

# A SYSTEM UNDER STRAIN: VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT IN ONTARIO SCHOOLS

Key Findings from a Province-wide Survey of Catholic Teachers

Nearly 3,000 Catholic teachers across Ontario responded to a province-wide survey conducted by Pollara Strategic Insights – and their message is clear: violence in schools is rising, and the system is under strain. This data will play a role in our focus at the bargaining table.

## Violence Is Widespread – and Growing

Violence against teachers in Ontario's publicly funded Catholic schools is no longer rare or isolated. It's widespread, increasing, and reshaping daily classroom life.

- 9 in 10 teachers have experienced or witnessed violence or harassment at school
- 4 in 5 have witnessed violence against a colleague
- Incidents have gotten more frequent and more severe over the past decade
- Teachers now report an average of seven violent incidents a year

## Who Is Most Affected

Violence and harassment affect all teachers – but the impacts are not equal.

- Women report higher exposure to acts of violence, especially in Kindergarten and Grades 1 to 3
- Indigenous, Black, racialized, and 2SLGBTQIA+ teachers report disproportionate levels of identity-based harassment
- Disabled teachers experience compounding barriers, especially when accommodation needs intersect with safety concerns



Scan to Access  
the Full Report

## Processes Are Not Keeping Pace

Teachers are doing what they can – but the processes meant to protect them are falling short, and there is little evidence of meaningful follow-through from school boards and the government. Too often, the government has failed to enforce proper oversight or hold school boards accountable for ensuring safe learning and working conditions.

- 1 in 3 have been discouraged from reporting incidents
- 1 in 5 reports resulted in no outcome
- More than half do not feel adequately prepared to respond to violence



*The system documented my experience, but it didn't protect me.*



## What This Looks Like in Classrooms

Teachers report physical assaults, threats, and incidents involving everyday classroom objects.

- Nearly 1 in 5 violent incidents involved a weapon
- Two-thirds resulted in physical injury, emotional harm, or property damage



*Anything can become a weapon – chairs, scissors, textbooks.  
You're constantly scanning the room.*



## Impact on Teaching and Learning

- 4 in 5 say violence disrupts their ability to teach
- Nearly half have changed their behaviour due to safety concerns
- Emotional harm is nearly as common as physical injury



*You stop teaching the way you know is best and  
start teaching in a way that feels safest.*



## What Must Change

To address violence and harassment in schools, Catholic teachers are calling for:

- Increased investment in frontline, school-based professionals
- Smaller class sizes
- Expanded and sustained student mental health supports
- Effective reporting systems with meaningful follow-through
- Early intervention strategies to better support students in need – before it becomes a crisis

An act of violence is often a cry for help. Real investment is needed to proactively support our most vulnerable students and to ensure safer schools for all.

**THE SAFETY OF STUDENTS, TEACHERS, AND EVERYONE IN THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY SHOULD NOT BE NEGOTIABLE – IT MUST BE BUILT INTO ONTARIO'S PUBLICLY FUNDED EDUCATION SYSTEM.**

Schools cannot be safe places to learn if they are not safe places to teach.