

A SYSTEM UNDER STRAIN: VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT IN ONTARIO SCHOOLS

Results from a Province-wide Survey of Catholic teachers

CONTENT WARNING

This report contains detailed descriptions of violence, harassment, and emotional distress experienced by teachers in Ontario's publicly funded Catholic schools. Some readers may find this content difficult.



INTRODUCTION: WHEN SCHOOLS AREN'T SAFE

Violence against teachers in Ontario schools is no longer rare, isolated, or unexpected. It is widespread, increasing, and reshaping what it means to teach and to learn.

More than **nine in ten teachers** report that they have **experienced or witnessed violence or harassment** in their workplace during the 2024-25 school year. Compared to findings from 2017, incidents are happening **more often**, are **more severe**, and are having a deeper impact on teachers' physical safety, mental health, and ability to do their jobs.

This report is based on a province-wide survey in the spring of 2025 conducted by Pollara Strategic Insights – one of Canada's leading research and polling firms – in collaboration with the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA). The online survey was sent to about 45,000 OECTA members, who teach in publicly funded Catholic schools across Ontario. In total, **2,873 Catholic teachers completed the survey**.

The survey explored Catholic teachers' experiences with workplace violence and harassment, their awareness and use of reporting tools and safety procedures, and their perceptions of how incidents are handled by school administrations and school boards. Where relevant, findings are compared to a similar OECTA survey conducted in 2017 to identify changes over time. Results from a sample of this size are considered accurate within a margin of error of ± 1.7 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

The responses were emphatic. Teachers are not only witnessing violence – many are directly experiencing it. Physical assaults, threats, and attempted assaults are increasingly common, particularly in elementary schools. A growing number of incidents involve weapons, most often everyday classroom objects. In many cases, these encounters result in physical injury, emotional trauma, or property damage.



I have witnessed students – as young as Kindergarten – swearing, hitting, biting, choking, throwing chairs and objects, damaging property, and hurting educators and support workers.



At the same time, teachers report feeling **unprepared and unsupported** in responding to these situations. Fewer than half say they feel adequately equipped by their school administration or school board to manage incidents of violence or harassment. While reporting tools and policies exist, teachers consistently describe a gap between reporting an incident and seeing meaningful action taken to prevent it from happening again.



I spend more time thinking about how to keep myself and my students safe than how to teach the lesson.



The consequences extend well beyond individual incidents. Four out of five Catholic teachers say that violence disrupts their ability to teach and manage their classrooms. Nearly half report changing their own behaviour – avoiding certain students, situations, or spaces – because of fear of violence. Increasingly, teachers are taking time off work, seeking medical or psychological support, or leaving the profession altogether.

At the same time, it is critical to remember that violence and harassment are not experienced equally. According to the survey results, women teachers, 2SLGBTQIA+ teachers, younger teachers, and elementary school teachers face substantively higher rates of exposure, greater severity, and deeper impacts from acts of violence and harassment. Many of those most affected also report feeling the least supported by existing processes.

Importantly, teachers do not see this as a problem rooted in individual student behaviour alone. They consistently point to **systemic pressures**: insufficient staffing, unmet student mental health needs, limited access to professional supports for students, and a lack of effective intervention strategies. In classrooms stretched beyond capacity, and a system facing nearly a decade of chronic underfunding, teachers are being asked to manage increasingly complex student needs without the resources required to do so safely.



This report presents the findings of a comprehensive province-wide survey of OECTA members. It reflects the experiences of nearly 3,000 Catholic teachers and provides a comprehensive snapshot of workplace violence and harassment in schools – what teachers are experiencing, how violence and harassment are affecting schools and the learning environment, and why current processes are falling short.

Most importantly, it highlights what must change to ensure that schools are safe places to learn and work – for students and for the teachers and education workers who support them every day.

Violence in schools is not inevitable. But without meaningful investment in frontline supports and student mental health services, it will continue to be normalized, endured, and absorbed by teachers – at great cost to individuals, classrooms, and communities.



THE SCALE OF THE PROBLEM: VIOLENCE IN ONTARIO SCHOOLS

Violence against teachers in Ontario schools is not a sporadic or isolated occurrence. It is widespread and increasingly common.

In 2025, **more than nine in ten Catholic teachers** reported that they have **experienced or witnessed violence or harassment** in their workplace. Seven in ten say they have personally experienced an act of violence at school, while more than four in five have witnessed violence directed at a colleague. These figures represent a clear increase since 2017, underscoring that violence in schools is not only persistent, but worsening.



It's not a question of if something will happen – it's when, and whether anyone will actually respond.



Catholic teachers report that violent incidents are happening **frequently and repeatedly**, not as one-off events. Among those who experienced violence during the 2024-25 school year, incidents occurred an average of **seven times**, up from fewer than six incidents in 2017. When asked about their entire teaching career, Catholic teachers report experiencing an average of **nearly 17 violent incidents**, a substantial increase from previous findings.

Violence is a problem across Ontario schools; however, it is not always evenly distributed. For example, **elementary school Catholic teachers are significantly more likely to report experiencing and witnessing violence** than their secondary school counterparts. They also report a higher frequency of incidents and greater disruption to their classrooms. While violence is present across all grade levels, elementary teachers and education workers are bearing a disproportionate share of its impact.

“

I was assaulted by a 10-year-old who kicked me in the stomach, punched me, pulled my hair and slapped the glasses off my face. This was after months of abuse toward his peers and EAs, as well as damage at the school.

”

Catholic teachers overwhelmingly perceive this trend to be moving in the wrong direction. More than **eight in ten** believe that violence against teachers in Ontario Catholic schools is **increasing**, and more than half say the **severity** of incidents is rising as well. Compared to 2017, perceptions of both frequency and severity have intensified, reinforcing teachers' sense that current approaches are failing to keep pace with escalating risks and behaviours.

“

A six-year-old, Grade 1 student was using a pair of scissors. He got frustrated with his work and his behaviour began to escalate. He chose to take his scissors and cut the arm of the student sitting next to him... he [then] proceeded to attempt to stab me.

”

The impact of this level of exposure is profound. Violence is no longer viewed as an exceptional crisis, but as a routine part of school life. For many teachers, the question is no longer whether violence will occur, but when – and whether there will be adequate support when it does.



WHAT VIOLENCE LOOKS LIKE — AND WHO IT AFFECTS

For many teachers, workplace violence is not abstract. It is physical, emotional, and disruptive – and it happens in the spaces where learning is supposed to feel safe.

Catholic teachers who responded to the survey report experiencing a wide range of violent acts, including physical assaults, attempted assaults, and threats of violence. These incidents are not limited to extreme or rare situations. Everyday classroom environments are increasingly the setting for aggressive behaviour that places teachers, education workers, and students at risk.

“

I have been hit, kicked, sworn at, and threatened more times than I can count. I've had chairs thrown across the room and objects used as weapons. After a while, you stop being shocked and start planning your day around what might trigger another incident. This is not what teaching was supposed to be. It feels like surviving, not educating.

”

Nearly **one in five Catholic teachers** who experienced violence report that an incident involved a **weapon**, most often an everyday classroom object. While these objects are not always considered weapons, their use underscores how quickly routine situations can escalate into dangerous ones.

“

Anything can become a weapon. Chairs, scissors, textbooks – you're constantly scanning the room.

”

The consequences of these incidents are serious and far-reaching. Among Catholic teachers who experienced or witnessed violence, **two-thirds report physical injury, emotional harm, or damage to personal property.** Emotional impacts – including anxiety, fear, and psychological distress – are nearly as common as physical harm. For many teachers and education workers, the emotional toll lingers long after an incident ends.



Beyond the physical pain, the constant exposure to aggression led to severe emotional and mental exhaustion. Every day, I go to work afraid, knowing I could be attacked again. By the end of the school year, I am completely burnt out, and the stress triggered vertigo.



Violence also changes how teachers do their jobs. Almost **half of Catholic teachers** who responded to the survey say they have modified their own behaviour because of a violent incident or the fear that one could occur. These changes are not pedagogical choices – they are survival strategies.



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



According to the survey data, students are most often identified as the perpetrators of violence, reflecting the complex realities facing classrooms today. As Catholic teachers routinely point out, an act of violence is often a call for help – and stems from an unmet need.

Catholic teachers in the survey consistently point to unmet student needs, particularly around mental health and behavioural supports, as a major factor contributing to violent incidents. While teachers and education workers understand these challenges, they report being asked to manage them without adequate resources or professional supports.

The burden of violence does not fall evenly. Certain groups of teachers experience higher rates of exposure, more frequent incidents, and more severe impacts. These disparities – explored in detail later in this report – highlight how existing systems fail to protect teachers from Indigenous and equity-deserving communities, who often are in some of the most vulnerable and challenging situations.

At the same time, the survey results point to an increasing normalization of violence, especially in Kindergarten and the early years, with hitting, biting, throwing objects, and verbal aggression often treated as routine rather than as warning signs of unmet needs requiring urgent support.

Simply put, violence in schools is reshaping the teaching profession. It affects not only physical safety, but how teachers interact with students, manage classrooms, and sustain their commitment to the work. When violence becomes routine, the cost is borne not just by teachers and education workers, but by the learning environments they are trying to protect and the students they are trying to serve.



PROCESSES THAT AREN'T WORKING

Teachers and education workers are doing everything they can to manage increasingly complex and volatile situations. But the processes meant to support them are falling short.

Despite the widespread nature of violence and harassment in schools, **more than half of Catholic teachers** say they do **not feel adequately prepared or equipped** by their school administration or school board to respond to these incidents. This lack of preparedness persists even as incidents become more frequent and severe.

While most Catholic teachers are aware that reporting tools and safety policies exist, far fewer believe those tools are effective. And the fact remains: access does not translate into action. Teachers describe a pattern in which incidents are reported, acknowledged, and then quietly absorbed or ignored – without meaningful follow-up or lasting change.



*You fill out the report, you get an email back, and then nothing changes.
The same situation happens again.*



Reporting violence or harassment is often seen as burdensome or futile. Many Catholic teachers say they chose not to report certain incidents because they did not believe it would help, did not think the incident would be taken seriously, or felt that dealing with behaviour had become “part of the job.” Alarming, more than **one in three Catholic teachers** report having been **discouraged from reporting an incident**, most often by school principals.

When reports are filed, outcomes are inconsistent. While incidents are frequently acknowledged by principals, teachers are far less likely to see concrete actions, such as safety plans, behavioural interventions, or meaningful consequences that prevent repeat incidents. One in five teachers report that using the reporting tool resulted in **no outcome at all**.



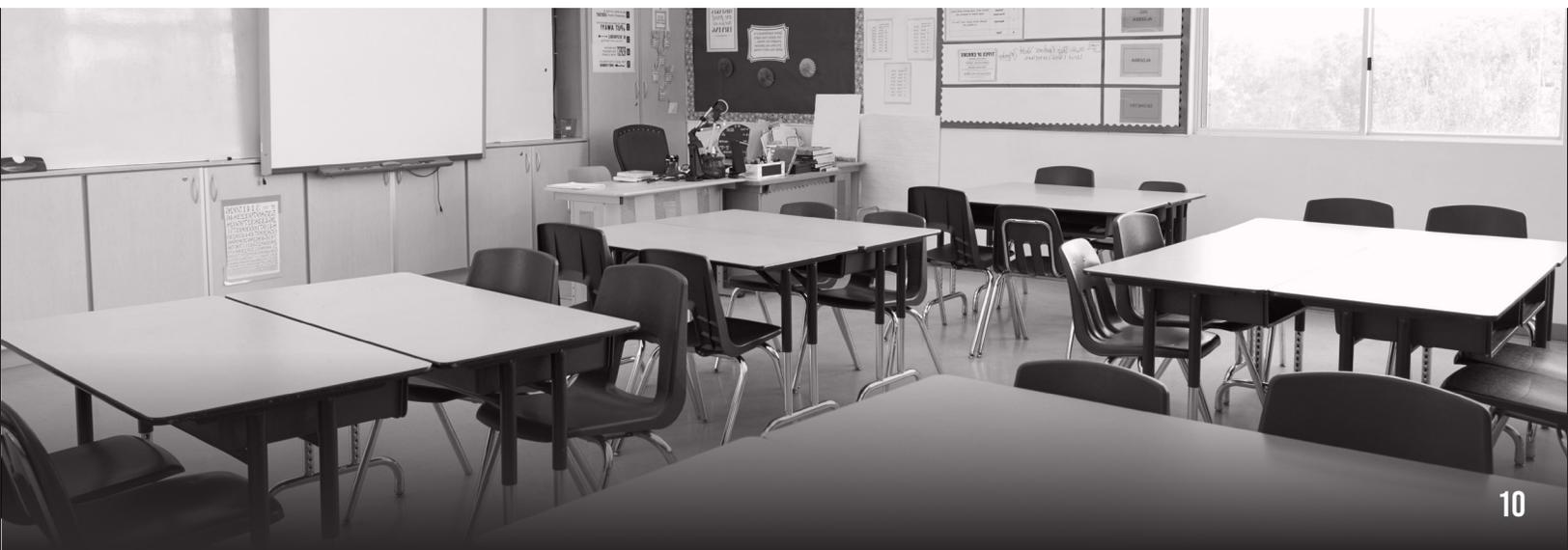
After the incident, I did everything I was supposed to do. I filled out the report. I spoke to administration. I followed the process. The incident was acknowledged – and then nothing happened. The student returned, the behaviour continued, and I was expected to carry on as if nothing had changed. The system documented my experience, but it didn't protect me.



Training is another weak point. Fewer than two in five Catholic teachers who responded to the survey report receiving training on their school's Safe School Plan. Among those who have, only a minority find the training helpful in preparing them to manage real-world incidents of violence or harassment. Teachers describe training as overly general, disconnected from classroom realities, or insufficient given the complexity of the situations they face.

The result is a system that places responsibility on teachers to manage risk without providing the tools, time, or professional supports needed to do so safely. Over time, this erodes trust, discourages reporting, and normalizes unsafe conditions.

When violence becomes routine and responses feel inadequate, teachers often perceive that they are left with a stark choice: absorb the risk themselves, or alter how they teach in order to protect their own safety. Neither option is sustainable.



HARASSMENT AND BULLYING: A PARALLEL CRISIS

Alongside physical threats or acts of violence, many teachers are also navigating persistent harassment and bullying in their workplaces. While these experiences may be less visible, their impact is cumulative and deeply damaging.



Nearly **half of Catholic teachers** report that they have personally experienced workplace harassment or bullying, and more than half say they have witnessed it happening to a colleague. These figures represent a significant increase since 2017, indicating that harassment remains a widespread and growing problem in Ontario schools.

Incidents of harassment are rarely isolated. Teachers who experience harassment report that it occurs **multiple times within a single school year**, often involving the same individuals and continuing over long periods. Over time, repeated exposure contributes to stress, anxiety, and burnout, particularly when teachers feel there is little recourse or protection.



It wears you down. One comment doesn't break you – it's the constant drip of disrespect.



Students are the most commonly identified perpetrators of harassment, but teachers also report harassment from parents, colleagues, and, in some cases, administrators. A significant portion of harassment now occurs through **digital and social media platforms**, extending the reach of these incidents beyond school walls and into teachers' personal lives.

When harassment is reported, teachers often describe inconsistent or inadequate responses. **More than one-third of Catholic teachers** say there was **no follow-up** after informing the school administrator of an incident, and more than half did not feel supported by their administration. Formal consequences for perpetrators are rare, reinforcing the perception that reporting harassment is unlikely to lead to meaningful change.

“

A parent came into my classroom with no warning or appointment. I was in a portable. He used his size and language to threaten me and then continued to do so psychologically for three years. So much so that I have left that school.

”

The emotional toll is substantial. Many Catholic teachers report experiencing significant stress as a result of harassment, and increasing numbers are seeking psychological support or taking time off work to cope. Others choose to take no action at all, either because they believe nothing will change or because they fear negative repercussions.

“

You start questioning yourself – whether it's worth speaking up or just keeping your head down.

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Harassment may not always leave visible injuries, but its effects are lasting. When disrespectful behaviour goes unchecked, it contributes to unsafe work environments, undermines professional dignity, and compounds the strain already placed on teachers dealing with violence in their schools.

UNEQUAL IMPACT: WHO IS MOST AFFECTED

While violence and harassment affect ALL teachers across Ontario, the burden is not shared equally. Results from the survey clearly indicate that certain groups experience higher exposure, more severe impacts, and fewer effective supports – revealing gaps in how current processes protect those who are most vulnerable.

WOMEN

Teachers who identify as women experience **higher rates of physical violence**, including assaults, attempted assaults, and threats. They are also more likely to report physical injury and property damage as a result of violent incidents. Despite being more familiar with reporting tools and safety plans, women are **less likely to feel prepared** to manage violence and are less likely to see strong consequences following an incident. Many women in the survey indicated that they feel discouraged from reporting and express lower confidence that doing so will lead to meaningful action.

2SLGBTQIA+ TEACHERS

Teachers who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+ report **significantly higher exposure to harassment**, particularly incidents tied to sexual orientation or gender identity. They also experience more frequent harassment and are nearly twice as likely to be exposed to incidents involving weapons. These teachers are more likely to seek psychological support and are more likely to report feeling unsupported by school administration. Discouragement from reporting is also more common, further isolating those most affected.



You worry that reporting will make things worse, not better.



BLACK AND RACIALIZED TEACHERS

Black and racialized teachers report experiences of harassment and discrimination that are closely linked to race, ethnicity, and racial identity. While their overall exposure to workplace violence may align with broader trends, these teachers are more likely to describe **racialized harassment**, including verbal abuse, stereotyping, and challenges to their authority and professionalism.

These incidents often take the form of repeated behaviours rather than single extreme events — such as microaggressions, dismissive language, racial slurs, differential treatment, or being subjected to heightened scrutiny by students, parents, or administrators. **Even a single incident of racialized harassment is inappropriate and harmful.** When these behaviours occur repeatedly, however, their impact is compounded. What may be minimized or overlooked in isolation contributes over time to unsafe, inequitable, and professionally undermining working conditions.



It's not always one big incident – it's the constant questioning of your competence and right to be there.



Black and racialized Catholic teachers also report concerns about how incidents involving race are handled when they are reported. Some describe feeling that racial dynamics are downplayed or reframed as misunderstandings, rather than recognized as part of a broader pattern of discrimination. This can reduce confidence in reporting processes and discourage teachers from seeking support.

The cumulative impact of racialized harassment compounds the broader effects of workplace violence and harassment, adding emotional strain and reinforcing feelings of isolation – in turn impacting psychological safety. Addressing safety in schools requires acknowledging how racism shapes workplace experiences and ensuring that policies, reporting processes, and supports meaningfully address race-based harm.

INDIGENOUS TEACHERS

While the survey data does not allow for detailed quantitative analysis specific to Indigenous teachers, qualitative responses and identity-based findings point to distinct challenges shaped by colonial histories and ongoing systemic inequities.

Indigenous teachers describe experiences of harassment and discrimination connected to their identity, including stereotyping, dismissive attitudes toward Indigenous knowledge, and challenges to their authority and credibility. These experiences often occur alongside broader workplace violence and harassment, compounding their impact.



There's an expectation that you carry the weight of reconciliation work, while also dealing with disrespect that others don't see.



Some Indigenous teachers report that incidents involving racism or cultural disrespect are minimized or not fully recognized when they are raised, making it harder to seek meaningful support. This can contribute to feelings of isolation and reinforce the perception that existing processes are not designed to respond effectively to Indigenous experiences.

The limited availability of disaggregated data on Indigenous teachers itself reflects a broader gap. Understanding and addressing workplace violence and harassment in schools, and within the context of inter-generational trauma, requires more intentional attention to Indigenous teachers' experiences – and processes that recognize how racism, colonialism, and safety intersect in the workplace.

DISABLED TEACHERS

Disabled teachers report distinct and compounding challenges in the context of workplace violence and harassment. While overall exposure to violence may reflect broader system trends, disabled teachers are more likely to describe heightened vulnerability during incidents and greater long-term impact following them.

For some, physical disabilities can limit the ability to move quickly or respond to escalating situations, increasing feelings of risk during violent incidents. Others describe how mental health or neurocognitive disabilities intensify the psychological impact of repeated exposure to aggression, threats, or instability in the workplace.

Disabled teachers also report concerns about how incidents are addressed when accommodation needs intersect with safety concerns. Some describe feeling that their requests for additional supports or adjustments are viewed as individual limitations rather than as indicators of broader system strain.



When you already have accommodation needs, being placed in unsafe situations feels even more isolating.



In addition, disabled teachers report lower confidence that reporting mechanisms will adequately account for the additional risks they face. This can discourage reporting and contribute to environments where unsafe conditions persist.

Ensuring safe schools requires recognizing how disability intersects with workplace safety. Protections, reporting systems, and training must be responsive not only to violent incidents themselves, but also to the specific vulnerabilities and accommodation needs of disabled teachers and education workers.

YOUNGER TEACHERS

Teachers who are under the age of 40 experience **higher rates and greater frequency of violence**, including physical assaults and threats. They are more likely to report physical and emotional harm, as well as disruption to their teaching and classroom management. At the same time, younger teachers are less familiar with workplace policies and safety procedures and are more likely to feel unprepared to respond to violent incidents. These gaps leave early-career teachers particularly vulnerable.

These findings have serious implications for recruitment and retention. When early-career teachers face higher exposure to violence, while feeling less prepared and supported, it can accelerate burnout and increase the likelihood that they leave the profession – further deepening staffing shortages across the publicly funded education system.

DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

Violence and harassment affect teachers across Ontario's elementary and secondary schools, but they take different forms and occur with different intensity depending on the setting

Secondary school Catholic teachers report **lower rates of physical violence** than their elementary counterparts, but they experience **higher levels of harassment and discrimination**, including incidents related to age, gender, ethnicity, and gender identity. Harassment in secondary settings is more likely to involve

repeated verbal abuse, intimidation, and online or social media-based behaviour, extending beyond the classroom and into teachers' personal lives. While secondary teachers are somewhat more likely to report that formal consequences – such as suspensions or police involvement – occur following serious incidents, many still describe a workplace climate where harassment is persistent and emotionally taxing. These experiences contribute to high levels of stress and psychological strain, even when physical violence is less frequent.

By contrast, elementary school teachers face **some of the highest levels of violence** across all school settings. They report more frequent incidents, greater classroom disruption, and a stronger perception that violence is increasing in both frequency and severity. While elementary teachers are more likely to report incidents and use reporting tools, they also express **higher dissatisfaction with outcomes** and are more likely to be discouraged from reporting. As a result, many advocate for stronger protective measures and additional supports.

Violence and harassment are not just widespread – they are **unequally experienced**. Addressing safety in schools requires recognizing these disparities and ensuring that protections and supports are responsive to those facing the greatest risk.



WHY THIS IS HAPPENING: WHAT TEACHERS ARE TELLING US

Catholic teachers do not view violence and harassment in schools as random or inevitable. They see it as the result of systems under strain and supports stretched too thin.

Across school settings, teachers consistently point to **staffing shortages (the recruitment and retention crisis) and large class sizes** as a primary driver of violent incidents.

When class sizes are large, support staff are limited, and specialized roles are understaffed or unavailable, teachers are left managing increasingly complex student needs on their own. This is particularly evident in classrooms where students require behavioural, emotional, or mental health supports that teachers are not trained or resourced to provide.

Unmet **student mental health needs** are another central concern. Many Catholic teachers in the survey report that they are witnessing heightened levels of distress, dysregulation, and unmet needs among students – pressures that intensified as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Without sufficient access to child and youth workers, social workers, psychologists, and other school-based professionals, these needs often surface as behavioural crises in classrooms.



We're not mental health professionals, but we're expected to respond like we are.



Teachers also identify **insufficient behaviour management strategies and inconsistent discipline** as contributing factors. When responses to violent behaviour vary widely or fail to prevent repeat incidents, teachers lose confidence that reporting will lead to safer outcomes. This inconsistency places additional pressure on teachers

and education workers to manage risk individually, rather than through co-ordinated, preventative approaches.

Training gaps further exacerbate these challenges. Teachers report limited access to practical, scenario-based training that reflects the realities they face in classrooms. When training does occur, it is often described as overly generic or disconnected from daily practice, leaving teachers unprepared to respond effectively when situations escalate.



Teachers should not have to fear for their safety at work. The lack of resources, training, and support is not only failing educators but also failing students who need specialized care and intervention.



Underlying all of these factors is a sense that responsibility has shifted without corresponding investment. Teachers are being asked to absorb the consequences of broader system failures – balancing instructional responsibilities with crisis management, often without the professional supports required to do either safely.

Violence in schools is not a failure of individual students or teachers. It is a predictable outcome of chronically under-resourced and underfunded systems. Addressing it requires moving beyond reactive responses and investing in the supports that prevent crises before they occur.



SPECIAL EDUCATION, COMPLEX NEEDS, AND VIOLENCE IN CLASSROOMS

Catholic teachers who responded to the survey consistently describe a strong connection between rising violence and the growing number of students with complex needs being supported in classrooms without

In particular, teachers working in special education settings – with students with high and complex needs – report higher exposure to physical aggression, including hitting, kicking, biting, throwing objects, and other behaviours associated with an inability to self-regulate.

Teachers are clear that these incidents are not the result of malice, but of **students whose needs exceed the supports available to them**. When specialized staff, behavioural supports, and mental health professionals are limited or absent, teachers are left managing crises they are neither trained nor resourced to handle safely.

This places teachers, education workers, and students at risk. It also contributes to environments where violence becomes more frequent and more severe – not because students are unsupported by intent, but because the system has failed to keep pace with students' needs.



In a special education classroom, students with severe autism can become very violent. A student picked up a water bottle and whipped it at my head.



Teachers emphasize that **appropriate, timely supports reduce incidents, protect dignity**, and create safer learning environments for everyone. Without sustained investment in special education staffing and school-based professional supports, classrooms are left to absorb pressures they were never designed to carry.



I have had multiple special needs students who scratched, kicked, threw chairs and classroom objects, spit, and pulled hair during a meltdown. There simply weren't enough supports in place.



WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE — AND WHY IT MATTERS

The survey makes one point abundantly clear: violence and harassment in schools are not inevitable. They are the result of choices about where – and whether – to invest in prevention, supports, and safety.

Teachers are emphatic about what is needed. Schools require **more frontline, school-based professionals** who are trained to support students before challenges escalate into crises. This includes child and youth workers, social workers, psychologists, and other mental health professionals who can work alongside teachers to address the complex needs present in today's classrooms.

Investment in **student mental health supports** is central to creating safer learning environments. When students receive timely, appropriate support, classrooms are calmer, relationships are stronger, and teachers are better able to focus on teaching rather than crisis management. These supports benefit not only individual students, but entire school communities.

The survey also made clear that **smaller class sizes are an essential component of safer schools**. When classrooms are overcrowded, teachers have less capacity to respond effectively to escalating behaviour, build strong relationships with students, and provide timely support to those with complex needs. Large class sizes increase the likelihood that warning signs go unnoticed and that incidents escalate before appropriate intervention can occur. Investing in lower class sizes would allow teachers to better support students, strengthen classroom management, and create safer, more stable learning environments for everyone.

Teachers also need processes that work as intended. Reporting processes must lead to **meaningful action**, not just acknowledgement. Training must be practical, relevant, and grounded in real classroom scenarios. Most importantly, teachers must be confident that their safety – and the safety of their students – is treated as a priority, not an afterthought.



*We want to do our jobs well.
We just need the supports in place to do them safely.*



The cost of inaction is high. When violence becomes normalized, teachers experience injury, stress, and burnout. Students lose stable learning environments. Families and communities feel the ripple effects as teachers and education workers are forced to manage unsafe conditions on their own, or leave the profession.

Safer schools are built through **support, not silence**. They require sustained investment in people, policies that prioritize prevention, and processes that respond effectively when harm occurs. Addressing violence and harassment in schools is not only about protecting teachers – it is about ensuring that schools remain places where students can learn, grow, and thrive.

This report reflects the voices of thousands of Catholic teachers across Ontario. Their message is consistent and urgent: students and schools need help. With the right investments and a commitment to prevention, safety in schools is achievable – and long overdue.



CONCLUSION: SAFETY SHOULD NOT BE NEGOTIABLE

Violence and harassment have become a defining challenge in Ontario schools. For too many teachers, unsafe conditions are no longer the exception – they are part of daily working life.



The violence doesn't stop when the bell rings. I replay incidents in my head, I avoid certain hallways, and I feel anxious before work every morning. I love teaching, but I'm constantly weighing how much more I can handle. No job should require this level of fear just to get through the day.



This report shows that violence is increasing, that its impacts are serious and unequal, and that existing processes are not keeping pace. Catholic teachers – like teachers and education workers across Ontario – are adapting to survive in classrooms that lack the supports needed to prevent harm, at significant personal cost and a cost to student learning.

Schools cannot be safe places to learn if they are not safe places to teach and work. Addressing violence and harassment requires more than awareness – it requires investment in frontline supports, student mental health services, and processes that respond effectively when harm occurs.

Safety in schools should not depend on negotiations or individual advocacy – it must be built into Ontario's publicly funded education system itself.

Catholic teachers are calling for solutions that protect students and educators alike. With the right supports in place, safer schools are possible. The cost of inaction is too high to ignore.

