

Research highlights the economic costs of workplace bullying

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Findings from a new NUI Galway study on workplace bullying, led by Dr. John Cullinan of the Discipline of Economics and Dr. Margaret Hodgins from the Discipline of Health Promotion, has been published in

the journal *Occupational Medicine*.

Workplace bullying is [aggressive behaviour](#) perpetrated by one or more persons, repeatedly and systematically over a prolonged time period, where the targeted person feels unable to defend themselves. In a previous study, the NUI Galway research team highlighted the relationship between bullying and work-related stress in the Irish [workplace](#). The current study builds on this to examine the economic [costs](#) of workplace bullying.

The research describes the range of impacts of workplace bullying on individuals and organisations. Using [statistical methods](#), it estimates the number of workdays lost as a result of workplace bullying and calculates the economic value of the associated lost productivity. Overall, the research estimates a total of 1.7 million days lost due to bullying at a cost to the economy of €239 million per year. In addition, the study finds that although bullying is more prevalent in the [public sector](#), it has a larger effect on absences in the private sector.

Commenting on the study, Dr. John Cullinan said: "Workplace bullying is a pervasive problem with significant personal and wider costs. Our study highlights the considerable economic cost of workplace bullying in Ireland. In addition to lost productivity from [workplace bullying](#), there are also likely to be costs associated with early retirement and presenteeism. Furthermore, bullying-related costs are unlikely to have gone away as a result of new COVID-19 work-from-home practices."

Dr. Margaret Hodgins noted that: "To tackle the problem, organisations need an anti-bullying policy in order to signal to staff that bullying is unacceptable. However a policy is insufficient in itself and it is vital that it is implemented fairly and in a timely fashion. Ideally, organisations should be proactive, identifying how and when bullying occurs in the organisation, and be prepared to develop specific interventions that are

appropriate to context."

More information: J Cullinan et al, The value of lost productivity from workplace bullying in Ireland, *Occupational Medicine* (2020). [DOI: 10.1093/occmed/kqaa067](https://doi.org/10.1093/occmed/kqaa067)

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