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News

## Most Catholic school teachers in Ontario have experienced violence at school: report

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A classroom is seen at an elementary school in Toronto on Tuesday, January 9, 2024. THE CANADIAN PRESS/Chris Young

A new report reveals a disturbing trend around teacher safety at Catholic schools in Ontario.

[A report](#) by the Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association (OECTA) shows that violence towards teachers is widespread in the classroom. It found that nine out of 10 Catholic school teachers experienced or witnessed violence or harassment at school between 2024 and 2025.

Teachers say that compared to similar findings in 2017, violent occurrences are more frequent and severe, rather than one-off events. The report shows teachers are reporting an average of

seven violent incidents a year, which is impacting their mental health and ability to do their jobs.

### **Certain minority groups more affected**

While OECTA found that violence experienced by teachers on school grounds was extensive, some demographics reported higher exposure.

Women, LGBTQ2S+, Black, Indigenous, racialized, and disabled teachers were disproportionately impacted by violence and harassment in the classroom. This applied to both the incidents themselves, and how they were handled after being reported.

For example, the report found that Black and racialized Catholic school teachers, who were more likely to describe racialized harassment, felt racial dynamics were downplayed or reframed as misunderstandings. As a result, it impacted their confidence in reporting processes and discouraged them from getting support.

### **Elementary vs. Secondary Schools**

The report found distinctions between violence and harassment in the province's Catholic elementary and secondary schools.

While there were lower rates of physical violence towards teachers in Catholic secondary schools, there were higher numbers of harassment and discrimination.

Meanwhile, Catholic elementary schools reported some of the highest levels of violence amongst all school settings. Although elementary teachers were more likely to report incidents, they felt more dissatisfied with the outcome, and in turn, more likely to be discouraged from reporting.

### **Where does the violence stem from?**

Government underfunding, overcrowding classrooms and staffing shortages were some of the reasons the report found that amplified the violence and harassment in the classroom.

OECTA also stressed that investments into frontline support workers, like educational assistants, social workers, psychologists, and child and youth workers, and student mental health services were sorely needed.

### **Methodology**

*1.7 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. OECTA's report is based on a province-wide survey conducted last spring in collaboration with Pollara Strategic Insights. The survey was sent to roughly 45,000 OECTA members who currently teach in publicly-funded Catholic schools in the*

*province and 2,873 teachers responded. The results of this survey are considered accurate within a margin of error of plus or minus.*