

# Toxic Leadership:

Detoxifying your Culture and Encouraging  
More Mindful Leadership

By Kenneth Matos, Ph.D.



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# Executive Summary

Toxic leadership is a combination of self-centered attitudes, motivations, and behaviors that have adverse effects on employees, the organization, and overall performance.

Toxic leaders focus on achieving short-term and personal goals, using abusive behaviors to bully or control others to the detriment of employees and the organization. Toxic leadership styles are devoted to advancing the leader's interests at the expense of the institution and coworkers. While toxic leaders can be highly effective in the short-term, their methods tend to burn out employees and present long-term risks for the organization. It is estimated that the productivity, turnover, and legal issues caused by abusive leadership cost U.S. employers \$23.8 billion per year.<sup>1</sup>

The current study presents findings from a survey asking 1,000 college-educated U.S. employees about the leadership of their immediate managers.

More than half of respondents report that their immediate managers are mildly (32%) or highly toxic (24%). Working for a toxic leader is associated with higher levels of stress, work-life conflict, and intentions to look for a new job. In addition, far more employees working for toxic leaders (81%) suspect them of discrimination when assigning career opportunities, compared with nontoxic leaders (8%). Toxic leadership styles harm organizations by creating workforces that are stressed, eager to turnover, and possibly motivated to pursue legal action for perceived discrimination.

Toxic leadership is also commonly encountered in “win-or-die” work cultures where

- mistakes are irreparable and damaged reputations are enduring;
- displays of weakness, in the form of emotional vulnerability or limited stamina, must be avoided; and
- displays of strength are a requirement for success.

Toxic leadership was commonly reported by employees who studied certain fields in college (engineering and computer science) and worked in industries (goods production and infrastructure) that have a reputation for being male-dominated cultures. Though toxic leadership was more common in these stereotypically male spaces, men were only slightly more likely to be identified as toxic leaders, suggesting that both men and women leaders may engage in these styles if the culture tolerates or supports it.

Organizations interested in detoxifying their cultures and encouraging more mindful leadership must take a two-pronged approach, addressing both the highly toxic leaders and the culture that promotes this leadership style. Well-developed employee training and succession plans are also essential, helping organizations develop the necessary bench strength to replace toxic leaders once they've been identified.



# Key Findings

## Toxic Leadership is common.

56% of respondents report their leader is mildly (32%) or highly (24%) toxic. [Figure 1].

## One toxic leader reflects on the whole organization.

Over 80% of respondents with nontoxic and highly toxic leaders both indicate that their leader is a typical example of leadership at their organization [Figure 2].

## Toxic leadership harms employees and creates lawsuit risks for companies.

More employees working for highly toxic leaders report high intent to leave (73% vs. 24%) and work-life conflict (70% vs. 27%) than do those working for nontoxic leaders. Fewer employees working for highly toxic leaders report low stress (14% vs. 61%) than those working for nontoxic leaders [Figure 3 through Figure 5].

More employees working for highly toxic leaders (81%) suspect their leader of discriminating against them than do those working for nontoxic leaders (8%) [Figure 6].

## Toxic leaders have employees who stay with them longer and are more highly engaged than non-toxic leaders.

Employees working for highly toxic leaders worked for their leaders longer (7 years) on average than those with non-toxic or mildly toxic leaders (5 years) [Figure 7].

More employees working for highly toxic leaders reported high job engagement (53% vs. 35%) and job meaning (63% vs. 46%) than those working for non-toxic leaders [Figure 8].

Employee engagement with work may be a key component of keeping them despite having a highly toxic leader.

## Toxic leaders are especially common in high-stakes cultures and stereotypically male-dominated industries and fields.

63% of respondents in high-stakes, win-or-die cultures identify their leader as highly toxic, whereas only 1% of those in low-stakes cultures do so [Figure 9].



Graduates of college engineering programs (77%) are the most likely to indicate they have a toxic leader. Graduates of humanities programs (42%) are the least likely to indicate they have a toxic leader [Figure 10].

Respondents working in goods-producing industries (38%) and infrastructure (34%) industries are the most likely to indicate they have a toxic leader, and those working in government (2%) are the least likely [Figure 11].

Highly toxic leaders are most common in all-male workplaces (74%) and least common in all-female (13%) and gender-equal (14%) workplaces [Figure 13].

## Men are only slightly more likely to be toxic leaders than women.

Women leaders (50%) are only a little less likely than men (60%) to be identified as toxic leaders. While male-dominated spaces and high-stakes cultures may foster toxic leadership, both men and women can engage in toxic behaviors [Figure 14].



# Introduction:

## What Is Toxic Leadership?

Toxic leaders are narcissistic, abusive, single-mindedly self-promoting, inconsistent, and authoritarian.<sup>3</sup> Their leadership styles are devoted to advancing their own interests at the expense of the institution and their coworkers.

Toxic leaders use corrosive leadership behaviors such as bullying others, berating employees publicly, or making unethical choices to get their way. They ignore ideas from others, micromanage events, hoard information, undermine peers, and work to look good to superiors.<sup>4</sup> Employees tend to see highly toxic leaders as less ethical and respectful of non-work commitments than nontoxic leaders.<sup>5</sup>

Yet toxic leaders are also attractive. Their ability to project an image of high confidence and influence, align themselves with more powerful individuals, and get short-term results draws people to them. For example, toxic leaders are more likely to be described as creative and courageous than non-toxic leaders.<sup>6</sup>

Hollywood presents numerous images of toxic leaders in many fields, such as Gordon Gekko in the movie *Wall Street*, Colonel Nathan Jessup in *A Few Good Men*, and Miranda Priestly in *The Devil Wears Prada*. Despite being in very different industries, these iconic toxic leaders pull unsuspecting subordinates into ethically challenging positions that advance the leader's personal fortunes or beliefs at the expense of the organization and staff.

Hollywood images, while illustrative, are rarely representative of the average experience. Toxic leaders make for good drama but what are they like in real life? Are toxic leaders common enough for businesses to worry about? How damaging are they to employees and organizations? What kinds of organizational cultures might give rise to a toxic leader? How can organizations use this information to detoxify their cultures and encourage mindful leadership?

To explore these questions, we asked 1,000 employed, college-educated people between the ages of 18 and 70 to tell us about their leaders' strengths and challenges.<sup>7</sup> This study provided important insights into the effects of toxic leaders and the kinds of environments that foster this leadership style. We present suggestions for organizations to confront toxic leadership and create work environments that are both effective and sustainable.

*The U.S. Army defines "toxic leadership" as "a combination of self-centered attitudes, motivations, and behaviors that have adverse effects on subordinates, the organization, and mission performance. This leader lacks concern for others and the climate of the organization, which leads to short- and long-term negative effects. The toxic leader operates with an inflated sense of self-worth and from acute self-interest. Toxic leaders consistently use dysfunctional behaviors to deceive, intimidate, coerce, or unfairly punish others to get what they want for themselves. The negative leader completes short-term requirements by operating at the bottom of the continuum of commitment, where followers respond to the positional power of their leader to fulfill requests. This may achieve results in the short term, but ignores the other leader competency categories of 'leads' and 'develops.' Prolonged use of negative leadership to influence followers undermines the followers' will, initiative, and potential and destroys unit morale."*<sup>2</sup>



# Toxic Leadership Styles are Common

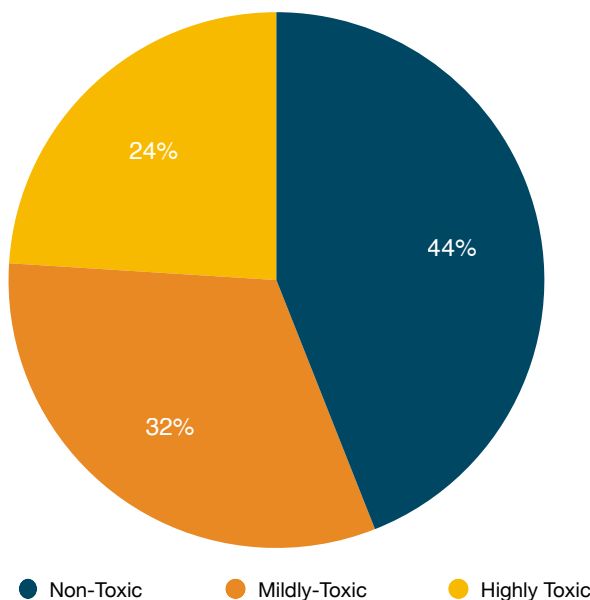
Our research suggests toxic leadership is fairly common. Studies by the Center for Army Leadership found that 20% of military members identified their leaders as toxic,<sup>8</sup> and Gallup finds that 50% of people have left a job to get away from a manager.<sup>9</sup>

In our study, more than half (56%) of respondents report that their leader is mildly (32%) or highly (24%) toxic [Figure 1]. This means that more than half of respondents report that their leaders engage in behaviors like publicly belittling subordinates, having explosive outbursts, and accepting credit for others' successes.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, employees generally don't see their toxic leaders as being atypical. Over 80% of respondents with nontoxic and highly toxic leaders both indicate that their leader is a typical example of leadership at their organization [Figure 2].

FIGURE 1

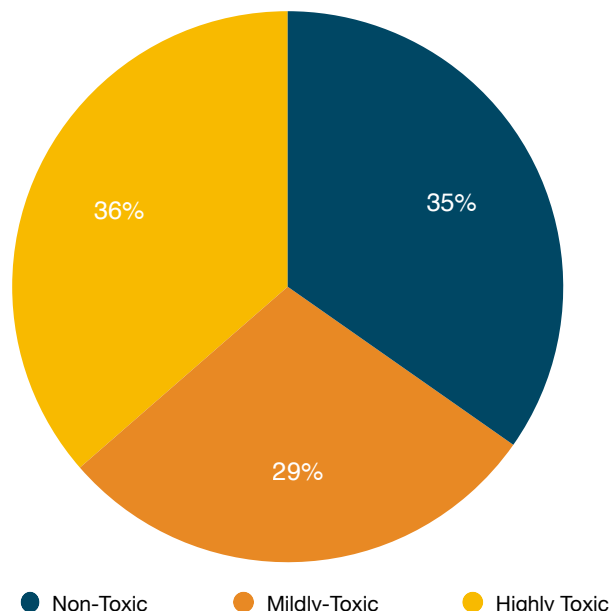
Overall Percentage of Toxic Leaders



Source: Toxic Leaders, 15Be, Inc.  
Note: N=1,000.

FIGURE 2

Percentage who believe leader is typical for the organization, by leader toxicity



Source: Toxic Leaders, 15Be, Inc.  
Note: N=1,000.





# Toxic Leadership Exhausts Employees and Opens the Door to Liability

Toxic leadership is a significant threat to organizations looking to innovate, diversify, or compete in tight labor markets. Though toxic leaders are often attractive and successful in short-term engagements, they tend to be corrosive over long periods of time, especially when one includes the side effects of their leadership styles.

It is estimated that abusive leaders cost U.S. employers \$23.8 billion per year in absenteeism, turnover, legal costs, and reduced productivity.<sup>11</sup> This figure doesn't take into account health care costs that may arise from working for abusive leaders such as increased likelihood to experience a heart attack or other life-threatening cardiac conditions.<sup>12</sup>

Such costs are consistent with our findings, as employees exposed to toxic leadership report higher levels of:

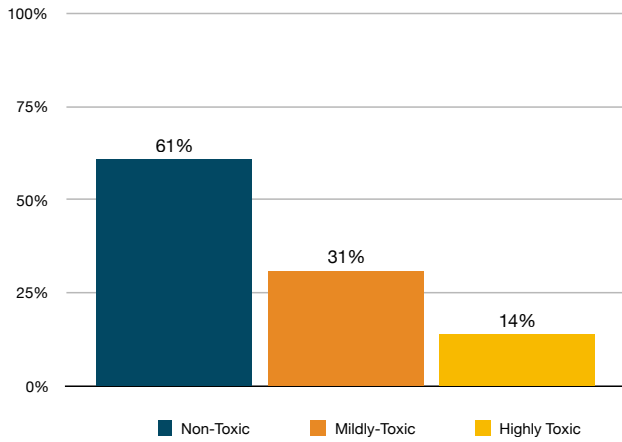
- **Stress:** The majority (61%) of employees working for nontoxic leaders report low levels of stress, whereas half as many respondents working for mildly toxic leaders (31%) and only 14% of employees working for highly toxic leaders report low stress [Figure 3].
- **Work-life conflict:** About a quarter (27%) of respondents working for a nontoxic leader indicated that their job and personal life interfere with one another somewhat or a lot, whereas more than half (52%) of those working for mildly toxic and almost three-quarters (70%) of those working for highly toxic leaders say the same [Figure 4].
- **Intentions to look for a new job:** Approximately three times as many respondents working for highly toxic leaders (73%) than nontoxic leaders (24%) plan to look for a new job in the next 12 months. [Figure 5].
- **Likelihood of suspecting their leader of discrimination:** Employees are more likely to suspect toxic leaders of denying them a developmental or career-advancing opportunity based on their
  - t/ethnicity,
  - gender,
  - sexual orientation,
  - age, or
  - caregiving responsibilities.

While only 8% of nontoxic leaders are suspected of discriminating, 52% of mildly toxic and 81% of highly toxic leaders are suspected of doing so [Figure 6].<sup>13</sup> While the study did not ask respondents whether they were planning to file a discrimination lawsuit, were they to do so an employer could easily be out hundreds of thousands of dollars in legal fees and damages for not addressing the toxic leader.



FIGURE 3

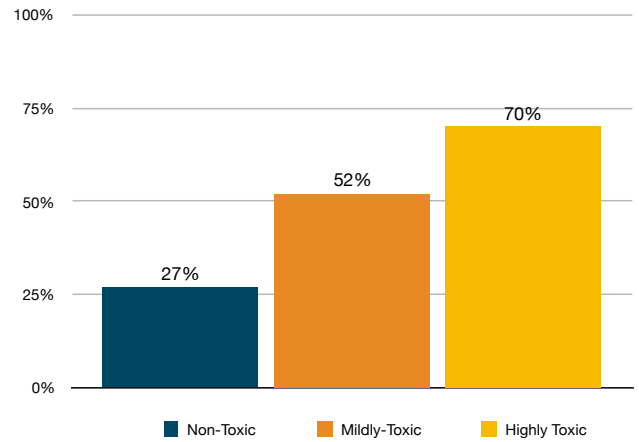
**Percentage with low stress level, by leader toxicity**



Source: Toxic Leaders, 15Be, Inc.  
Note: N=1,000.

FIGURE 4

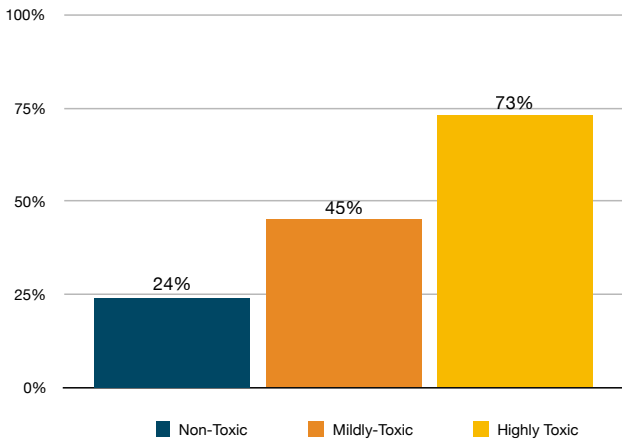
**Percentage with high work-life conflict, by leader toxicity**



Source: Toxic Leaders, 15Be, Inc.  
Note: N=1,000.

FIGURE 5

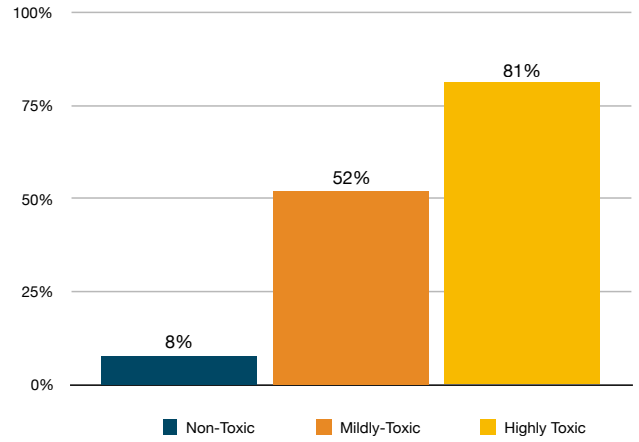
**Percentage who are (extremely) likely to look for a new job in next 12 months, by leader toxicity**



Source: Toxic Leaders, 15Be, Inc.  
Note: N=1,000.

FIGURE 6

**Percentage believing or suspecting their leader has discriminated against them**



Source: Toxic Leaders, 15Be, Inc.  
Note: N=1,000.



# Why Do Employees Remain with Toxic Leaders?

Though toxic leaders can be effective, we know that they are associated with higher intentions to leave, stress, work-life conflict, and suspected discrimination.

We would expect to see that highly toxic leaders would have a hard time holding onto employees. Yet we find that employees end up working longer for highly toxic leaders (seven years on average) than for nontoxic or mildly toxic leaders (five years for both) [Figure 7]. Why are employees staying longer with highly toxic leaders than with less toxic ones?

To understand this finding we need to draw a distinction between intent to look for a new job and the act of doing so. Employees experiencing higher stress and work-life conflict may be more interested in leaving but probably have less energy to engage in a job search. Tired employees may linger in the orbits of their toxic leaders simply because it takes longer for them to gather the resources to get out.

Second, respondents working for highly toxic leaders report higher levels of job engagement and job meaning than do those with nontoxic or mildly toxic leaders [Figure 8]. It is unlikely that toxic leaders inspire those sentiments. The literature on engagement suggests that should decline as leadership becomes more toxic. In our study, we do see that effect when comparing non-toxic and mildly toxic leaders: a dip in engagement and job meaning.

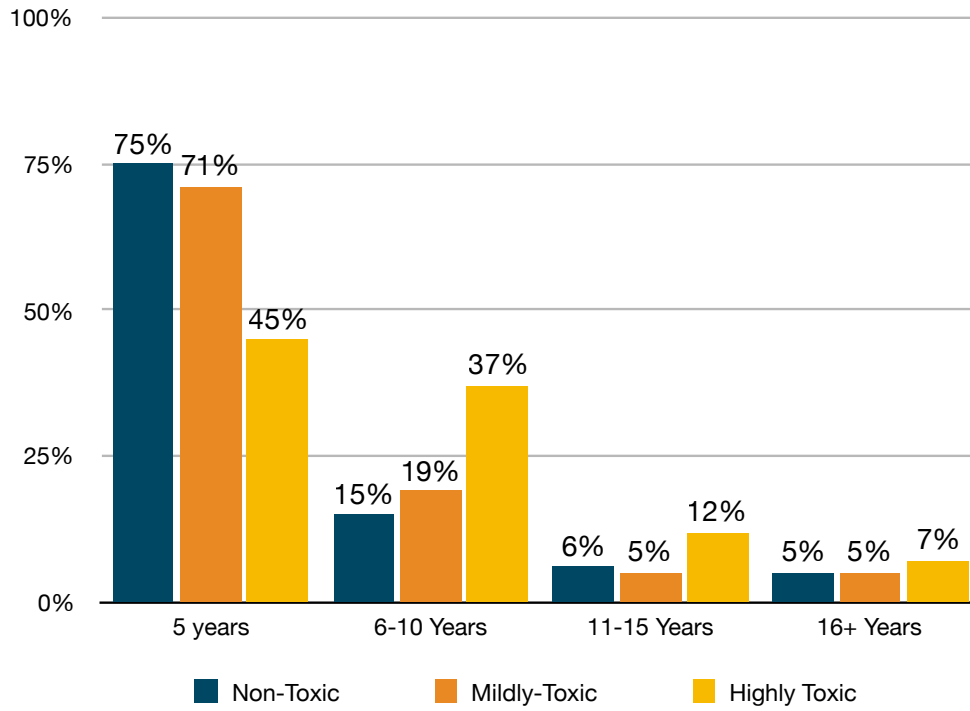
However, a surprising proportion of employees working for highly toxic leaders report high engagement. This effect may be a result of the cross-sectional nature of the study. Cross-sectional studies only look at respondents at one point in time rather than tracking their experiences repeatedly over a period of time (a longitudinal study).

It is possible that highly toxic leaders quickly reduce engagement for those who are not intrinsically devoted to their jobs. These disengaged employees then turnover rapidly, leaving behind their more intrinsically motivated counterparts. The result in a cross-sectional study would be what we see here: a collection of primarily highly engaged employees who linger in jobs they love despite leaders who treat them poorly. A longitudinal study would be better positioned to show the declines in engagement among some employees and their exodus away from their toxic leaders. Such an effect would align with the results seen in the case study presented later (page 17) in this report.



FIGURE 7

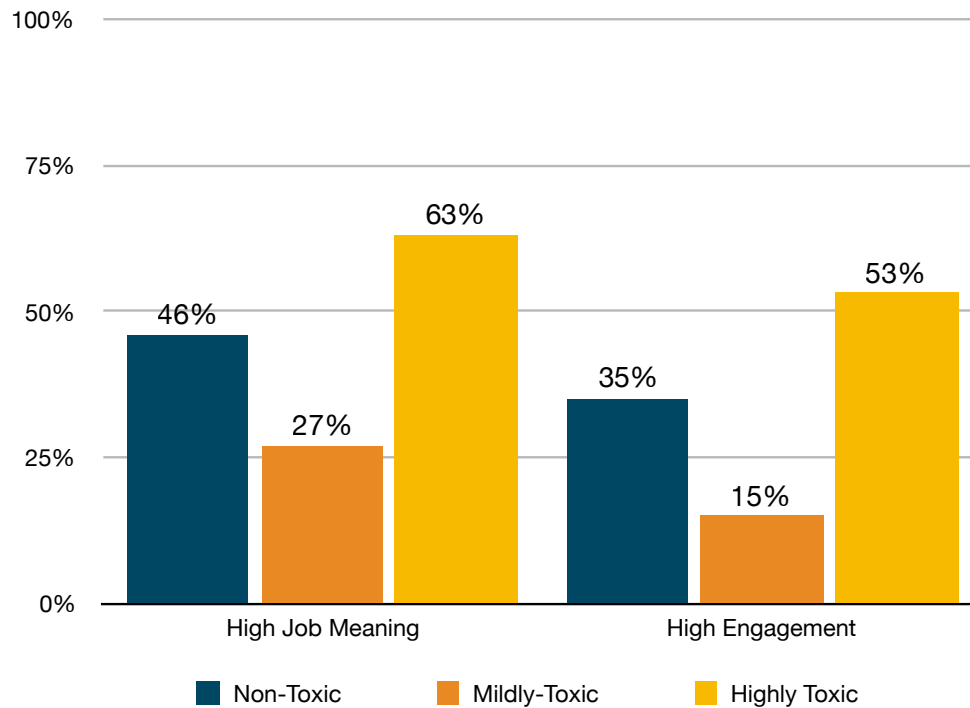
### Mean tenure with the current leader, by leader toxicity



Source: Toxic Leaders, 15Be, Inc.  
Note: N=1,000.

FIGURE 8

### Percentage with high levels of job meaning and engagement, by leader toxicity



Source: Toxic Leaders, 15Be, Inc.  
Note: N=1,000.



# Toxic Leaders Thrive in “Win-or-Die Workplaces”

While being a toxic leader is likely a personal choice, based on personality traits and prior success employing toxic strategies, there appear to be organizational conditions that either promote or enhance toxic leadership styles.

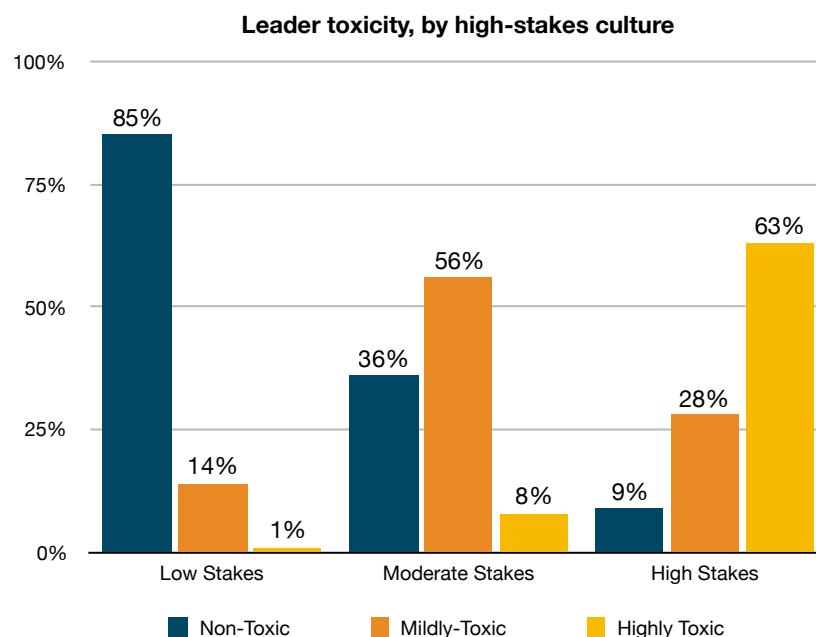
One such condition is the presence of a win-or-die organizational culture where the stakes for failure are very high. Our study included a measure of these win-or-die cultures<sup>15</sup> where high scores indicated a culture where:

- mistakes are irreparable and damaged reputations are enduring;
- displays of weakness, in the form of emotional vulnerability or limited stamina, must be avoided; and
- displays of strength are a requirement for success.

Toxic leadership—a collection of behaviors well suited to advance one’s fortunes while sabotaging the autonomy and confidence of potential rivals—may be an individually logical response to win-or-die cultures. If work is perceived as a zero-sum game of winners and losers, then toxic leadership is a sensible strategy for presenting oneself as a winner. However, if an organization depends on long-term collaborative work to succeed, toxicity advances the leader at the expense of the organization.

Our findings support this theory with 63% of employees in high-stakes cultures identifying their leaders as highly toxic, whereas only 1% of respondents in low-stakes cultures identify their leaders that way. [Figure 9].

FIGURE 9



Source: Toxic Leaders, 15Be, Inc., Note: N=1,000.



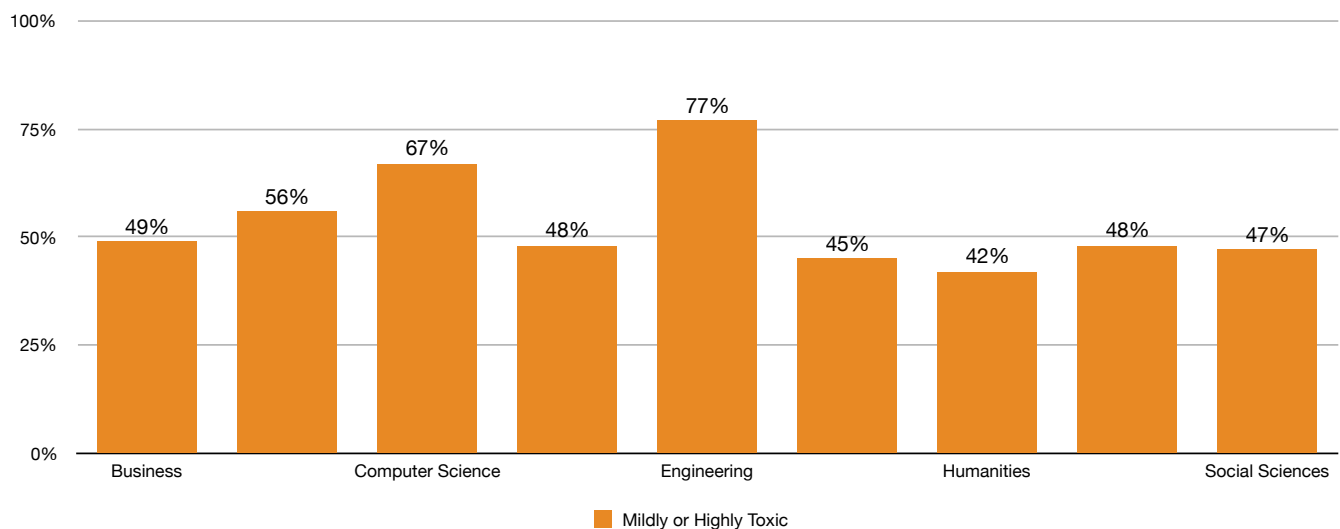
# Where are Toxic Leaders Found?

Toxic leadership is not evenly distributed throughout all workplaces. Employees indicating they had toxic leaders were more likely to work in industries and have training in fields that are stereotypically male dominated.

For example, respondents with engineering degrees—a field well known for its efforts to recruit more women—reported the largest proportion of toxic leaders, at 77% [Figure 10]. Engineering is followed by respondents with a computer science degree, 67% of whom report having a toxic leader. On the other hand, employees with humanities (42%) degrees—which has a much stronger association with female inclusion—experience the lowest levels of toxic leadership. While this finding doesn't directly implicate degree programs for producing toxic leaders, it does show that people with certain degrees are more likely to find themselves working for toxic leaders (who likely share similar educational paths).

FIGURE 10

Leader toxicity, by bachelor's degree program



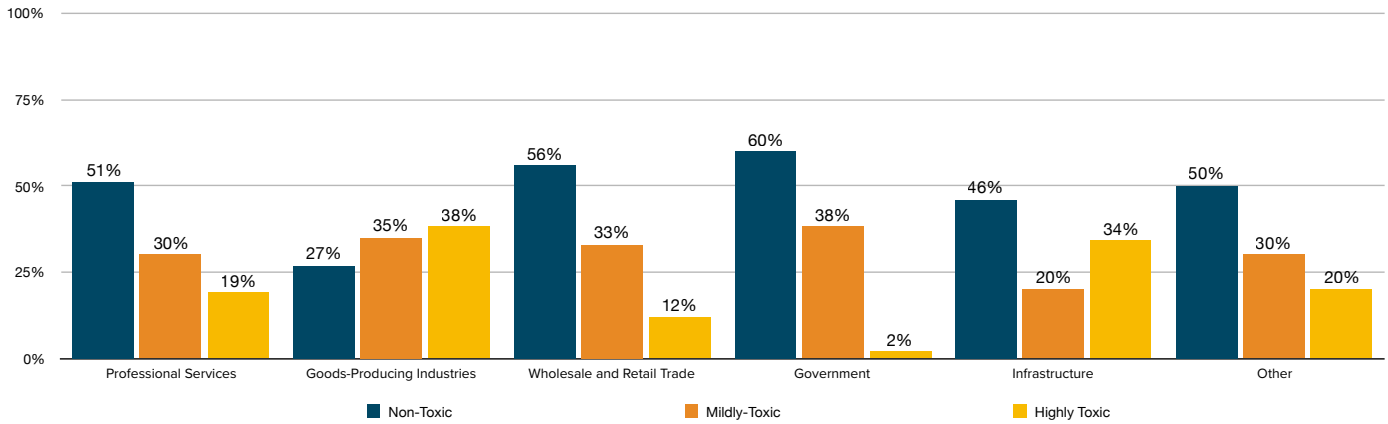
Source: Toxic Leaders, 15Be, Inc.

Notes: N=975. Respondents who were unsure of how to categorize their degree were excluded.

Similarly, respondents in certain male-dominated industries<sup>16</sup> report higher levels of toxic leadership and win-or-die cultures. Over a third of respondents in the goods-producing (38%) and infrastructure (34%) industries report they have a highly toxic leader [Figure 11]. Similarly, about half of employees in those industries reported that they worked in a high-stakes culture [Figure 12].

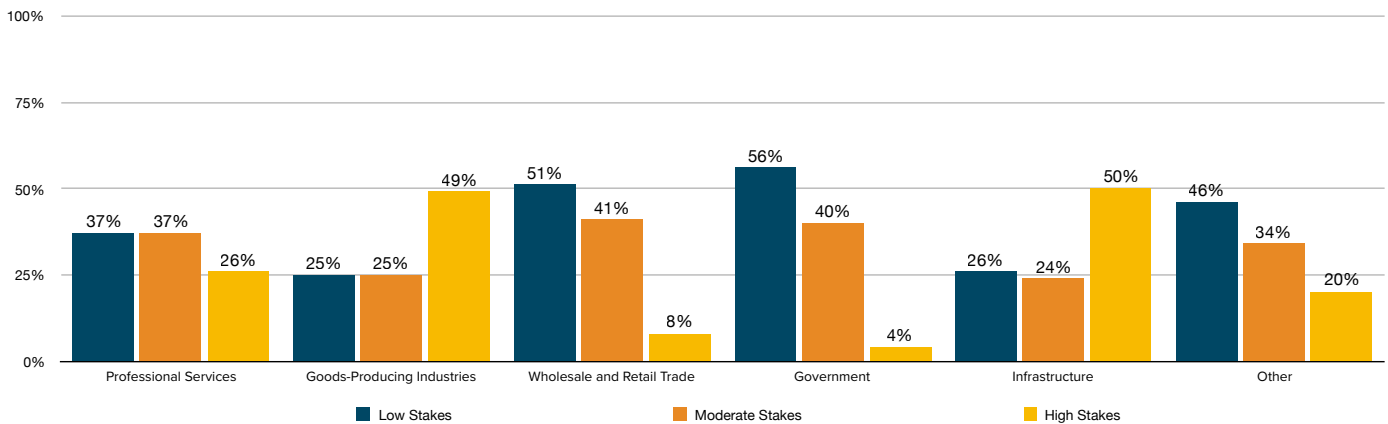


FIGURE 11  
Leader toxicity, by industry



Source: Toxic Leaders, 15Be, Inc.  
Notes: N=801. Respondents whose employer is in two or more industries or who didn't know how to categorize their industry were excluded. Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

FIGURE 12  
High-stakes culture, by industry



Source: Toxic Leaders, 15Be, Inc.  
Notes: N=801. Respondents whose employer is in two or more industries or who didn't know how to categorize their industry were excluded. Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

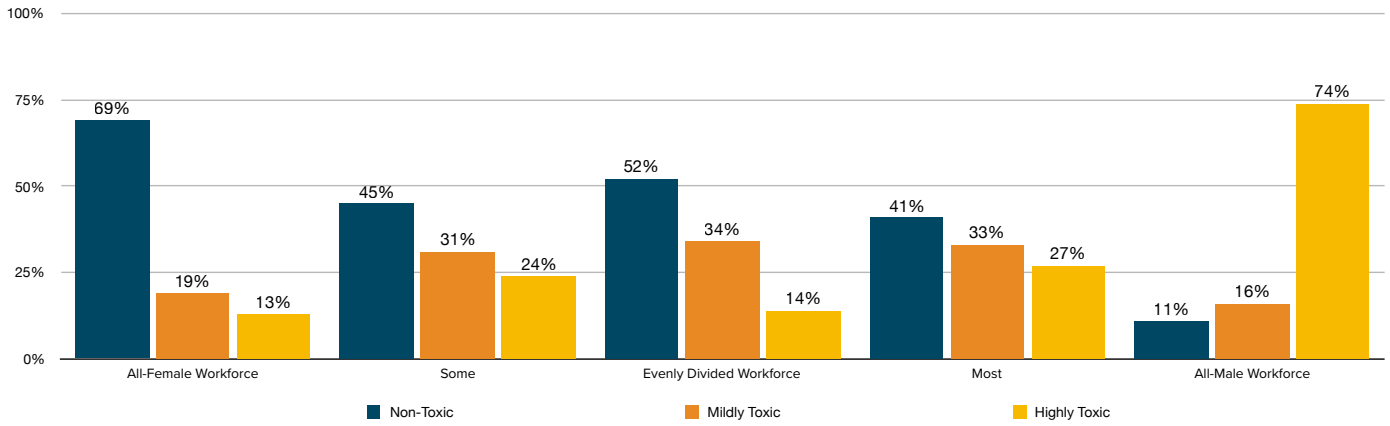
In addition, 74% of respondents who indicated that their workforce was entirely male reported that their leader was highly toxic, whereas only 13% of respondents in all-female workplaces said the same thing [Figure 13]. On the other hand, mildly toxic leadership is more common in mixed-gender workplaces.

While the single gender workplaces were rare, the stark difference in prevalence of toxic leadership in male and female workplaces aligns with the gendered view of toxic leadership. Yet, the proportions of male (60%) and female (50%) leaders that were described as toxic were not very different [Figure 14]. While toxic leadership is common in areas often identified as male-dominated toxicity is not limited to men. Rather win-or-die cultures where exaggerated versions of traditionally masculine ideals of stoicism, strength, and tolerance for risk have become the norm are more reliable warning signs of toxic leadership



FIGURE 13

Leader toxicity, by proportion of men in the organization

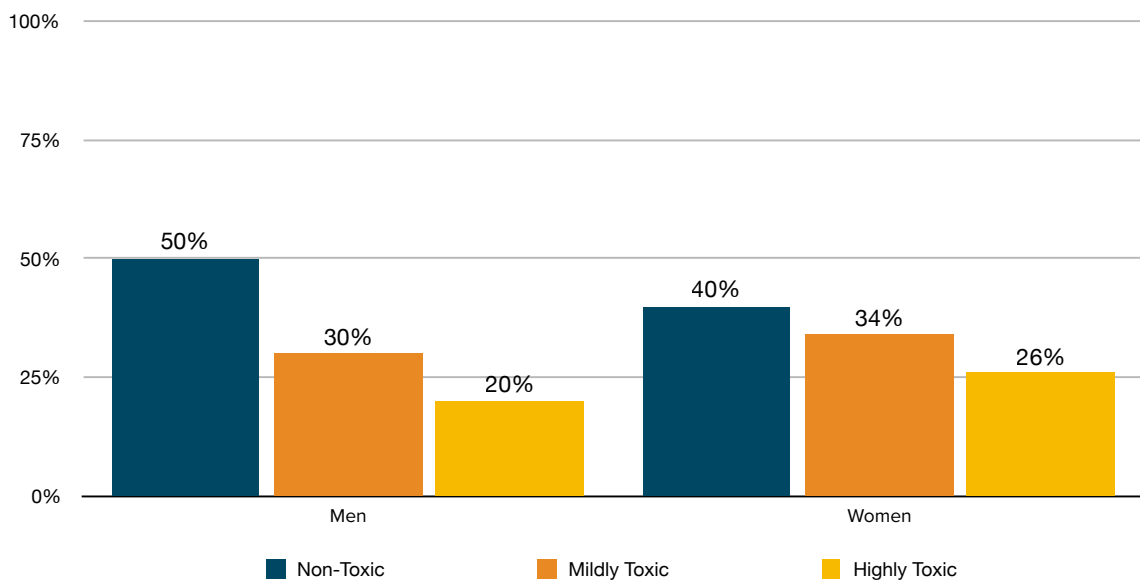


Source: Toxic Leaders, 15Be, Inc.

Note: N=899. Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

FIGURE 14

Leader toxicity, by gender



Source: Toxic Leaders, 15Be, Inc.

Note: N=981.





# Case Study: Toxic Leadership has Far-reaching Effects

The systemic effects of toxic leadership can be difficult to envision based on survey results alone.

The following case study shows one real world illustration of the data where a few toxic leaders, allowed to take root within an organization, can dramatically impact how everyone at the organization functions.

One of 15Be's clients\* provided a vivid example of the findings of our research. Despite frequent calls from the most senior leaders for innovative collaboration across multiple departments, employees would not exchange information or engage with one another. Simultaneously, the organization was having difficulty holding onto new hires, especially Millennial employees.

Contrary to expectations, our assessment<sup>14</sup> found few signs of disengagement. Employees worked long hours, at jobs they liked, with people they respected to achieve a mission they valued. However, employees and senior leaders alike described a culture that had been overtaken by a few toxic leaders. The toxic leaders had, through explicit directions and the use of rewards and punishments, created a culture where employees reported:

- Certain departments as being in a constant cold war, where leaders policed any information crossing departmental lines, lest some “weakness” be exposed.
- Micromanagement of work and life, going so far as to allow or deny vacation based on how an employee planned to spend it. Efforts at broad flexibility programs were blocked and flexibility and autonomy were instead given as rewards to favored employees.
- Toxic leaders were demoralizing, frequently reminding employees of mistakes and offering little positive feedback.
- Toxic leaders committed to projects that would impress important clients, with little consideration to the impact on others.
- Staff would be overworked to complete the project, while the toxic leader took responsibility for success and passed along blame for failures.

Employees had few options to address these problems. The toxic leaders were well respected in their fields and had a reputation of retaliating swiftly to any challenge, which silenced most employees from formally complaining. Most non-toxic leaders were at a loss for how to constructively challenge their peers on their bad behavior. Without a public dialogue on the culture, leaders and employees alike ended up feeling isolated and wondering if their experiences qualified as toxic behavior worthy of intervention.

As a result, employees would either leave or avoid taking any initiative that risked a response from the toxic leaders. The nontoxic leaders withdrew from managing the collective culture and focused on creating

*\*This organization did not contribute any data the survey.*



positive cultures in their departments instead. Employees following toxic leaders were burnt-out while those with nontoxic leaders were disheartened watching the poor treatment of colleagues in other departments. Though the toxic leaders were few, the entire organization was transformed by their behavior.

# Detoxifying Your Culture and Encouraging Mindful Leadership

Dealing with toxic leaders is not an easy matter. Toxic leadership styles not only are destructive but also actively suppress the exchange of information that would help weed out toxic leaders.

By abusing subordinates, toxic leaders ensure there is no pipeline of potential, less toxic replacements who could step-up if they were removed. Given that toxic leaders seem to cluster in high-stakes cultures, where ends may justify means, their organizations may have little obvious motivation to remove them.

To address toxic leadership in your organization:

- **Be honest about the underlying culture:** Do employees and leaders feel such pressure to succeed that they would become toxic or tolerate others' toxic behaviors? Is this pressure based on real win-or-die scenarios (e.g., healthcare, the military) or created through onerous performance demands? If the stakes really are high, leaders need support around managing stress and staying constructive, even when things are intense. Otherwise, employees and leaders need help redefining the culture to properly prioritize tasks and block disproportionate responses to mistakes.
- **Use third parties to assess the culture and senior leader performance:** Internal individuals may have an interest in protecting or avoiding conflicts with toxic leaders, and employees may not feel safe speaking to internal assessors. As in our case study, employees may be more forthcoming with their perspectives with an outside party who can present an objective summary of events while still protecting their anonymity.
- **Enhance succession planning:** Toxic leaders drive out and exhaust subordinates, leaving gaps in succession plans and making it difficult to fire a toxic leader quickly.

Organizations dealing with toxic leaders and cultures should not depend solely on leaders to provide coaching and professional development. Providing alternative sources of training will provide a stronger bench from which to draw new talent, should they need to purge a toxic leader from the team.

- **Reinforce appropriate behavior with the reward structure:** Toxic leadership is generally focused on earning short-term rewards. Build long-term checks into your reward structure. For example, link bonuses to continuous growth and employee wellbeing. Leaders who have sudden spikes in productivity should earn a lesser bonus than those who grow value over time (and even less if employee wellbeing takes a nose dive along with productivity spikes).



- **Provide training, coaching and upward feedback:** Many employees find it difficult to push back against the demands of their superiors. Providing employees with coaches and training on bystander intervention and boundary setting can help them resist unreasonable demands and support one another in maintaining a more positive culture.
- **Invest in leadership development:** Hold toxic leaders accountable for their behavior. Make it clear that other, less non-toxic leaders, can and will replace them if they don't change their ways. Offer coaching and other behavior change resources for those willing to adjust their behavior.



If your organization is interested in assessing its culture, or in helping leaders refocus on what matters, contact 15Be to set up a discussion about how we can help you prevent and correct leadership toxicity and create sustainable cultures of collective success.

## About the Study

This study was previously launched under the Life Meets Work brand with sponsorship from Allianz. Content and source data are owned by 15Be.

## About the Author

Dr. Kenneth Matos conducts research on a wide range of workforce and workplace issues, including diversity, mentoring, work-life alignment, wellness, engagement, and workplace effectiveness. He has been frequently quoted in a variety of media, such as *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Today Show*, and NPR.

## About 15Be

15Be is a technology and training firm focused on the transformative power of human connection. We improve wellbeing for companies, people, and teams. Visit [www.15Be.com](http://www.15Be.com) or contact 15Be to set up a discussion about how we can help you create sustainable cultures of collective success.

## Contact

**Kyra Cavanaugh**

President, 15Be

[kcavanaugh@15Be.com](mailto:kcavanaugh@15Be.com)



# Endnotes

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- III. *Schmidt, A.A. (2008). Development and Validation of a Toxic Leadership Scale. College Park, MD: University of Maryland, College Park.*
- IV. *Department of the Army. (2012). Army Doctrine Publication 6-22. Washington, DC: Department of the Army.*
- V. *In this study, highly toxic leaders were less likely than nontoxic leaders to be viewed as ethical (67% vs. 84%) and respectful of subordinates' non-work commitments (66% vs. 81%).*
- VI. *In this study, highly toxic leaders were more likely than nontoxic leaders to be viewed as creative (70% vs. 59%) and as courageous risk takers (69% vs. 52%).*
- VII. *A 21-minute online survey was administered to a sample of 1,000 employees, age 18-70, in the U.S. The questionnaire was developed by 15Be, and the participants were gathered from an SSI survey panel. All participants either had completed or were currently pursuing a bachelor's degree at the time of the survey. All respondents indicated that there was one specific person whom they see as their immediate manager and were directed to consider their immediate manager when answering questions about their leader. The survey was administered November 2-28, 2016. Quotas were established to ensure even proportions of men and women and each of four generations: Gen Z (born 1995-1998), Millennials (born 1981-1994), Gen X (born 1965-1980), and baby boomers (born 1946-1964). The sponsor did not contribute any data to either the survey or the case study.*
- VIII. *Zwerdling, D. (2014). Army Takes On Its Own Toxic Leaders. Washington, DC: National Public Radio. Available at <http://www.npr.org/2014/01/06/259422776/army-takes-on-its-own-toxic-leaders>.*
- IX. *Harter, J. & Adkins, A. (2015). Employees Want a Lot More From Their Managers. Washington, DC: Gallup. Available at <http://www.gallup.com/businessjournal/182321/employees-lot-managers.aspx>.*
- X. *The toxic leadership scale is based on 15 items derived from Schmidt, A.A. (2008). Development and Validation of a Toxic Leadership Scale. College Park, MD: University of Maryland, College Park. The scale is calculated by taking the mean of the 15 associated items (excluding responses of "not applicable"). Scores between 1 and 2.99 are considered nontoxic, scores between 3 and 4.99 are considered mildly toxic, and scores between 5 and 6 are considered highly toxic.*
- XI. *Tepper, B.J., Duffy, M.K., Henle, C.A. & Lambert, L.S. (2006). Procedural Injustice, Victim Precipitation, and Abusive Supervision. Personnel Psychology, 59(1), 101-123.*
- XII. *Nyberg, A., Alfredsson, L., Theorell, T., Westerlund, H., Vahtera, J., & Kivimäki, M. (2009). Managerial leadership and ischaemic heart disease among employees: the Swedish WOLF study. Occupational Environmental Medicine, 66(1), 51-55.*
- XIII. *Overall, 40% of respondents believed or suspected that their leader excluded or denied them a developmental or career-advancing opportunity because of their elder- or child-care responsibilities, gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, or age. Highly toxic leaders were generally thought to have discriminated based on gender (42%) or care responsibilities (43%). Concerns about discrimination were less often based on race/ethnicity or age (both 29%) or sexual orientation (20%). By comparison, the most common source of discrimination among nontoxic leaders was age (5%), followed by care responsibilities (3%), gender (2%), and race/ethnicity and sexual orientation (both 1%). Respondents could indicate more than reason for the discrimination.*
- XIV. *To evaluate the state of our client's culture and engagement, we conducted a population-wide survey, employee and manager focus groups, and interviews with all the organization's senior leaders.*
- XV. *Win-or-die cultures are organizational cultures where employees feel that work success is a zero-sum game: they cannot recover from mistakes, public displays of strength are required, and displays of vulnerability must be avoided to succeed. They can also be viewed as cultures where aggressive interpretations of masculinity are dominant. The scale for determining a high-stakes culture was developed by the Culture of Masculinity Contest Working Group, based at the Sauder School of Business, of*



which the author is a member. The scale consists of an introduction, seen below, as well as eight items, including the following:

*"We are interested in the values and norms people experience in their work environments. Please indicate how well each of the following statements describes the place where you work. Please note that we are NOT asking about your own personal values but rather the norms within your work environment. In my work environment..."*

1. You're either "in" or you're "out," and once you're out, you're out
2. If you don't stand up for yourself, people will step on you
3. Taking days off is frowned upon
4. Expressing any emotion other than anger or pride is seen as weak

XVI. Respondents indicated how true these statements were for their workplace on a five-point scale. The final scale is calculated by taking the mean of the eight items. For analysis, the scale was broken into three parts. The first 33% of scores (1 to 1.75) were considered low-stakes cultures, the second third (1.76 to 3.3750) were considered moderate-stakes cultures, and the final third (3.3751 to 5) were considered high-stakes cultures.

The industry item offered respondents the choice of 26 different industry responses. Respondents could respond with one or more industries as being the primary activity or industry for their organization. Responses were collapsed into seven analytical categories:

1. Professional services: Associations – Professional and trade, Business support services, Consulting, Education, Finance, Healthcare, Insurance, Other professional services
2. Goods producers: Biotech, Construction, High-tech, Manufacturing, Pharmaceutical
3. Wholesale and retail trade
4. Local and federal government
5. Other: Arts, entertainment, and recreation; Government; Publishing; Insurance; Real Estate; Religious or charitable; Food and Lodging services
6. Infrastructure: Telecommunications, Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities, Waste management
7. Two or more industries

