



**2023**

**ETFO ALL-MEMBER  
VIOLENCE  
SURVEY RESULTS**



# SURVEY OF ETFO MEMBERS FINDS VIOLENT INCIDENTS ON THE RISE

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## A SIGNIFICANT MAJORITY OF ETFO MEMBERS REPORT A RISE IN THE OCCURRENCE AND SEVERITY OF VIOLENT INCIDENTS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) represents approximately 83,000 members, including public elementary teachers, occasional teachers, designated early childhood educators, education support personnel, and professional support personnel. ETFO commissioned national research firm Strategic Communications (Stratcom) to conduct a survey of its members about their experiences of workplace violence. Almost 25,000 ETFO members responded to the survey.

The survey results reveal an increase in the number and severity of violent incidents in elementary schools. They also say that front-line supports are not always available, administrators know that violence is a problem, but do not always act on reports of violence, and that ETFO members are suffering from the effects of violent incidents.

## ETFO MEMBERS REPORT A RISE IN THE OCCURRENCE AND SEVERITY OF VIOLENT INCIDENTS

More than three-quarters (77%) of ETFO members have personally experienced violence or witnessed violence against another staff person. This is an increase from the 70% reported in 2017. Educators working with younger students are more likely to experience violence, and the vast majority of members who work in special education have personally experienced violence or witnessed violence against another staff person (86%).

Number of violent incidents has increased

80%

Severity has increased

66%

Violence is a growing problem

80%



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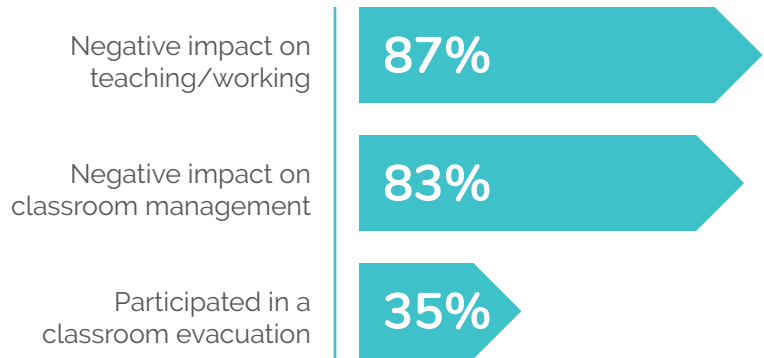
Almost all ETFO members are feeling the negative impacts on their work, with 87% of members agreeing that violence in elementary schools makes working with students more difficult.

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Four out of five members (80%) state there are more incidents of violence in schools since they started working in the Ontario public elementary school system, and two-thirds of members (66%) say the severity of violent incidents has increased. The vast majority of members (80%) agree that “violence is a growing problem” at their school. Almost three-quarters of members (72%) state the number of violent incidents has increased since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**VIOLENCE IS DISRUPTING TEACHING, WORKING, AND LEARNING CONDITIONS**

Almost all members are feeling the negative impacts on teaching and working conditions, with 87% of members agreeing that violence in elementary schools is “making teaching more difficult” and 83% saying that violence “interferes with classroom management” (both are an increase of 4% since 2017). Just over a third of ETFO members (35%) participated in a classroom evacuation during the 2022-2023 school year. This increases to 40% of ETFO members who work in Kindergarten.



**FRONT-LINE SUPPORTS ARE OFTEN NOT AVAILABLE TO EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS WHEN NEEDED**

A majority of ETFO members report that educational assistants (61%), social workers (56%) and child and youth workers (53%) were available only “some of the time,” “rarely,” or “never” when needed in the 2022-23 school year.



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More than two-in-five members (42%) have suffered a physical injury/illness or psychological injury/illness as a result of workplace violence.

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### SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS KNOW THAT VIOLENCE IS A PROBLEM

Although 58% of members who experienced violence informed their administrators, only 41% indicated that they always made a written/online report, meaning that administrators are aware of the significant underreporting of violence. At the same time, 63% of ETFO members say that school administrators do not take the problem of violence in elementary classrooms as seriously as they should.

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### SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS ARE NOT ACTING ON ALL REPORTS OF VIOLENCE

Only 36% of ETFO members who reported incidents of violence indicated that there was follow-up or investigation “in all cases” or “in some cases”. This is a significant decrease from the 50% reported in 2017. When there were follow-up actions to prevent the recurrence of violent incidents, only 8% of members rated those actions as effective.

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### VIOLENT INCIDENTS ARE CAUSING MEMBER INJURY/ILLNESS, BUT IT ISN'T ALWAYS ACKNOWLEDGED AS WORKPLACE INJURY/ILLNESS

More than two-in-five members (42%) have suffered a physical injury/illness or psychological injury/illness as a result of workplace violence against them in the 2022-23 school year. Approximately 30% of ETFO members' injuries warranted a WSIB claim. However, among those who could have filed a WSIB claim, only 17% did.



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**Methodology:** These are results from an online survey of ETFO members from February 8 to March 22, 2023, conducted by Strategic Communications. All members received an email invitation with a unique URL to complete the online survey with regular reminders, resulting in a final sample of 24,872 which was weighted to match the gender, region and member type of the ETFO membership. The margin of error for the sample is +/- 0.4%, 19 times out of 20. Members were asked to report on their experiences from the 2022-2023 school year.

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**Strategic Communications Inc. (Stratcom)** is a full-service opinion research and communications firm with staff in Toronto, Vancouver, Ottawa, Saskatoon, and Brighton and London, U.K.