

NEWS

## Workplace bullying, harassment - even doctors are not spared

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**COMMENT** | Following recent reports whereby a junior doctor at a local hospital had to resort to making a police report after he was threatened by a senior doctor, and the Health Minister saying he wants to end the “toxic work culture” of healthcare practitioners, our community of doctors wondered just how extensive the problem of bullying of junior doctors is in Malaysia.

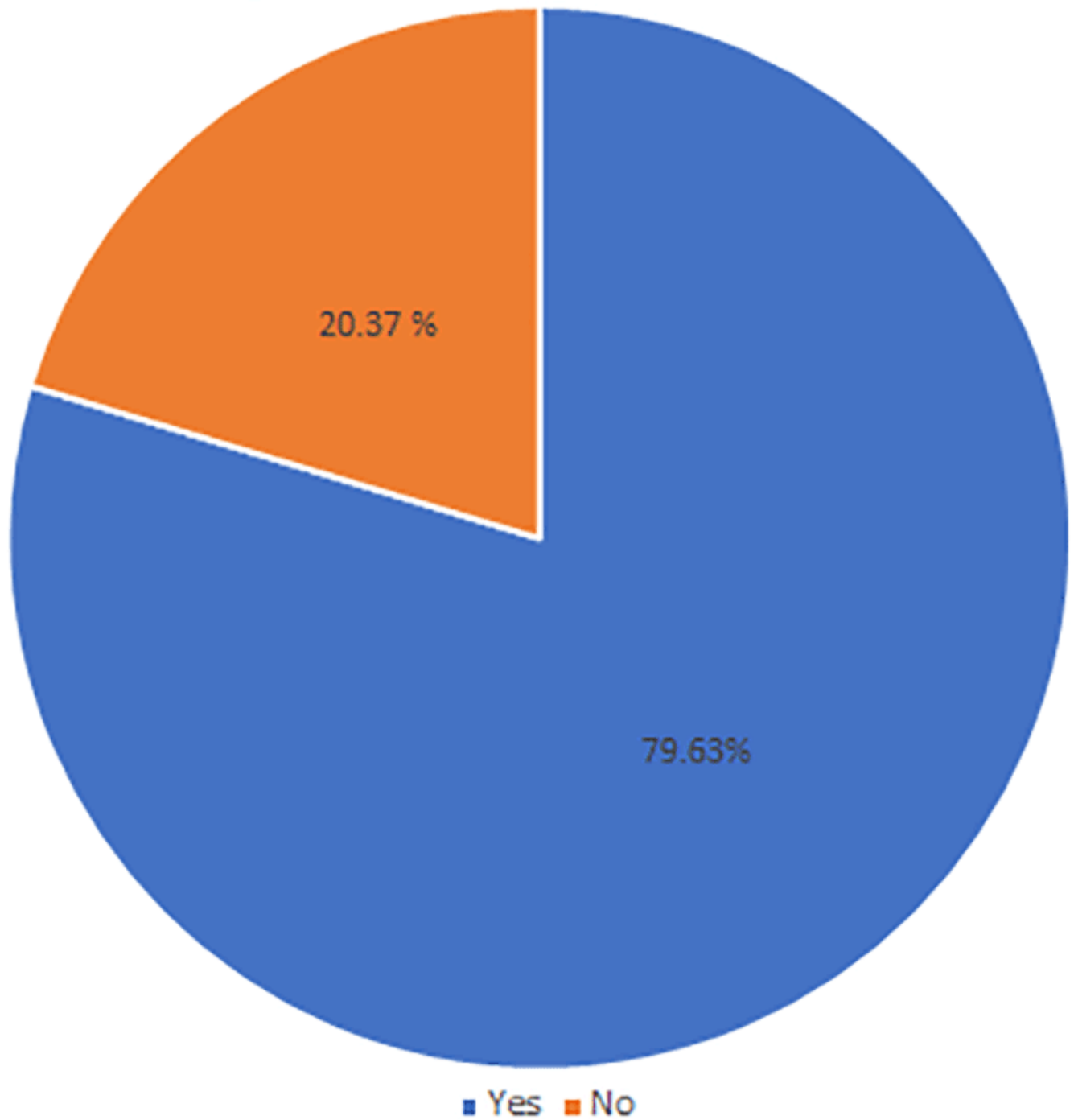
Since there is a lack of data, we decided to conduct an anonymous survey of doctors of DOBBS, the largest [online community](#) for Malaysian doctors, with about 16,000 members.

Detailed results and analysis of this survey can be found [here](#), including the methodology, definitions and raw data.

Here are the results of the survey:

79.63 percent of respondents reported experiencing bullying at the workplace.

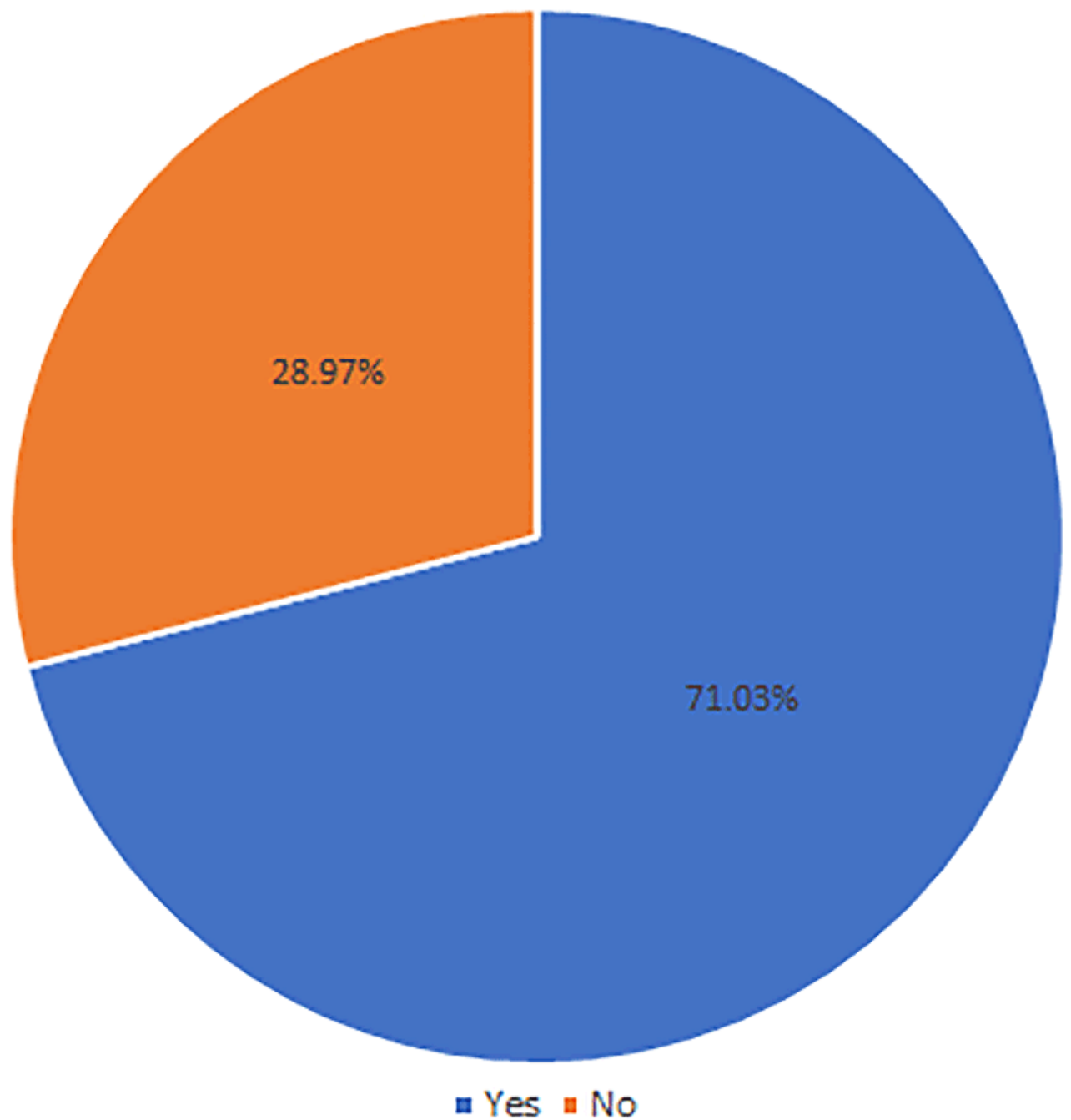
## Bullying Experienced by Junior Doctors



Dobbs.com Malaysian Doctors Online Community

Those who experienced bullying were asked if they experienced symptoms as a result of the bullying, such as anxiety, loss of confidence, hyper-vigilance. Among respondents who experienced bullying, 71 percent experienced such symptoms.

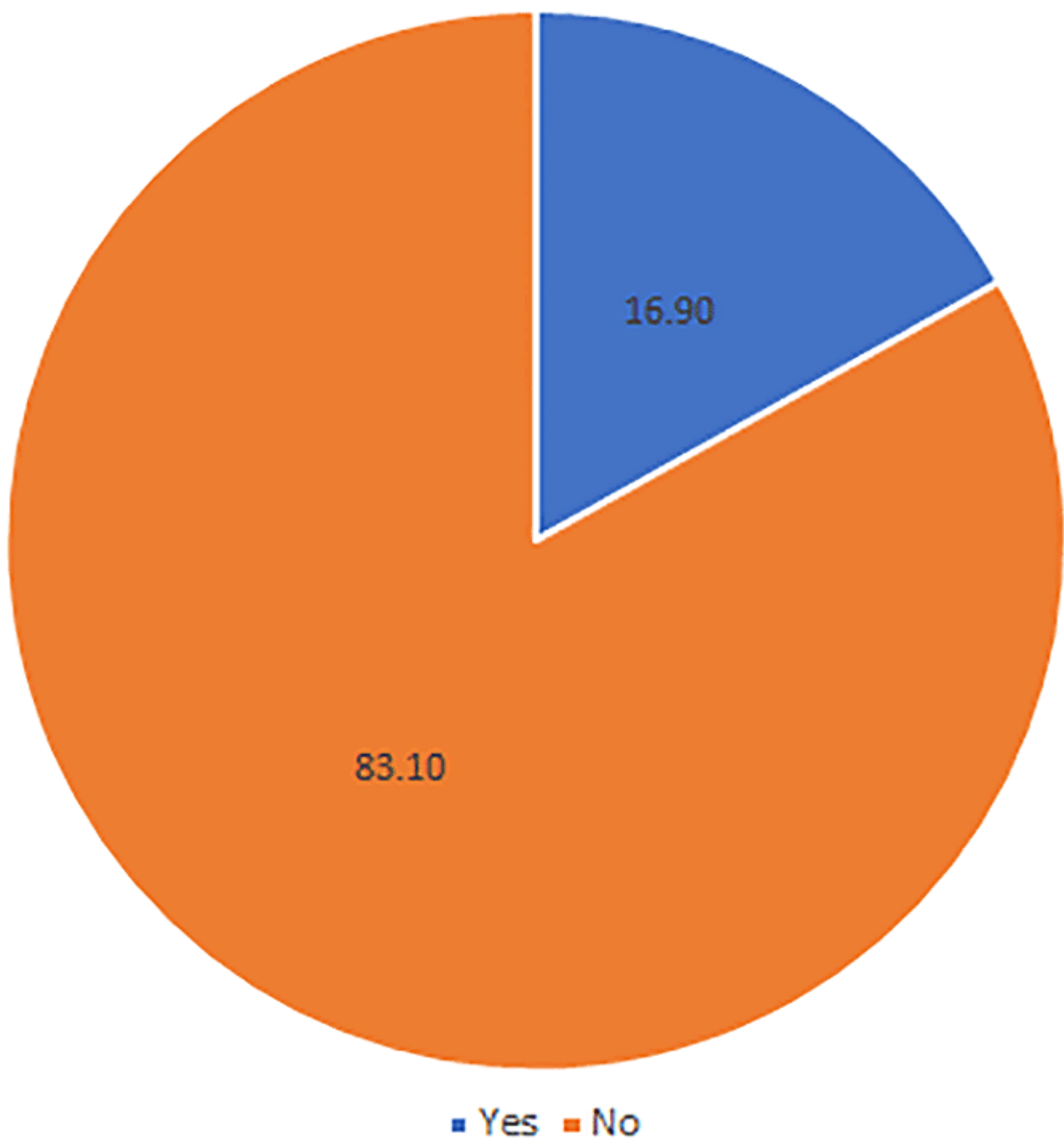
## Symptomatic Bullying Amongst Junior Doctors



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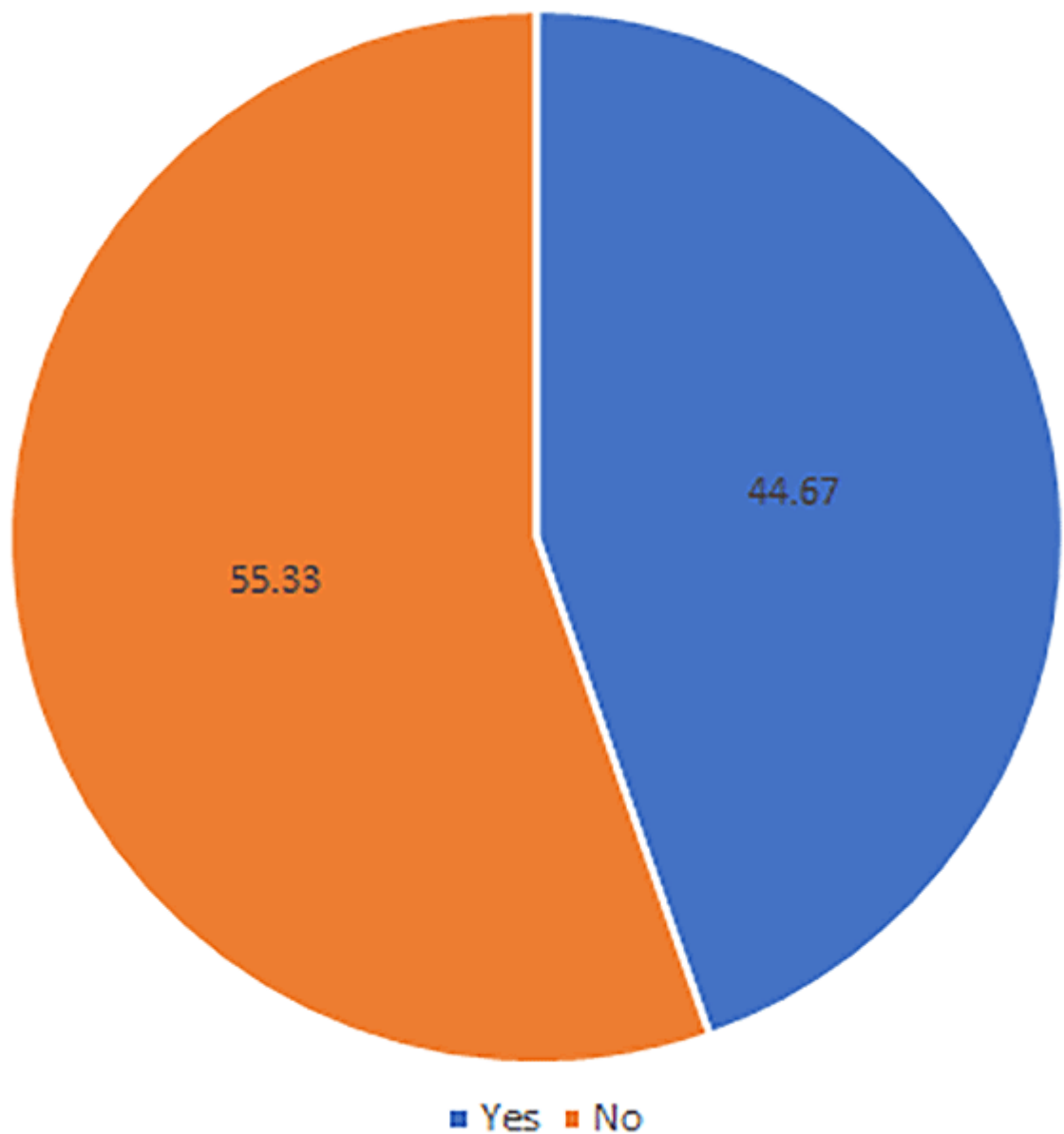
Of those bullied, 16.9% felt suicidal at some point.

## Suicidal feelings amongst Bullied doctors



Workplace harassment which is much more serious (and illegal in some countries, though not Malaysia) was experienced by 44.6% percent of respondents.

### Harassment experienced by Junior doctors



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From the survey, it seems there is an unhealthy work culture in the training of junior doctors in Malaysia. While some amount of admonishment is to be expected during the training period, it should not reach the level of

bullying. Workplace harassment, especially sexual harassment should not be tolerated at all and should be made illegal.

What are the possible solutions? We recommend the Ministry of Health consider these points:

- Have a grievance mechanism for junior doctors whereby they can report bullying without fear of being victimised.
- Have a support system for counselling bullied doctors, especially if they are feeling suicidal. The Malaysian Medical Association MMA already has Helpdoc, a helpline for doctors in distress: 03-40411140.

Overall, we need to lobby for legislation which outlaws workplace harassment and in particular, sexual harassment.

*The views expressed here are those of the author/contributor and do not necessarily represent the views of Malaysiakini.*