

The Survey

The administration received complaints regarding bullying prior to August 2012. They created a survey in order to accurately gauge the level of bullying and/or discontent related to bullying. The survey was anonymous and intended to collect data for the administration to discuss at the Fall Admin Meeting.

Regarding a definition of bullying, a key theme throughout the majority of responses is that bullying in respect of online situations entails verbal abuse or comments in a manner in which a person feels belittled, harassed or threatened. Most feel as though those who belittle or make unkind comments do so with no constructive element and instead the sole purpose is to make comments to deliberately hurt or get a rise from another person.

The Results

The majority of people to answer the survey held the rank of Aes Sedai or Gaidin (71.49%). Following that were Accepted/Soldier (12.40%) and then Novice/Recruit (6.20%). 7.85% of people chose not to identify.

There are a few other statistics that were revealed through the survey. 45.45% of people have witnessed bullying on the message boards while 23.55% have seen this behavior in the chat rooms. This is versus the 15.70% of people who have not seen any on the boards and 23.97% have not seen any in chat.

More people have not brought bullying to the attention of a moderator/admin/op (30.17%) than did (20.25%). Reasons for not doing so ranged from the bullying already being reported, to not feeling comfortable as they felt the mod/admin/op wouldn't listen or were too friendly with the bully. However, 16.94% said they received a response when they did report bullying.

Increased communication between the admin that handled the bullying and the person that was bullied so that the bullied party does not feel like anything was resolved is something that seems like it would go a long way to making sure people felt like they were heard. Doing something visible in response to bullying so that JMs and other members feel heard (public warnings/apologies were mentioned). Sharing information is a concern for those who report bullying. Several people were worried that what they report may be held against them. A clear definition of bullying is also necessary as there is a distinction between bullying and disagreeing (particularly in CE).

Most people would like to see a call to really crack down on those who are found to be bullying. Going along with this is not allowing those who bully to hold moderator or admin positions, or at least have them taken away for a period of time if the mod/admin/op is found to be guilty of bullying. Overall there is a cry for harsher punishments. Most who feel that their complaints would go unheard really want to see the excuse of "that's how they are" abandoned while also enforcing the rules equally no matter if the accused is a friend of a high ranking member. There is also a need for speed in dealing with the situation and a clear delineation on who to report to in cases of bullying.

2012 Fall Admin Meeting

The results of the survey were given to the Administration in time to be discussed at the Fall Admin Meeting. According to Vivianna L'antreau, the Amyrlin Seat, "We spent quite a time talking about this topic and going over the results from the bullying survey. We definitely agreed with quite a number of respondents that bullying happens, but that it is the exception rather than the rule. Many of the comments indicated that members were not aware of a resolution to issues that happened or were reported. There were also indications of fears of reprisals for reporting. It was also stated that many members will report issues on behalf of another person. Consequences of bullying actions will be further discussed in the Membership section of this meeting. A definition of what is considered bullying is being worked on by the Executive team and will be added to the Membership Manual. A policy regarding reporting incidents is being created and will be covered in an upcoming PSA."