

## Assessing bullying and harassment to improve construction worker mental health

### **A method to assess bullying and harassment as an upstream determinant of construction worker mental health**

*Cora Roelofs, Christopher Rodman, Amber Trueblood, Chris T. Cain. American Journal of Industrial Medicine, July 2024.*

#### **Overview**

Workplace bullying and harassment are increasingly recognized as hazardous exposures that can negatively impact mental health, even contributing to increased risk of suicide. Construction workers have one of the highest suicide rates of any occupation, and the sector has responded with efforts to destigmatize mental health support. However, there has been less focus on reducing workplace factors, such as poor social climate, that may contribute to poor well-being among construction workers. To begin to address this gap, the researchers collaborated with a large building trade union, an apprenticeship program, and a union-contractor alliance to develop a survey instrument to understand abusive conduct in the industry. The goal of the survey project was to assess baseline conditions and provide data that could be used to develop training and other interventions. The survey received over 3300 responses, including 500 open-ended text responses describing perspectives on bullying and harassment in the industry.

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#### **Read the article:**

<https://bit.ly/47qn2Hx>

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#### **Key Findings**

- The research resulted in a reliable survey instrument that was tailored to construction, including taking into account the types of bullying and harassment experienced in the sector. For example, typical workplace bullying and harassment evaluations do not usually consider the role of the apprenticeship, hazing, and the small number of women in the workforce. This construction industry bullying and harassment survey can be used with confidence to find out how negative acts are impacting construction workers and to develop specific strategies to address them.
- The open-ended responses allowed for the revision of the instrument to make it more sensitive to the conditions of bullying and harassment in the industry. The researchers revised the survey to obtain information about:
  - specific locations where bullying takes place
  - acts of retaliation for confronting or reporting bullying
  - attitudes and beliefs about abusive behavior
  - the role of work-related factors such as hygiene conditions, lack of paid time off, and lack of training
  - specific impacts of bullying on the individual who experienced it (e.g., mental health, retaliation, wanting to quit, denial of promotions/development, etc.)
  - the role of travel for work and/or being far from home
- The researchers plan to expand use of the survey to other industry organizations to promote regular assessments and interventions in order to reduce bullying and harassment and improve psychosocial safety for everyone in the construction work environment.



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