

Number of disabled workers facing bullying, discrimination and harassment “shockingly high”, TUC warns

3 months ago



The number of disabled workers at the receiving end of bullying, discrimination and harassment is “shockingly high”, [the TUC](#) has warned.

The warning comes as the TUC publishes new polling which reveals the “pervasive” mistreatment of disabled workers across UK workplaces.

According to the poll of 1,000 workers, commissioned by the TUC and carried out by Opinium, nearly four in ten (39%) of disabled workers have experienced bullying, discrimination and harassment at work in the last five years related to their disability, impairment or long-term health condition.

For disabled workers who have faced bullying, harassment and discrimination, mistreatment came in different forms:

- 15% have been subjected to intrusive or offensive questioning about their disability.
- 14% had been made to feel uncomfortable at work due to their disability – including through stereotypes or assumptions about their disability.

- 14% reported offensive jokes or “banter” about disabled people.
- 12% said that they had experienced bullying, for example sustained patterns of intimidating or abusive behaviour, clearly linked to their disability.

Mistreatment came at the hands of work colleagues, customers, clients, patients and members of the public met through work.

Disabled workers at breaking point

The TUC says this widespread mistreatment is pushing a significant number of disabled workers to breaking point – leading them to consider quitting work.

According to the new polling, significant proportion of the workers who had faced bullying, discrimination and harassment in the last five years reported that the experience made them reconsider whether they should stay in work:

- Almost three in ten (28%) said that the level of mistreatment they experience made them want to leave their job but were unable to due to financial or other constraints.
- One in five (20%) had to take time off work.
- One in five (20%) reported a negative impact on their physical health.
- More than one in ten (16%) left their job or employer altogether.

The level of mistreatment experienced by disabled workers also has a deep impact on their wellbeing at work:

- More than four in ten (42%) said the treatment impacted their mental health, such as making them feel more stressed, anxious, or depressed.
- Almost four in ten in 10 (38%) lost workplace confidence.

- Three in ten (31%) said their work performance was negatively affected.

Boost to workers' rights

The Employment Rights Bill, currently at committee stage in the House of Lords, is set to offer protection for workers experiencing abuse at work.

In particular, the Employment Rights Bill includes a clause requiring employers to take all reasonable steps to prevent harassment of staff by third parties, such as customers and patients.

The TUC says this will help stamp out widespread abuse of disabled workers.

Recent TUC polling shows that protecting workers from harassment is one of the most popular policies in the Employment Rights Bill – with almost eight in ten UK voters (78%) supporting it.

The Conservatives and Reform have both mischaracterised the government's plans to protect workers from third-party harassment as an end to pub banter.

TUC General Secretary Paul Nowak said: "No one should face bullying, harassment or discrimination at work.

"But the number of disabled workers reporting that this is their everyday experience is shockingly high.

"It's time to stamp out this pervasive mistreatment. Disabled workers deserve dignity and respect at work like every other worker does.

"That's why the Government's Employment Rights Bill is so important.

"It will introduce sensible changes like a duty on employers to protect workers from harassment. This will be an important step towards putting an end to the widespread abuse disabled people experience at work."