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**FIRM MANAGEMENT**

# Study: 20% of U.S. Workers Say They Felt Mistreated by Colleagues Over Political Views

Society for Human Resource Management survey found an uptick in political volatility in the workplace.

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The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) released new research today that shows one in five U.S. workers (20%) have experienced poor treatment in the workplace by co-workers or peers due to their political views.

Results of SHRM's 2022 Politics at Work Study, which was completed at the end of the summer, show an uptick in political discussions and political volatility in the workplace in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2020 presidential election.

SHRM found a quarter of U.S. workers (24%) have personally experienced political affiliation bias, including preferential treatment or undue negative treatment on the basis of their political positions or opinions, compared to 12% of U.S. workers in 2019.

Twenty percent of HR professionals say there is greater political volatility at work than there was three years ago.

“Unfortunately, we’ve seen a real decline in civility when people express their opinions and beliefs, and it’s a barrier to success for employers and their employees,” said SHRM President and CEO Johnny C. Taylor Jr. “This trend has been fueled by the relative anonymity of social media, and it has spilled into our communities and our workplaces. In today’s climate, people are saying, ‘I can’t work with you if you don’t share my views.’ It’s a problem HR professionals and business leaders cannot ignore. I am hopeful SHRM’s research will help organizations build constructive dialogue in the workplace—for the good of employees, the bottom line and society at large.”

Study results are especially troubling when it comes to the role of politics and employee advancement. Over one in 10 U.S. workers (13%) have experienced limited opportunities for promotions due to their political views.

SHRM found that most organizations have not experienced an uptick in employee complaints related to political discussions at work (88%) or had to respond to an employee for political-related conflict in the workplace (84%). At the same time, however, the percentage of U.S. workers who say they’ve experienced political affiliation bias or differential treatment because of their political views has increased by over 10 percentage points in the past three years.

Here are other key findings from the 2022 SHRM Politics at Work Study:

- 45% of U.S. workers say they have personally experienced political disagreements in the workplace, compared to 42% of U.S. workers in 2019.

- Those who work fully in-person (50%) are more likely to say they've experienced political disagreements in the workplace than hybrid workers (36%) and fully remote workers (39%).
- Over a quarter of U.S. workers (26%) engage in political discussions with their co-workers.
- Only 8% of organizations have communicated guidelines to employees around political discussions at work, particularly leading up to the 2022 midterm elections.
- When it comes to inclusive workplace cultures, two-thirds of U.S. workers (66%) say that the employees in their organization are inclusive of differing political perspectives amongst other employees, and nearly the same amount (68%) say that their organization is inclusive of differing political perspectives amongst employees.
- Liberal workers (70%) and moderate workers (73%) are more likely to say the employees in their organization are inclusive of differing political perspectives among other employees than conservative workers (60%).
- Supervisors are 10 percentage points more likely to be hesitant to hire a job applicant who disclosed they had extremely conservative beliefs (30%) than an applicant who disclosed they had extremely liberal beliefs (20%).
- More than four in five (82%) U.S. workers plan to vote this year. Of these workers, the top political issues influencing their vote include the economy (48%), inflation (38%), abortion (37%), gun policies (32%), health care (28%), and immigration policy (18%).
- Forty-five percent of U.S. workers have experienced political disagreements in the workplace, and nearly the same amount (46%) have witnessed or observed political disagreements in the workplace.
- Male workers (30%) are more likely to say they've personally experienced political affiliation bias than female workers (18%).
- More than one in 10 U.S. workers (13%) have experienced bullying in the workplace due to their political views.
- 27% of U.S. workers have experienced joking about their beliefs in the workplace.

A sample of 504 working Americans was surveyed using the AmeriSpeak Omnibus, NORC at the University of Chicago's probability-based panel designed to be

representative of the U.S. household population. The survey was administered Aug. 25 to 29. All data was weighted to reflect the U.S. adult population.

In addition, a sample of 1,525 HR professionals were surveyed through SHRM membership. The survey was administered Aug. 25 to Sept. 11. Only HR professionals who were currently working for an organization (either remotely, in person, or through a hybrid model) were eligible to participate in this survey.

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