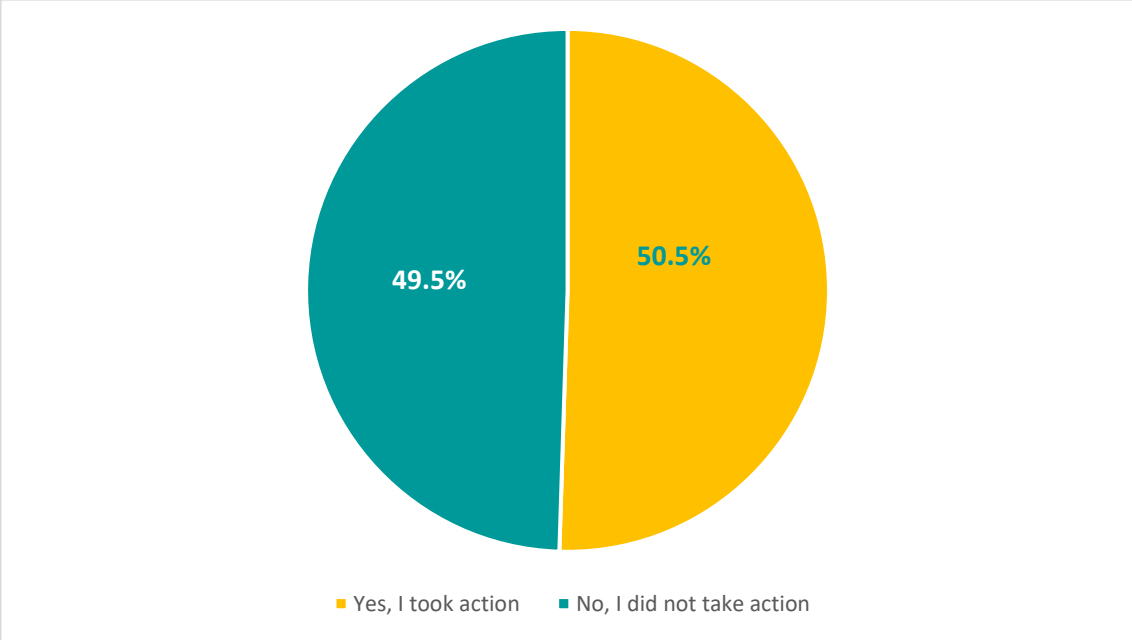


Figure 38. Rates of Respondents Who Reported Taking Action When Witnessing Bullying Versus not Taking Action



9. Reasons for Taking Action: Employee Voice and Silence

- Most respondents decided to take action when witnessing bullying because they wanted the bullying to end (63%). Another common reason for taking action involved feelings of concern for the targeted employee (46.2%).
- Over a third of respondents (39.8%) strongly agreed that they did not take action because they were not confident that someone would have sympathetically listened to them. Another frequent reason for not taking action involved lacking confidence that their intervention would have changed the situation (39%).

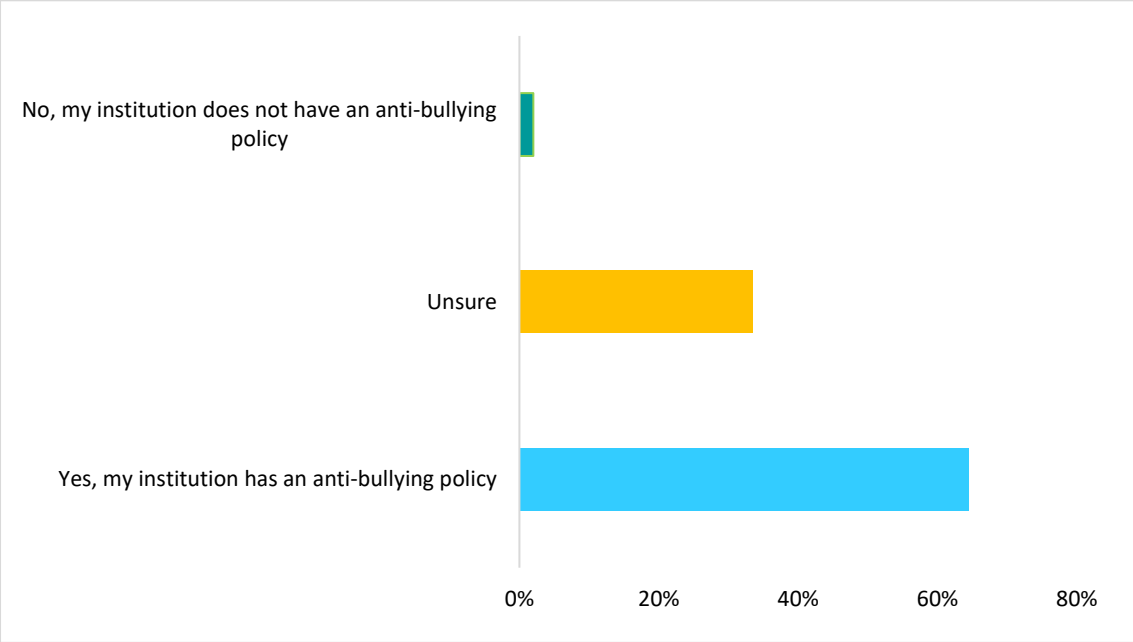
SECTION 4: Anti-Bullying Culture and Awareness of Anti-Bullying Policies

10. Anti-Bullying Culture and Policy

Survey respondents were asked if an anti-bullying policy was in place at their HEI.

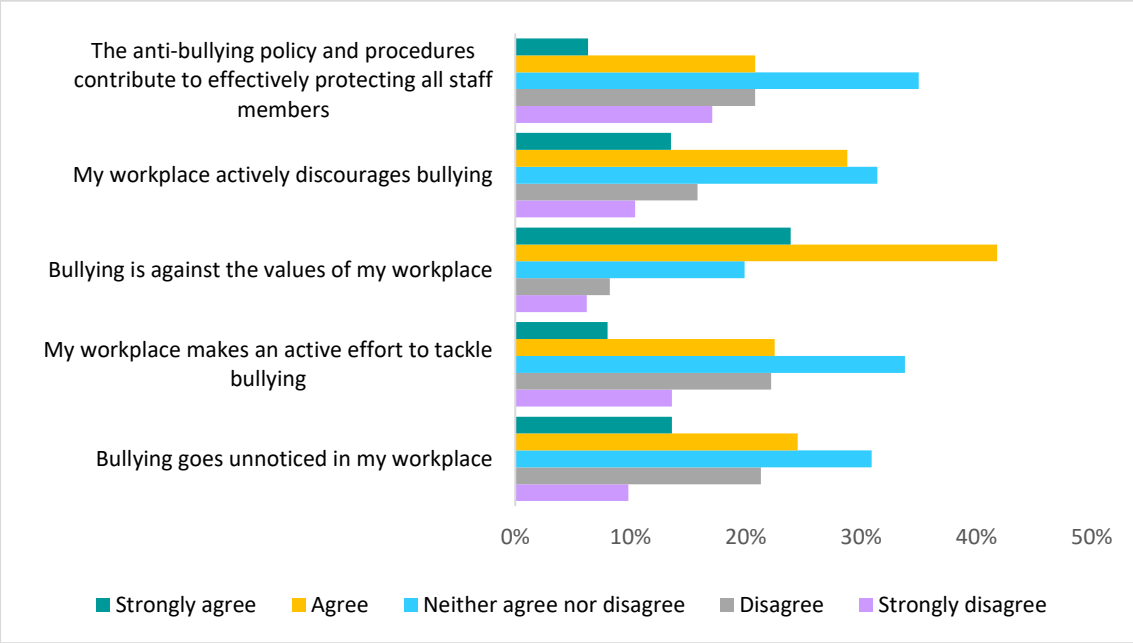
- Sixty-four point five percent (64.5%) of respondents were aware of their institution's anti-bullying policy, whereas 2% reported that their institution did not have an anti-bullying policy, and the remaining 33.5% were unsure (Figure 39).

Figure 39. Respondents' Awareness of Anti-Bullying Policies at Their Institution



- A relatively low rate of respondents who were aware of the anti-bullying policy at their institution were confident that this contributed to effectively protecting all staff members (20.8%).
- Only 8% of respondents strongly agreed that their workplace makes an active effort to tackle bullying (Figure 40).

Figure 40. Perception of Anti-Bullying Policy and Anti-Bullying Culture



SECTION 5: Team Psychological Safety and Work Demands

11. Team Psychological Safety

Survey respondents were asked if they felt free to express their views and supported by their team, which could be referred to as team psychological safety.

- Forty-seven-point-six (47.6%) agreed that members of their team can bring up problems and difficult issues. Moreover, 32.4% agreed and 8% strongly agreed that they felt safe to take risks in their team.
- Fifteen-point-four percent (15.4%) of respondents agreed and 5.6% strongly agreed that they found it difficult to ask for help to other members of their team.
- On a positive note, 29.3% agreed and 19.7% strongly agreed that other team members would not undermine their own efforts. Finally, over one third (36.2%) agreed and 14.4% strongly agreed that their skills and talents were utilised within their team.

12. Pressure to Produce

Survey respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they felt that their HEI was pressuring them to be as productive as possible.

- Twenty-six-point-eight percent (26.8%) and 17.1% of respondents respectively agreed or strongly agreed that they are expected to do too much in a day (Figure 41).

13. Work-Life Balance

Survey respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they perceived their lives to be balanced in terms of being able to handle work and non-work activities.

- Thirty-four percent (34%) of respondents to this survey reported that their personal life suffers because of work, 32.6% reported that they find it difficult to juggle work and non-work activities. In addition, 30.8% were not happy with the amount of time at their disposal to carry out non-work activities (Figure 42).

Figure 41. Pressure to Produce in the Overall Sample

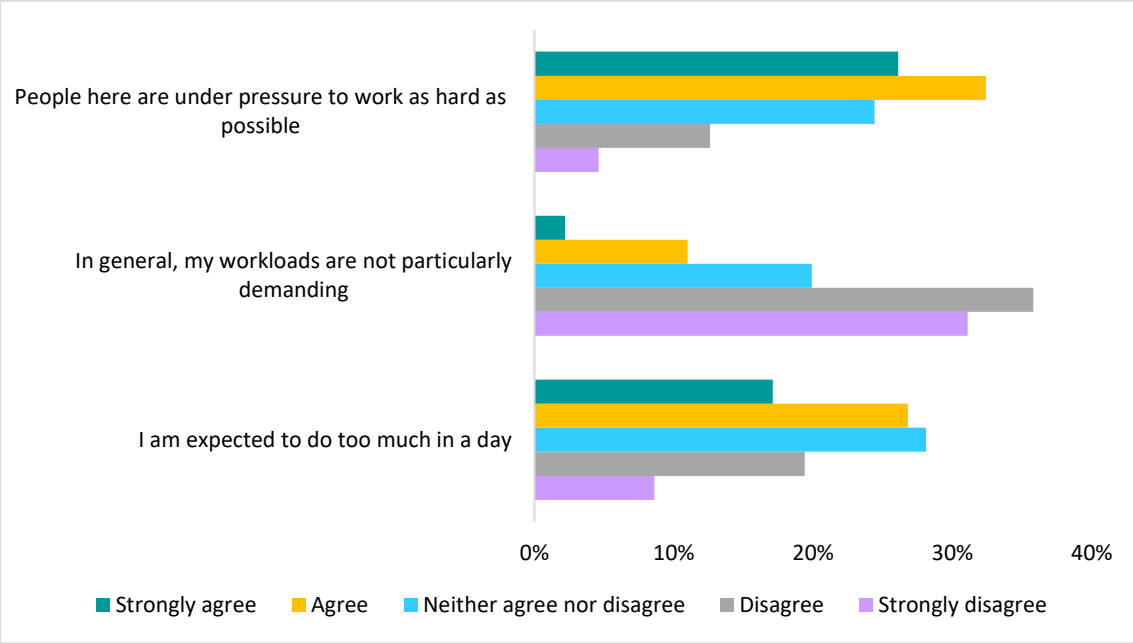
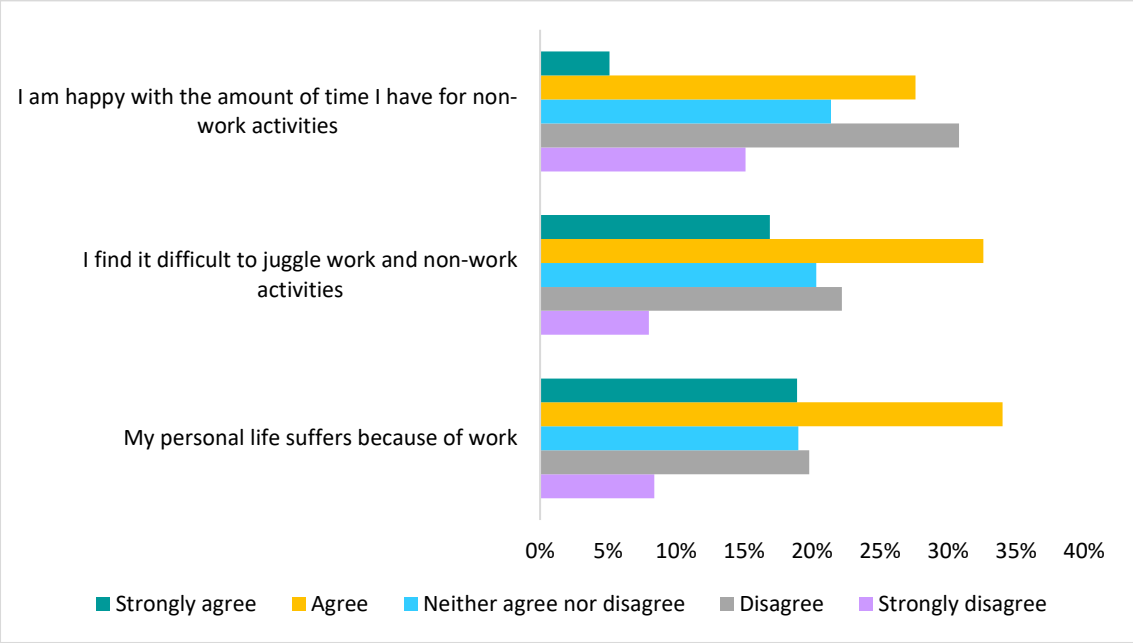


Figure 42. Work-Life Balance in the Overall Sample



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 include:

- Awareness, Education and Training.
- Implementing evidence-based programmes.
- Supporting targets of bullying and bystanders.
- Developing anti-bullying policies in consultation with employees.
- Ongoing research to further investigate and monitor the prevalence of workplace bullying in HEIs.

Awareness, Education and Training

Raising awareness around online and offline bullying, while promoting and reinforcing a positive workplace culture are paramount to successfully tackling bullying. Online professional learning resources with a focus on recognising, responding, and preventing bullying in the workplace should be integrated within HEIs learning and development curricula. Importantly, training programmes should be aimed at raising awareness around safe and effective strategies to report bullying from a bystander perspective. Moreover, anti-bullying training should include a diversity and equality component aimed to promote an inclusive organisational culture.

Supporting Targets of Bullying and Bystanders

Although a proactive approach involving awareness raising and prevention should be the preferred option, counselling services (e.g., Employee Assistance Programme) could be beneficial in terms of supporting bullied employees. Trauma-informed models of care have been suggested to be effective psychotherapy approaches to be adopted with employees who suffer from the negative mental health outcomes of bullying (Duffy & Brown, 2018). Based on the data presented in this report, bystanders can experience adverse mental health outcomes. Thus, psychological support services, should be available for both targets and bystanders.

Evidence-Based Programmes

Anti-bullying intervention programmes should draw on the actual experiences of employees in HEIs, while engaging employees in the creation and implementation of anti-bullying programmes. In other words, employees should not be seen as passive recipient of predefined intervention programmes, but as active agents of change. This approach enhances employees' sense of agency and ownership, which in turn increases the chances for intervention programmes to be successful (Osatuke et al., 2009). Based on these considerations, it is recommended for anti-bullying experts to collaborate with employees towards the implementation of anti-bullying programmes reflecting the needs of staff in HEIs. Moreover, the findings of this survey study support the notion that workplace bullying should be seen as a phenomenon involving further individuals beyond the bullied employee and the perpetrator (Paull et al., 2020). Thus, a whole-organisational approach targeting all employees within HEIs should be adopted when tackling bullying in the workplace.

Anti-Bullying Policies

As shown above, survey respondents were not very confident that reporting the bullying incidents that they had witnessed would be effective, neither they showed much trust in anti-bullying policies. Previous research has shown that bullied employees often receive a poor response from their institution and that HEIs are often unwilling to accept the existence of bullying in the workplace (Fahie, 2020). Moreover, if the presence of bullying is acknowledged, managers or Human Resources frequently dismiss cases (Hodgins & Mannix-McNamara, 2019). Alternatively, bullying could be supported either implicitly or explicitly in an effort to increase productivity and work output (Fahie, 2020). Based on previous research and on the findings of this survey study, it is paramount to increase HEIs' staff trust that the institution will handle bullying effectively. Safe complaint systems should be put into place for bystanders to report bullying without them fearing negative consequences to their self-image, status or career progression. One of the viable strategies to promote employee trust in anti-bullying policies lies in the engagement of HEIs' staff in developing anti-bullying policies through open consultation (that is, taking into consideration staff's inputs and views in relation to anti-bullying policies).

Ongoing Research to Further Investigate Workplace Bullying in HEIs

Regular survey studies with data collected annually are recommended to help monitoring the phenomenon of workplace bullying within HEIs. Moreover, survey studies should be combined with focus groups and interviews, which could offer a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of staff members in HEIs.

References

Duffy, M. & Brown, J. E. (2018). Best practices in psychotherapy for targets of workplace bullying and mobbing. In Duffy, M. & Yamada, D. C. (Eds.) *Workplace bullying and mobbing in the United States,* Volume 2 (pp. 291-314). ABC-CLIO, Santa Barbara, USA.

Fahie, D. (2020). The lived experience of toxic leadership in Irish higher education. *International Journal of Workplace Health Management*, *13*(3), 341–355. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJWHM-07-2019-0096

Hodgins, M., & Mannix-McNamara, P. M. (2019). An Enlightened Environment? Workplace Bullying and Incivility in Irish Higher Education. *SAGE Open*, *9*(4). https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244019894278

Health and Safety Authority, HSA. (2021). *Code of Practice for Employers and Employees on the Prevention and Resolution of Bullying at Work*. https://www.hsa.ie/eng/publications_and_forms/publications/codes_of_practice/code_of_practice_foremployers_and_employees_onthe_prevention_and_resolution_ofbullying_at_work.pdf

Osatuke, K., Moore, S. C., Ward, C., Dyrenforth, S. R. & Belton, L. (2009). Civility, respect, engagement in the workforce (CREW). Nationwide organization development intervention at Veterans Health Administration. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 45*(3), 384-410. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0021886309335067

Paull, M., Omari, M., D'Cruz, P., Cangarli, B. G. (2020). Bystanders in workplace bullying: working university students on action versus inaction. *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources, 58*, 313-334. https://doi.org/10.1111/1744-7941.12216

DCU

Ollscoil Chathair
Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City University