

National Healthy and Respectful Workplace Survey Highlights

Scope The Canadian Dental Hygienists Association retained Harry Cummings and Associates Inc. to conduct a Healthy and Respectful Workplace Survey of its members between November 13 and December 17, 2018.

This survey was developed in consultation with a panel of dental hygiene experts and CDHA staff.

Data In total, 3780 members (22% of membership) completed the survey.

The share of responses from each province/territory is comparable to the distribution of the entire membership.

Definitions For the purposes of this survey, the following definitions were used:

- **Workplace harassment:** single or repeated incident of objectionable behaviour that offends, humiliates or degrades a particular person or group.¹
- **Workplace bullying:** repeated, unreasonable or unwelcome behaviour directed towards a particular person or group. Assertion of power through aggression. Bullying actions can be both obvious and subtle.²
- **Workplace abuse/violence:** threatened, attempted or actual conduct of a person that causes or is likely to cause physical or psychological injury. Includes **sexual harassment, sexual assault, abusive or violent behaviour.**³

In the past year, 35% of all respondents have experienced some form of harassment, bullying, abuse and/or violence on an occasional, repeated or constant basis from employers, colleagues, and clients in the workplace.

Mistreatment⁴ at a Glance

■ Dentists:

- **42%** of respondents have experienced some form of harassment, bullying, abuse and/or violence from dentists over their career
- In the past year, **21%** have experienced some degree of harassment or bullying
- In the past year, **12%** have experienced some degree of abusive and/or violent behaviour
- **49%** have observed others⁵ in the workplace being mistreated by dentists

■ Office Managers:

- **36%** of respondents have experienced some form of harassment, bullying, abuse and/or violence from office managers over their career
- In the past year, **19%** have experienced some degree of harassment or bullying
- In the past year, **12%** have experienced some degree of abusive and/or violent behaviour
- **40%** have observed others in the workplace being mistreated by office managers

■ Co-workers⁶:

- **37%** of respondents have experienced some form of harassment, bullying, abuse and/or violence from co-workers over their career
- In the past year, **23%** have experienced some degree of harassment or bullying
- In the past year, **14%** have experienced some degree of abusive and/or violent behaviour
- **41%** have observed others in the workplace being mistreated by co-workers

■ Clients:

- **49%** of respondents have experienced some form of harassment, bullying, abuse and/or violence from clients over their career
- In the past year, **32%** have experienced some degree of harassment or bullying
- In the past year, **22%** have experienced some degree of abusive and/or violent behaviour
- **42%** have observed others in the workplace being mistreated by clients

Response to Harassment, Bullying, Abuse, and Violence in the Workplace

The most common action taken by those who have experienced mistreatment in the workplace is to discuss the matter with a co-worker (65% of respondents). The second and third most common actions are to discuss the matter with the manager or supervisor (53%) and to discuss the matter with the offending person (46%).

- ***60% of respondents either don't have a workplace policy on harassment in place (42%) or are unsure (18%) if they have one***

Factors Influencing Decisions Not to Take Action in Response to Mistreatment

A substantial proportion of respondents (32%) indicated that they do not always report or discuss the mistreatment that they experience in the workplace. The major factors influencing this decision are concerns about possible retaliation from others in the workplace (70%) and the possible impact on their job security (68%).

Impact of Harassment, Bullying, Abuse and/or Violence in the Workplace

The impact of workplace harassment, bullying, abuse, and violence is far-reaching for the dental hygiene profession and the dental health care sector in general. Over half of the respondents reported that they experienced stress (56%) and/or considered quitting their job (52%), and 30% actually quit their job. The financial impact on the practice can be significant in terms of time spent posting the position, interviewing candidates, providing orientation and training, low initial productivity, and potential loss of clients.

Many respondents indicated that mistreatment in the workplace negatively affected their emotional health with 40% experiencing a loss of motivation, 36% losing interest in their work, and 31% losing confidence in their abilities.

Management and Leadership Issues in the Workplace

The survey revealed that respondents have considerable concerns with management and leadership in the workplace. Over half of the respondents (57%) reported that they had at least one issue or concern related to the management and leadership provided by dentists and office managers. Close to half of the respondents or more identified concerns related to lack of authority, lack of accountability, lack of transparency, poor communication, and poor people skills.

Suggestions for Supporting and Promoting a Respectful and Healthy Workplace

Members were asked to share their suggestions on how to support and promote a healthy and respectful workplace. The following key themes emerged from the analysis:

- Establish and/or strengthen the workplace policy on harassment, bullying, abuse, and violence.
- Establish and/or strengthen workplace procedures and protocols for addressing harassment, bullying, abuse, and violence.
- Ensure that there is a skilled human resource official in the office to manage and support staff.
- Ensure that there is accountability and that the workplace policy on harassment, bullying, abuse, and violence is enforced.
- Provide training and resources on the prevention of harassment, bullying, abuse, and violence in the workplace.

Initial Strategic Actions

CDHA will work collaboratively with key stakeholders to support the development, adoption, and maintenance of policies, procedures, and accountability mechanisms in all work environments to promote healthy and respectful workplaces.

CDHA will develop a set of tools and resources that will be available to members to support and reinforce a healthy and respectful workplace.

For more information, please contact Donna Wells, manager of professional practice, at dwells@cdha.ca or 1-800- 267-5235 ext 132.

¹e.g., targeting someone on the basis of a characteristic such as age, sex, race, national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, religion, etc. It does not include any reasonable conduct of an employer or supervisor related to the normal management of workers or a work site. Differences of opinion or minor disagreements between co-workers are also not generally considered to be workplace harassment.

²e.g., intimidating or threatening a person, belittling a person's opinions, spreading malicious rumours, excluding or socially isolating a person.

³Abusive behaviour includes verbal or written threats, insults, and threatening behaviour; violent behaviour includes physical attack or aggression, sexual violence, and domestic violence. Sexual violence as a workplace hazard refers to any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, or other act directed against a worker's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in a workplace or work-related setting. Sexual violence exists on a continuum from obscene name-calling to sexual assault and/or homicide. It includes online forms of sexual violence, such as internet threats and harassment, and sexual exploitation. Domestic violence becomes a workplace hazard when it occurs or spills over into the workplace. It may put the targeted worker at risk and may pose a threat to co-workers.

⁴In this document, "mistreatment" encompasses harassment, bullying, abuse, and violence.

⁵"Others" refers to persons in the dental setting (dental associate, dental hygienist, dental assistant, office managers, clients).

⁶"Co-workers" refers to dental associates, dental hygienists, and dental assistants