



# Bullying in the Workplace

A Survey of Ontario's Elementary and Secondary School Teachers and Education Workers  
by James Matsui and Lang Research

The study was commissioned by the: Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO), Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA), Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF)

## Executive summary

### *Objectives and Methodology*

Three Ontario education worker unions—the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF), the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) and the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA)—retained James Matsui Research to conduct a survey to obtain information concerning the bullying of their members. Bullying is defined as persistent or repeated incidents of abuse, threats, insults or humiliation that are intended to hurt other individuals physically, emotionally, psychologically or socially.

The two specific objectives of the research are to:

- establish the incidence of bullying of the members of the three sponsoring organizations; and,
- describe bullying incidents from the perspective of their instigation, the nature of the bullying, the reporting of the bullying incidents, actions taken to halt bullying and the outcomes of these actions.

In total, 1,217 members of the three organizations were contacted by telephone and interviewed in March 2005. Each organization contributed equally to the overall sample which subsequently was weighted at the analysis stage. For the representative sample of 1,217 education workers in Ontario, the margin of error is  $\pm 2.8$  percent at the 95 percent confidence interval. The subsamples from the individual sponsoring organizations have a margin of error of  $\pm 4.9$  percent.

Bullying of teachers by students is more prevalent than any other form of bullying. Just under four of every 10 teachers in Ontario (38%) have been bullied by their students. This type of bullying is relatively widespread across the province and different groups of teachers given their demographic characteristics or attributes of their teaching experience.

Despite the widespread prevalence of bullying of teachers by students, there are some teacher groups who are somewhat more likely to have been bullied. Thirty-nine percent of all elementary teachers in the province and 36 percent of secondary teachers have been bullied by students. In particular, part-time teachers (44%) are more likely to be bullied by students than full-time teachers (37%).

As well, the incidence of bullying by students is higher among women teachers (39%) than among men teachers (34%). At least 34 percent of teachers in each of the seven regions of province have been bullied by students. It is, however, highest in the Southwestern region of the province (42% of teachers have been bullied by students) followed by teachers working in the City of Toronto (39%) and Eastern Ontario (39%). Teachers who work in rural communities (40%) are somewhat more likely to be bullied by students than teachers working in larger communities across Ontario.

Bullying by students is most likely to have affected teachers of the intermediate grades (grades 7 through 9) in elementary schools. Fifty percent of these teachers report that they have been bullied by students. The next highest incidence of this form of bullying is found among kindergarten (41%) and junior (40%) grade teachers.

As teaching experience increases, the likelihood that a person has been bullied by a student also tends to increase. Bullying by students peaks for teachers with 16 to 20 years experience (44%) then drops slightly for those with more than 20 years experience (42%). Only 22 percent of teachers with five years or less teaching experience have been bullied by their students.

Of the teachers who have been bullied by students, 82 percent have been subject to repeated class disruptions or repeated disrespectful behaviour. Intermediate grade teachers in elementary schools (85% of those bullied by students) and kindergarten teachers (92%) are most likely to be subject to this particular kind of bullying. As well, teachers working in the Southwestern region (88%), Hamilton-Niagara region (87%) and smaller communities (87%) tend to be the targets of disruptive or disrespectful behaviour.

Forty-one percent of those bullied by students have had their personal belongings or property vandalized and 27 percent have been threatened or physically assaulted on more than one occasion. Intermediate grade teachers in elementary schools are most likely to have their belongings vandalized by students (22% of all intermediate grade teachers, 44% of those bullied).

Other forms of bullying by students include persistent verbal abuse (16% of those bullied by students), repeated racial, sexual or religious slurs (11%) and repeated attempts at intimidation (10%). Less than one percent of those who have been bullied by students have been threatened by abusive email or use of the Internet.

For more information on bullying and this survey, please contact one of the following:



OECTA – Donna Marie Kennedy, President  
416-925-2493



OSSTF – Rhonda Kimberley-Young, President  
416-751-8300

## Bullying Resources

### Websites:

- [www.bullying.org](http://www.bullying.org)
- [www.bullyboy.ca](http://www.bullyboy.ca)
- [www.bullyingawarenessnetwork.ca](http://www.bullyingawarenessnetwork.ca)
- [www.bullyfreealberta.ca](http://www.bullyfreealberta.ca)
- [www.canadiansafeschools.com](http://www.canadiansafeschools.com)
- [www.kidshelp.sympatico.ca](http://www.kidshelp.sympatico.ca)
- [www.peacefulschoolsinternational.org](http://www.peacefulschoolsinternational.org)
- [www.redcross.ca](http://www.redcross.ca)

### Films and Videotapes:

- *Origins of Human Aggression – The Other Story*  
National Film Board of Canada (2005)
- *It's A Girls' World*  
National Film Board of Canada (2003)
- *Cyber Bullying*  
Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (2002)
- *Bullied, Battered & Bruised*  
Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (2000)

### Books:

- Coloroso, Barbara. *The Bully, the Bullied and the Bystander*. Toronto: Harper Collins, 2002.
- Lantieri, Linda; Patti, Janet. *Waging Peace in Our Schools*. Beacon Press, 1996.