



BULLYING & OSTRACISM AT THE WORKPLACE IN MALTA

PROJECT OVERVIEW

FOR THE MALTA COUNCIL FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (MCESD)

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Who is bBrave?

MISSION STATEMENT

To raise awareness on different forms of bullying, to facilitate assistance for individuals suffering from bullying and for the reform of individuals displaying bullying behaviour in Malta.

Sabiex titqajjem kuxjenza dwar forom differenti ta' bulliżmu, sabiex tiġi ffaċilitata l-għajnuna għal dawk li jsofru l-bulliżmu u għar-riforma ta' min jadotta mġieba ta' bulliżmu f'Malta.



BBRAVE COUNCIL



2023 WORKPLACE BULLYING PROJECT

PILLARS

1. Study

To determine the extent and characteristics of the problem within the workplace in Malta

2. Toolkit

Development of a tool-pack to be utilised by organisations (including template anti-bullying policy and training presentations)

3. Workshops

Implementation of toolkit with employers and employees

4. Awareness Campaign

A campaign to educate the public about bullying and ostracism at the workplace, its effects, and possible remedies

5. Stakeholders' Conference

An event bringing together interested parties to look at the data and tools in hand, and discuss ways forward



CONTEXT OF RESEARCH STUDY

Bullying may be defined as the **unwanted, abusive behaviour** among individuals that:

1. involves an imbalance of power;
2. evolves over time; and
3. is repeated over a period of time.

Workplace bullying occurs in various ways, including;

- excessive criticism
- intimidation
- aggression
- exclusion
- ostracism
- removal of responsibility

This is the first **research study** conducted in Malta to determine the extent to which bullying is present in the workplace, as well as its causes and consequences.



METHODOLOGY

There were two workstreams:

1. Quantitative online national survey

→ sample: over 2,400 responses from Malta's working population

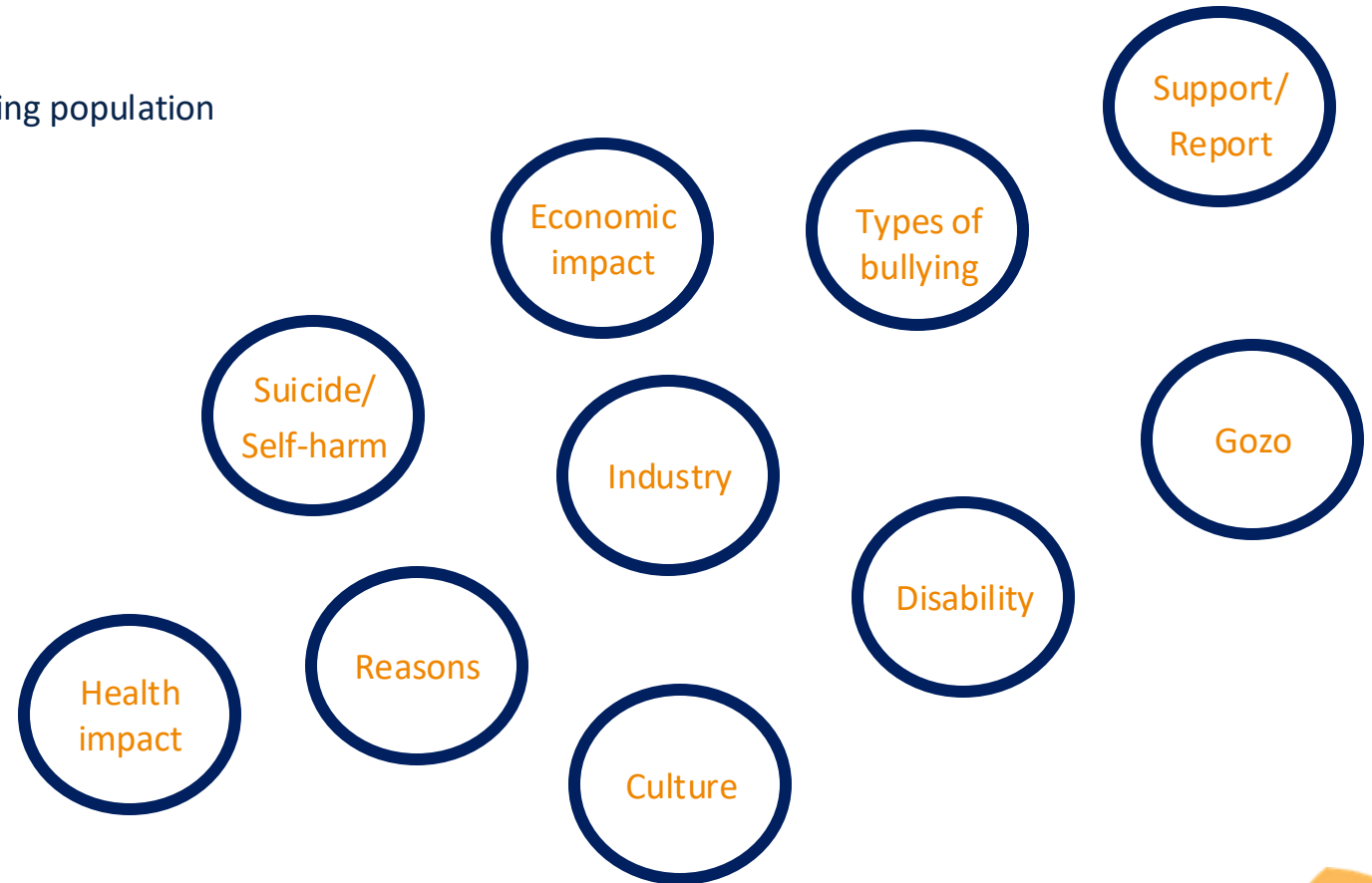
→ timeframe: 6th January - 27th May 2023

1. Qualitative series of 10 focus groups

→ size: 12 participants

→ duration: 90 - 120 minutes

→ 10 key topics discussed:





Key Study Findings

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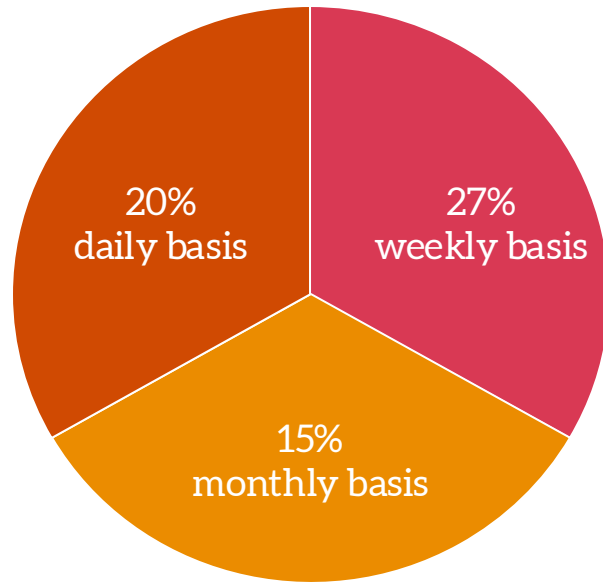
64% of workers **believe** bullying exists at their workplace

56% of workers **witness** bullying at their workplace

40% of workers **experience** bullying at their workplace



Of those who experienced bullying



- 88% were bullied in the **presence of others**
- 48% were bullied **after 1 year** of employment
- 66% were bullied by person at a **senior** level
- 43% of **female** participants were bullied
- 55% of participants with a **disability** were bullied
- 56% of participants residing in **Gozo** were bullied





Impact of bullying on health

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Of those bullied:

73% suffered from increased **stress**

58% suffered from **mental health** repercussions

39% suffered from **physical health** repercussions

9% engaged in **self-harm** or **suicidal thinking/behaviour**

7% reported increased **substance dependence**



Bullying has significant negative effects on mental, emotional, and physical health

- Anxiety & panic attacks
- Apathy
- Low self-esteem
- Emotional outbursts
- Depression & sadness
- Stress
- Isolation
- Negative thinking
- Negative effect on relationships
- Self-harm/suicidal thinking
- Frustration & demotivation
- Fear
- Lack of trust
- Heart-related issues
- Gastroenterology-related issues
- Substance dependence
- Eating disorders
- Burnout
- Impaired sleep & nightmares





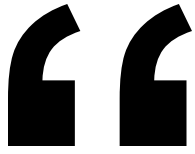
Economic Impact on Bullying

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Of those who experienced bullying:

- **45%** reported **reduced work engagement**
- **37%** reported to be **less focused**
- **33%** reported to be **less productive**
- **23%** reported to **take more time off work**



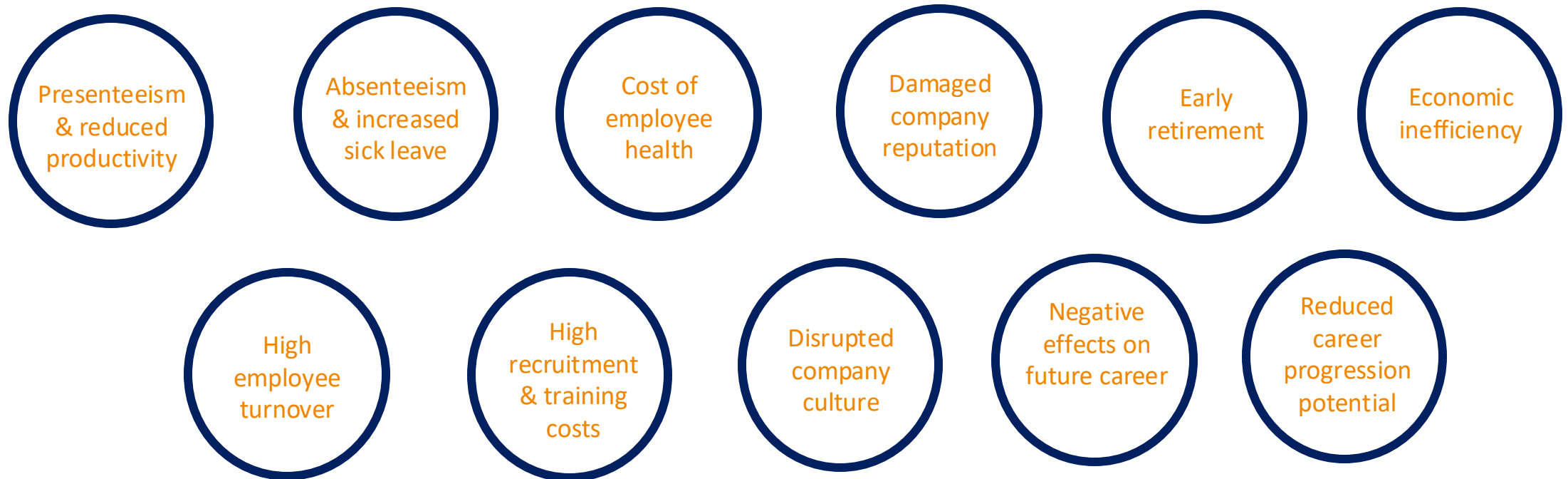


Estimate impact of 4% to Malta's GDP*

**Currently there are no specific studies estimating the economic implications of workplace bullying in Malta. This is partly due to the difficulty in calculating certain costs, such as decreased productivity and decreased service quality. One estimate based on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) data from other countries suggests that roughly 4% of Malta' GDP could be impacted through direct and indirect costs. This estimate also implies that in 2017, mental ill-health in Malta could have resulted in costs of upwards of €400 million annually (Mental Health Strategy, Malta 2020-2030). A 2020 study by the University of Galway found that 1.7 million days are lost due to workplace bullying in Ireland, at a cost to the economy of €239 million per year (Cullinan et al., 2020). One may assume that this cost has only increased over recent years due to various reasons, namely the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and economic uncertainty.*



Bullying has wide-reaching economic implications at the individual, organisational, and societal level





Bullying Prevalence in Different Industries

Industries with most prevalent bullying



Public sector

Private sector





Effects of Culture on Bullying Prevalence

Culture has a direct effect, at organisational & national levels

Management &
leadership

Lack of policies &
procedures

Politics &
favouritism

Maltese culture:
humour &
avoidance

COVID-19
pandemic

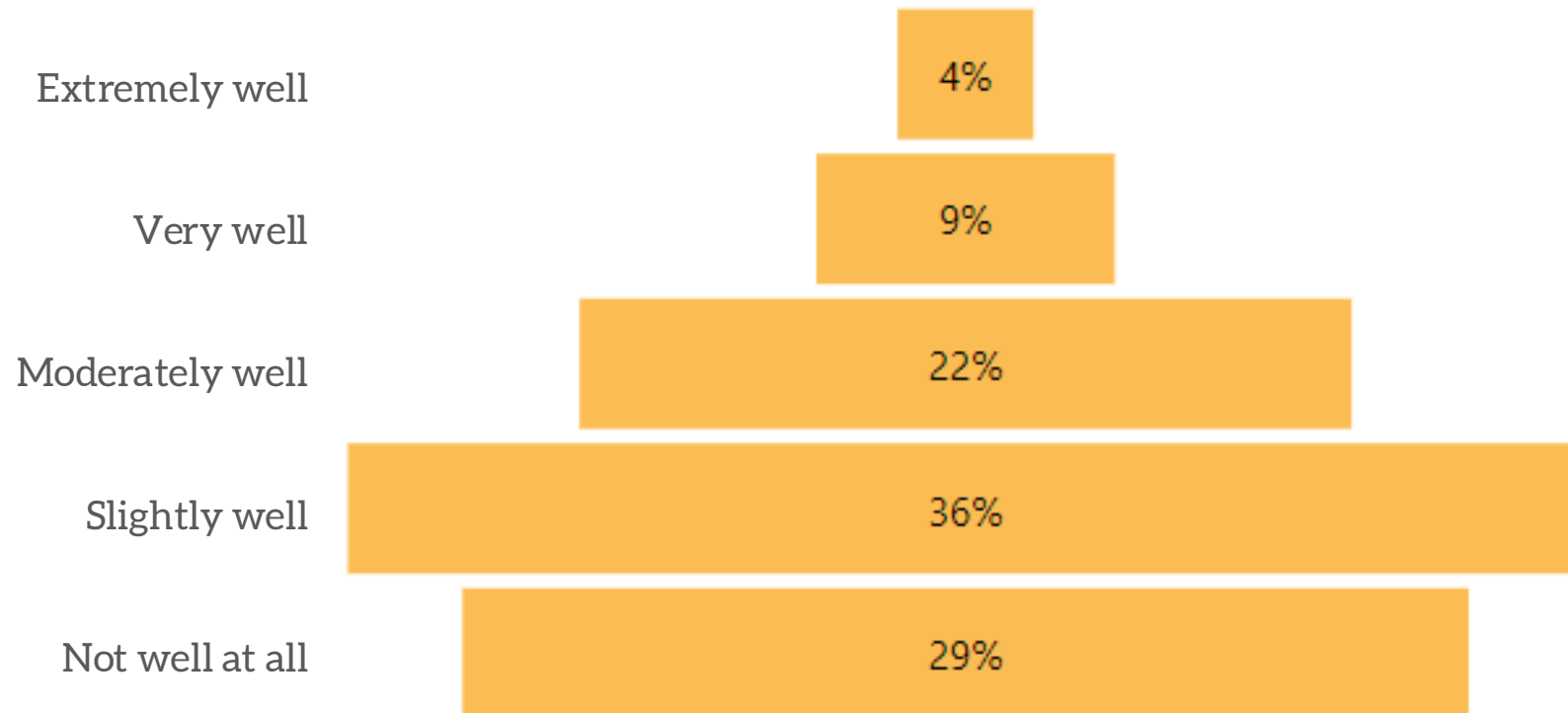
Economic climate





Reporting

42% **reported** bullying behaviour at their workplace.
From those, the matter was handled;



50% of workers did not report workplace bullying due to fear of repercussions

Other reasons included:

lack of support from
superiors

lack of policies &
procedures

did not have the
mental energy

36%

22%

19%





Anti-Bullying Interventions

Recommended Interventions

For Government Policy Makers:

1. Anti-bullying legislation
2. Awareness campaigns
3. Increased quality & quantity of support & reporting resources

For Workplaces:

1. Anti-bullying policy
2. Employee Health & Wellbeing
3. Training



THE FUTURE

- Implementation of toolkits in workplaces around Malta & Gozo
- Anti-Bullying legislation
- More national awareness about workplace bullying
- Yearly campaigns
- Revision of the toolkit
- bBrave workshops
- Involving more stakeholders



IGNORING BULLYING IS MORE COSTLY

A proactive approach is
advisable



RESOURCES

- Report

<https://bbrave.org.mt/2023/11/08/bbrave-final-report-research-study-on-bullying-and-ostracism-at-the-workplace-in-malta/>

- Toolkit

<https://bbrave.org.mt/2023/11/17/publication-of-workplace-bullying-toolkit/>





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all about people





Q & A





*“NO ONE HEALS HIMSELF BY WOUNDING
ANOTHER.”*

ST. AMBROSE

THANK YOU

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