

Is your workplace toxic?

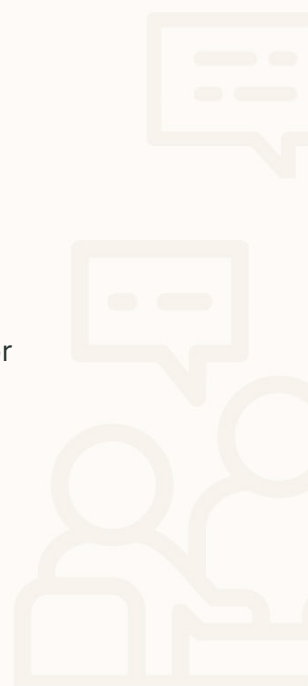
A healthy workplace environment results in positive outcomes for workers and workplaces. On the other hand, a toxic work environment is detrimental to both.



What does a toxic workplace look like?

Here are some signs of a toxic work environment:

- Unprofessional communication
- Gossiping when inflammatory
- Offensive, aggressive, or intimidating communications or leadership
- Ostracism (i.e. purposefully excluding, blaming or shunning others)
- Sexism, racism, homophobia and other discriminatory comments or behaviour
- Inappropriate, disrespectful, and discriminatory comments or behaviour go unaddressed
- Feedback from workers is ignored
- Workers are emotionally depleted and feel futile about work
- Workers are afraid to speak about work-related problems
- Inadequate supervision or support of workers
- Worker safety and health is minimized or jeopardized
- Patterns of unfairness or inequity (e.g. unfair hiring, promotion, assignment of work, or unfair outcomes to other decisions that affect workers)
- Those with organizational power benefit personally from organizational decisions
- Leaders task workers to resolve or take the blame for organizational problems
- Deteriorating trust amongst workers and between workers and leaders



What are the impacts of a toxic work environment?

A toxic environment has negative impacts on both workers and the workplace. Common impacts include:

- Poor worker mental health and wellbeing
- Stress, burnout, depression and anxiety among workers
- Decreased sense of belonging
- Worker detachment and apathy (i.e. not caring about quality of work, decreased commitment to work and the workplace)
- Increased staff absenteeism and turnover
- Poor performance
- Reduced morale
- Reduced innovation
- Poor customer or patient outcomes
- Decreased safety
- Increased financial costs due to absences, turnover, rehiring, productivity reduction, as well as compensation and litigation costs
- Increased prevalence of harassment and violence
- Underreporting of experiences of harassment and violence



Association of Workers' Compensation Boards of Canada (AWCBC), 2025; Blotnick, 2005; Mesinioti et al., 2026; Rasool et al., 2021