Us Too?
Bullying and Sexual Harassment in the Legal Profession

The largest-ever survey on bullying and sexual harassment in the legal profession

Bullying is rife in legal workplaces, affecting:
1 in 2 female respondents and 1 in 3 male respondents.

Sexual harassment is also common, with:
1 in 3 female respondents and 1 in 14 male respondents
having been sexually harassed in a work context.

6,980 respondents
from 135 countries
Conducted in 6 languages
From law firms, in-house, barristers’ chambers, judiciary and government

www.ibanet.org/harassment.aspx
57% of bullying cases and 75% of sexual harassment cases, the incident is never reported. Targets do not report. In: Targets don’t report due to: the status of the perpetrator, fear of repercussions and the incident being endemic to the workplace.

More needs to be done. Of respondents’ workplaces, 53% had policies and 22% undertook training to address bullying and sexual harassment.

Respondents were: 67% female 32% male 0.2% non-binary/self-defined
From across the spectrum of the legal profession.

57% of bullying cases and 75% of sexual harassment cases, the incident is never reported.

Policies and training do not appear to be having the desired impact. Respondents at workplaces with policies and training are just as likely to be bullied or sexually harassed as those at workplaces without.

Targets are leaving unsupportive workplaces. 65% of respondents who have been bullied and 37% of respondents who have been sexually harassed left or are considering leaving their workplaces.
Bullying and sexual harassment by country*

Bullying

Sexual harassment

*Gender-weighted
## Recommendations

1. **Raise awareness**  
The legal profession has a problem. Spread the word – it is the first step towards achieving change.

2. **Revise and implement policies and standards**  
Policies to address bullying and sexual harassment are under-utilised and not sufficiently effective. We need more effective policies and better implementation.

3. **Introduce regular, customised training**  
Effective training can reduce the prevalence of workplace bullying and sexual harassment. Training must be the norm, not the exception.

4. **Increase dialogue and best-practice sharing**  
A problem shared is a problem halved. Let’s work together to address the scourge of bullying and sexual harassment in the profession, sharing what works and what doesn’t.

5. **Take ownership**  
This is everyone’s problem. From senior leaders of the profession to incoming graduates, we all need to take ownership of the problem and work towards a more harmonious legal profession.

6. **Gather data and improve transparency**  
Data about the nature, prevalence and impact of bullying and sexual harassment is important – we don’t have enough. Once we have the data, we need to be open about it. Transparency will help us to address these issues.

7. **Explore flexible reporting models**  
Legal professionals do not report bullying or sexual harassment often enough, at the time it happens or at all. We need to improve existing reporting channels and explore new ones, to make reporting a better experience for targets.

8. **Engage with younger members of the profession**  
Younger legal professionals are disproportionately impacted by bullying and sexual harassment. They must be part of this conversation – they will play a major role in developing and implementing solutions and shaping workplace culture.

9. **Appreciate the wider context**  
Bullying and sexual harassment do not occur in a vacuum. Mental health challenges, a lack of workplace satisfaction and insufficient diversity are all related issues. These dynamics need to be understood and addressed collectively.

10. **Maintain momentum**  
Change is not inevitable. But it is possible, if individuals, workplaces and institutions work together to eradicate bullying and sexual harassment from the profession.

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