

2018 Workplace Experience Study

Volume I, II & III



2018 Workplace Experience Study

Toxic workplace behavior is a major contributor to lost productivity, legal issues, disproportionate stress, and high employee attrition in the American workplace and conservatively costs companies billions of dollars per year. While harassment, bullying, and discrimination have been more newsworthy in recent times, issues such as poor management, bad attitude, and incompetence can also be culture and productivity killers.

To better understand how these behaviors can do less damage and perhaps be prevented, Warble conducted the attached study in July 2018. We've produced this three-part series based on the results;

Warble Inc's 2018 Workplace Experience Study took place in July 2018. This study was developed from a survey of 521 U.S workers between the ages of 18-65. Learn more about Warble and how we help employers uncover people problems before they negatively impact culture and revenues at www.warble.work.

Part 1: Why US Workers Remain Silent About Disruptive Behavior at Work – page 3

In many cases, American businesses are challenged to address bad behavior in the workplace because they simply don't find out about it quickly enough. Understanding why this occurs, and addressing it, can help companies get better information faster – before these behaviors have destructive impact.

Part 2: Disruptive Work Behaviors and Their Impacts on US Business – page 6

Our findings about how employees feel about the impact of toxic behavior on the business uncovers a simple but crucial contradiction that is the root of many culture and accountability issues in American businesses.

Part 3: Gender and Income Influence How Workers Feel About Toxic Workplace Behavior – page 10

While there were many similarities across distinct groups of study respondents, key differences across gender and household income uncover some areas of focus for companies who want to progress.

Why US Workers Remain Silent About Disruptive Behavior at Work

2018 Workplace Experience Study, Volume I
July 24, 2018. Warble Inc.

This is the first in a series of findings resulting from Warble's 2018 Workplace Experience Study, completed in July 2018.

One of the lasting memories of the year 2017 will be the reckoning of powerful and famous men, including Harvey Weinstein, Al Franken, Kevin Spacey, Matt Lauer, and many others. We reached a tipping point that resulted in many people who were previously silent coming forward to tell their stories.

However, for many employees who experience a variety of disruptive or harmful behavior in the workplace, that tipping point has not yet been reached. Many remain reluctant to speak out about sexual harassment or other troubling workplace behaviors. Warble, as part of its mission to help companies uncover people problems, has recently concluded its 2018 Workplace Experience Study to help determine how typical American workers perceive the challenges and impacts of bad behavior in the workplace. This study sought to discover U.S. workers' feelings about a broad array of common negative workplace behaviors including bad attitude, discrimination & targeting, fraud, incompetence, poor management skills, sexual harassment, theft, unethical behavior and violence.



63% of respondents witnessed behavior at work that was disruptive to culture, productivity and/or the business but did not report it to management or HR.

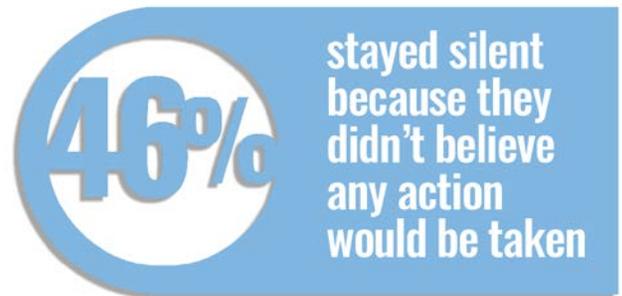
One of the key findings of this study is that 63% of respondents witnessed behavior at work that was disruptive to culture, productivity and/or the business but did not report it to management or HR.

Many key factors were identified as impacting why people haven't reported these behaviors in the past, with implications for how companies can better manage employee feedback in the future.

Why US Workers Remain Silent About Disruptive Behavior at Work

Why don't people report disruptive behavior?

The majority of respondents had witnessed behaviors which they themselves classified as disruptive and never reported. Given a list of options to choose from, there were a variety of reasons for remaining silent. 60% of respondents identified a multiple reasons for not reporting disruptive behavior, thus reflecting the complexity of the decision-making process.



Lack of faith in “the system”

The most common reason identified was “I didn't believe that any action would be taken” – nearly 46% of respondents felt that their complaints would not change a situation. In addition, 32% of respondents would not submit their concern because they “don't trust HR”. In total, 60% of respondents selected at least one of these two options, indicating a significant lack of faith in their company's ability, or desire, to resolve disruptive behavior even if that behavior is negatively impacting the business.

Interestingly, men were 34% more likely to indicate that they did not trust HR as a reason to not submit.

Fear of retaliation

47% of respondents indicated that they feared retaliation (38%) or that they would lose their job (26%) if they spoke up. Women were 28% more likely to fear retaliation than men (although each gender was equally concerned about losing their job specifically).

On the other hand, people whose household income was under \$150,000 per year were 73% more likely to fear losing their job than their counterparts above that threshold. In general, people whose incomes were below that threshold were less likely to speak out than those with higher income. Clearly, income and financial insecurity can be a factor in whether someone decides to act.

Fear of losing reputation

39% of respondents indicated that they did not speak up because they feared being labeled a complainer or seeming overly emotional, weak, or petty. Regardless of gender or income, even in cases where there is no fear of retaliation, the fear of not appearing weak or negative is a driver of employee silence.

Harmful behavior of managers

Another significant factor in the decision-making process is whether or not the respondent's manager is the offender. When the boss was the cause, respondents were 17% more likely to stay silent than if another person was the cause. Overall, the manager was the offender 38% of the time when behavior was not reported.

Warble helps companies identify these unreported behaviors by offering an anonymous channel for employees to submit their concerns. 71% of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they would be more likely to report bad behavior if they knew their report was anonymous.

Why US Workers Remain Silent About Disruptive Behavior at Work

What does this mean for companies?

With over half of employees admitting to staying silent while witnessing disruptive behavior in the workplace, leaders should be cognizant that they likely have an incomplete view of the personnel issues impacting both their culture and their business. The interactions, behaviors and relationships between people are deep contributors to job satisfaction and company engagement.

A recent study by firm Accounting Principals and Ajilon, found that 54% of respondents claim that loyalty they feel towards their team, boss, co-workers or company keeps them from quitting, while 45% of our respondents indicate that they have quit a job because of a disruptive co-worker or bad manager, with women 30% more likely than men to have reached this point.

Mental Health America study indicates that 71% of people are actively or passively looking for work at any given point in time. With SHRM citing the costs of replacing talent at up to 6 to 9 months' salary, high turnover is prohibitive to profitability.

Employers need to do better at being proactive in the efforts to demand equal behavioral accountability and standards across the organization, to encourage all employees to speak up if they encounter harmful or disruptive action in the workplace, and to increase trust among employees that voices will be listened to and actions will be taken as issues arise.

There is no longer room for employers to be passive bystanders in setting the tone for company culture or the demand for an inclusive and safe workplace.

Suggestions for change include -

- 1) Make sure employees have clarity on behavior that is acceptable and behavior that is not. Develop policy, training and coaching practices to help educate individuals and improve problem areas.
- 2) Implement anonymous feedback loops such as Warble Pro Active, to help employees feel more confident about reporting bad behavior without fear of retaliation or being labeled. A safe and trusted process to encourage feedback on issues as they arise means better visibility into the areas that need help and attention.
- 3) Set clear, realistic expectations for workers who provide feedback. Not every complaint will be serious and not every behavior, once reported, should result in disciplinary action for the offender. Develop and train employees and managers on a consistent process for addressing issues that accounts for the type of offense(s) being reported and the frequency of reports against an individual.
- 4) Encourage open communication. For some situations, there is no substitute for direct communication. Employees at all levels should feel comfortable addressing interpersonal challenges directly with others, even people above them on the org chart, without fear of reprisal.

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Disruptive Work Behaviors and Their Impacts on US Business

2018 Workplace Experience Study, Volume II

August 2, 2018. Warble Inc.

This is the second in a series of findings resulting from Warble's 2018 Workplace Experience Study, completed in July 2018.

In the first of this series, Warble published results that examined the contributing factors to employees remaining silent when witnessing disruptive behaviors in the workplace. 63% of respondents admitted to witnessing behavior they believed was disruptive to productivity, the culture or business that they did not report to HR or management, yet nearly half of respondents indicated that they had actually quit jobs because of the toxic behavior of others.

In this second series, Warble takes a deeper look at the disruptive behaviors themselves and the perceived impact they have on the business, compared to the likelihood of the behavior to get reported. A key finding is that there is an incongruity between the behaviors believed to have the greatest negative impact and those most likely to be disclosed.

Respondents were asked to estimate the impact of a series of bad behaviors on their workplace on a five-point scale. Of the categories of behavior presented, Poor Management Skills rated the most disruptive – 64% of respondents believed that poor management has had a moderate or strong impact on their companies.



The behaviors identified as having the largest negative impact in the workplace are: Poor Management Skills, Bad Attitudes, and Incompetence.

Disruptive Work Behaviors and Their Impacts on US Business

Based on the level of impact and the type of behavior, behaviors can be grouped into three categories:

Broad Impact, Soft Skills

Between 55% and 65% of respondents chose three of the behaviors as having the largest impact in the workplace – Poor Management Skills (64%), Bad Attitudes (58%), and Incompetence (56%).

These seem ubiquitous in the workplace – it’s likely that the reader will recall many examples of each in their work history. And the implication is that these behaviors are both more common and impact more people at a time than the other categories of behavior offered.

Systemic Impact, Ethical Boundaries

Roughly 40% of respondents indicated that discrimination and unethical behaviors were impactful. These behaviors are in some cases are linked to an organization as a whole - companies that don’t embrace diversity, safety, and ethical dealings tend to have systemic issues in these areas. These behaviors tend to impact a smaller sub-class of people as well, whether it’s a race, gender, or other class of workers.

Personal Impact, Illegal Behavior

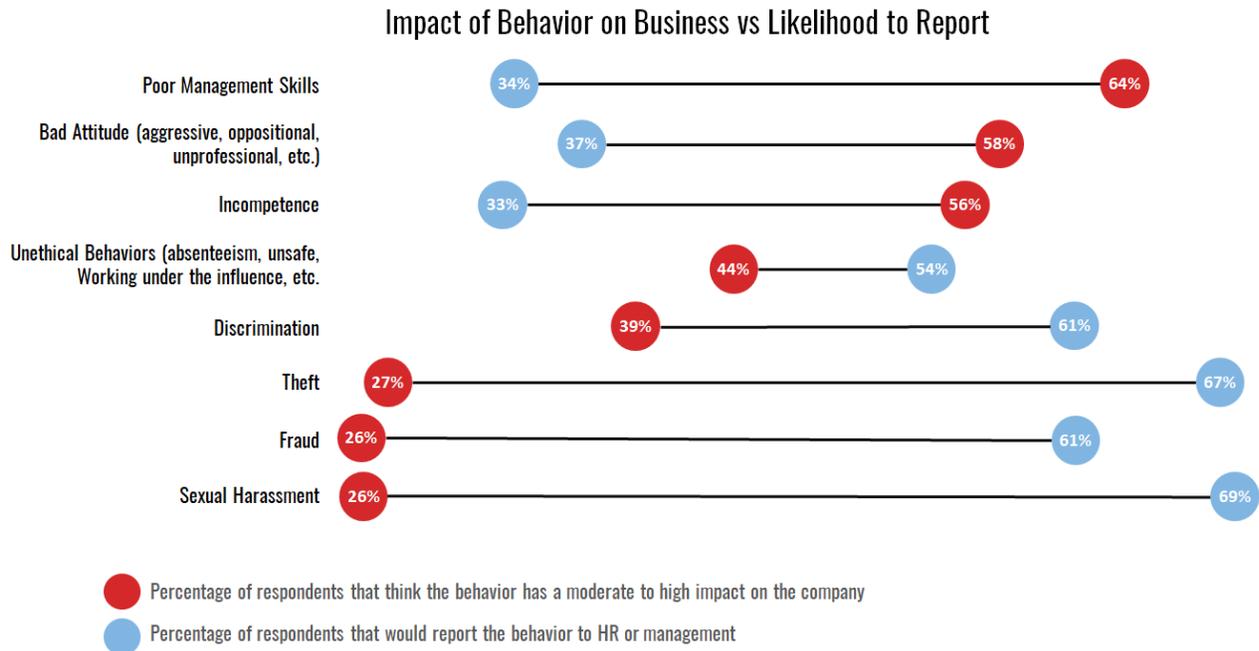
The behaviors indicated as having the lowest impact on the company, according to our respondents, are sexual harassment (26%), fraud (26%), and theft (27%). While many of these carry regulatory and legal implications for most organizations, they were each considered impactful by just over 25% of the respondents. This could mean that these incidents occur less frequently than the others, or could also be an indicator that the impact of each, while significant (and for victims of sexual harassment, potentially very damaging), may be narrower in scope than a bad attitude that is apparent to all. Interestingly, men were actually 37% more likely than women to indicate that sexual harassment had a moderate to strong impact on their companies as a whole.

78% of people think the most common disruptive behaviors at work are done in subtle or passive aggressive ways

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The Feedback Conundrum

Given an understanding of how impactful each behavior was, as a follow-up, the respondents were asked which behaviors they would be likely to report to HR or management at their company. Across every category, **the more impactful the behavior, the less likely respondents were to report them.**



This survey reflects one of the basic cultural challenges many organizations face. When considered alongside some of the reasons why people don't report bad behavior (as described in volume 1 of this series), employees will report behavior that is the most obvious, egregious or illegal but are far less likely to share feedback about 'less extreme' behavior that has (in their own estimation) a greater impact on culture and productivity.

A majority of respondents felt that incompetence, poor management, and bad attitudes were highly impactful but would not report them to management if they witnessed them. These respondents were also more likely to say that they feared being labeled a complainer or overly petty if they spoke out. They also indicated that these behaviors were harder to describe clearly or succinctly.

Across all respondents, 78% agreed with the following statement – "The most common disruptive behaviors at work are done in subtle or passive aggressive ways". The results are a strong indicator that, for companies to address these types of behaviors, the tipping point for employees to provide feedback needs to be nudged.

Disruptive Work Behaviors and Their Impacts on US Business

Conclusions and Suggestions

The word ‘accountability’ is used in many organizations to describe a desire to hold all employees to a standard of behavior and competence. When companies fail to achieve a satisfactory level of accountability, the culture, productivity, reputation and employee trust can suffer as a result. Ignoring the disconnect between your employees’ recognition of disruptive behaviors and their willingness to report them becomes a significant driver in the cyclical problem of distrust between a business and its workforce.

The #1 reason most respondents (46%) gave for not reporting disruptive behavior was that they didn’t believe any action would be taken. Companies that can help and encourage their employees to provide this feedback will be better armed to improve their responsiveness and will improve their culture and trust as a result.

A few key suggestions;

- 1) Provide vehicles for employees to report these behaviors anonymously. Nearly 75% of our respondents agreed they would be more likely to come forward if they could do so anonymously.
- 2) Rather than offering open-ended feedback tools that ask the employee to try to describe conduct that can be difficult to describe, provide a list of options to choose from that can help them pinpoint what they’ve observed.
- 3) Set clear expectations for how feedback will be used. In many cases, employees who are perceived as difficult or poor performing may not even realize that their actions are impacting others. Feedback can be instrumental in coaching and helping someone self-correct their behavior.
- 4) Use feedback to inform training. Companies whose employees believe their managers are poor, for instance, may need to offer additional management training or may need to reset with their employees so that they have the right expectations of their bosses.

Many companies struggle to keep good people and maintain a positive work environment. Fostering honest communication and a culture where feedback, coaching, and the opportunity for improvement are embraced can go a long way towards improving employee engagement and productivity.

This is the second in a series of findings from Warble Inc’s 2018 Workplace Experience Study. This study was developed from a survey of 521 U.S workers between the ages of 18-65. Learn more about Warble and how we help employers uncover people problems before they negatively impact culture and revenues at www.warble.work.



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Gender and Income Influence How Workers Feel About Toxic Workplace Behavior

2018 Workplace Experience Study, Volume III
August 22, 2018. Warble Inc.

This is the third in a series of findings resulting from Warble's 2018 Workplace Experience Study, completed in July 2018.

Results from Warble's 2018 Workplace Experience Study indicate that a worker's reluctance to report bad workplace behaviors is influenced, in most cases, by a variety of factors. Additionally, the behaviors viewed by employees as having the greatest negative impacts on the business are also identified as those least likely to be reported.

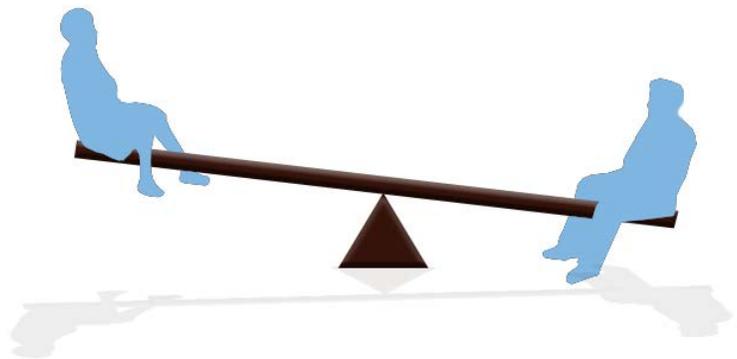
Breaking down the results further, both demographic and socioeconomic factors appear to impact the likelihood of a person to speak up about disruptive behavior(s) at work. While this volume only specifically considers gender and income (based on the limitations of this study), companies must contemplate the varying needs and perspectives of diverse employee groups as they act to improve issue visibility.

Influences on reporting bad behavior

For the overall survey sample, 63% of both men and women indicated that they had not reported toxic behavior they witnessed. However, their stated reasons for not reporting were very different.

Women were 28% more likely to list fear of retaliation as a reason for not reporting the behavior. Men, on the other hand, were 34% more likely to indicate that they did not trust HR. These might be two expressions of the same underlying belief – that if they had come forward, they would suffer an adverse reaction because their submission would “fall into the wrong hands”. However, given that women were also 18% more likely to report if they could do so anonymously, it seems as though the actual fear of retaliation is stronger in women.

Men were also 10% more likely to indicate that they found it difficult to describe or pinpoint the behavior. This may indicate that men literally have a harder time describing what they've experienced, or it could reflect the varying types of behaviors experienced by each gender.



Gender and Income Influence How Workers Feel About Toxic Workplace Behavior

Income was also a strong indicator of how an employee may respond. People whose households earned less than \$150,000 per year were 23% less likely to report toxic behavior than their higher-earning counterparts. That same group was 73% more likely to cite fear of losing their job as a reason and were 58% more likely to have quit a job because of the toxic behaviors of others.

Much of the recent news about toxic workplace cultures illustrate this trend. People in positions of authority (with presumably more wealth), have remained unchecked while creating an unwelcoming or disruptive environment for those below them in the org chart.

Women are 28% more likely than men to list fear of retaliation as a reason for not reporting bad behavior.

Influences on perceptions of behavior impact

When asked how strongly different categories of bad behavior were impacting the companies they worked for, gender and income influenced the responses as well.

Men were 10% more likely to indicate that negative behaviors affected the business moderately or strongly. Of the eight categories (Bad Attitude, Discrimination or Targeting, Fraud, Incompetence, Poor Management Skills, Sexual Harassment, Unethical Behavior and Theft) that users were asked to estimate, Poor Management was the only one that women felt was more impactful than men did. Both genders however, rated Poor Management, Bad Attitude, and Incompetence as the three behaviors with the greatest negative influence overall.

From an income perspective, people with household incomes over \$100,000 were 33% more likely to cite incompetence as a prominent issue than people below that line. Conversely, those with an income under \$150,000 were 34% more likely to indicate that fraud was a key issue. Most other categories were close to equal across income levels.

Other key gender differences identified in the study

Women were 30% more likely than men to quit a job because of the behavior of a co-worker or supervisor. They were also 21% more likely to report sexual harassment than men. In total, women valued anonymity – they were 18% more likely than men to report if they could do so anonymously.

Conclusions and Suggestions

Segmenting study results based on gender and income uncovered important differences that should impact how companies address toxic behavior;

- Men and women each admitted to not reporting bad behavior at the same rate. However, women were far more likely to fear retaliation and value anonymity than men. Men, on the other hand, were less likely to fear being discovered but were more likely to just not trust HR to address the issue (or

Gender and Income Influence How Workers Feel About Toxic Workplace Behavior

address it correctly). Companies that need better feedback (and most companies do) need to address both of these issues.

- Income significantly impacted an employees' likelihood to report. Those from lower household incomes were far more likely to fear losing their jobs and, as a result, were more likely to stay silent. This income disparity is another contributor to the unequal power dynamic in most companies. Organizations that fail to consider these dynamics will continue to experience a perception disconnect between upper management and the rest of the organization.
- Income and gender both influenced which behaviors were seen as the most impactful. Companies who rely disproportionately on the perspectives of their executive and management teams are more likely to be unaware of issues that the rest of their workforce sees as more impactful (like poor management). Traditional top-down review processes may reinforce a divide between the manager and the employee and limit the opportunity to address key cultural challenges.

These findings reinforce key points that were addressed in previous volumes of this study;

- 1) Companies that provide all employees an opportunity to offer anonymous feedback will benefit by helping more people come forward when issues occur and also by hearing from parts of the company that may otherwise stay silent because they fear retaliation.
- 2) Most of the stories about toxic workplace behavior start from a common place – the abuse of power of a manager or other authority figure over another. This study confirms that companies need to do more to make employees at “lower levels” of the organization feel that their right to a safe, productive workplace is as important as anyone else's.
- 3) Many workers, especially men, do not trust that speaking out about negative behaviors will result in change. Companies can improve their employees' trust by responding promptly and appropriately, applying accountability equally across the organization, and by protecting the rights of people that do report bad behavior. As trust is improved, all employees will feel better about taking an active role in making their company better.

While this study specifically measured the impact of gender and income on behavior and perception, there are many other factors that should be considered by companies that wish to address toxic behavior. For example, review processes and feedback mechanisms that treat people unequally based on any number of factors introduce biases. These factors could include, but are not limited to;

- Demographics (Gender, age, race, sexuality)
- On-site vs remote workers
- Personality styles (e.g., introverts vs extroverts, thinkers vs feelers, etc.)
- Position in the organization / income

Gender and Income Influence How Workers Feel About Toxic Workplace Behavior

Employing an approach that stimulates trust & inclusiveness and encourages employees to speak up if they witness disruptive behavior, will give companies the best chance to improve their culture, mitigate their risk, and help their employees be their most productive.

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