# Cambridge University staff survey reveals alarming dissatisfaction over bullying and harassment



An internal survey at Cambridge University has revealed that only 27% of staff are satisfied with the institution's handling of bullying and harassment, raising significant concerns among academics regarding the university's commitment to addressing these issues. The staff culture survey, conducted in January 2024, was disclosed through Freedom of Information (FoI) requests, prompting allegations that the university attempted to obscure the distressing findings.

A university spokesperson stated that efforts are being made to support departments in addressing identified issues, emphasising the importance of reporting bullying behaviour. “We take concerns about bullying seriously and strongly encourage anyone who experiences such behaviour to report it,” the spokesperson noted.

The survey results have sparked criticism, particularly from prominent academics like astrophysicist Professor Wyn Evans. He has decided to seek nominations in the upcoming election for Cambridge’s new Chancellor on an anti-bullying platform, following the resignation of Labour peer David Sainsbury from the post last year. Evans expressed his dismay at the survey's findings, stating, "This survey reveals a grim culture of bullying and harassment, yet the most shocking thing of all is that the university found this out a year ago and hasn’t taken any action."

Experts at the university's prestigious science departments reported alarming statistics, with only half (52%) of staff feeling supported regarding their mental health and well-being. In some cases, such as the Medical Research Council toxicology unit, a staggering 69% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with how bullying and harassment were handled.

Evans further articulated the need for a chancellor who prioritises internal reforms rather than simply serving as an ambassador for the university. With the landscape of higher education becoming increasingly competitive, there is a growing concern about the implications of this environment on the staff's mental health and the prevalence of bullying. "If a senior academic is valuable to the university because they hold a lot of research grants bringing in a lot of money, Cambridge won’t touch them. If there is a grievance, it will be discarded," he added.

The findings align with broader trends across academic institutions. A 2020 survey by the Wellcome Trust highlighted that nearly two-thirds of researchers witnessed bullying and harassment, with 43% claiming to have experienced it personally. Diego Baptista, head of research and funding equity at Wellcome, commented on the sector's need to cultivate a more supportive environment, stating, “Research shouldn’t come at the cost of damaging people’s wellbeing.”

The implications of such findings are evident in personal accounts from affected individuals. A cancer researcher who recently departed the university due to claiming intimidation and harassment by a senior academic described their experience as detrimental to their mental health, stating, “The ordeal ruined my personal life. I stopped sleeping." This sentiment underscores the severe impact that workplace culture can have on individual academic careers.

Cambridge University has, however, highlighted its efforts to address these issues through the introduction of a new code of behaviour and updates to its dignity-at-work and grievance policies. Nonetheless, the survey results and the surrounding discourse indicate a pressing need for effective measures to ensure that all staff can work in a safe and supportive environment, ultimately aligning the institution's practices with its professed values of inclusivity and support.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/cambridge-staff-unhappy-response-bullying-claims> - This article corroborates the claim that only 27% of Cambridge University staff are satisfied with the institution's handling of bullying and harassment, highlighting significant concerns about the university's response to these issues. It also discusses the staff culture survey conducted in early 2024.
2. <https://www.hr.admin.cam.ac.uk/hr-staff/information-staff/assistant-staff-handbook/bullying-and-harassment> - This resource supports Cambridge University's commitment to addressing bullying and harassment through its dignity-at-work policy and grievance procedures, emphasizing the importance of maintaining a respectful work environment.
3. <https://www.noahwire.com> - This source provides the original context for the article, detailing concerns at Cambridge University regarding the management of bullying and harassment. However, as it is not a publicly accessible link in the search results, it serves more as a reference to the original article rather than corroborative evidence.
4. <https://wellcome.org/news/stories/addressing-bullying-and-harassment-academic-research> - This resource from Wellcome highlights broader trends in academia regarding bullying and harassment, with nearly two-thirds of researchers witnessing it and 43% experiencing it personally, aligning with concerns at Cambridge University.
5. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/bjpsych-bulletin/article/workplace-bullying-of-psychiatric-trainees-systematic-review/98E691D96FCCFE6310717244CEDEFDE8> - Although this study focuses on psychiatric trainees, it illustrates the prevalence of bullying in professional environments, highlighting common forms of bullying such as undermining professional status and verbal abuse.
6. <https://dignity.cam.ac.uk/what-we-do/supporting-staff/> - Unfortunately, this specific URL does not appear in search results. However, similar resources at Cambridge University would support the university's efforts to address bullying and harassment by promoting dignity at work for its staff.
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2025/apr/12/cambridge-university-accused-of-bullying-cover-up-as-internal-survey-revealed> - Please view link - unable to able to access data