

# Teachers - the new targets of schoolyard bullies?

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## 1. Introduction

While murder and mayhem with students running amok with knives and guns may be less prevalent here than in the US or UK, serious assaults against teachers are definitely on the rise<sup>1</sup> and violence against teachers is a workplace hazard of increasing concern to PPTA members. There is a great deal of anecdotal evidence available from teachers, and a plethora of stories and articles in the media, particularly high profile stories of physical assaults against teachers from students. This year media coverage of the issue has been dominated by teachers' reports of workplace bullying at Cambridge High. At meetings held with PPTA members over the last 15 months, teachers report increasing incidents of violence from students. Nor is this a situation where teachers receive either sympathy or support. All too often they report an environment where they are increasingly blamed both for aggressive and disruptive student behaviour and for their efforts to minimise and control it. That blame originates both from within the school community - from management and parents - and also from the very agencies teachers turn to for support, i.e. the Ministry of Education, ERO or the Teachers Council.

Despite a wealth of anecdotal evidence, there is currently very little research data available on the prevalence or impact of the various forms of physical and emotional violence directed against staff in schools. Accordingly, in July this year, PPTA undertook a systematic survey of its members in order to find out what kinds of bullying and harassment teachers are facing in schools and from whom.

This paper refers to both bullying and harassment of teachers. The School Anti-Violence Toolkit, published by the union earlier this year, used the umbrella term "violence" to cover all forms of bullying and harassment, and preferred the term "harassment" when discussing behaviour directed at teachers by students. However, teachers themselves are increasingly using the term "bullying" to describe the targeted aggressive behaviour they experience from both students and adults in schools. Andrea Needham, writing about workplace bullying, has commented:

*The definition of workplace bullying has become a point of discussion around the world as individuals, groups and governments research the problem and develop criteria, boundaries, guidelines and even legislation. (Needham, 2003)*

Bullying has been widely defined by a range of characteristics and behaviours:

- *Bullying is the aggressive behaviour arising from the deliberate intent to cause physical or psychological distress to others. (Randall, 1997)*
- *Mobbing (bullying) is an emotional assault.... Aggression against "anyone" rather than specific discrimination against someone based on age, gender, race, creed, nationality, disability or pregnancy – using harassing, abusive and often terrorising behaviours. (Davenport, Schwartz, Elliott, 1999)*

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<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Education statistics show an increase in physical assaults on teachers:

2002: 537  
2003: 637

The PPTA survey showed 15.5% of teachers either experienced or witnessed a physical assault against a teacher from a student or students in the last year

- *Bullying is a conscious and wilful act of aggression and/or manipulation by one or more people against another person or people. Bullying can last for a short period or go on for years, and is an abuse of power by those who carry it out. It is sometimes pre-meditated, and sometimes opportunistic, sometimes directed mainly towards one victim, and sometimes occurs serially and randomly* (Sullivan, 2000)
- *A bully is someone who knowingly abuses the rights of others to gain control of the situation and the individuals involved. Bullies deliberately use intimidation and manipulation to get their way.* (Horn, 2002)

Many writers stress the necessity of bullying being a *repeated* behaviour, i.e.:

- *Bullying is persistent, unwelcome behaviour.....a continual and relentless attack on other people's self confidence and self esteem* (Field, 1996)
- *It is repetitive, occurring over a period of time, or it is a random but serial activity carried out by someone who is feared for this behaviour* (Sullivan, 2000)
- *Workplace bullying is repeated, unreasonable behaviour directed toward an employee, or group of employees, that creates a risk to health and safety* (Victorian Workcover Authority, 2002)

However this view is becoming more commonly challenged, certainly in discussions with teachers themselves both in New Zealand and Australia (Violence workshop, AEU Women's Conference, Melbourne, October 2004). Many teachers maintain that while a necessarily repetitive component is true of minor incidents that would not singly amount to bullying, occasional or even single, significant aggressive acts, which seriously endanger them or undermine their well being or professional integrity, do amount to bullying. For this reason the paper has distinguished between what I've called "cumulative" bullying behaviour and "significant" bullying incidents.

Some authors also stress the power difference they believe is necessary between bully and target, eg Barbara Coloroso (2003) in her book *The Bully, the Bullied and the Bystander*, maintains a bully must be either physically stronger or more favourably situated than the target. *Bullying From Backyard to Boardroom* opens with a definition that stresses both repetition and a power difference:

*Bullying can be defined as an act of repeatedly and deliberately putting a weaker person under stress* (McCarthy, Sheehan and Wilkie, 1996)

However, others, often practitioners dealing with the behaviour at first hand, have taken a wider view, such as that expressed in *Bullying and Harassment, A Legal Guide for Educators*:

*What is a "bully"? A typical bully is hard to describe; after all bullies don't come with a capital "B" on their jackets. Psychologists and behaviour specialists maintain that bullies come in all shapes and sizes. Students bully other students; students bully teachers. Teachers bully students; teachers bully other teachers and parents. Those with the power bully; those who feel powerless also bully* (Conn, 2004).

This view is strongly echoed by teachers themselves. At meetings and workshops run by the union on school violence, bullying and harassment, many teachers who have experienced forms of aggressive behaviour from students maintain they *feel* bullied by students, even if they might be seen to hold a position of greater authority and status. By contrast, a recent discussion with school principals resulted in their strong consensus that a bully must be of higher status than the victim and their preference was to use the term "harassment" when referring to student aggressive targeted behaviour against staff. However, many teachers feel the term "harassment" has connotations of behaviour that is primarily driven by discriminatory motives, such as racial or sexual harassment, which is not always present in the behaviour they experience. As this survey also explored the extent of racial and sexual harassment experienced by teachers, both terms are used in some instances throughout the paper.

## 2. Methodology

The findings in this report are based upon two survey tools, a questionnaire designed for individual teachers and a questionnaire designed for PPTA branch officers<sup>2</sup>.

### Branch Officer Questionnaire

This was distributed to each secondary and area/composite school branch. Of the 395 questionnaires sent out we received responses from 112 schools. The questionnaire asked for information on the practices schools are currently implementing to manage and minimise violence in their school communities. These responses have been reported in this paper by category of school practice as well as with a sample of the practices illustrating the range provided.

### Member questionnaire

#### Distribution and response

A systematic sample of teachers in all secondary and area schools was surveyed. The PPTA Branch Chairperson of each school was asked to distribute the survey to every fifth teacher sequenced through their staffroom 'pigeon-hole'.

The survey had a potential distribution of some 3000 teachers, though we cannot be certain that the surveys were distributed in every school. In the responses 195 different schools were identified by name, and a further 114 teachers did not give the name of the school. We can be sure that in at least half of all schools surveys were distributed and a minimum of 10% of the workforce received the questionnaires.

587 questionnaires were returned<sup>3</sup>. This is 3.7% of the secondary work force, 19.6% of the potential sample.

#### Contents

The questionnaire was organised into three parts:

- Part 1            Questions on a fairly standard range of comparative data on the respondents (age, gender, ethnicity and role and status in schools) and on their school (size, decile, location and type).
- Part 2            Four sections of specific questions on bullying or harassing behaviours from:
- Students
  - Parents (this category also included visitors to the school and Board of Trustee members)
  - Staff (of equal status)
  - Management staff
- Part 3            A section of open questions regarding systems and resources participants would like to assist them to combat bullying and harassment in schools<sup>4</sup>.

In each of the four sections from the second part of the questionnaire participants were provided with a list of incident type forms of bullying and asked to indicate the frequency with which they

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<sup>2</sup> The survey was sent to the branch chairperson at each PPTA branch (school)

<sup>3</sup> It was expected that the survey would achieve a one third return rate (some 1000+ responses). Unfortunately, as some branch officers pointed out, it came at the latter part of a year in which teachers were also being consulted about an unprecedented range of professional and industrial issues. In considering the sub-group analysis the numbers involved mean that the data is to be considered indicative.

<sup>4</sup> There needs to be further analysis of the responses to the third part of the questionnaire. This paper will present only initial categorising of resources identified.

had personally either experienced or witnessed such incidents over the last year. There were a greater *variety* of categories of bullying offered within the management section than from other groups<sup>5</sup>. The list of incident types was developed from responses to previous PPTA surveys, from discussions with members and from literature on the subject (i.e. Needham, 2003).

To ensure that all potential incidents were covered, all categories were also asked an open question providing participants with the opportunity to provide examples of other forms of perceived bullying and the frequency of such incidents. Fewer than 2% of respondents identified instances of bullying which they considered to be outside the range of options provided in any section. This suggests that the range of options suggested for each potential source of bullying was appropriate.

## Responses sought in Section 2

For each category of the potential source of bullying participants were asked to use the following scale to indicate the frequency of each of the types of incidents they experienced or witnessed in the last twelve month period:

Never	Not in the last 12 months
Rarely	Once or twice in 12 months
Sometimes	Once or twice a term
Frequently	Once or twice a month
Often	Once or twice a week
Constantly	Once or twice a day

## Data analysis

For each type of bullying in each category of potential bully the following was calculated:

- The percentage of responses for each of the six possible responses.
- The percentage of responses indicating that event at any frequency.
- The percentage responses indicating such an event either daily or weekly.
- The mean minimum number of events in the previous twelve months.

These calculations were run across the whole sample, and then across various demographic or school type divisions. Demographic groupings were arranged so that wherever possible sub-samples were composed of more than 100 respondents.

Since the types of behaviour surveyed ranged in severity of impact on teachers<sup>6</sup> they were then organised into two general categories:

Category A: incidents which may not have a significant impact upon an individual if occurring infrequently, but which may have a significant negative effect on a teacher when repeated over time, eg continual verbal abuse.

Category B: incidents which, when performed by a particular type of potential bully, may have a significant effect upon a teacher, even if occurring only once, eg physical intimidation<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> The higher number of questions regarding bullying from management reflected the greater scope for bullying incidents that can arise from those in positions of greater power and authority, and the more serious effect these can have on the target.

<sup>6</sup> As all forms of bullying and harassment are highly subjective it is not possible to evaluate the actual harm they cause or whether it is more harmful to be subjected to continual lower level harassment or to more occasional but more significant forms of bullying. However, it is reasonably clear that it is useful to separate out in the analysis infrequent incidents of low level bullying from infrequent incidents of serious bullying which is more likely to have a significant impact on the target.

<sup>7</sup> In some instances a particular incident, eg a significant challenge to the teacher's authority, when made by a student, may be categorised as 'cumulative' whereas it becomes 'significant' when performed by someone of equal or higher status, i.e. colleague or manager.

For each of these groups of bullying, and across all categories in each section was calculated:

- The percentage of responses indicating that event at any frequency.
- The percentage responses indicating any event occurring either daily or weekly.
- The total mean minimum number of events in the previous twelve months.

In recording the results it was determined that category A incidents are more appropriately highlighted when they occur on a daily/weekly basis<sup>8</sup>, while the more severe category B incidents have been recorded on the basis of having occurred at any frequency (but at the very least once) over the previous 12 months.

Incidents in either or both categories have also been recorded for comparative purposes in terms of mean minimum incidents per teacher per year. This measure provides a way of illustrating how frequently bullying incidents are occurring across the workforce in a yearly period, rather than simply recording what proportion of the workforce experiences bullying incidents. It also allows us to compare the number of incidents occurring between sub-categories of different size.

### Calculating mean minimum incidents.

For each type of incident (I) the mean minimum is:

$$\frac{\sum I_w n}{N}$$

Where  $I_w$  is the weighting for the frequency of occurrence given by the individual to the event and  $n$  is the number of people giving that frequency of occurrence and  $N$  is the total number of people.

It is the mean *minimum* figure as it assumes only one incident per frequency category, whereas that is the minimum number in each category. Thus a teacher may have recorded an incident as once or twice a day, but for the calculation it is assumed the incident occurs once per day.

The weightings<sup>9</sup> applied are:

Never		0
Rarely	Once or twice in 12 months	1
Sometimes	Once or twice a term	4
Frequently	Once or twice a month	10
Often	Once or twice a week	40
Constantly	Once or twice a day	190

A mean minimum figure of 4 would indicate that the average person in the sample would have experienced that type of bullying incident **at least** four times in the previous twelve-month period.

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<sup>8</sup> The maximum scale of teachers reporting daily/weekly cumulative bullying charts (40% and 50% for teachers by school decile) differs from that for significant bullying (100%) as the percentages are so much lower.

<sup>9</sup> The weightings assume that incidents occur when the school is open for instruction.

### 3. Analysis of findings

Responses have been reported, unless otherwise specified, in four main ways;

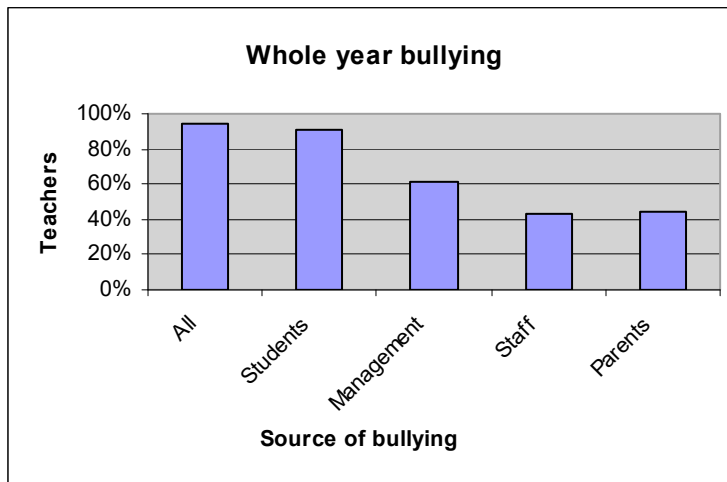
- i. Mean maximum incidents per teacher per year for overall comparative purposes
- ii. Overall frequency rates of reported incidents and types of bullying
- iii. Category A (cumulative) incidents occurring on a daily/weekly basis
- iv. Category B (significant) incidents occurring within a whole year

Information has also been provided on the distribution of teachers within different demographic groups of teachers or schools.

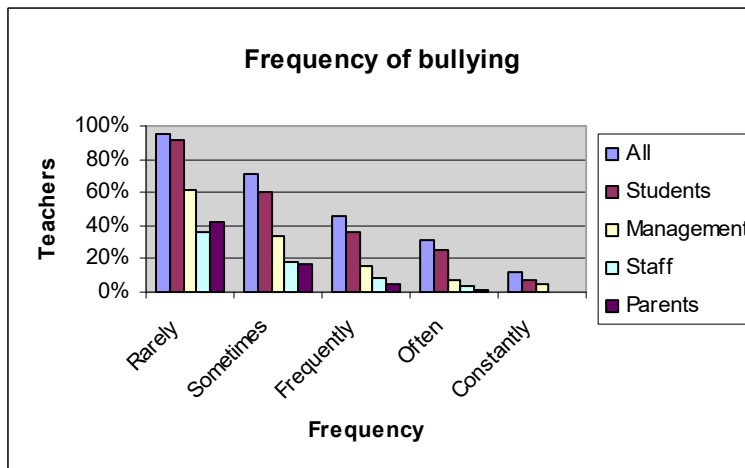
#### General findings relating to all teachers in all schools

##### Who are teachers most bullied or harassed by?

Consistently, by far the most bullying and harassment reported by teachers was from students, followed by management and then, to a far lesser extent, from either other teachers or from parents or visitors to the school. This is seen in all reports throughout all demographic groups of teachers and school types and is illustrated here in the percentage of teachers who reported any incident of bullying over a whole year.



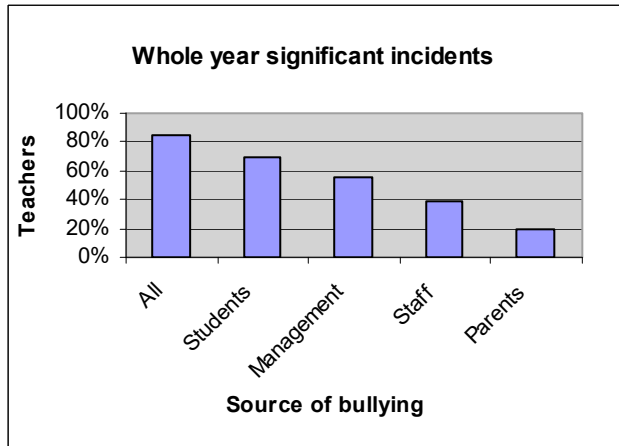
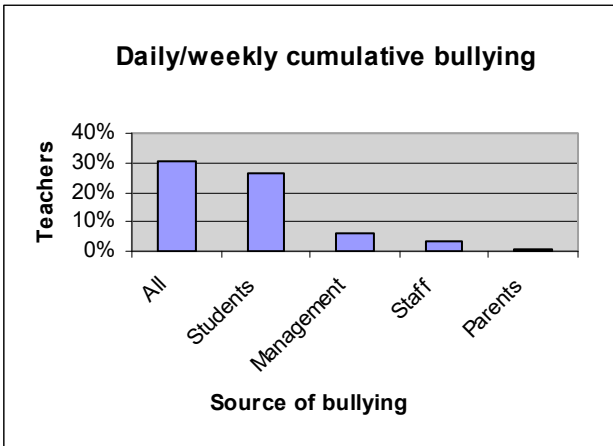
Frequency of bullying also shows a consistent trend in regard to the frequency rate most commonly reported. Most bullying incidents are infrequent. Most teachers reported bullying incidents as occurring rarely and this trend persisted throughout all reporting with the least proportion of teachers reporting constant, i.e. daily, bullying or harassment.



**How many teachers report bullying?**

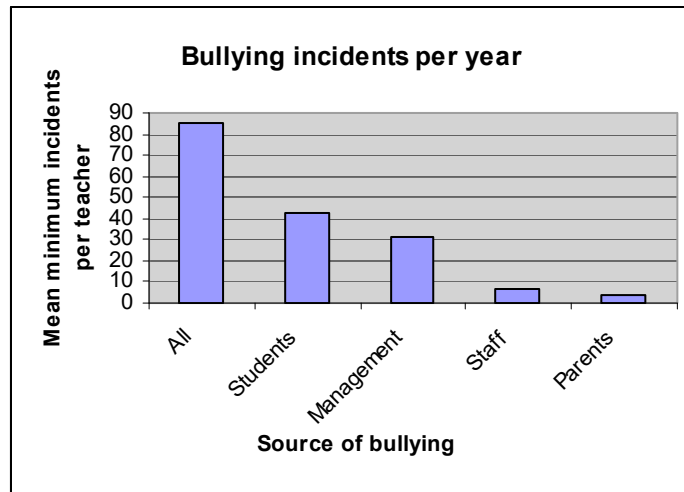
The analysis of cumulative bullying incidents showed nearly a third of all teachers experience minor forms of bullying on a daily or weekly basis, mostly from students (28%). Comparatively few teachers experience this form of bullying on a regular basis from management (8%), other staff (3%) or parents (0.5%).

On the other hand, a far higher proportion of teachers (85%) report less frequent but more significant bullying incidents within a school year. While the same trend is apparent, i.e. the most frequent sources of bullying being students, management, staff and parents in that order, there is far less differentiation and the ratio of incidents generated by student and management staff in particular are much closer.



**How much bullying or harassment does the average teacher experience in a year?**

Using the mean minimum calculation explained in the previous section, the average teacher can expect to be confronted with 85 incidents of some kind of bullying or harassment per year. (This does *not* include incidents of violence between students). 42 of these can be expected from students, 32 from management staff, 7 from other staff and 4 from parents.



## Different kinds of bullying behaviours

The table below describes the forms of bullying behaviour from each source most reported by teachers.<sup>10</sup> These behaviours were of both cumulative and significant incidents and they remained consistently the most reported from different groups of teacher, and from teachers in different types of school. This remained consistent when applying different measures (whole year, daily/weekly or mean minimum). This table illustrates the percentage of teachers reporting incidents in these categories at any frequency level throughout a whole year as well as the mean minimum number of each type of behaviour reported by participants.

Source of bullying	Cumulative bullying	Whole year	Mean min. inc.	Significant bullying	Whole year	Mean min. Inc.
<b>Students</b>	Verbal abuse	81.6%	17.8	Acts of vandalism	55.9%	7.4
	Significant public challenges to authority as a teacher	69.3%	10.2	Physical intimidation	48.6%	3
	Verbal intimidation, i.e. threats	48.7%	3.2	Physical assault	15.5%	0.4
	Verbal sexual harassment	26.1%	1			
	Written or electronic bullying	20.1%	1			
<b>Parents/visitors</b>	Verbal abuse	25.6%	1	Significant public challenges to authority	22.1%	0.8
	Verbal intimidation, i.e. threats	21%	0.4	Physical intimidation	14.5%	0.3
	Disparaging remarks about work or personal life in front of students or adults	20.4%	0.5	Acts of vandalism	9.5%	0.4
	Ridicule/taunts in front of students or adults	14.1%	0.3	Physical assault	1.7%	0.002
<b>Staff</b>	Disparaging remarks about work or personal life in front	20.3%	0.8	Deliberate denial of information or resources	22.7%	1.6

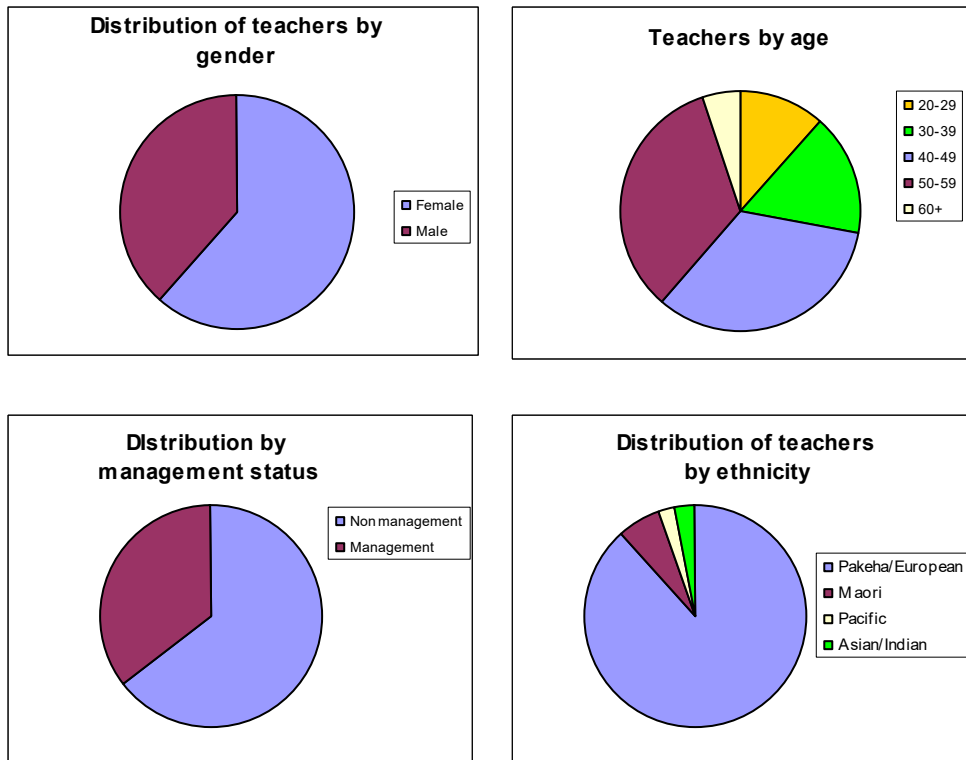
<sup>10</sup> Also included is the percentage of teachers reporting the *most* extreme form of violence, physical assault. 15.5% of teachers report such assaults from students, the 8<sup>th</sup> ranking behaviour (out of 11). However physical assaults from parents are reported by only 1.7% of teachers making assault the second to least reported behaviour. And physical assaults from either management or non-management staff are the least reported behaviour and reported by the least number of teachers (0.7 and 0.5% respectively).



	of students or adults					
	Ridicule/taunts in front of students or adults	17.5%	0.8	Isolation or exclusion from meetings, events, conversations	21.8%	1.6
	Verbal abuse	13.3%	0.5	Significant public challenges to authority	12.6%	0.4
				Physical assault	0.3%	0.002
<b>Management</b>	"Silent" treatment, refusal to communicate	30.5%	4.2	Imposing unrealistic workload compared with colleagues	27.9%	5.4
	Unfair blame	30%	1.6	Public reprimand or humiliation if speaking out against management decision	22.8%	1.05
	Excessive monitoring, micro-management	23.5%	3.7	Credit claimed for work or achievements	20.6%	1
				Classes or tasks changed without cause or time	20.3%	1.3
				Denial of information or resources necessary to teaching or other work	18.4%	2.8
				Denial of reasonable support, mentoring or professional development requested by teacher	17.7%	2.5
				Isolation /exclusion from meetings, events or professional conversations	16.9%	2
				Physical assault	0.5%	0.000

## Differences between specific groups of teachers

When looking at differences between groups of teachers the survey identified teachers by gender, age, ethnicity and management/non-management staff. The distribution of the groups was as follows:

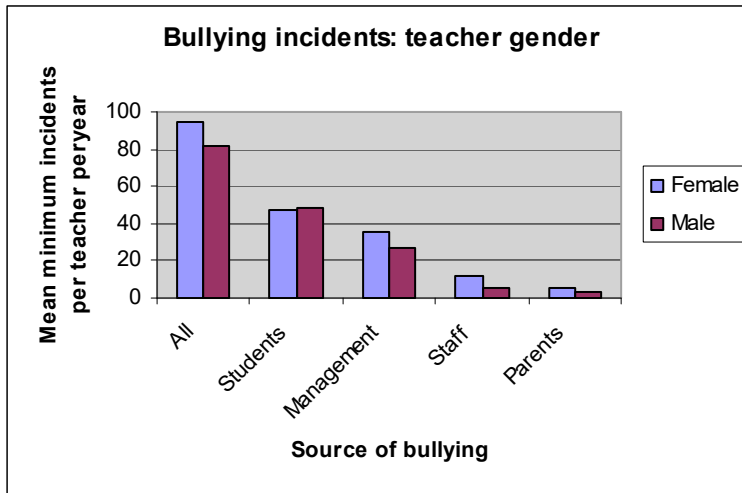


## Ethnicity

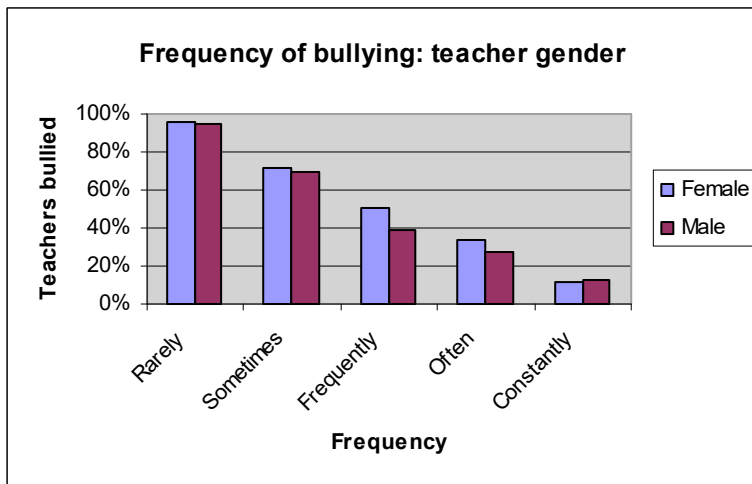
Unfortunately the sample of ethnicities other than Pakeha/European was too small to draw significant conclusions in terms of racial harassment or other forms of bullying of teachers of other ethnicities and this analysis will have to await further research. There were only 37 respondents who identified as Maori, 16 as Asian or Indian and 14 as Pacific.

## Gender

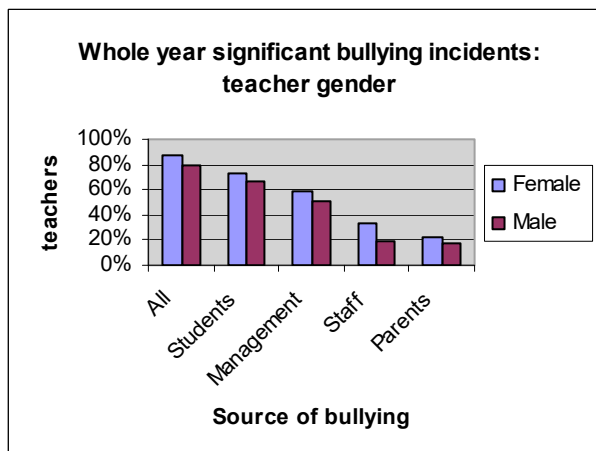
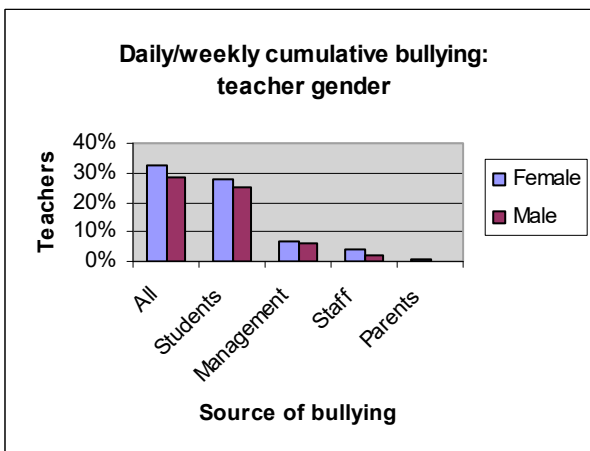
More women teachers report bullying from all sources than men, and women teachers can expect to experience more bullying than men, at least an average of 94 incidents within a year as compared with 81 incidents for men teachers. This pattern remained consistent when looking at bullying from management, other staff and parents. However male teachers reported a slightly higher average incident rate of bullying from students than women teachers (48.6 over 47.8 for women).



Women teachers also reported more bullying at most frequency levels from weekly to yearly incidence. However constant bullying (at least once or twice a day) was reported slightly more often by male teachers (12.7% over 11.5%).



Women teachers also reported more of both significant and cumulative incident bullying, an overall difference of 8.4% for significant and 4.5% for cumulative bullying. This remained consistent for both forms of bullying from all sources.<sup>11</sup>



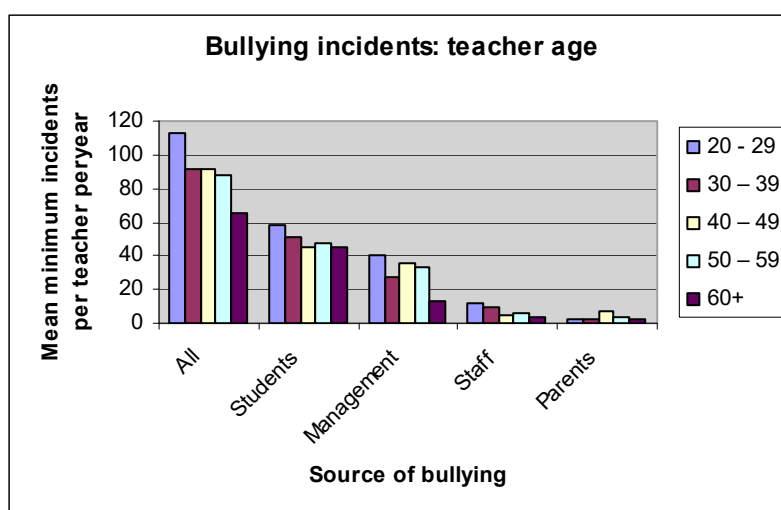
<sup>11</sup> It should be noted however, that deductions regarding frequent cumulative bullying, from staff of equal status and from parents can often only be indicative due to the small size of sample

## Age

In analysing the data on differences in bullying trends on different age groups of teachers, a more complex picture emerges.

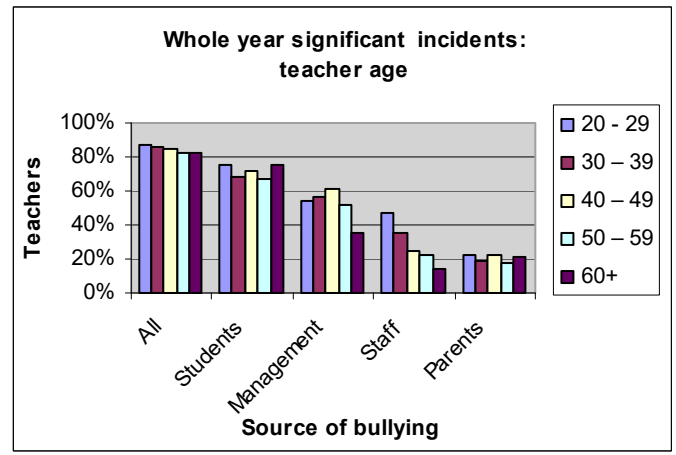
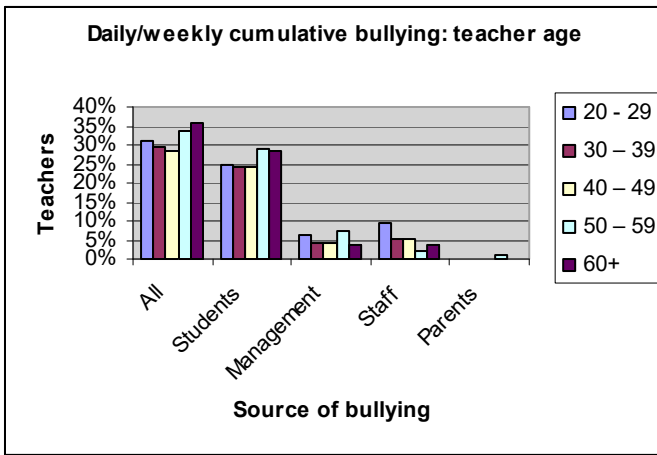
It is hardly surprising that the youngest teachers, who are also the least experienced, and those with the least status, can expect a higher average incidence of bullying overall, and from most sources. However there is an interesting spike in the middle years (40-59), of bullying from management staff, which nearly matches that experienced by the 20-29 group. Teachers within this group are more likely to be themselves management staff, and this finding is consistent with those of management staff reports of bullying from management staff (see over).

The average numbers of bullying incidents from staff and parents are very small. However, their indication that the teachers most vulnerable to bullying from parents are in the 40-49 age group, are reasonable, considering the high number of these teachers who are in management positions responsible for discipline of students and thereby coming into conflict situations with parents.



However when analysing the specific data of both cumulative and significant bullying incidents, another group clearly emerges as being a prime target of bullying, particularly from students. While more teachers from the youngest age group report significant incidents overall, the teachers reporting significant incidents from students are from the oldest age group, 60 and over.

This is even more marked in the reports of cumulative bullying, where more teachers in this oldest age group report the most frequent bullying from both all sources, and particularly from students. The small size of the over 60 age group sample (28 teachers) may suggest these findings can only be seen as indicative. However, this finding is considerably strengthened when considering that it is the next oldest, and much larger, age group of 50 – 59 year old teachers (184) who are the next highest reporters of bullying from both sources. More teachers from this latter group (50-59) also report workplace bullying from management, which is again consistent with the findings from the management group (see over) as they themselves are more likely to be management staff.



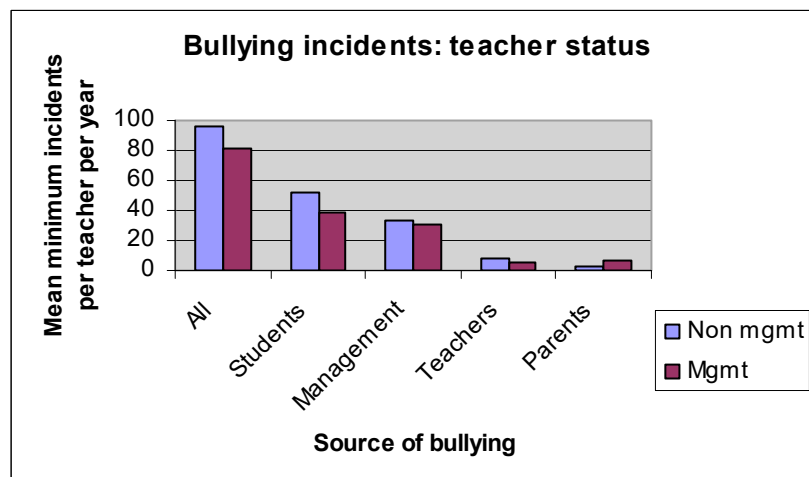
Initially the writer found it odd that the oldest, and most experienced teachers should be those who most reported both cumulative and significant bullying, particularly from students, especially when the average incidents experienced were actually lower than for younger age groups. However discussions with groups of teachers have offered some insight both in terms of student behaviour and teacher response. Teachers report that some students harass older teachers *specifically* in relation to their age with comments such as; “Are you still here?” and; “Aren’t you past it?” Others comment that older teachers have higher expectations on students in regard to familiarity, language and respect, remembering earlier years in their teaching experience where teachers were afforded a great deal more respect and authority.

### Management and non management staff

Participants were asked to identify as either:

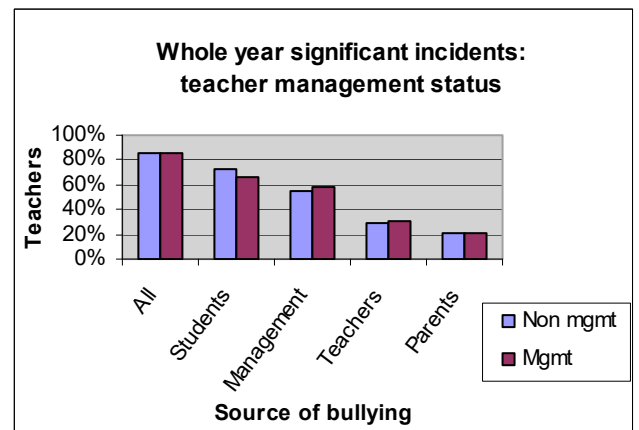
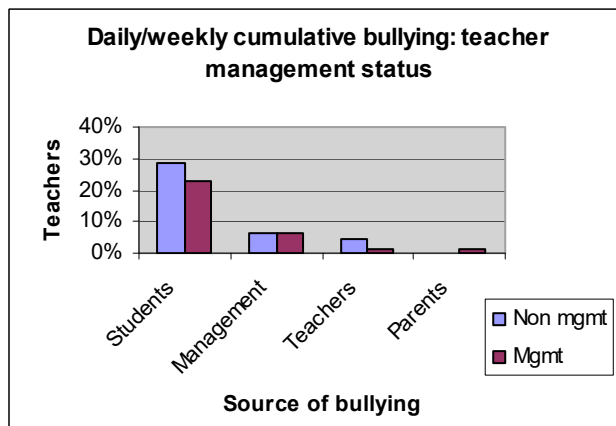
- i. Classroom teacher
- ii. Guidance counsellor
- iii. Teacher in charge of subject
- iv. Assistant HoD/ H.o.Faculty
- v. H.o.D / H.o.F
- vi. Associate Principal
- vii. Deputy Principal
- viii. Principal

Analysis between non-management (i-ii above) and management (iii – viii above) staff indicates by all measures, that non-management staff are subjected to more bullying by students and management staff to more from parents. As younger staff members are less represented in management positions, this correlates also with the findings in regard to age groups.



More surprisingly, it was apparent that management staff reported a similar amount of cumulative bullying and more significant incident bullying from other management staff of a higher status. A number of factors could be at play here, particularly in regard to the less frequent but more significant incidents. Factors could include:

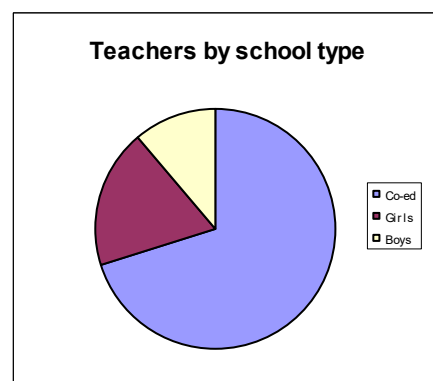
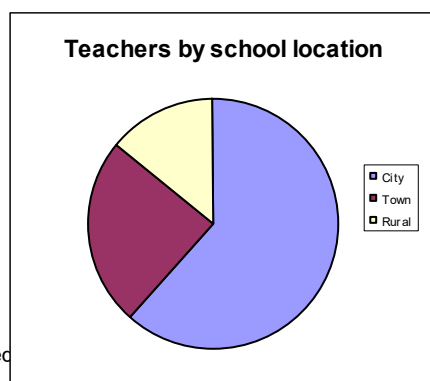
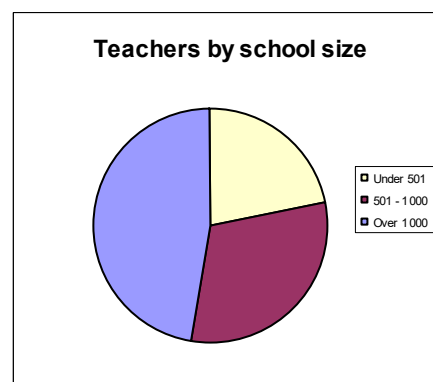
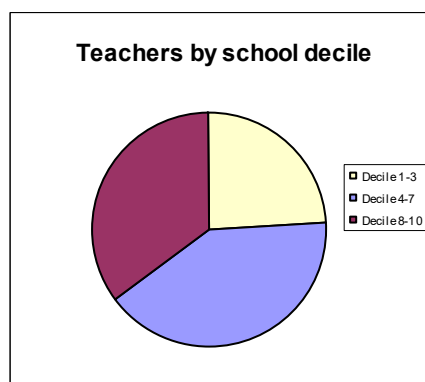
- more contact through the closer working relationships between lower, middle and higher level management staff
- workload pressure
- pressure to perform from both outside agencies and within the school community
- competition for resources
- pecking order effect – more senior managers pulling rank in school hierarchic system



### Differences between teachers from different schools

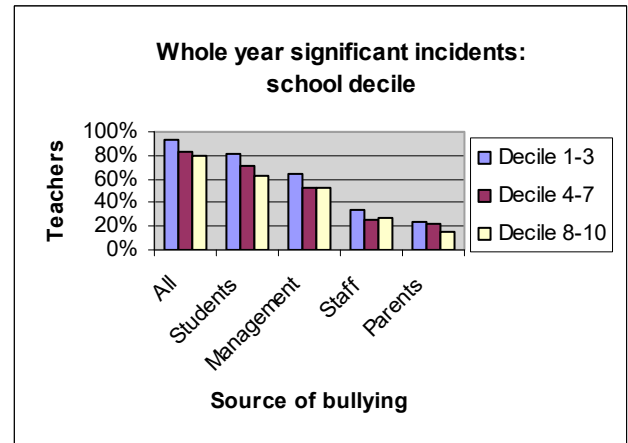
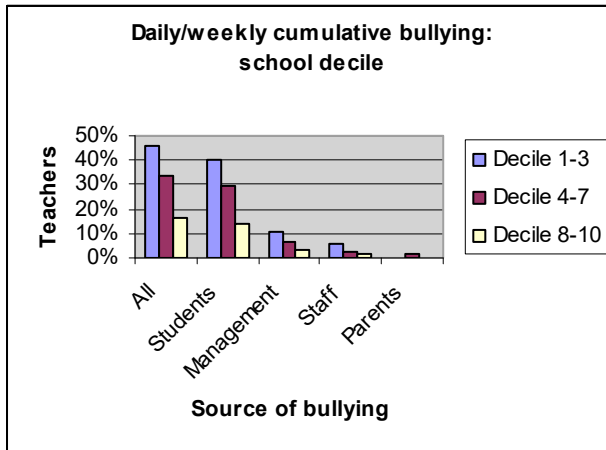
The data was also analysed by groups of teachers coming from different kinds of school according to:

- Decile group (1–3, 4-7, 8-10)
- Location (town, city, rural)
- Type (girls, boys or co-ed)
- Size (under 500, 500-1000, over 1000)

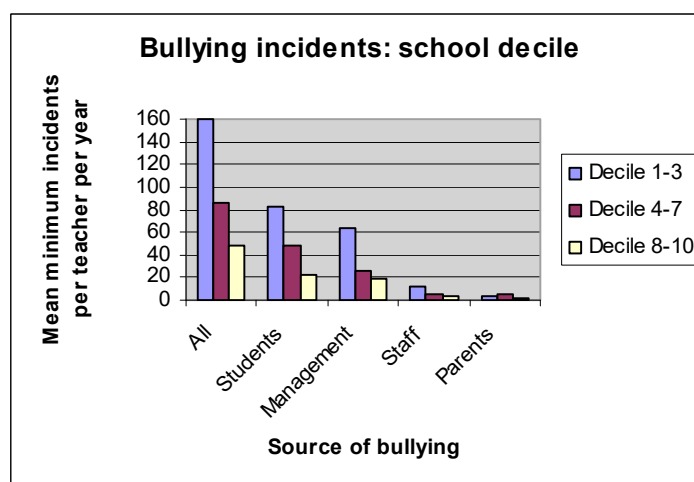


## School decile

There were no surprises regarding differences in bullying and harassment experienced by teachers from lower decile schools. Decile ranking is based on the proportion of lower socio-ranking families within the school population. Teachers in lower decile schools have always reported being subjected to more violence in quantum and violence of a more serious nature and the findings of this survey support this. Consistently, more teachers reported more bullying from students, the lower the decile of school. This was true of both cumulative bullying and significant incidents.



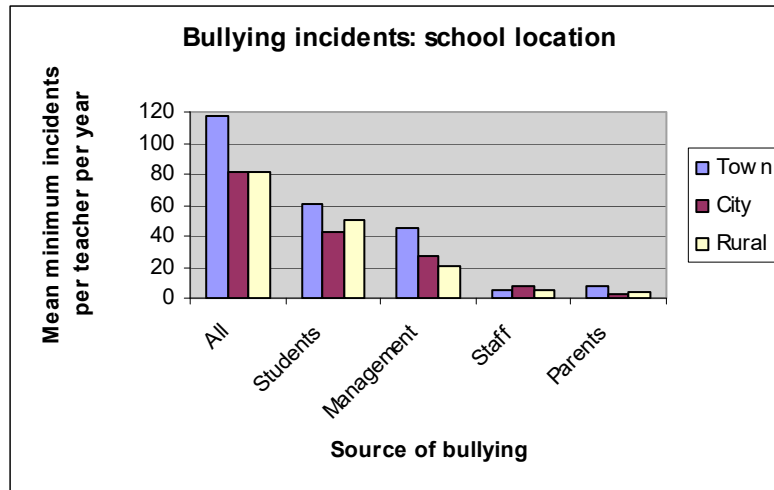
Teachers working in lower decile schools can also expect to experience many more bullying incidents throughout a whole school year. In fact teachers in the lowest decile group averaged almost twice the overall number of bullying incidents from students each year. However, while this may not be surprising when considering the behaviour of students, it is less obvious why it should hold true of bullying from management and other staff, other than to suggest an overall “rougher and tougher” school environment and the rubbing off of this on relationships between adults as well.



The effect of decile of school mediates throughout all reports from teachers in the different kinds of school; location, type and size. It appears to be one of the most crucial factors in school environments that impacts on violence against teachers.

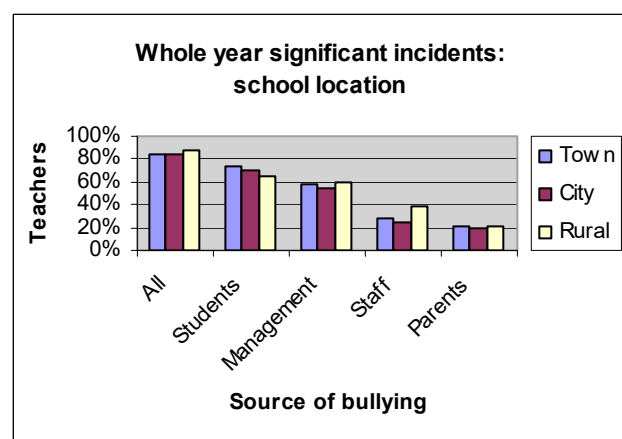
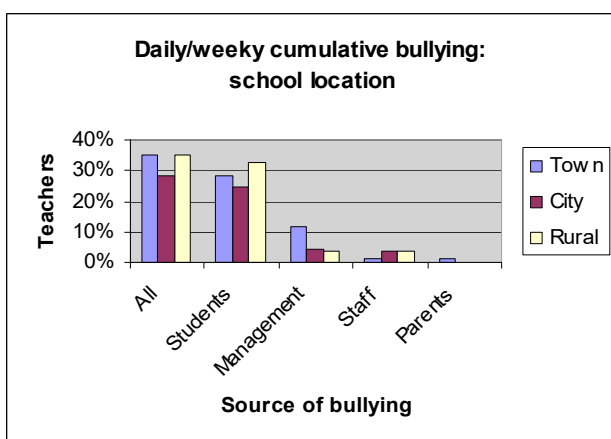
## School location

The overall comparison of mean minimum incidents per teacher per year showed bullying from almost all sources to be more prevalent in town schools, followed by rural and city schools. Rural schools produced more incidents of bullying from students and parents than city schools but the reverse was true with bullying from management and staff.



More teachers from rural schools reported cumulative bullying by students and more teachers from town schools reported it from management, with teachers from city schools reporting the least. There was little appreciable difference between the three groups in terms of significant bullying incidents.

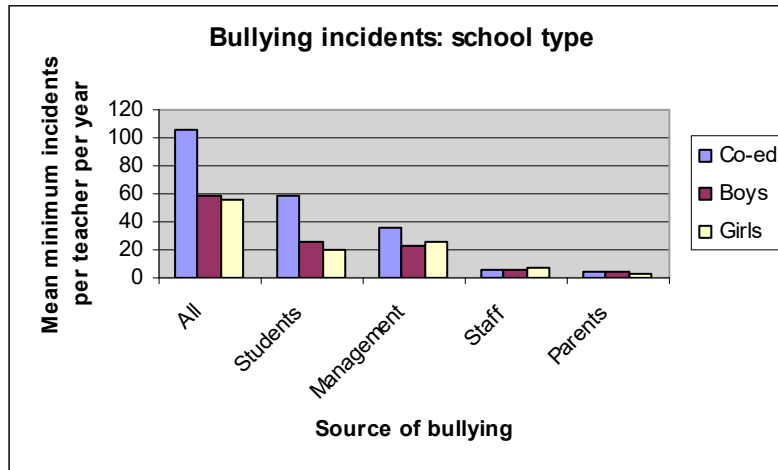
Overall, teachers from city schools appear to experience the least bullying. In discussions with teachers, individually and in groups, they speak of the higher visibility and vulnerability teachers often have in town and rural communities. There is also a strong correlation with the decile findings as town and rural schools have lower than average decile ratings than city schools.





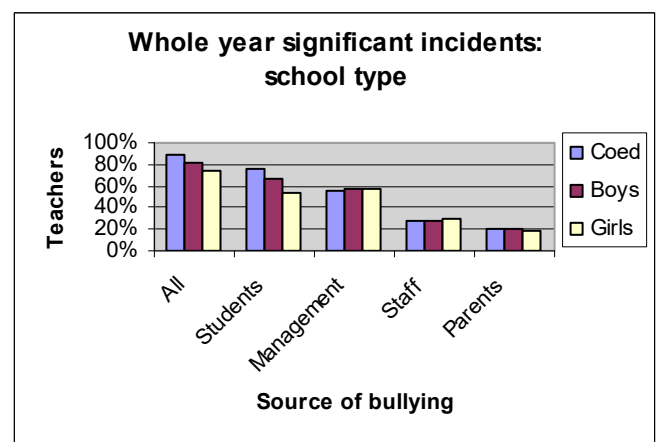
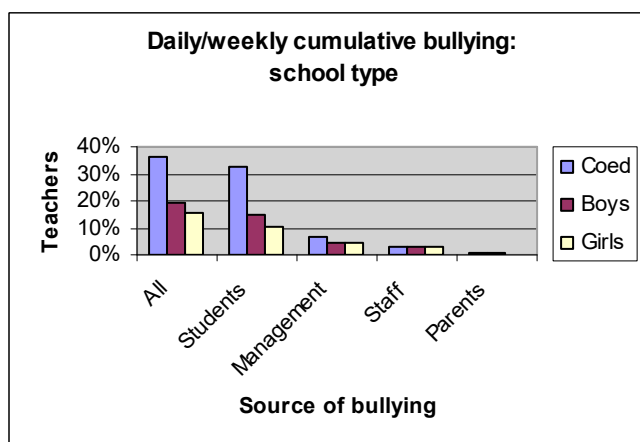
## School type

Overall, bullying appears to be considerably more prevalent in co-educational schools, followed by boys' schools and (slightly) less in girls' schools. This is most evident in bullying from students where teachers in co-ed schools can expect to average almost twice the number of incidents from students than those from other schools. Teachers from girls schools can expect slightly more bullying from management than those from boys schools, although still less than those in co-ed schools, and there are no appreciable difference in bullying of teachers from other staff or parents within the different schools.



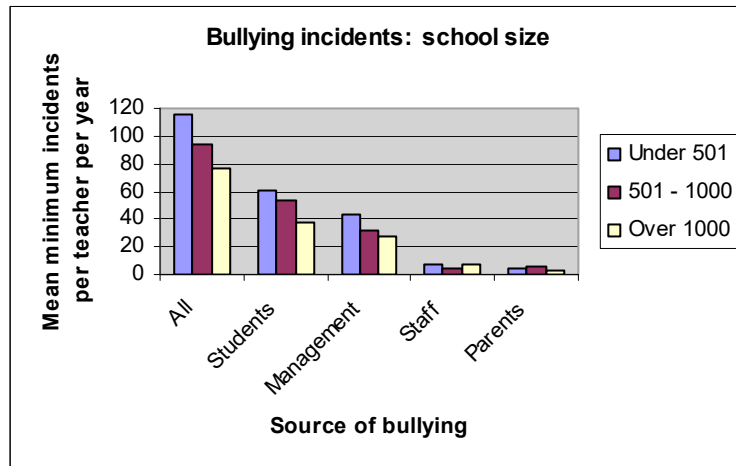
These trends are entirely consistent in the reporting of cumulative and significant bullying except that slightly more significant incidents by management are reported in both boys and girls schools than in co-educational schools.

Again these findings link strongly to those on teachers from lower decile schools, with more co-educational schools falling within the lower decile groups than single sex schools.

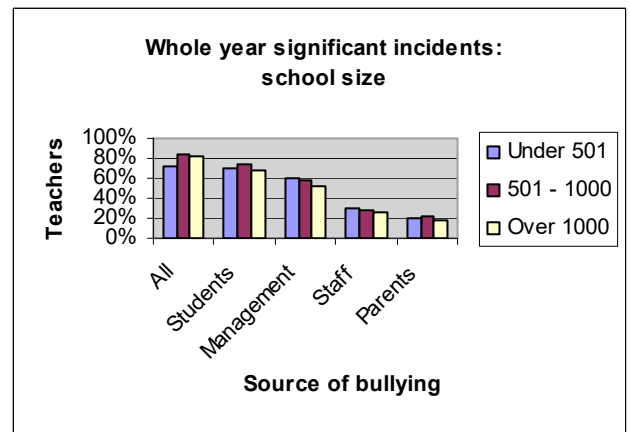
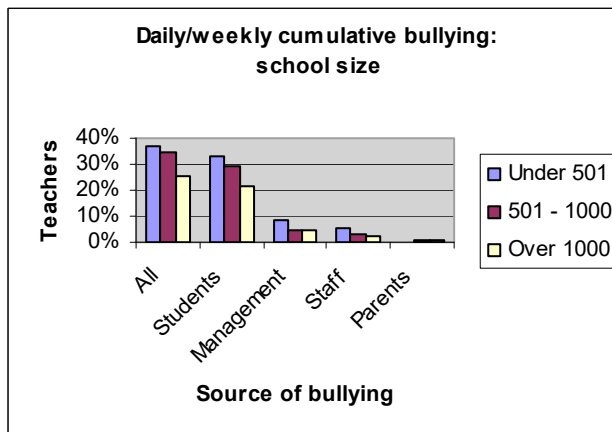


## School size

The data on school size is similarly clear and consistent, if somewhat surprising. It appears that the smaller the school the more bullying teachers report from the two major sources of bullying, students and management. There is a slight variance from this when analysing bullying from parents and staff but the numbers here are so small it is truest to say there is little appreciable difference in the numbers of teachers reporting bullying from these sources from different sized schools.



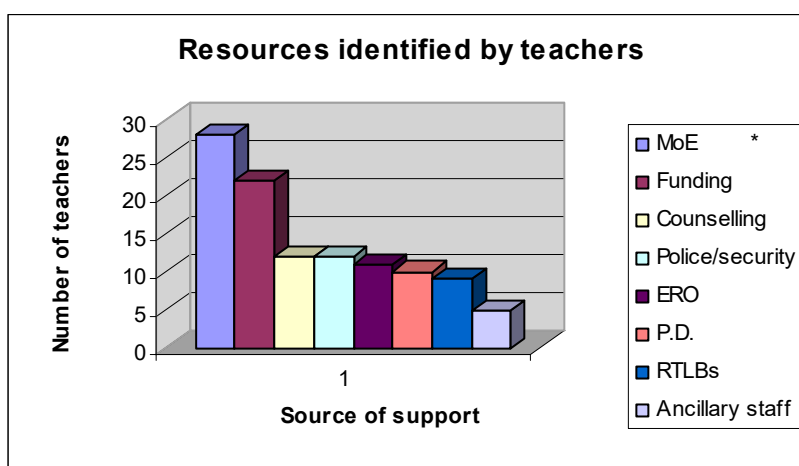
A very similar picture emerges with the cumulative bullying data, but a greater variance is apparent with significant incident bullying in different sized schools. Overall, slightly more teachers from medium sized schools report significant incident bullying over a whole year from both students and parents.



#### 4. Resources identified by members to combat violence

240 teachers altogether responded to the open question regarding what resources they would like put in place to assist them. Only a cursory analysis of these has thus far been possible. This has indicated that teachers identified the following groups and agencies as being the ones they most need to provide them with necessary support, resources and professional development. Many of the comments indicate that teachers are disappointed with the dearth of appropriate resources and support from these agencies and that it is programmes, professional development and resources they need rather than blame for student behaviour and violence, eg,

- *MOE taking more notice of the behaviour many current students display. Not putting blame on teachers, schools.*
- *Higher expectations of accountability of parents and caregivers. Much currently seems one-sided.*



\* **Key**

- Ministry of Education (including Group Special Education)
- Funding (in general for specific purposes, eg class sizes, access to specialists and resources etc)
- Counselling (for targets of bullying)
- Police/security (Police sometimes referred to in security sense, sometimes in providing programmes for students, eg, Kia Kaha)
- Education Review Office (assistance and support rather than criticism)
- Professional Development (in a range of areas, mostly behaviour/risk management)
- Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour (greater access)
- Ancillary staff (specialists, teacher aides, security staff)

## 5. The branch survey

### Survey of branch chairs

The branch survey was sent to all secondary and area or composite school branch chairpersons. They were asked to report on any anti-violence systems, policies and procedures in place in their schools and the overall picture their responses present is that most schools are addressing issues of violence in schools to some extent. However, only 101 branches responded to the survey out of 395 and it is possible that this could have given a positive skew to the response as those branches with a lack of systems and policies in place may have been less likely to respond. Further analysis is needed to draw parallels between what kinds of schools have the most systems in place in terms of their decile, location, size or type.

### Policies, practices and procedures identified as existing in schools

<b>Any anti-violence policy / procedure in school</b>	<b>82.7%</b>
Clear reporting/complaint procedure of violent incidents	85.5%
Provision of counselling/support to targets of violence	83.6%
Safety measures, eg, lighting, alarms etc	72.7%
Anti-bullying programmes for students	65.5%
Access to mentoring/professional development for staff	64.5%
Identified staff responsible for handling complaints	63.6%
Procedures to prevent/diffuse violent situations	60.9%
Whole school policy, including monitoring/evaluation	55.5%

While 82.7% responded to the first and more comprehensive question; “*Does your school have any anti-violence systems, policies or procedures in place?*” there were reports of two individual provisions that exceeded this. 85.5% of schools reported that they had clear well known reporting and complaint processes for violent incidents and 83.6% reported that counselling or support was available to targets of violence after the event. There was a range of reports of other specific procedures of between 60 and 73%, but the lowest response (only 55.5%) reported a whole school anti-violence policy in place.

46 branches responded to an open question seeking for information on other systems, policies or procedures being used. Of these, three reported very little violence occurring against teachers in their schools.

Many reported a range of specific initiatives being used in schools. Several schools reported the existence of policies, some more comprehensive than others:

- *Policy on sexual harassment. Policy on dealing with bullying. We are currently working on a policy which covers the anti-violence guidelines/kit sent by PPTA*
- *School wide anti violence, anti bullying (policies) and positive reinforcement of a set of values for all staff and students.*
- *We have an anti-bullying policy which we regard as constituting a programme*
- *Policies are as laid down in BOT documents. Copies (are) available if desired*

Some expressed active concern about the effectiveness of school policies or procedures:

- *We say we have them but I'm not too clear as to how the system(s) work. Not too many of the staff could describe any or many.*
- *At times, policies seem to change as to what are the requirements without some staff and students realising there has been a change.*

A number of innovative initiatives were reported for situations of student bullying students:

- peer mediators
- student counsellors
- student bullying surveys
- self defence programmes
- peer support and 'buddying' programmes
- student based mediation, eg MASH (mediation against student harassment)
- anti-bullying programmes, eg WITS (walk away, ignore, tell someone, say something to the person).

Zero tolerance of any violence was referred to by a few schools, sometimes coupled with suspension or stand down and (one) with a restorative justice initiative. A very few schools reported combined student/staff approaches. The following was the exception:

- *Anti harassment team - posters with their names and photos in every classroom. Team is staff and students from all levels. One AP dedicated to student concerns and available at virtually all times.*

One school reported a specific whole staff approach with special regard for staff welfare:

- *School ancillary staff, cleaners, groundsmen, office staff all are members of the staff welfare committee which meets every month to discuss any issues regarding violence.*

One school referred to community violence interacting with school violence and the school's method of dealing with this:

- *If a big fight is coming up individuals are released at different times but no set procedure - often our big fights are community not school related.*

Professional development, mentoring or resources for teachers were hardly reported at all. There were two reports of using RTLBs on occasion, two of schools undertaking the Eliminating Violence programme assisted by Group Special Education, and one of the staff having professional development on mental health.

Overall it was very apparent that most school policies and practice were primarily if not exclusively aimed at dealing with violent situations between, and bullying and harassment of, students rather than adults in school community.

## 6. Conclusion

Teachers work in a complex work environment where the possibility of encountering aggression and hostility is arguably far greater than that encountered by most other employees. While there is no scope within this paper to compare the workplace bullying experienced by teachers with that experienced by other employees, the literature would suggest that the incidence of workplace bullying in schools from other adults, particularly management, would appear to be at least as prevalent in schools as in most workplaces of similar size and complexity.

However, other adults are not the only, or even the prime, source of violence directed against teachers. This survey clearly shows that aggression and violence against teachers comes primarily from students and that this is where the school environment differs markedly from the working environment of other employees of a similar professional status. While practitioners in other professions such as medicine and law are exposed to occasional (and often very dangerous) violence from their clients, it is highly unlikely that they encounter anywhere near the number of violent incidents directed against them as teachers do from students, both at a constant low level and at a less frequent but more serious one.

Schools are also a places that many students do not wish to be in, they *have to* go to school and to this extent it is a coercive environment, but one with far less resources and levels of support in respect to client behaviour, than is afforded to similar coercive work environments, i.e. prisons.

When the sheer number of students in each school is considered, and in particular, the emotional and volatile nature of the adolescent behaviour they exhibit, the school environment teachers work in is clearly a particularly hazardous one. Yet teachers and schools often find it difficult to access appropriate resources and support to assist them to provide a safe school environment which will afford respect and dignity to both adults and students in the school community.

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