



MONASH
University

OHS SURVEY OF AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION UNION MEMBERS VICTORIAN BRANCH

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LIST OF DEFINITIONS

Several terms used in this report may be unfamiliar to some readers, so we provide a list of definitions below.

TABLE 1: DEFINITIONS OF CONSTRUCTS USED IN THIS REPORT

<i>Term</i>	<i>Definition</i>
<i>Acquiescent silence</i>	Employee silence refers to the passive withholding of relevant ideas due to submission. “Acquiescent silence represents disengaged behaviour shown by employees who have given up hope for improvement and are not willing to exert the effort to speak up, get involved, or attempt to change the situation” (p. 351). ¹
<i>Aggression</i>	“Deviant behaviour with intent to harm” (p.456). ²
<i>Bureaucracy</i>	“The relative emphasis on rules and ‘red tape’ within an organization” (p. 340). ³
<i>Bullying</i>	A situation where one or several individuals persistently, over a period of time, perceive themselves to be on the receiving end of negative actions from one or several persons, in a situation where the target of bullying has difficulty in defending him or herself against these actions. ⁴ We do not refer to a one-off incident as bullying. For this report, the context is the workplace, so we use the term ‘workplace bullying’ (WPB).
<i>Change</i>	“How organizational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organization” (p. 122). ⁵
<i>Emotional burnout</i>	The degree of psychological fatigue and exhaustion that is perceived by the person as related to their work (p. 197). ⁶
<i>Incivility</i>	“Low intensity deviant behaviour with ambiguous intent to harm” (p. 456). ²
<i>Job control</i>	“How much say [a] person has in the way they do their work” (p. 121). ⁵
<i>Job demands</i>	“Includes issues such as workload, work patterns, and the work environment” (p. 121). ⁵
<i>Leading indicators of occupational health and safety (OHS)</i>	“[... measures] actions, behaviors and processes, the things people actually do for safety, and not simply the safety-related failures typically tracked by trailing [or lagging] measures” (p. 29). ⁷ Leading indicators of OHS are measures of the predictors, or causes, of OHS performance in a workplace. ⁸
<i>Manager support</i>	“Encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the employer” (p. 99) ⁹ and/or the immediate supervisor.
<i>Mindfulness</i>	“The awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment” (p. 145). ¹⁰
<i>Near misses</i>	“Any unplanned incidents that occurred at the workplace which, although not resulting in any injury or disease, had the potential to do so.” (p. 6). ¹¹
<i>OHS</i>	“Health, safety and welfare of employees and other persons at work” (p. 2). ¹²
<i>Peer support</i>	“Encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by colleagues” (p. 97). ⁹

Term	Definition
<i>Quiescent silence</i>	Employee silence in relation to the active withholding of relevant information in order to protect oneself, based on the fear that the consequences of speaking up could be personally unpleasant (p. 351). ¹
<i>Remoteness classifications</i>	<p>“The Remoteness Structure of the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) [...] divides each state and territory into several regions on the basis of their relative access to services.” (p. 4).¹³</p> <p>The remoteness scores range from 0 (high accessibility to services centres) to 15 (high remoteness from services centres). The remoteness index results in several remoteness categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • major city (e.g., Melbourne, Geelong) • inner regional (e.g., Ballarat, Bendigo) • outer regional (e.g., Horsham, Bairnsdale) • remote (e.g., Cowangie, Bonang) • very remote (none in Victoria)
<i>Reported hazard</i>	Any activity, procedure, plant, process, substance, situation or any other circumstance that could cause, or contribute to causing, a major incident which has been reported by a worker to management. ¹⁴
<i>Reported incidents</i>	Occurrences of injury/disease which were reported to management by workers. ¹¹
<i>Role clarity</i>	“Whether people understand their role within the organization and whether the organization ensures that the person does not have conflicting roles” (p. 122). ⁵
<i>Safety climate</i>	<p>There are numerous definitions of safety climate. One example is:</p> <p>“A specific form of organizational climate, which describes individual perceptions of the value of safety in the work environment” (p. 100).¹⁵</p> <p>Factors that have been identified as being important components of safety climate include: management values (e.g. management concern for employee wellbeing), management and organisational practices (e.g. adequacy of training, provision of safety equipment, quality of safety management systems), communication and employee involvement in workplace health and safety.¹⁶</p>
<i>Safety compliance</i>	<p>“Core safety activities that need to be carried out by individuals to maintain workplace safety” (p. 947).¹⁶</p> <p>Examples of safety compliance activities could include, but are not limited to, lockout procedures and using correct health and safety procedures.</p>
<i>Safety control</i>	“A person’s perception of the ability or opportunity to manage work situations to avoid injuries and accidents” (p. 427). ¹⁷
<i>Safety motivation</i>	“An individual’s willingness to exert effort to enact safety behaviours and the valence associated with those behaviours. Individuals should be motivated to comply with safe working practices and to participate in safety activities if they perceive that there is a positive safety climate in the workplace” (p. 947). ¹⁶
<i>Safety participation</i>	“Behaviours such as participating in voluntary safety activities or attending safety meetings. These behaviours may not directly contribute to workplace safety, but they do help to develop an environment that supports safety” (p. 349). ¹⁶

<i>Term</i>	<i>Definition</i>
<i>Stress</i>	The UK-based Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines stress as “the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them”. ¹⁸
<i>Thriving</i>	“Thriving is a psychological state composed of the joint experience of vitality and learning. People who are thriving experience growth and momentum marked by both a sense of feeling energized and alive (vitality) and a sense that they are continually improving and getting better at what they do (learning)” (p. 250). ¹⁹
<i>Unreported incidents</i>	An OHS incident that was not reported to a manager. ²⁰
<i>Violence</i>	“High intensity, physically aggressive behavior” (p. 456). ²
<i>Violence (safety) climate</i>	<p>“The idea of a perceived violence climate is a direct extension of the idea of a safety climate. A good violence climate will be perceived by employees when management emphasizes the control and elimination of violence and verbal aggression” (pp.119–120).²¹</p> <p>Although the term used in the academic literature is ‘violence climate’, in order to reinforce the connection with a focus on safety in this report, the construct will be referred to as ‘violence safety climate’.</p>
<i>Wellbeing</i>	“‘Wellbeing’ refers to a positive rather than neutral state, framing health as a positive aspiration. This definition was adapted by the 1986 Ottawa charter, which describes health as ‘a resource for everyday life, not the object of living’. From this perspective health is a means to living well, which highlights the link between health and participation in society” (para. 11). ²²
<i>Work overload</i>	<p>Workload generally refers to the sheer volume of work required of an employee. Workload can be measured in terms of number of hours worked, level of production, or even the mental demands of the work being performed.²³</p> <p>High workload or work overload is likely to be reflected by increased work hours, and also contributes to feelings of strain and exhaustion.²⁴</p>

LIST OF ACRONYMS

Several acronyms used in this report may be unfamiliar to some readers, so we provide a list below.

TABLE 2: ACRONYMS USED IN THIS REPORT

<i>Acronym</i>	<i>Expansion</i>
<i>AEU</i>	Australian Education Union
<i>HSE-MSIT</i>	Health and Safety Executive - Management Standards Indicator Tool
<i>NAPLAN</i>	National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy
<i>OECD</i>	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
<i>OHS</i>	Occupational health and safety
<i>OPM-MU</i>	Organizational Performance Metric - Monash University
<i>SD</i>	Standard deviation(s)
<i>TAFE</i>	Technical and Further Education
<i>TALIS</i>	Teaching and Learning International Survey
<i>WHO</i>	World Health Organization
<i>WPB</i>	Workplace bullying

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Background and aims

This report presents results of a survey conducted with members of the Australian Education Union (AEU) Victorian branch in August and September 2019 by the Monash Workplace Health and Safety Research Team. The survey addressed a range of areas relevant to occupational health and safety (OHS).

Previously, in 2014, the Monash Workplace Health and Safety Research Team conducted a survey with the AEU Victorian branch with the aim of providing an overview of their members' perceptions of OHS, safety behaviours and other elements of work-related experiences along with self-reported OHS outcomes. The current report presents a similar analysis of union members' perceptions of OHS, their safety behaviours within the workplace and OHS outcomes along with new information related to work demands and levels of incivility, aggression and violence experienced by the Victorian educator workforce. This new information can be used as the basis for ongoing recording of these issues in subsequent years.

The aim of the report is to present the AEU with an overview of their members' perceptions of OHS, safety behaviours and other elements of work-related experience, as well as self-reported OHS outcomes.

Where relevant, data recorded in the current survey will be compared to 2014 data.

1.2 Research method

AEU (Victorian branch) members were invited to participate in an online OHS survey in August and September 2019. The survey targeted all registered members of the AEU. Overall, 47,712 members had the opportunity to participate in the survey; usable responses were received from 1,109 members. While the response rate is very low (2%), the sample is large and represents a wide cross-section of members. Respondents were working in primary schools (41%) or secondary schools (32%), with fewer respondents from early childhood education (8%), special schools (7%), TAFE (5%) or Disability Services Centres (2%) and other education facilities (4%).

The survey contained several sections where respondents were asked to provide information about their:

- demographics and work role
- perceptions, attitudes and behaviours regarding OHS
- experience of OHS incidents in the past 12 months
- experience and reporting of incivility, aggression and violence
- experience and reporting of workplace bullying (WPB)
- workplace stress
- wellbeing
- engagement at work

1.3 Major findings

- 1) **OHS and safety behaviour.** Respondents reported on a range of safety experiences within the workplace. Respondents tended to rate aspects of safety that they have control over at higher levels (i.e., safety control, safety participation, safety compliance, safety motivation) compared to elements of OHS where they have less control, (i.e., OHS leading indicators, safety climate).
- 2) **OHS incidents.** Twenty-five percent of respondents reported that they had experienced an OHS incident in the past year for which they had formally completed an incident report form. The most common types of incidents for all groups were unreported incidents and near misses. Disability

workers reported that they were involved in more (reported and not reported) OHS incidents, on average, and this was particularly evident for cases not reported.

- 3) **Incivility, aggression and violence.** Experiences such as obscene remarks, obscene gestures, intimidation and verbal threats tended to be experienced on multiple occasions over the past 12 months, while physical attacks, theft of property, threats with a weapon and damage to personal property were more likely to be reported as one-off experiences. While incidents were primarily perpetrated by students or clients, other reported perpetrators included family of students or clients, supervisors and colleagues.

The majority of experiences of violence and aggression were not reported to a manager or supervisor. Education support and disability workers, on average, experienced more incidents of violence and aggression that they did not report to a manager or supervisor compared with principals and teachers. The main reasons for not reporting were accepting incidents as part of the job and wanting to diffuse a situation rather than making it worse.

Respondents who reported incidents of violence and aggression were more likely to get post-incident support than those who did not report. Non-reporting meant that only a small percentage of respondents received post-incident support.

With respect to perceptions of the climate associated with violence safety, around two thirds of respondents indicated that there were violence reporting procedures in place and that the reporting of physical violence is encouraged. However, less than half of the respondents thought that the reporting of verbal violence was encouraged and that reports of violence were taken seriously. About 23% of respondents reported that they were aware of policies in place to prevent violence in their workplaces, and around two thirds of respondents reported that they had not been provided with violence prevention training from their employer.

Workplace bullying (WPB). Approximately 4 out of 10 (41%) of the respondents reported experiencing WPB in the 12 months preceding the survey, with roughly one quarter reporting frequent experiences of WPB (i.e., monthly, weekly, daily). While WPB was primarily perpetrated by colleagues along with managers and supervisors, other reported perpetrators included students or clients and family of students or clients. Daily forms of bullying included being ignored or excluded, persistent criticism and excessive teasing or sarcasm. Being shouted at, gossip and rumours and being reminded of errors were less frequently reported as daily experiences of WPB than other forms of workplace bullying. The incidents were however still reported as occurring by more than 40% of the sample.

Approximately half of the respondents reported their experiences of WPB to managers or supervisors. While the number of unreported incidents of WPB was greater for all groups, disability workers experienced more incidents of both reported and unreported WPB, on average, compared with all other groups. Respondents who reported WPB were much more likely to receive post-incident support than those who did not report WPB. The non-reporting of WPB meant that only a small percentage of respondents received post-incident support.

- 4) **Workplace stress and bureaucracy.** Respondents in this sample experienced high levels of workplace stress as measured by the Health and Safety Executive -Management Standards Indicator Tool (HSE-MSIT). Compared to benchmarked data from the United Kingdom (UK), respondent perceptions of stress in their workplaces indicate that there is an urgent need to address work-related stress in this workforce. This is particularly evident with respect to job demands, job control, management of workplace change and manager support. Levels of bureaucracy were reported to be high by respondents in the sample.
- 5) **Emotional burnout and silence.** Respondents indicated that they experienced moderate levels of burnout. With respect to employee silence, both quiescent silence (fear of the consequences of speaking up) and acquiescent silence (having given up hope for improvement) were high.
- 6) **Wellbeing.** Respondents experienced poor wellbeing as measured using the World Health Organization measure, WHO-5,²⁵ ($M = 11.8$, $SD = 6.1$). Teachers, education support and disability workers scored below the threshold score of 13 for poor wellbeing, compared to principals who scored just above the threshold for poor wellbeing. While respondents experienced relatively high levels of thriving at work with respect to learning, their experience of thriving at work with respect to

vitality was lower. All member groups reported moderate levels of mindfulness, but principals and teachers, on average, reported slightly higher levels compared to education support and disability workers.

- 7) **Engagement and intentions to leave.** Overall, respondents in this sample reported high levels of work engagement, moderate levels of intention to leave their job and low levels of intention to leave their profession.
- 8) **Comparing the 2014 and 2019 results.** The number of responses to this survey (1,109) is low compared to 2014 (4,750), representing a 2% response rate in 2019 compared to 10% in 2014. For this reason, the results in 2019 should be considered with some caution. There were however only minor demographic and workplace differences between the two samples. There was a slightly higher percentage of women and a higher percentage of younger members in the 2019 sample. Aspects of the workplace such as workplace type and size were roughly equivalent to the 2014 sample.

There was a greater percentage of permanent employees in the 2019 sample—88%, up from 81.6% in the 2014 sample. We also asked about full-time versus part-time status. Although most respondents have been employed on a permanent/ongoing basis, only two thirds (68%) of respondents in 2019 were employed full-time; this proportion was similar to the 2014 sample of 66.5% of respondents who were employed full-time. In the 2019 survey, respondents were also asked to indicate reasons for being employed on a part-time basis. About 40% did so for life priorities, approximately one quarter reported only having been offered part-time employment, while another quarter did so in order to cope with work pressure.

There were lower scores, on average, for OHS leading indicators in 2019 compared to 2014, but respondents in 2019 reported higher scores for their own safety behaviours and motivations. Fewer respondents in 2019 reported having OHS representation compared to 2014, and there was an increase of those who were unsure of whether they had OHS representation. Finally, respondents in the 2019 sample reported higher scores, on average, for burnout, silence, bureaucracy and intention to leave the profession compared to the 2014 sample.

1.4 Conclusions

The research at hand provides data that will allow for ongoing tracking of OHS issues in Victorian education workplaces. The comparisons to the 2014 sample reveal higher levels of burnout, silence, bureaucracy and intention to leave the profession. Evidence from the new measures in the 2019 survey provide additional, but preliminary, information related to work demands and levels of incivility, aggression and violence experienced by the Victorian educator workforce. This new information can be used as the basis for ongoing recording of these issues in subsequent years.

2 BACKGROUND

This report presents results of a survey conducted with members of the Australian Education Union (AEU) Victorian branch in August and September 2019 by the Monash Workplace Health and Safety Research Team. The survey is a follow-up to previous research conducted in 2014. The aim of that research was to provide an overview of AEU Victorian branch members' perceptions of the OHS environment in which they work, their own safety behaviours and other elements of work-related experiences (e.g. work overload, burnout) as well as self-reported OHS outcomes. The current research has the same aim but provides new reporting on workplace demands as measured by the HSE Management Standards Indicator Tool and information related to incivility, aggression and violence for the Victorian educator workforce.

An important aspect of the current research has been to consider the experience of the classroom teacher. With respect to the attractiveness of the teaching profession in Australia, according to the 2019 OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS),²⁶ teaching was the first-choice career for 58% of teachers in Australia compared to 67% in OECD countries. The data indicate that, in Australia, although people are choosing to enter the teaching profession, it is not always their first career choice. The research at hand provides an opportunity to track workplace OHS conditions that may contribute to decisions to enter, and stay in, the education profession.

2.1 Aim of this report

In view of the importance of tracking AEU member opinions of their OHS environment, the aim of this report is to present the AEU with an overview of their members' perceptions of OHS, safety behaviours and other elements of work-related experience, as well as self-reported OHS outcomes.

Where relevant, results in the current survey will be compared to those reported for the 2014 survey.

3 RESEARCH METHOD

3.1 Survey design

In August and September 2019, all members of the AEU were invited to participate in an online survey. A link to the survey was embedded into a newsletter that was sent to all registered members of the AEU (Victorian branch). The survey contained several sections where respondents were asked to provide information about themselves, their role in their respective workplaces, perceptions about health and safety in their workplace, the perceptions of job demands and resources, their experience of violence and aggression and their general wellbeing. Respondents were also invited to offer additional comments and suggestions about OHS at their workplace.

A reminder was emailed two weeks after the initial invitation was sent to all members. Approval to administer the survey was obtained from the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee.

3.2 Measures

The 2019 survey contained several categories of measures to examine a wide range of OHS and wellbeing issues that might affect employees in the Australian education sector. These issues include: OHS and employee safety practices, incivility, violence and aggression, workplace bullying, workplace stressors, and employee wellbeing along with measures that address employee engagement. These are all well-established measures, validated in the peer-reviewed literature.

3.2.1 Demographic and work-related measures

The survey recorded respondent demographics (e.g., age, gender) and details of their workplace role (e.g., principal, primary teacher) and their working life (e.g., employment status, working hours). We also collected details on the workplaces including type (e.g., TAFE) and size of the workplaces respondents worked in.

3.2.2 Perceptual measures of health and safety in the workplace

The OPM-MU and safety climate measures focus on workplace practices and managers' actions that are leading indicators of OHS. Leading indicators of OHS are measures of the predictors, or causes, of OHS performance in a workplace.⁸ The remaining measures (safety motivation, compliance, participation and control) refer to the individual's own attitudes and behaviours related to their safety at work.

TABLE 3: MEASURES OF HEALTH AND SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE

Measure	Items	Example item
OPM-MU ^{27, 28}	8	"Those who act safely receive positive recognition"
Safety climate ¹⁶	4	"Senior management shows support for stress prevention through involvement and commitment"
Safety motivation ¹⁶	3	"I feel that it is important to maintain health and safety at all times"
Safety compliance ¹⁶	3	"I use all the necessary safety equipment to do my job"
Safety participation ¹⁶	3	"I promote health and safety policy within the workplace"
Safety control ¹⁷	3	"I am comfortable talking about health and safety issues"
Perceived violence safety climate ²¹	7	"Does your employer provide assault/violence prevention training?"

3.2.3 Negative workplace experiences

We administered a series of multi-item scales to ask respondents details about frequency and sources of incivility, aggression and violence and the reasons employees do not report incidents to management. We also asked about the frequency and sources of workplace bullying. Table 4 below lists each of these measures with a sample item.

As well as these multi-item scales, we included a series of single-item questions to investigate whether incidents were reported or not reported, and whether post-incident support was or was not provided.

TABLE 4: MEASURES OF NEGATIVE WORKPLACE EXPERIENCES

Measure	Items	Example item
Incivility, aggression and violence ²⁹	11	“Obscene gestures”
If respondents indicated that they did not report an incident of violence and aggression, they were asked for reasons for non-reporting ³⁰	8	“I accept these incidents as part of the job”
Workplace bullying ³¹	9	“Spreading of gossip or rumours about you”

3.2.4 Workplace stress

We included the Health and Safety Executive Management Standards Indicator Tool (HSE-MSIT) to measure workplace stress. This measure has been well validated in the UK and internationally. Table 5 below lists each of the subscales in the HSE-MSIT with a sample item.

TABLE 5: MEASURES OF WORKPLACE STRESS

Measure	Items	Example item
Demands ⁵	8	“I have to neglect some tasks because I have too much to do”
Control ⁵	6	“I can decide how I do my work”
Managers’ support ⁵	5	“I can rely on my supervisor to help me out with a work problem”
Peer support ⁵	4	“I receive the respect I deserve from people I work with”
Relationships ⁵	4	“Relationships at work are strained”
Role clarity ⁵	5	“I am clear what my duties and responsibilities are”
Change ⁵	3	“Staff are consulted about changes at work”

3.2.5 Bureaucracy, burnout and silence

We examined bureaucracy, burnout and employee silence. Silence was separated into two subscales within this report: acquiescent silence and quiescent silence. Table 6 below lists each of these measures with a sample item.

TABLE 6: MEASURES OF BUREAUCRACY, BURNOUT AND SILENCE

Measure	Items	Example item
Bureaucracy ³²	3	“My work involves a great deal of paperwork and administration”
Burnout ⁶	7	“Do you feel worn out at the end of the working day?”
Acquiescent silence ¹	3	“I have remained silent at work because nothing will change anyway”
Quiescent silence ¹	3	“I have remained silent at work because of fear of negative consequences”

3.2.6 Wellbeing

We examined wellbeing, thriving and mindfulness. Thriving was separated into two subscales: learning and vitality. Table 7 below lists each of these measures with a sample item.

TABLE 7: MEASURES OF WELLBEING

Measure	Items	Example item
Wellbeing (WHO-5) ²⁵	5	“I woke up feeling fresh and rested”
Thriving – Learning ¹⁹	5	“I find myself learning often”
Thriving – Vitality ¹⁹	5	“I am looking forward to each new day”
Mindfulness ³³	15	“I do jobs or tasks automatically, without being aware of what I’m doing”

3.2.7 Engagement

In this survey, we also asked all respondents about issues relating to their experience of work in general. Table 8 below lists each of these measures with a sample item.

TABLE 8: MEASURES OF ENGAGEMENT

Measure	Items	Example item
Engagement ³⁴	9	“I am enthusiastic about my job”
Intention to leave job ³⁵	3	“I often think about quitting my job”
Intention to leave profession ³⁶	3	“I intend to leave the education field within the next year”

4 RESULTS

4.1 Description of the respondents

The survey link was sent to all AEU (Victorian branch) members and responses were received from 1,292 members. After 183 responses were removed due to insufficient data, 1,109 usable responses remained. The response rate is low (2%); the sample is large however and represents a wide cross-section of members. Figure 1 below displays the distribution of respondents across types of workplaces: most respondents were from primary schools or secondary schools with fewer respondents from early childhood education, Disability Services Centres/special schools or TAFE. Four percent of the respondents reported working in other education facilities.

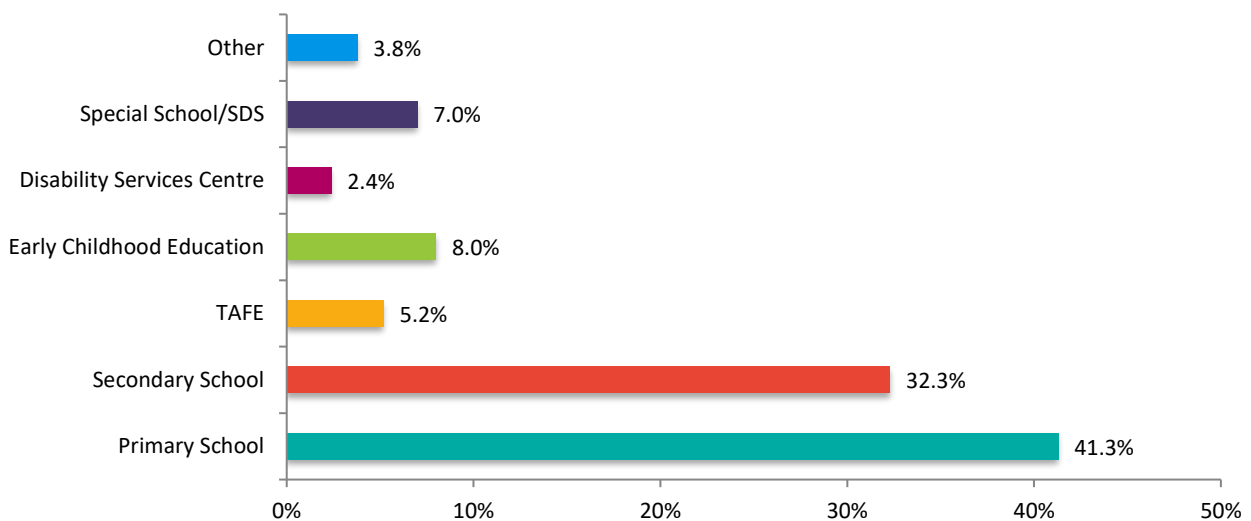


FIGURE 1: TYPE OF WORKPLACE

Figure 2 shows that most respondents reported working in medium-sized workplaces (20 to 199 employees). Few respondents worked in micro (1 to 4 employees), small (5 to 19 employees) or large workplaces (more than 200 employees). Generally, respondents reported working in workplaces located in major cities or inner regional areas. Very few respondents reported working in outer regional or remote areas.

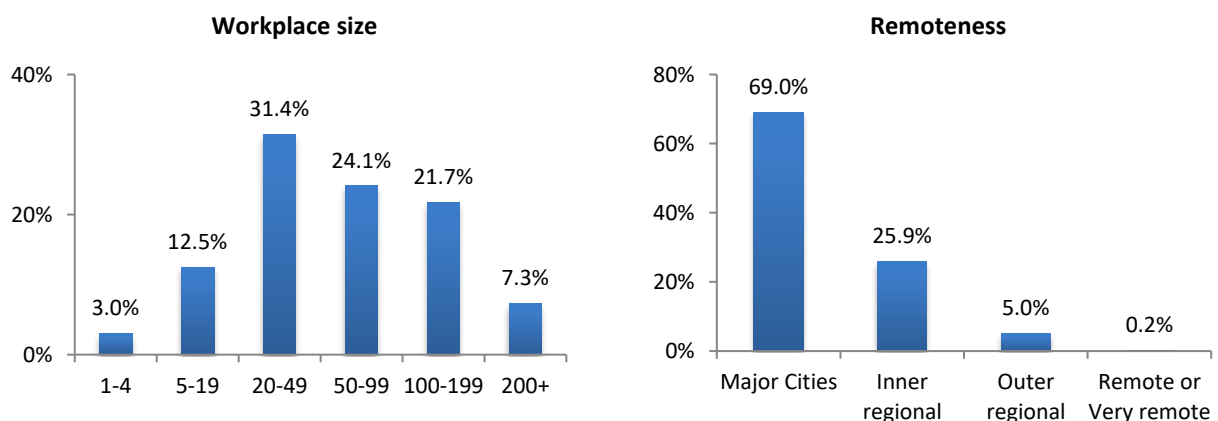


FIGURE 2: WORKPLACE SIZE AND REMOTENESS

As shown in Figure 3 below, nearly all respondents were female. Most respondents were aged between 46 and 65 years of age.

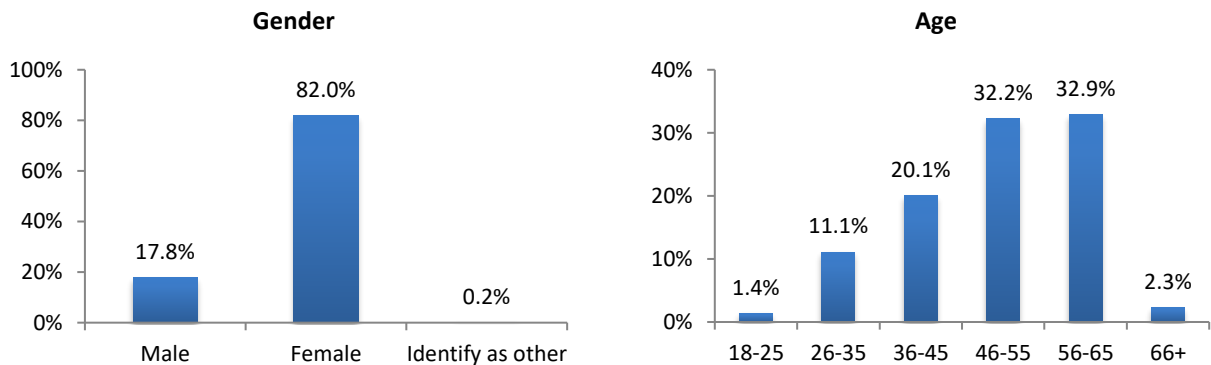


FIGURE 3: RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Figure 4 shows that most respondents have been employed in the education sector for more than ten years and most have been at their current workplace for more than six years, indicating that this is a mature and long-tenured workforce. Most respondents reported that they were employed as teachers or education support staff.

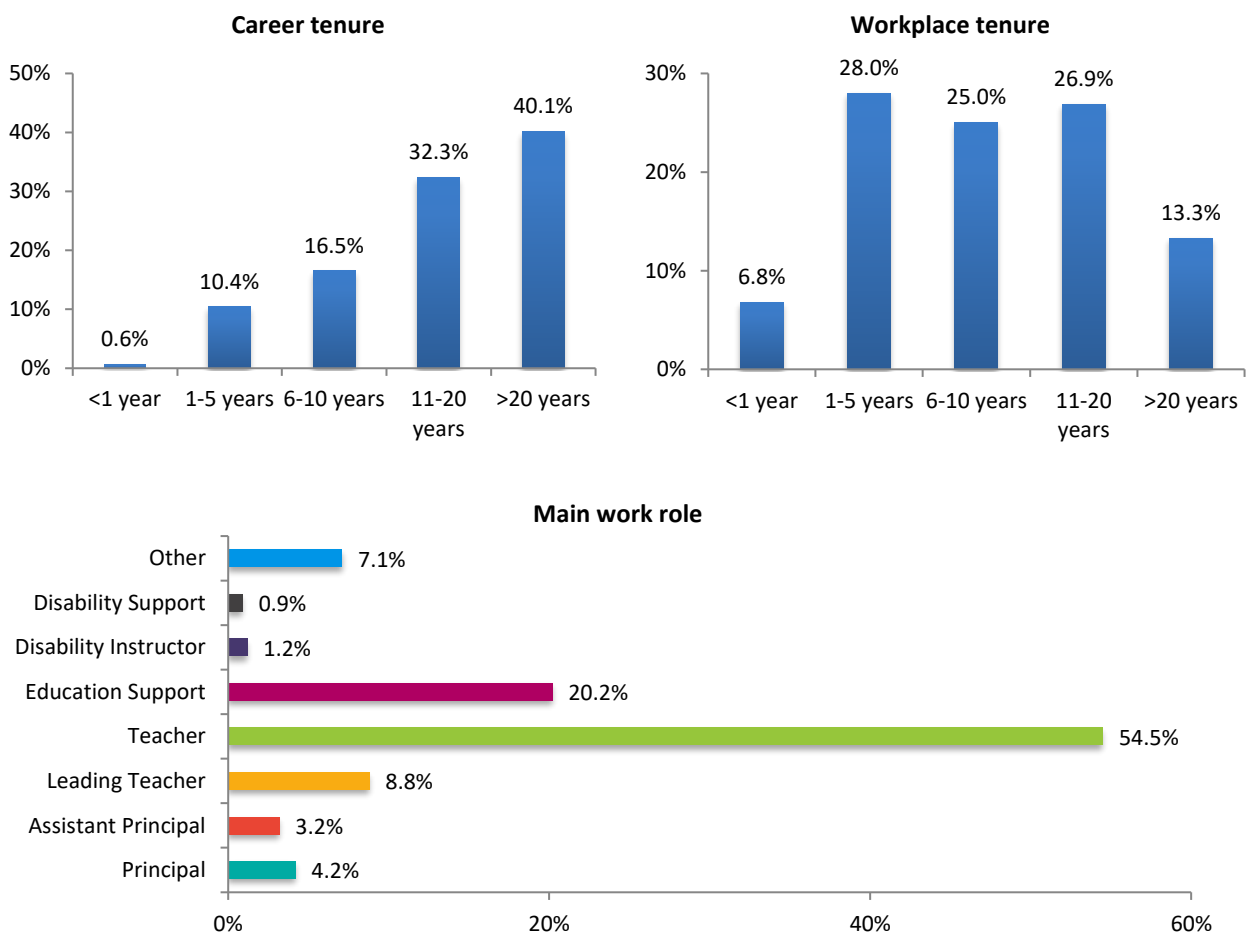


FIGURE 4: JOB CHARACTERISTICS

Figure 5 below shows that most respondents have been employed on a permanent/ongoing basis with approximately two thirds of respondents being employed full-time. Of the respondents reporting being employed on a part-time basis, about 40% did so for life priorities. Approximately one quarter reported only having been offered part-time employment, while another quarter did so in order to cope with work pressure.

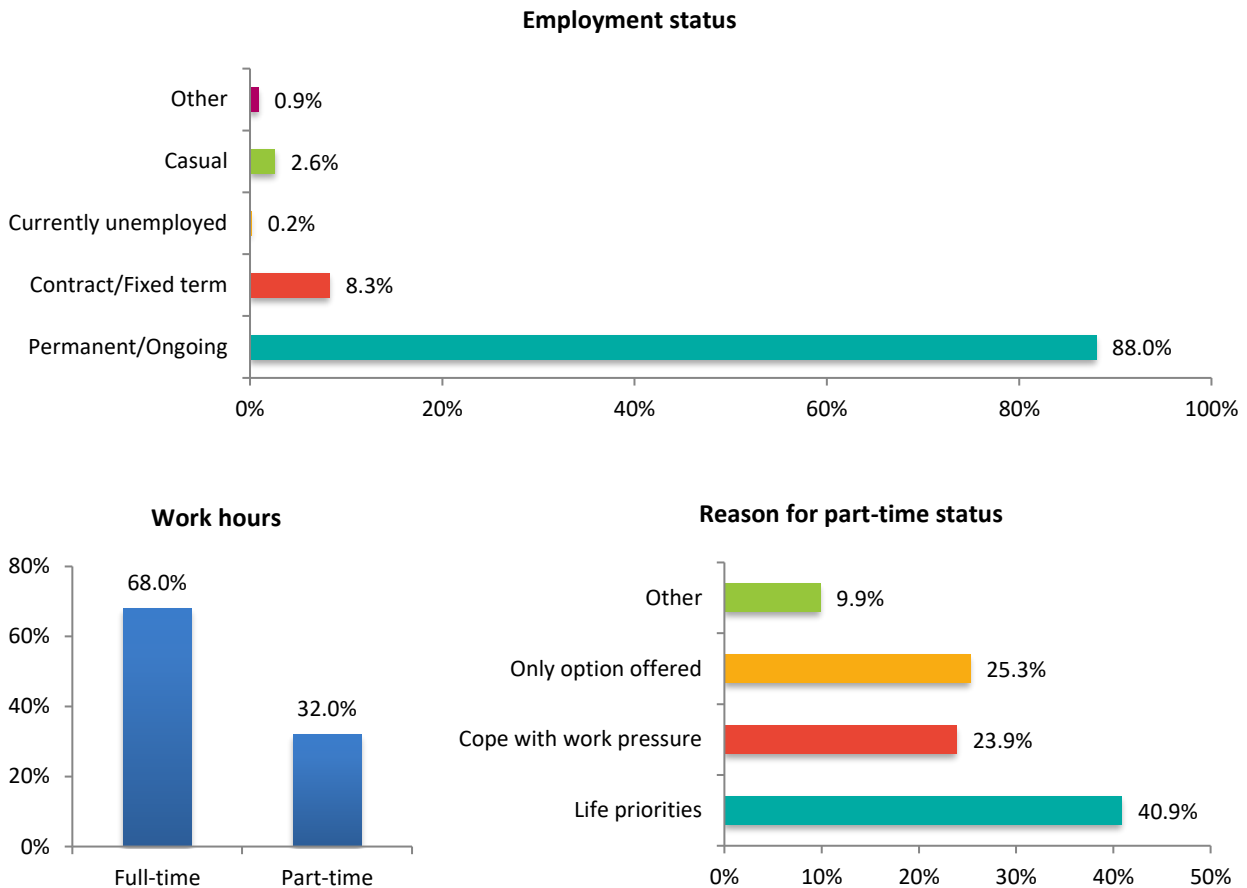


FIGURE 5: JOB STATUS

4.2 Health and safety in the workplace

4.2.1 Employee perceptions of safety

Figure 6 below compares averaged scores for several measures of OHS and employee safety that were included in the survey. The OPM-MU and safety climate measures focus on workplace practices and managers' actions that are leading indicators of OHS. The remaining measures (safety motivation, compliance, participation and control) refer to the individual's own attitudes and behaviours related to their safety at work. Respondents tended to report high levels of safety motivation, safety compliance and safety control. Measures that were related to workplace safety (OPM-MU, safety climate) were generally given lower scores compared to areas of safety that respondents have greater control over (motivation, compliance, participation, control).

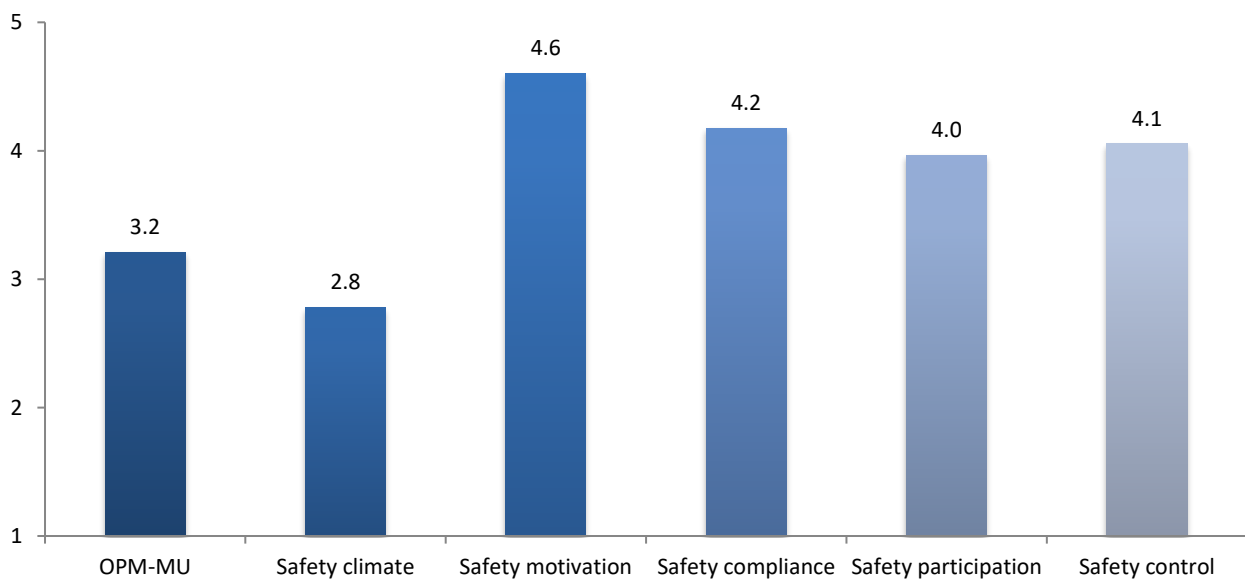


FIGURE 6: PERCEPTIONS OF OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Figure 7 below shows that average scores for principals' measures of OHS and employee safety were at slightly higher levels compared to the other groups. This is evident for the measures of safety climate and leading indicators of OHS (as measured by the OPM-MU).

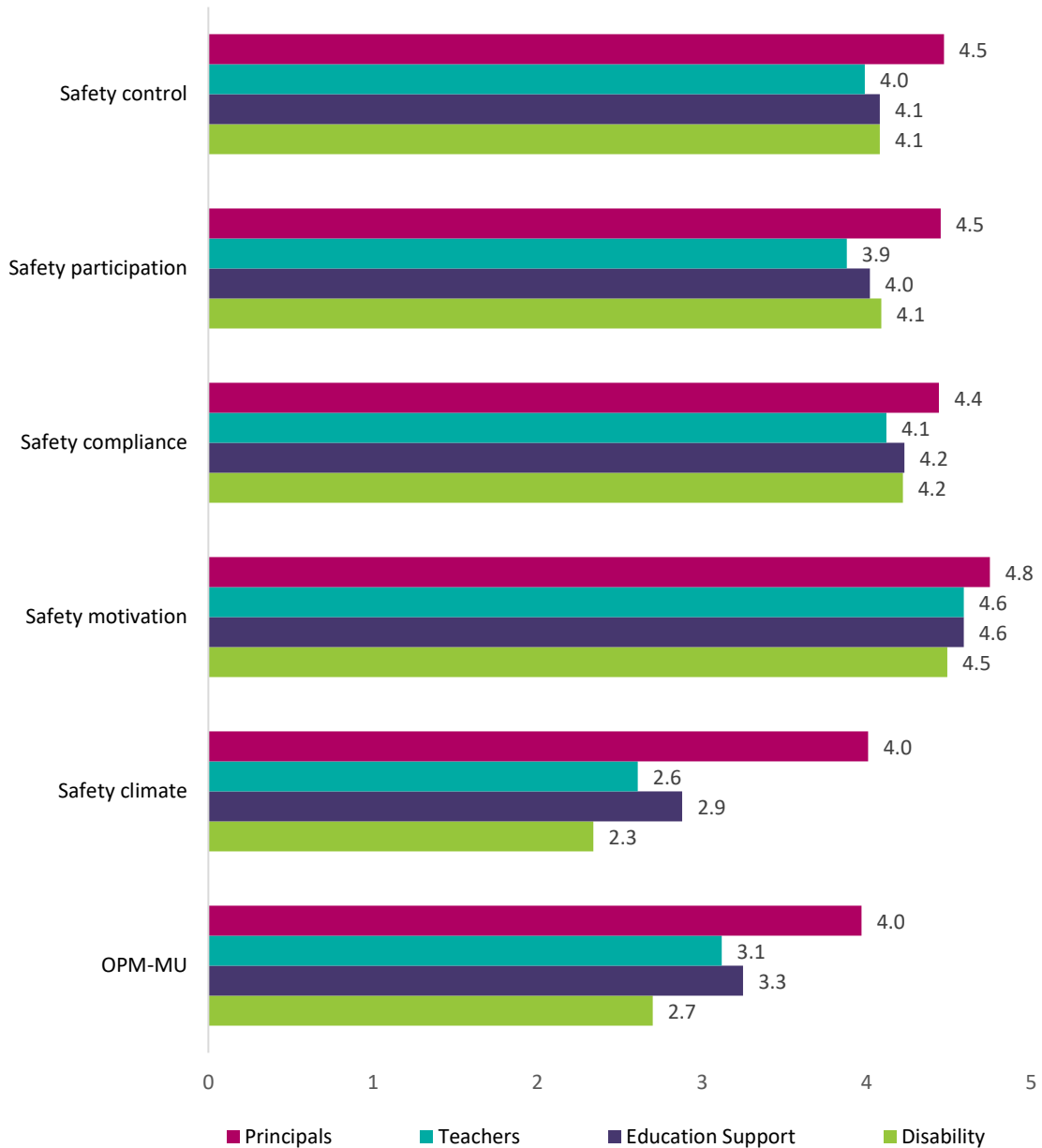


FIGURE 7: EXPERIENCE OF SAFETY ACROSS MEMBER GROUPS

4.2.2 OHS injury

Twenty-five percent of respondents indicated that they had experienced an OHS incident in the past year for which they had completed an incident report form. The total number of reported OHS incidents in the past 12 months ranged from 0 to 32 with respondents indicating, on average, 0.6 ($SD = 1.8$) OHS incidents. As shown in Figure 8 below, the OHS incidents most likely to be experienced by respondents were near misses followed by unreported incidents.

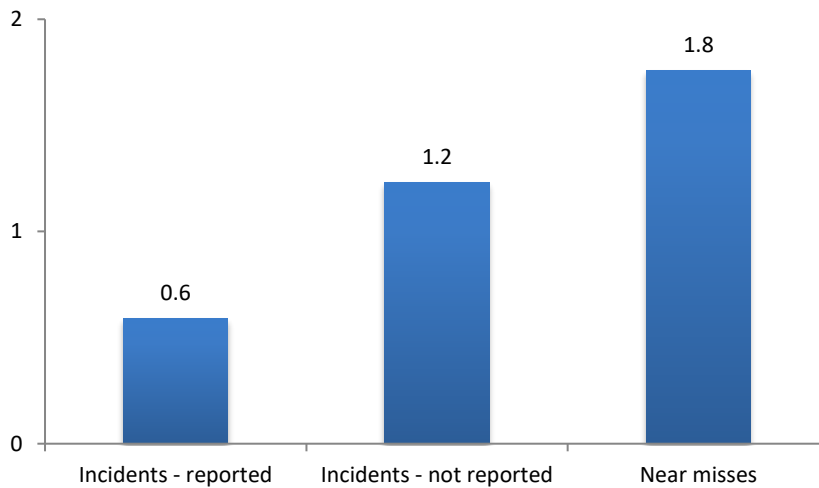


FIGURE 8: AVERAGE NUMBER OF OHS INCIDENTS

Figure 9 below displays the pattern across OHS incident types experienced in the past year across AEU member groups. The most common type of incidents for all groups were unreported incidents and near misses. Disability workers indicated that they were involved in more (reported and not reported) OHS incidents on average, and this is particularly evident for cases not reported.

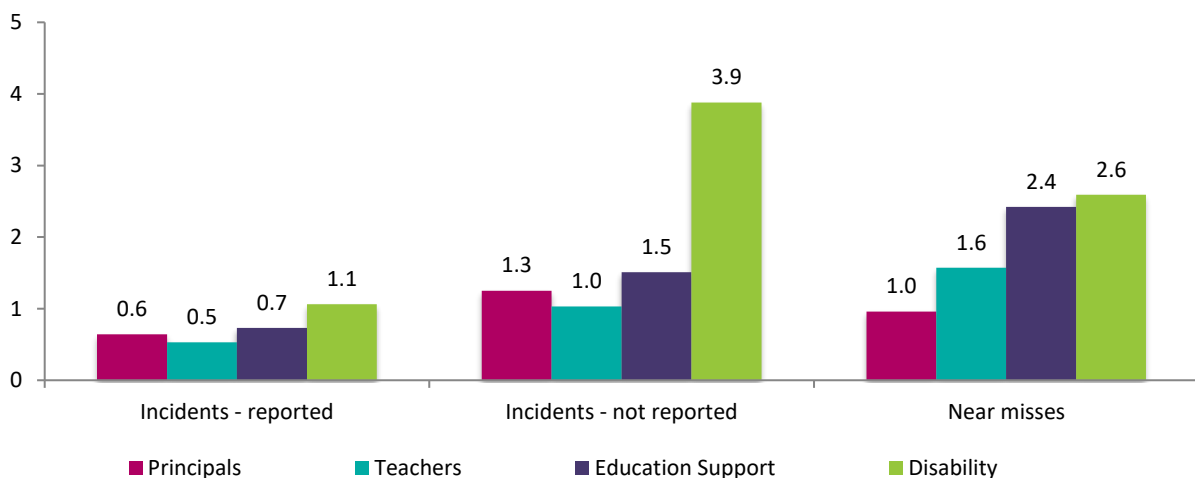


FIGURE 9: AVERAGE NUMBER OF OHS INCIDENTS BY MEMBER GROUP

4.2.3 OHS training

The OHS training procedures within the Victorian Department of Education³⁷ require that all employees have current OHS training. Figure 10 below shows that, of those who had accessed OHS training, approximately 69% thought that the training was somewhat effective or very effective.

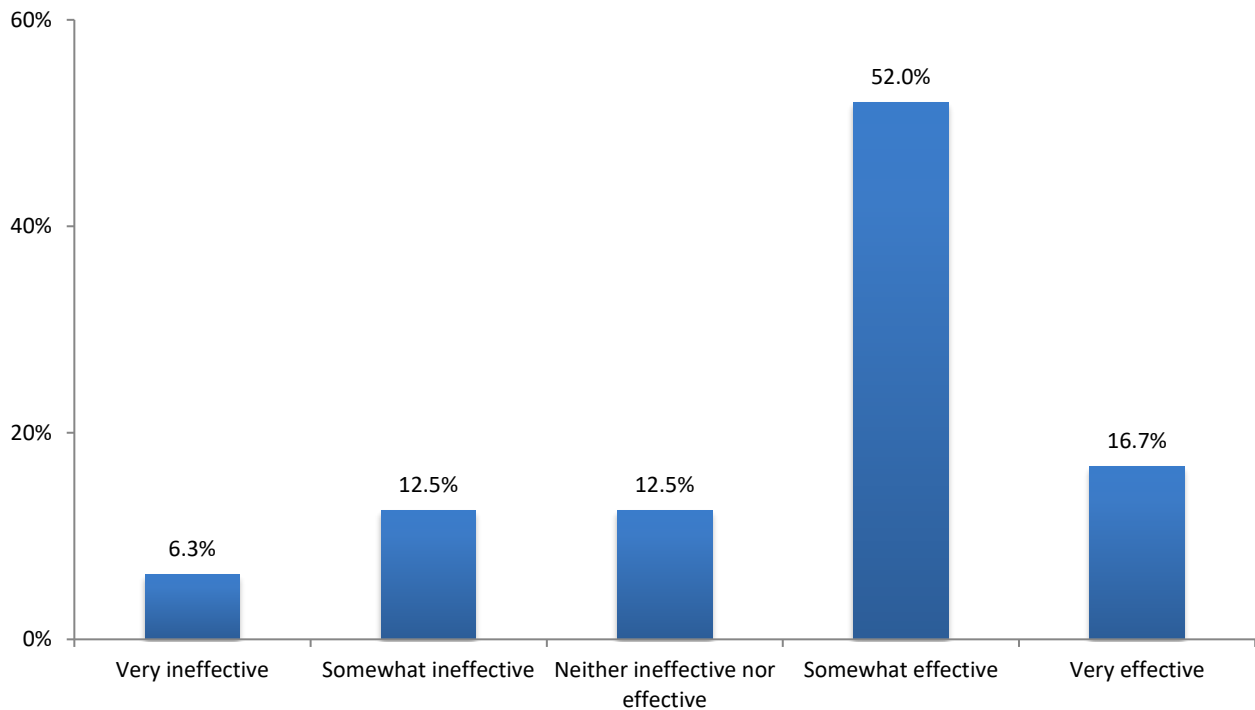


FIGURE 10: OHS TRAINING EFFECTIVENESS

4.3 Incivility, aggression and violence

4.3.1 Experiences of incivility, aggression and violence

The types of incivility, aggression and violence experienced by AEU members in the past year is displayed in Figure 11 below. This figure shows the proportion of all respondents who indicated having experienced, versus not having experienced, different types of occupational violence and aggression. The most common behaviours reported were intimidation, obscene remarks, verbal threats and obscene gestures. A substantial proportion of respondents also reported experiencing having objects thrown at them.

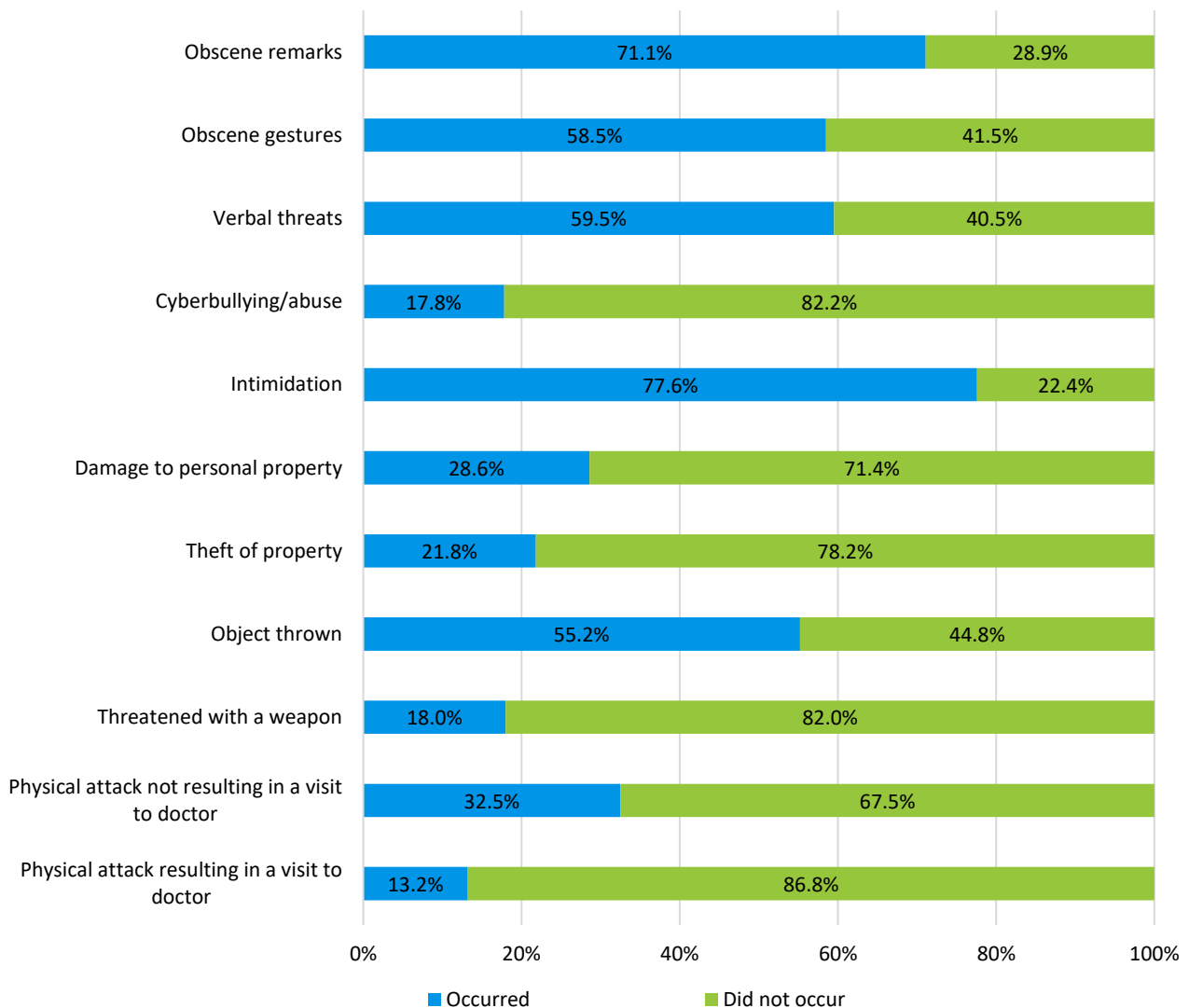


FIGURE 11: TYPES OF INCIVILITY, AGGRESSION AND VIOLENCE EXPERIENCED BY AEU MEMBERS

Figure 12 below displays the frequency of each type of incivility, aggression and violence experienced by AEU members in the past year (as reported in Figure 11). This figure shows that behaviours that occurred on a more frequent basis were obscene remarks, obscene gestures, intimidation and verbal threats. While thrown objects have affected more than half of the respondents in the sample, as described above, this was reported to occur less frequently than obscene remarks or gestures.

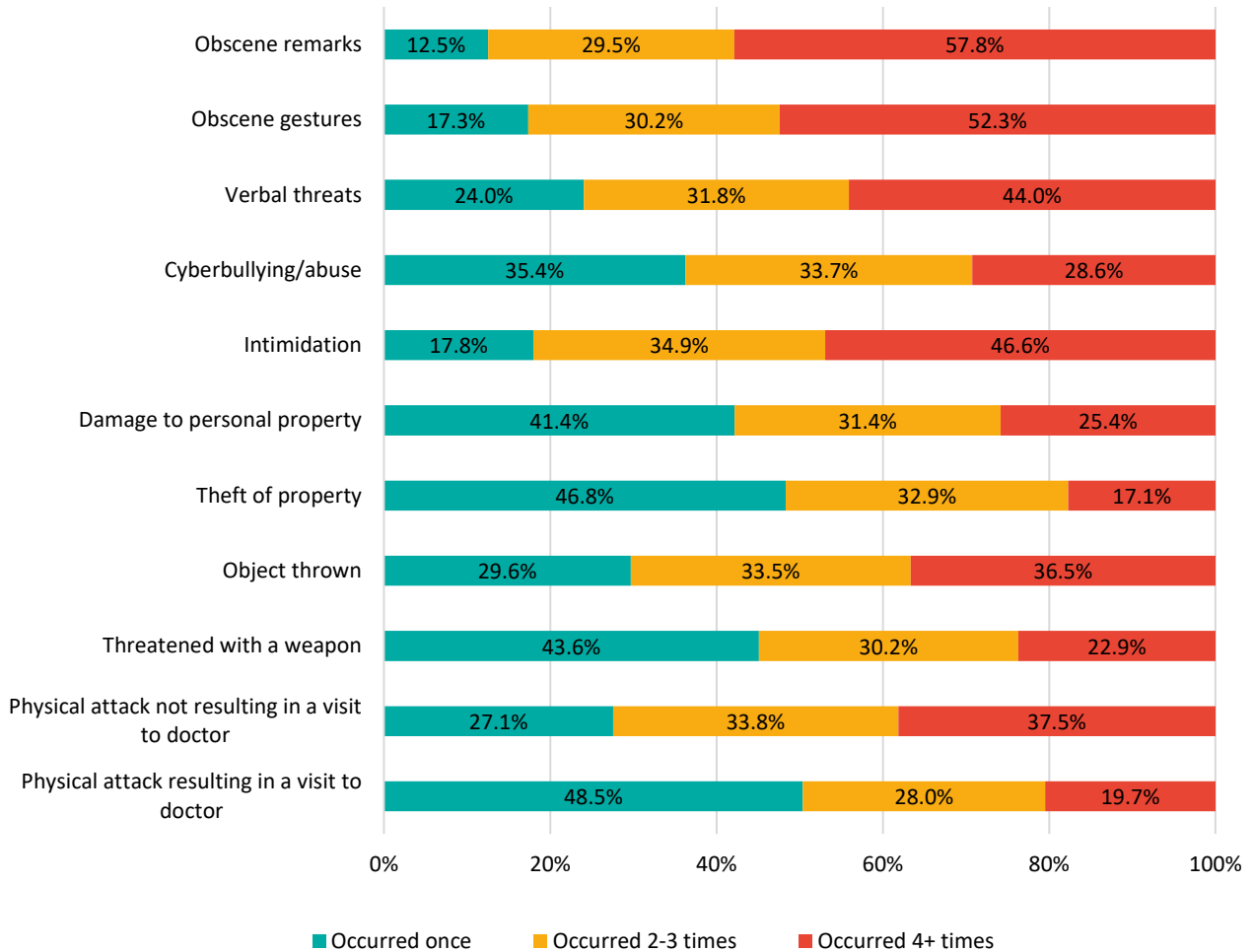


FIGURE 12: FREQUENCIES OF EXPERIENCED INCIVILITY, AGGRESSION AND VIOLENCE BY TYPE

Different types of incivility, aggression and violence experienced by all respondents are displayed in Figure 13 below. The frequency of the perpetrators of each type of experience is indicated by the horizontal bars. For example, 22.5% of respondents had experienced obscene remarks from supervisors and colleagues, 88.5% from students and clients, and 21.1% from family of students and clients. The figure shows that students and clients were the most common perpetrators of every type of experience except for intimidation tactics. Supervisors, colleagues and family of students and clients were the least common perpetrators of physical forms and interactions related to personal property.

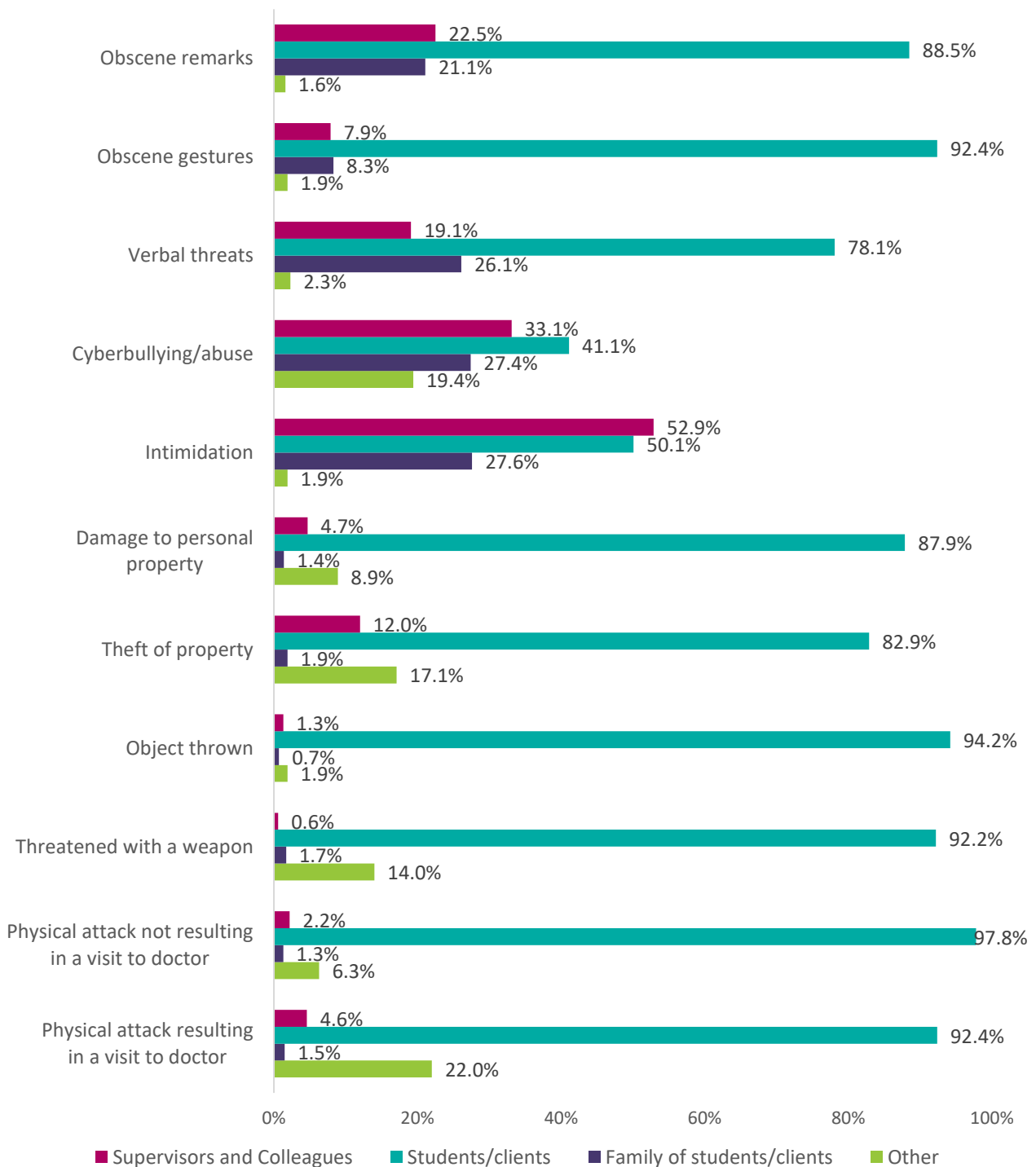


FIGURE 13: PERPETRATORS OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF INCIVILITY, AGGRESSION AND VIOLENCE

4.3.2 Reporting violence and aggression and post-incident support

Figure 14 below compares the average number of incidents of violence and aggression that were reported or not reported to a manager or supervisor across respondent groups. While the number of unreported incidents of violence and aggression was greater for all groups, education support and disability workers, on average, experienced more incidents that they did not report to a manager or supervisor compared with principals and teachers.

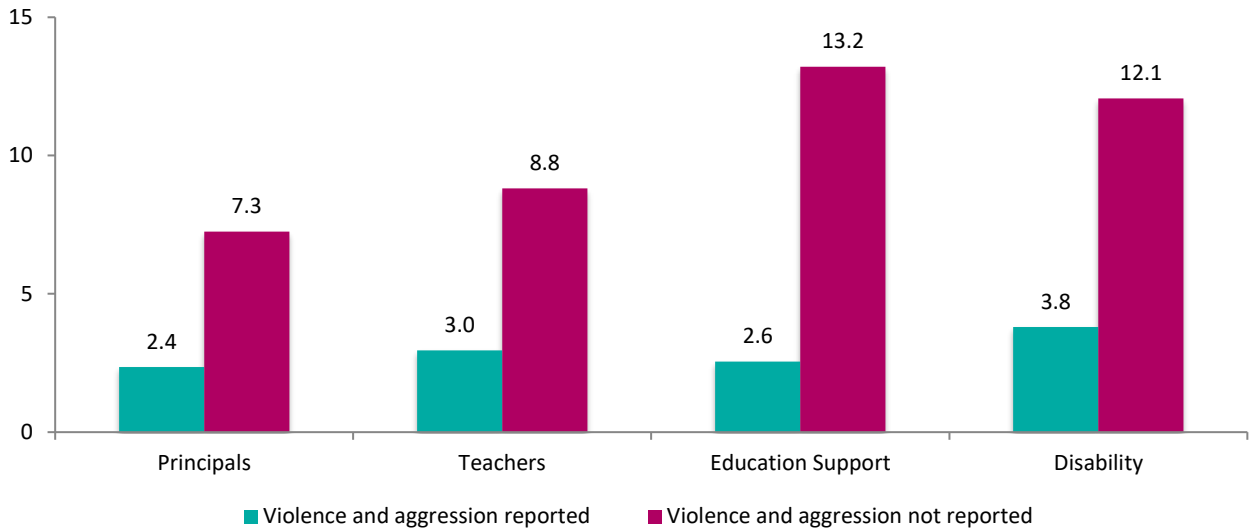


FIGURE 14: REPORTING VIOLENCE AND AGGRESSION BY MEMBER GROUP

Reasons for not reporting incidents of violence and aggression can be categorised as relating to pastoral care (e.g., “to protect the student or client perpetrator”), job-related factors (e.g., “I accept these incidents as part of the job”) and respondent reputation (e.g., I didn’t want to be seen as weak”).

The frequency of each of the reasons for not reporting violence and aggression for all respondents is displayed below in Figure 15. This figure shows that the main reasons for not reporting violence and aggression were accepting it as part of the job and wanting to diffuse a situation rather than making it worse. Protecting students or clients, not wanting to be seen as weak or losing face were less likely to be offered as reasons for not reporting violence and aggression.

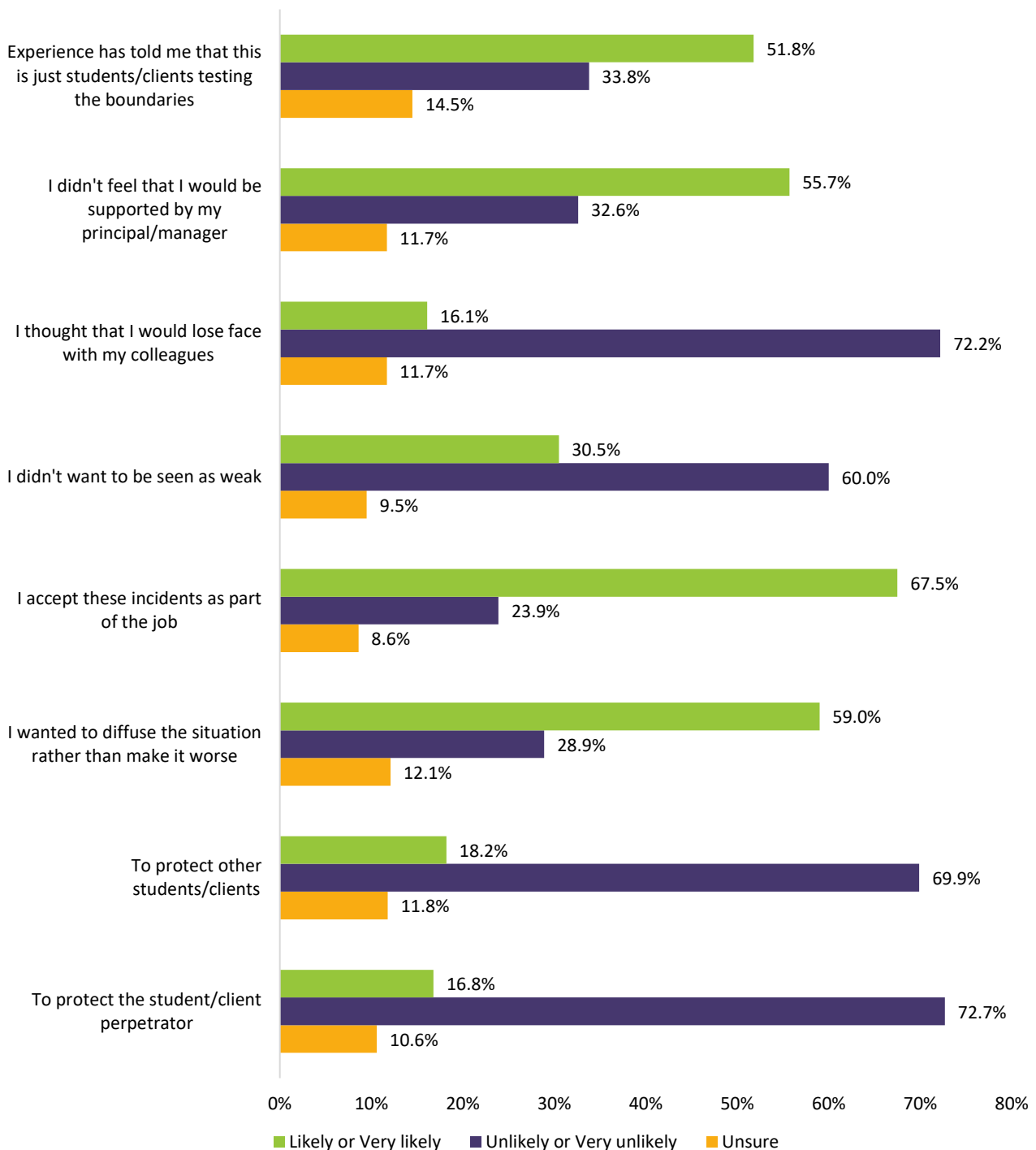


FIGURE 15: REASONS FOR NOT REPORTING INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE AND AGGRESSION

Figure 16 below shows that respondents who report violence and aggression were much more likely to get post-incident support than those who do not report. Post-incident support is only provided to less than half of those who do report their experiences of violence and aggression.

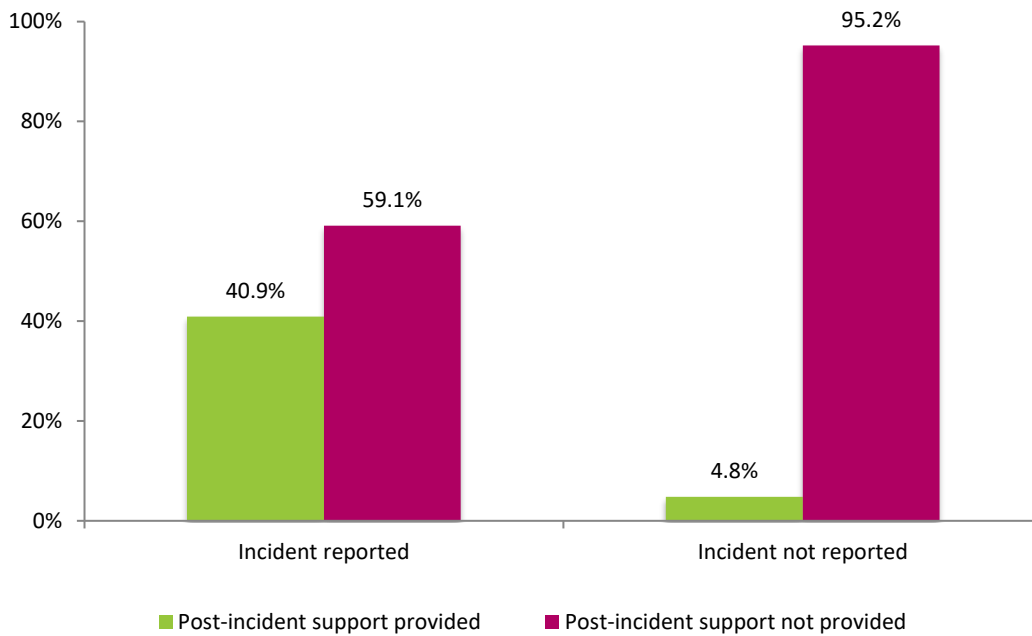


FIGURE 16: REPORTING INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE AND AGGRESSION AND POST-INCIDENT SUPPORT

4.3.3 Perceptions of violence safety climate

Figure 17 below shows respondent ratings of the items in the perceived violence safety climate measure pertaining to their workplaces. Around two thirds have violence reporting procedures in place and the reporting of physical violence is encouraged. However, less than half of the respondents thought that the reporting of verbal violence was encouraged and that reports of violence were taken seriously. Approximately 23% of respondents reported that there were policies in place to prevent violence in their workplaces and around two thirds of respondents reported that they had not been provided with violence prevention training from their employer.

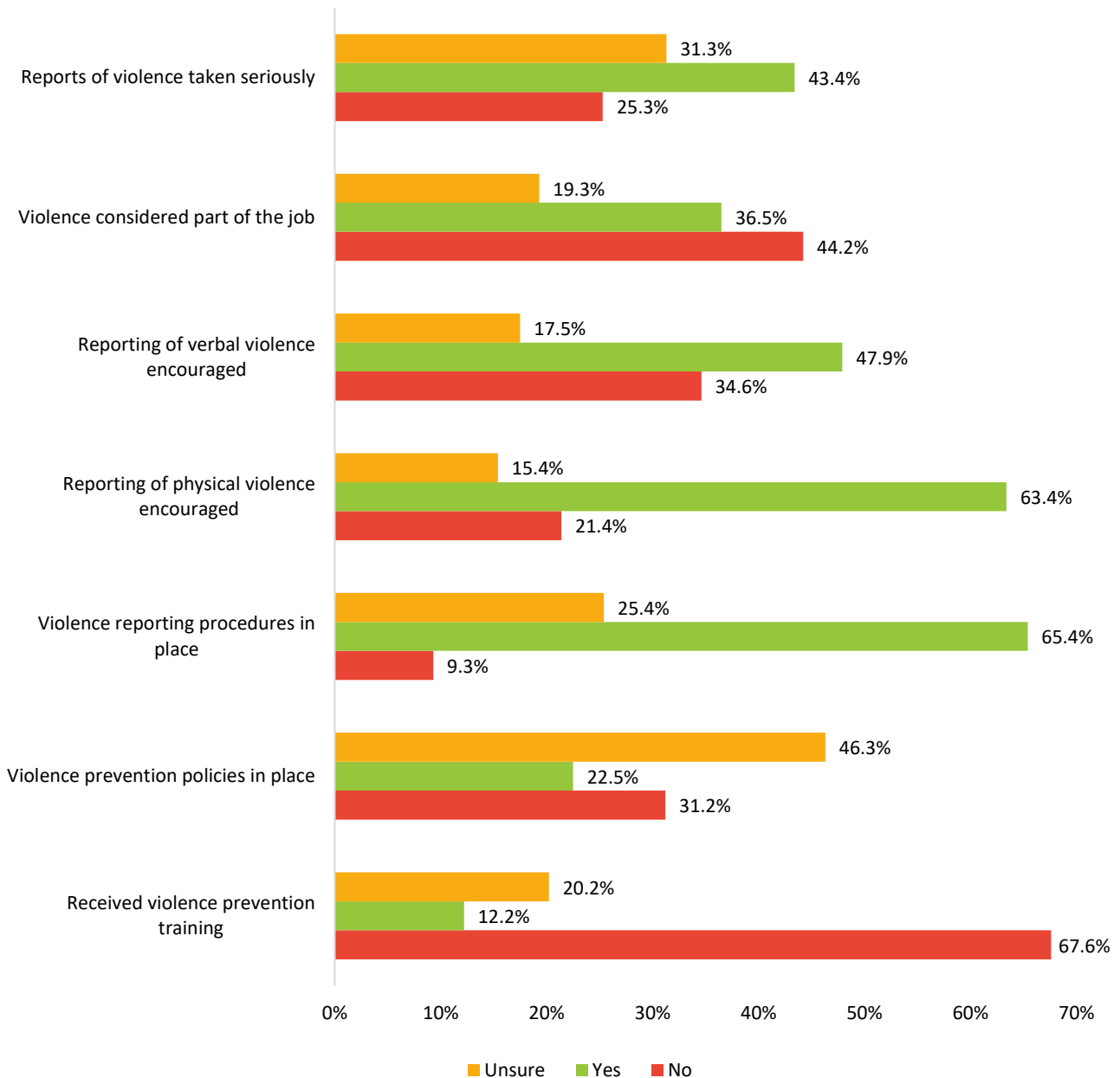


FIGURE 17: PERCEPTIONS OF VIOLENCE SAFETY CLIMATE AMONG AEU MEMBERS

4.3.4 Experience of workplace bullying

Figure 18 below shows the frequency of experienced workplace bullying among respondents over the past year. We define bullying as a situation where one or several individuals persistently, over a period of time, perceive themselves to be on the receiving end of negative actions from one or several persons, in a situation where the target of bullying has difficulty in defending him or herself against these actions.⁴ We do not refer to a one-off incident as bullying.

Approximately 41% of respondents experienced WPB in the past year. The sources of bullying by different perpetrators is shown in Figure 19, where colleagues were most often the source of WPB, followed by superiors.

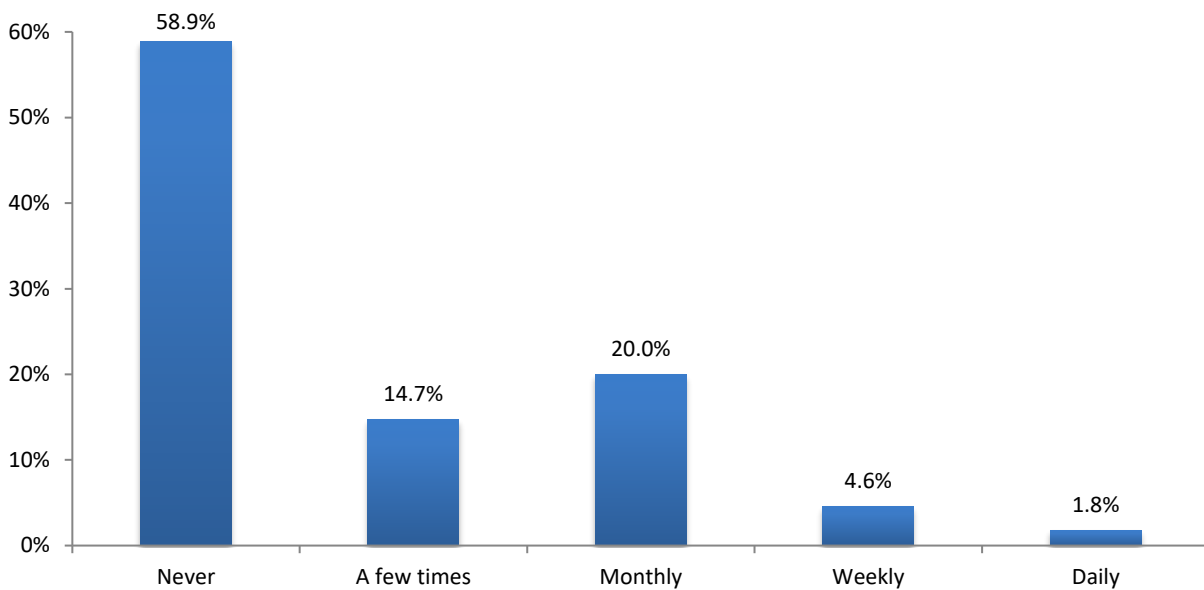


FIGURE 18: FREQUENCY OF WORKPLACE BULLYING

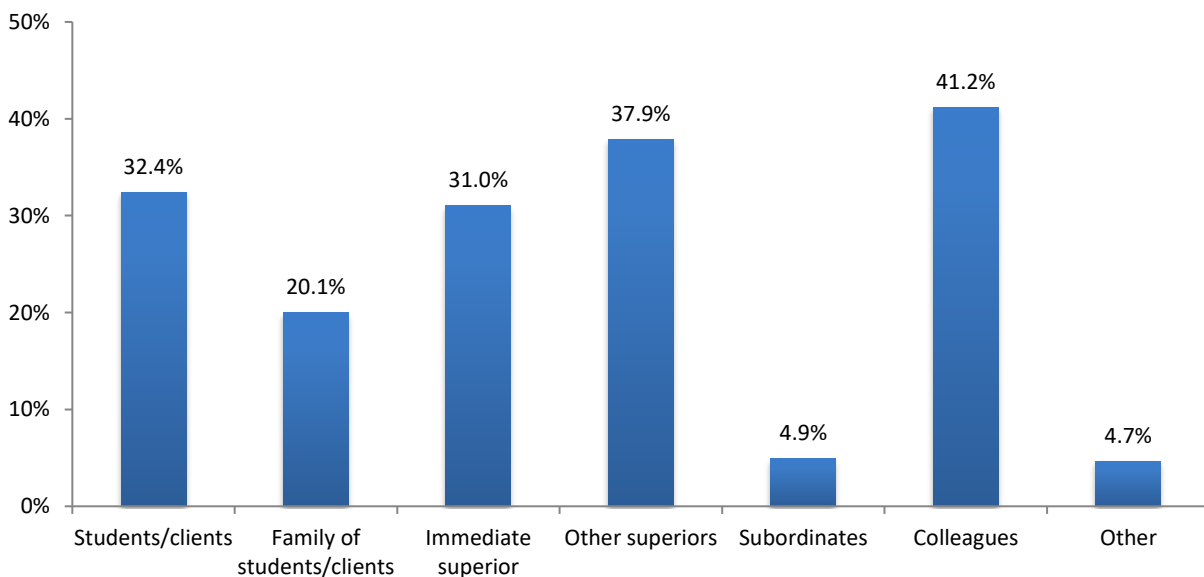


FIGURE 19: SOURCES OF WORKPLACE BULLYING

Figure 20 below reports the types of WPB experienced by respondents. This figure shows the proportion of all respondents who indicated having experienced, versus not having experienced, different types of WPB. The most common forms of bullying that were reported were the withholding of information and hostile reactions. However, being shouted at, being ignored or excluded and experiencing gossip and rumours were also reported by more than half of the sample.

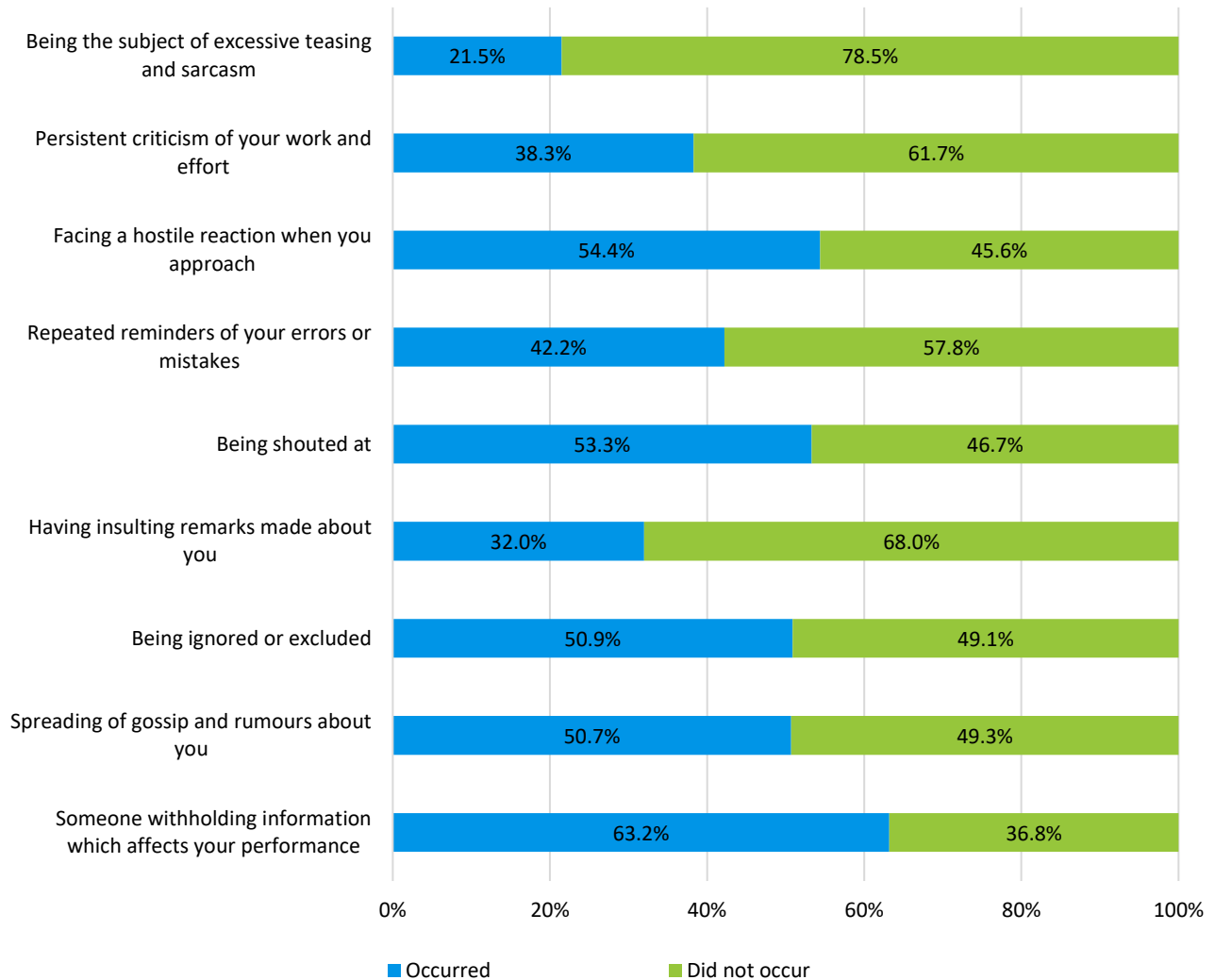


FIGURE 20: TYPES OF WPB EXPERIENCED BY AEU MEMBERS

The frequency of each type of WPB experienced by respondents is displayed in Figure 21 below. This figure shows how often those respondents who indicated having experienced WPB in the past year (as reported in Figure 20) experienced each of the different types of bullying. It also shows that the types of bullying that more often occurred on a daily basis were being ignored or excluded, persistent criticism and excessive teasing or sarcasm. Being shouted at, gossip and rumours and being reminded of errors were less frequently reported as daily experiences of WPB than other forms of bullying.

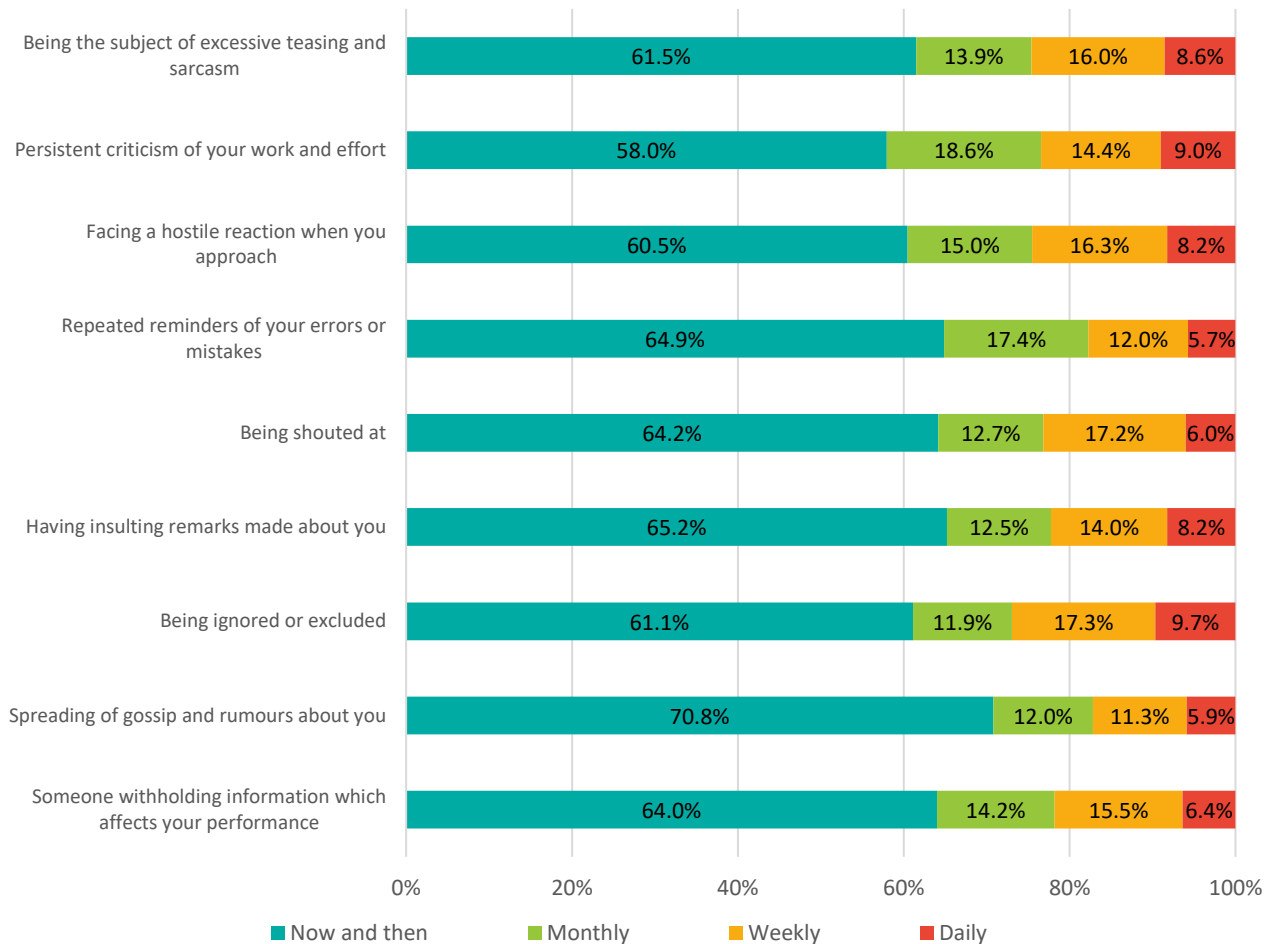


FIGURE 21: FREQUENCIES OF WPB EXPERIENCED BY TYPE

Figure 22 below shows the proportion of perpetrators of workplace bullying by gender. As can be seen in Figure 22, approximately 67% of respondents had experienced being bullied by one or two female perpetrators in the past year, and approximately 59% had experienced being bullied by one or two male perpetrators in the past year.

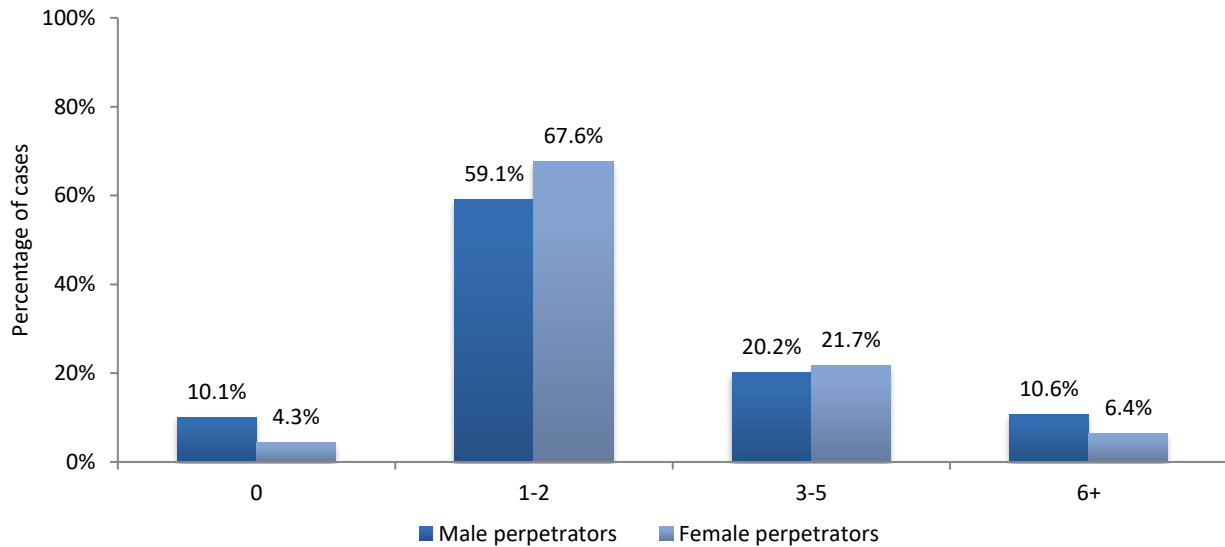


FIGURE 22: PERPETRATORS OF WPB BY GENDER

4.3.5 Reporting of WPB

As shown in Figure 23 below, approximately half of the respondents reported their experiences of WPB over the last twelve months. Respondents who reported experiences of WPB to management experienced, on average, 3.2 incidents ($SD = 3.7$) over the past year. However, those who did not report their experience of WPB experienced, on average, 8.5 incidents ($SD = 15.2$) over the past year.

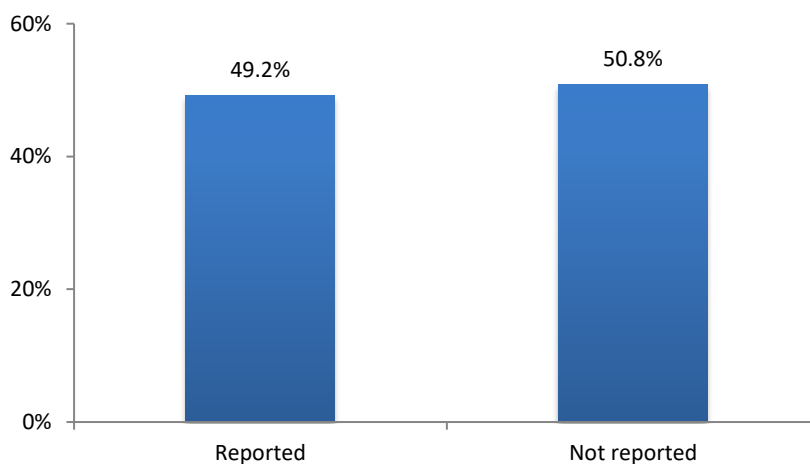


FIGURE 23: REPORTING INCIDENTS OF WPB

Figure 24 compares the average number of incidents of workplace bullying experienced by respondents over the past year by member group. Disability workers experienced more incidents of both reported and unreported WPB, on average, compared with all other groups. All member groups experienced, on average, more incidents of WPB which they did not report compared to incidents which they did report, with education support workers indicating the largest comparable difference.

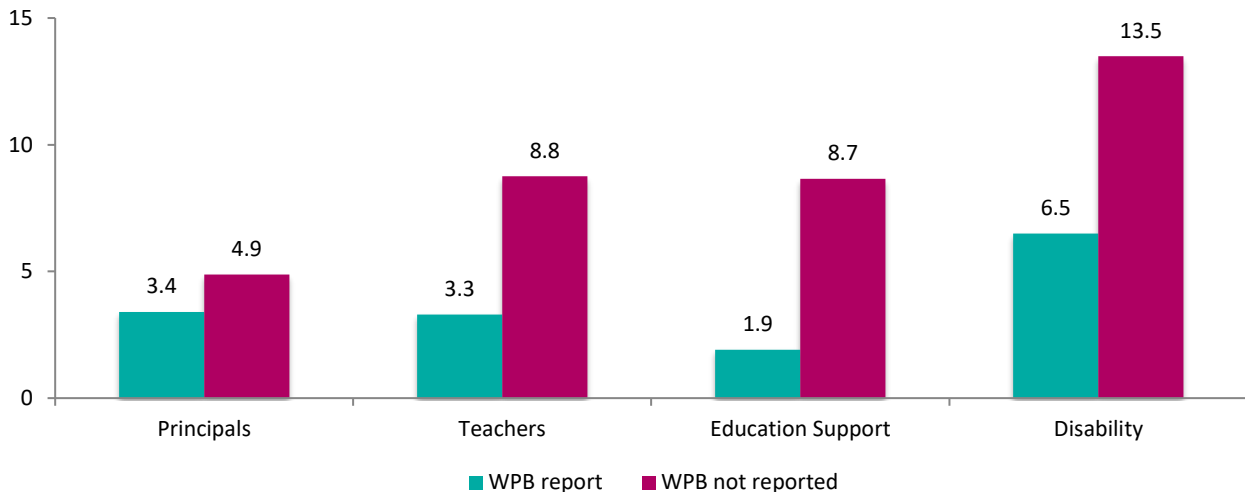


FIGURE 24: REPORTING OF WPB BY MEMBER GROUP

Of those respondents who experienced WPB in the past 12 months, most (84.3%) indicated that they did not receive post-incident support. Figure 25 below shows that, while respondents who reported WPB were much more likely to receive post-incident support than those who did not report WPB, post-incident support was still only provided to less than one third of those who did report the experience of WPB.

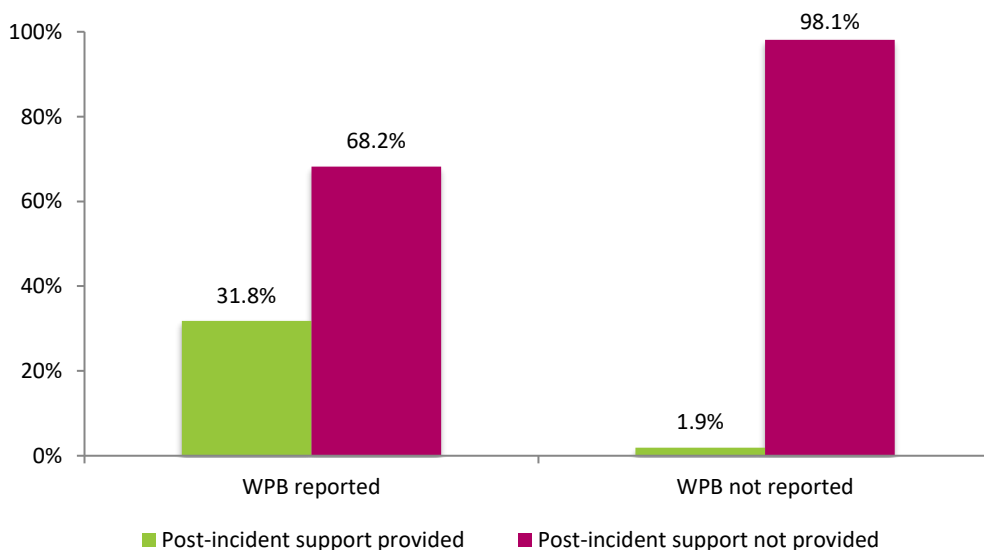


FIGURE 25: REPORTING OF WPB AND POST-INCIDENT SUPPORT

4.4 Workplace stress and bureaucracy

The HSE Management Standards Indicator Tool has been developed and tested in several studies in the United Kingdom (UK) with data collected from 39 organisations ($n = 26,382$). These figures show the results for job demands, job control, manager support, peer support, relationships, role and change. These are all psychosocial factors that are found in workplaces that have been shown in previous research to influence the mental wellbeing of employees.^{5,9}

For each HSE Management Standard displayed in the figures below, we have averaged the scores and colour coded them following the UK norms. The use of norms developed in the UK rather than Australia is not ideal, so comparisons between norms established in the UK sample and scores in this sample should be undertaken with caution.

The scores for each subscale have been colour coded into one of four percentile categories based on the UK norms: below the 20th percentile, between the 20th and 50th percentiles, between the 50th and 80th percentiles and above the 80th percentile. Edwards and colleagues⁹ suggest that these categories can be interpreted as follows:

- **Red:** The worksite score falls below the 20th percentile and urgent action is required.
- **Yellow:** The worksite score is below average so there is a clear need of improvement.
- **Blue:** The worksite score is better than average but still needs improvement.
- **Green:** The worksite is doing very well.

In this survey, we have investigated individual employee perceptions across multiple worksites rather than specific worksites. However, it is still useful to compare AEU member perceptions of workplace stress to the UK norms. For example, a score at the 50th percentile indicates that respondents perceive stress in their workplaces to be at the same level or better than 50% of the employees in the UK sample.

Figure 26 displays average scores among AEU members for the HSE-MSIT subscales. Clarity around respondent roles at work was the most highly-rated subscale followed by peer support and relationships, indicating that these specific work stressors were relatively low compared to job demands and the management of workplace change. Note that to ensure that higher scores indicate better outcomes across all HSE-MSIT subscales, the scores on the job demands and relationships subscale are always reversed so that higher scores represent lower job demands and relationship tension.

On average, respondents scored their experiences at very low levels indicating that they were experiencing high levels of workplace stress. Compared to the UK norms, all these average scores fall into the lowest 20th percentile, indicating an urgent need for attention.

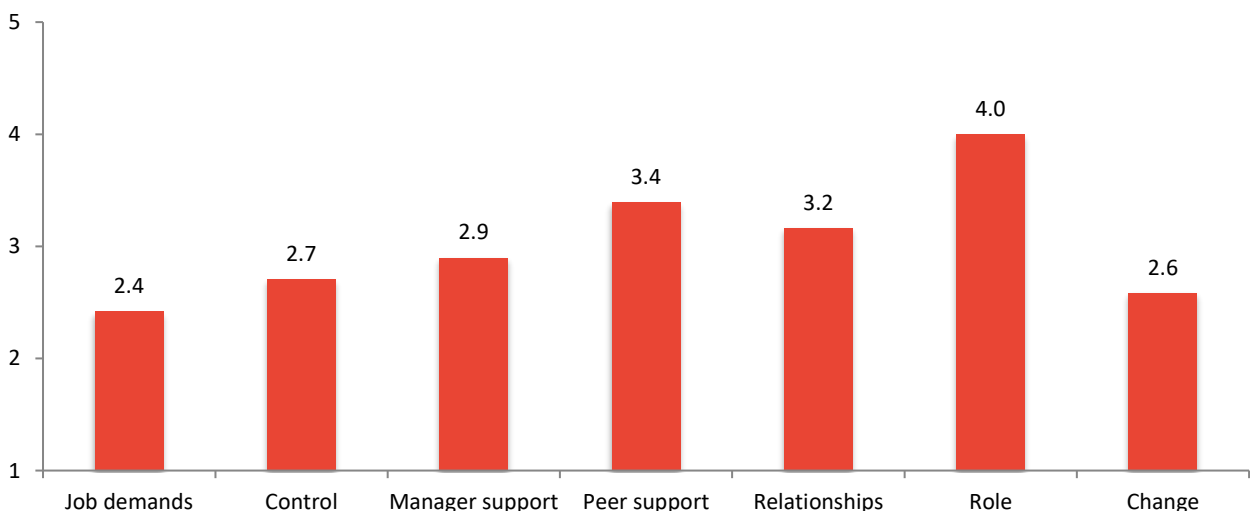


FIGURE 26: WORKPLACE STRESS

Figure 27 below displays average scores for the job demands subscale across member groups. The measurement of job demands includes issues such as workload, work patterns, and the work environment. To ensure that higher scores indicate better outcomes across all HSE-MSIT subscales, the scores on the job demands subscale are always reversed so that higher scores represent lower job demands.

Members working in education support and disability rated their work higher on the job demands subscale compared to principals and teachers, indicating a lower level of job demands in these two groups. Compared to the UK norms, scores for principals, teachers and disability workers fell into the lowest 20th percentile, indicating an urgent need for attention. Scores for those working in education support fell between the 20th and 50th percentiles, indicating a clear need for improvement.

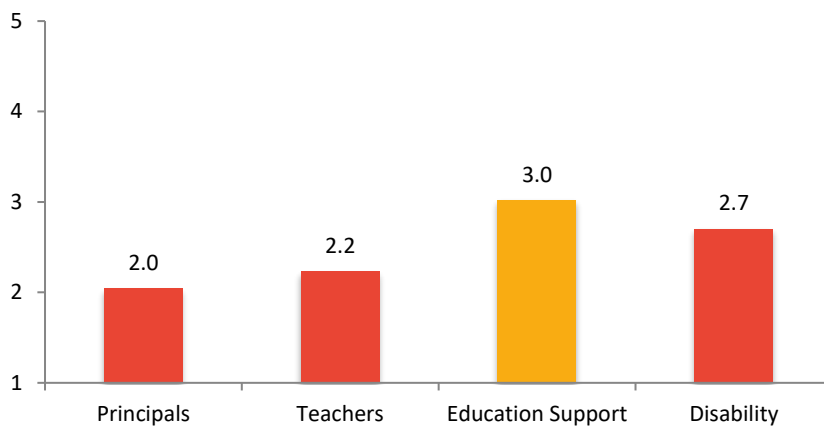


FIGURE 27: JOB DEMANDS BY MEMBER GROUP

Figure 28 below displays average scores for the job control subscale across member groups. Job control generally refers to how much say the person has in the way they do their work. Principals rated their work higher on the job control subscale compared to teachers, education support and disability workers, indicating a higher level of job control for this group. Compared to the UK norms, scores for teachers, education support and disability workers fell into the lowest 20th percentile, indicating an urgent need for attention. Scores for principals fell between the 20th and 50th percentiles, indicating a clear need for improvement.

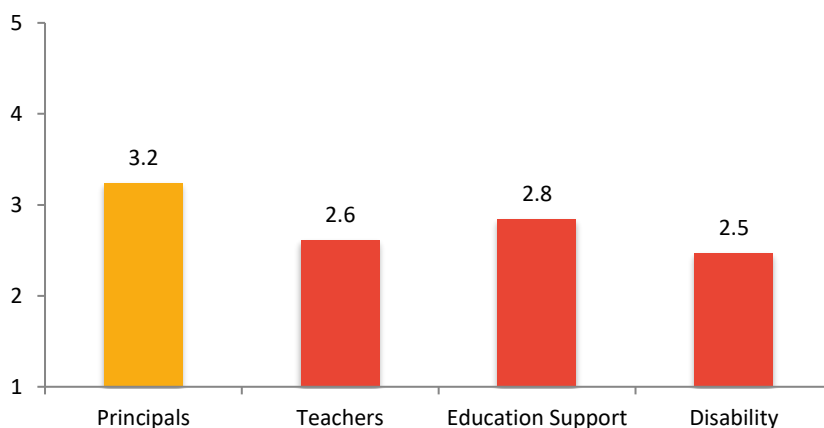


FIGURE 28: JOB CONTROL BY MEMBER GROUP

Figure 29 below displays average scores for the manager support subscale across member groups. Manager support includes experienced levels of encouragement, sponsorship and resources. Principals and members working in education support rated their experience higher on the manager support subscale compared to teachers and disability workers, indicating a higher level of manager support in these two groups. Compared to the UK norms, scores for all four member groups fell into the lowest 20th percentile, indicating an urgent need for attention.

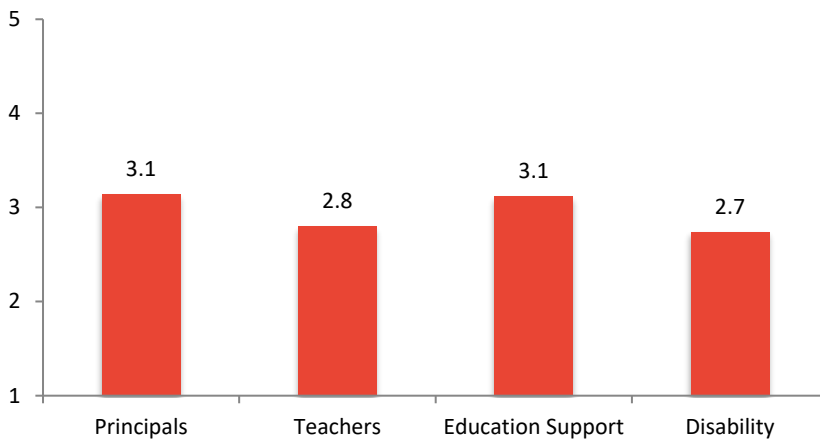


FIGURE 29: MANAGER SUPPORT BY MEMBER GROUP

Figure 30 below displays average scores for the peer support subscale across member groups. Principals rated their experience higher on the peer support subscale compared to all other groups, indicating a higher level of experienced peer support. Compared to the UK norms, scores for teachers, education support and disability workers fell into the lowest 20th percentile, indicating an urgent need for attention. Scores for principals fell between the 20th and 50th percentiles, indicating a clear need for improvement.

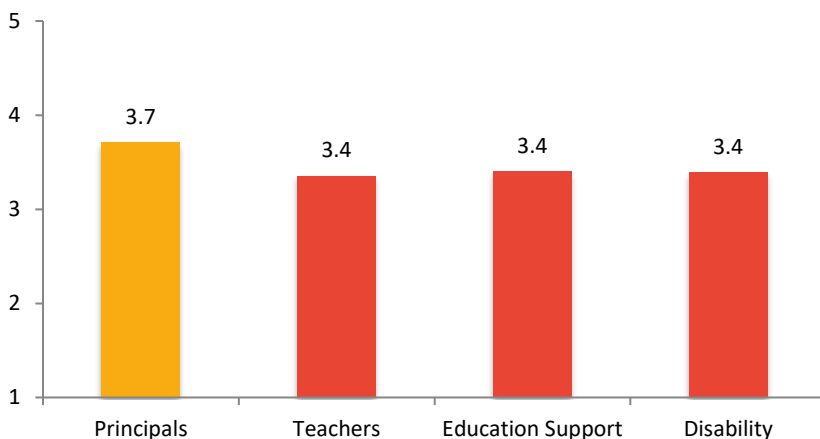


FIGURE 30: PEER SUPPORT BY MEMBER GROUP

Figure 31 below displays average scores for the relationships subscale across member groups. Relationships includes the approaches towards unacceptable behaviour and positive working environment to circumvent conflict. To ensure that higher scores indicate better outcomes across all HSE-MSIT subscales, the scores on the relationships subscale are always reversed so that higher scores represent better working relationships among employees.

Principals rated their experiences higher on the relationships subscale compared to all other groups, indicating a lower level of tension within working relationships. Compared to the UK norms, scores for all four member groups fell into the lowest 20th percentile, indicating an urgent need for attention.

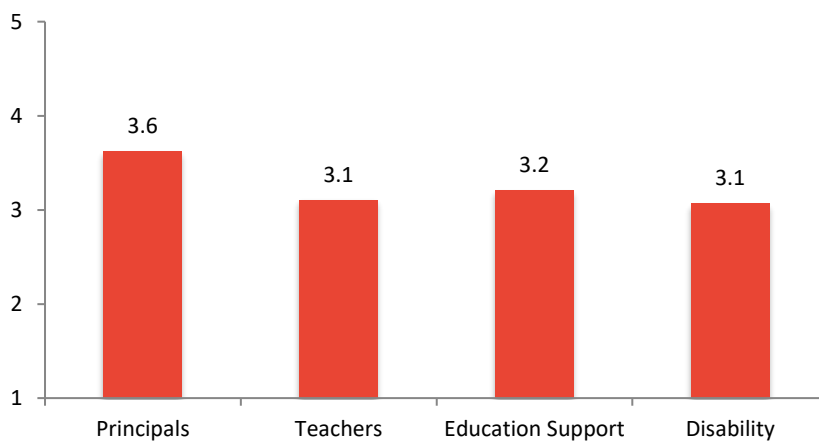


FIGURE 31: RELATIONSHIPS BY MEMBER GROUP

Figure 32 displays average scores for the role subscale across member groups. Role includes whether the employee clearly understands their responsibilities at work and how they fit into the objectives of their organisation. Principals and members working in education support rated their work higher on the role subscale compared to teachers and disability workers, indicating a higher level of role clarity in these two groups. Compared to the UK norms, scores for teachers and disability workers fell into the lowest 20th percentile, indicating an urgent need for attention. Scores for principals and education support workers fell between the 20th and 50th percentiles, indicating a clear need for improvement.

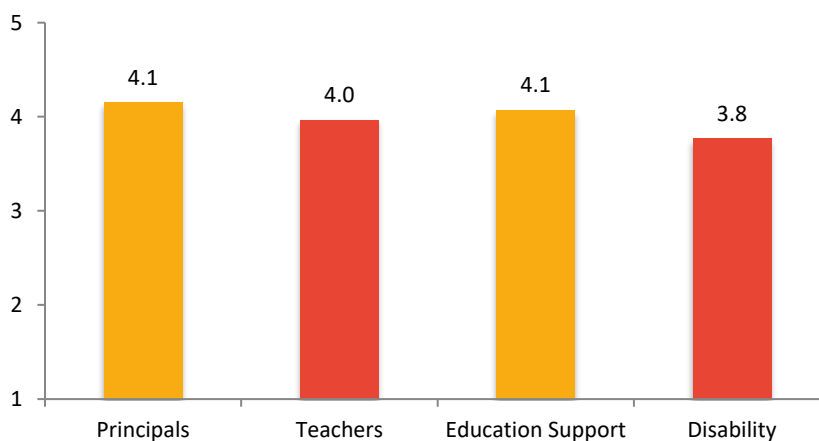


FIGURE 32: ROLE CLARITY BY MEMBER GROUP

Figure 33 below displays average scores for the change subscale across member groups. Change refers to the “management and communication of change” in the workplace.⁵ Principals rated their workplaces higher on the change subscale compared to all other groups, indicating a higher level of ease when experiencing changes at work. Compared to the UK norms, scores for all four member groups fell into the lowest 20th percentile, indicating an urgent need for attention.

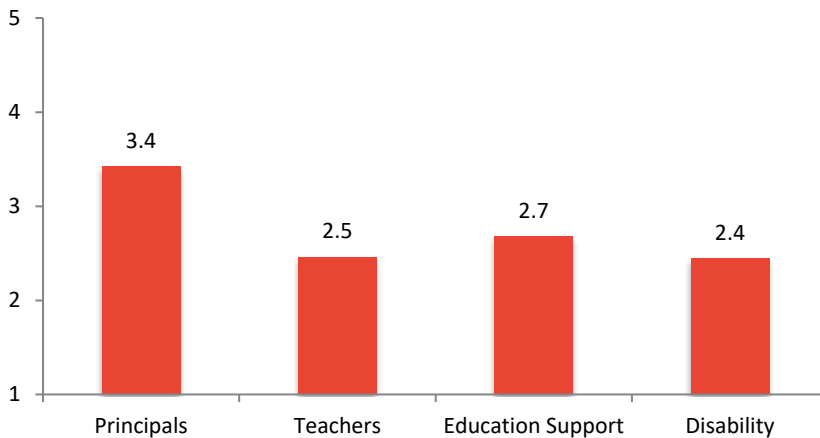


FIGURE 33: CHANGE BY MEMBER GROUP

In addition to scores for the HSE Management Standards Indicator Tool, respondents were asked to score workplace-related experiences of bureaucracy.

Figure 34 below shows the average respondent scores on the bureaucracy subscale across member groups. Bureaucracy is defined as “the relative emphasis on rules and ‘red tape’ within an organization”³ and was reported along a scale where 1 represents strong disagreement and 5 represents strong agreement with items representing bureaucracy in the workplace. The average bureaucracy score for the whole sample was 4.0 (*SD* = 0.8). The figure below shows that principals and teachers, on average, reported higher levels of bureaucracy than did education support and disability workers.

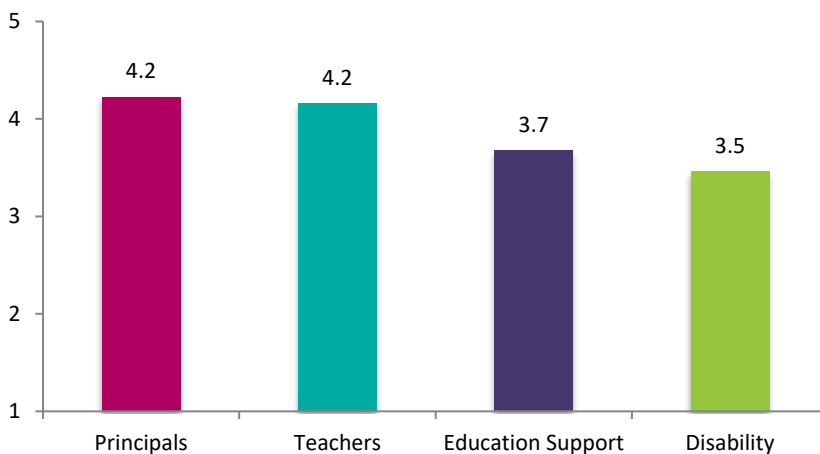


FIGURE 34: BUREAUCRACY BY MEMBER GROUP

4.5 Emotional burnout and silence

Figure 35 below shows average respondent scores on emotional burnout across member groups. Burnout was reported along a response scale where 0 represents no experience of burnout and 100 represents severe levels of burnout. The average burnout score for the whole sample was 66 ($SD = 19.8$), considered to be a moderate level of burnout.³⁸ The figure below shows that teachers and disability workers reported higher levels of burnout compared to education support workers and principals.

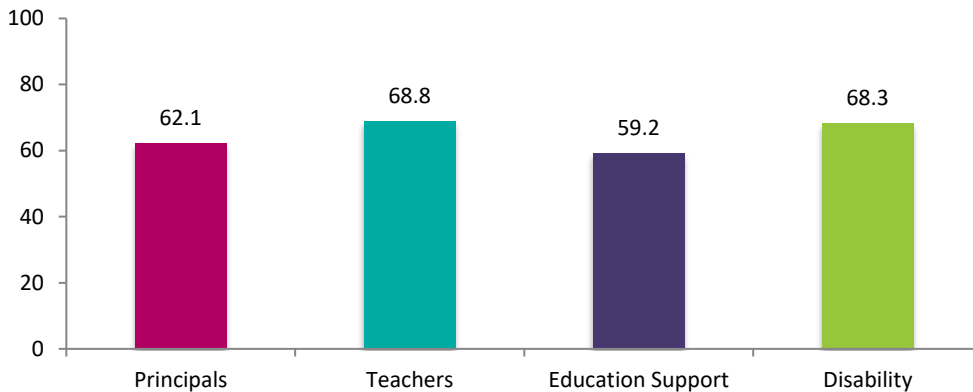


FIGURE 35: EMOTIONAL BURNOUT BY MEMBER GROUP

Figure 36 below displays the scores for quiescent and acquiescent silence across member groups. Quiescent silence describes a condition where employees are silent because of their fear of the consequences of speaking up, whereas acquiescent silence is where employees have given up hope for improvement and are not willing to exert the effort to speak up.

Along a scale where 1 represents strong disagreement and 7 represents strong agreement with scale items, the overall average scores across all respondents was 4.7 ($SD = 1.9$) for quiescent silence and 4.5 ($SD = 1.8$) for acquiescent silence. The figure below shows that principals report lower levels of both quiescent and acquiescent silence than all other groups, while teachers reported slightly higher levels than education support and disability workers. The scores for each group on the two measured types of silence are roughly equivalent.

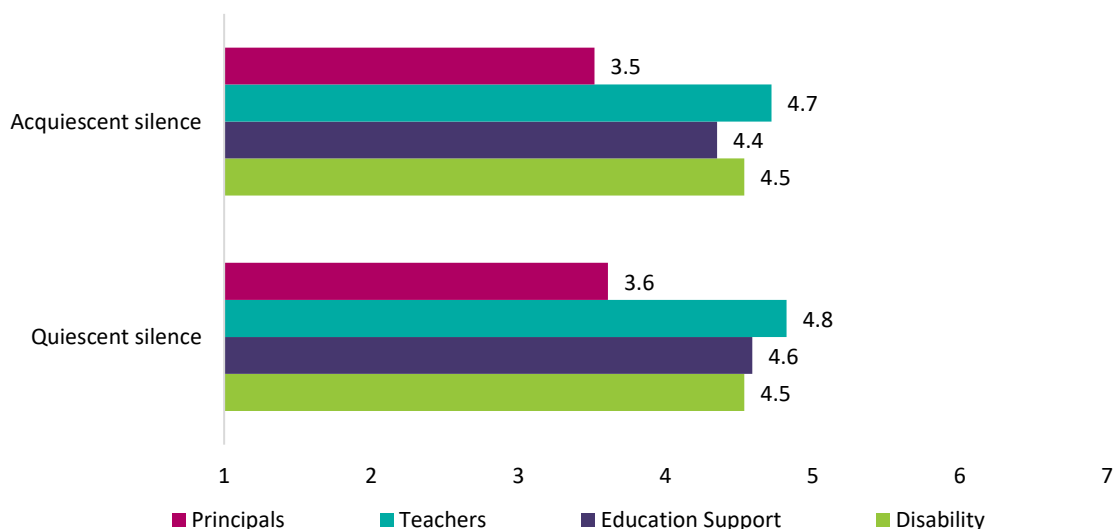


FIGURE 36: EMPLOYEE SILENCE BY MEMBER GROUP

4.6 Wellbeing

Figure 37 below shows the raw scores for wellbeing as measured by the World Health Organization’s measure (WHO-5) across member groups, where a score of 0 represents a very low level of wellbeing and 25 represents a very positive sense of wellbeing. The average score on the wellbeing scale for all respondents was 11.8 ($SD = 6.1$). A score below 13 on the WHO-5²⁵ indicates poor levels of wellbeing.

Principals indicated slightly higher levels of wellbeing, on average, than the other member groups, and their average score is slightly above the threshold of 13 for poor wellbeing. Teachers, education support and disability workers all scored below the threshold of 13, indicating poor wellbeing.

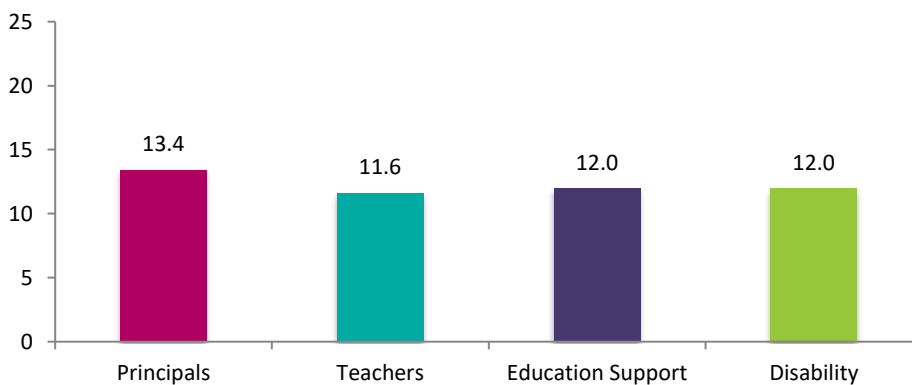


FIGURE 37: WELLBEING BY MEMBER GROUP

Figure 38 below shows measurements of thriving at work (expressed via two subscales—learning and vitality) which garnered mixed results where respondents reported high levels of learning and moderate levels of vitality. On average, principals reported higher levels of thriving than the other member groups for both learning and vitality. While teachers reported moderately high levels of learning at work, they scored the lowest for vitality as compared to the other groups (though were still moderate). Reported along a scale where 1 represents strong disagreement and 7 represents strong agreement, the average scores among all respondents were 5.5 ($SD = 1.2$) for learning and 4.3 ($SD = 1.5$) for vitality.

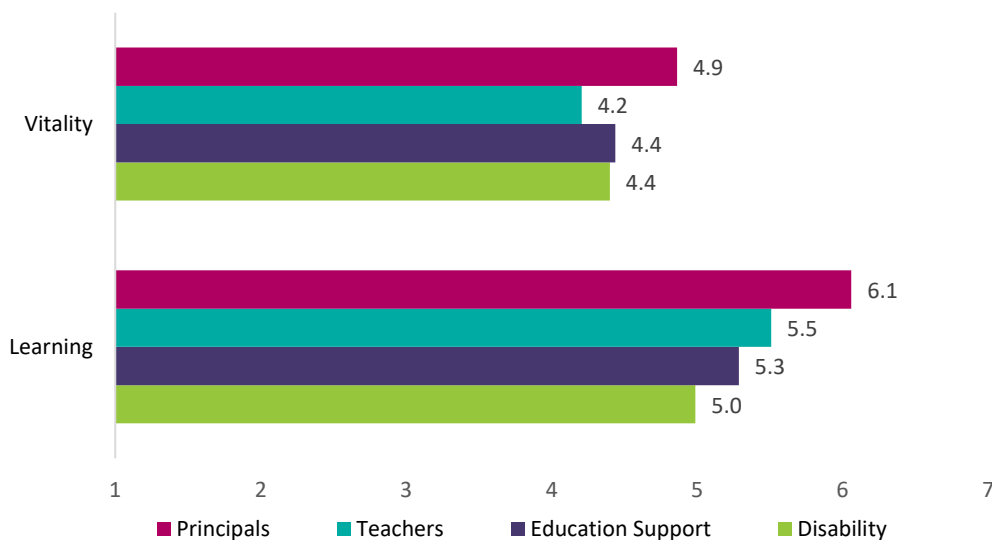


FIGURE 38: THRIVING AT WORK BY MEMBER GROUP

Figure 39 below shows the average scores for the mindfulness scale across member groups where a score of 1 represents very low levels of mindfulness and 5 represents very high levels of mindfulness. The average score on the mindfulness scale for all respondents was 3.1 ($SD = 1.0$).

Principals and teachers tended to report slightly higher levels of mindfulness compared to education support and disability workers.

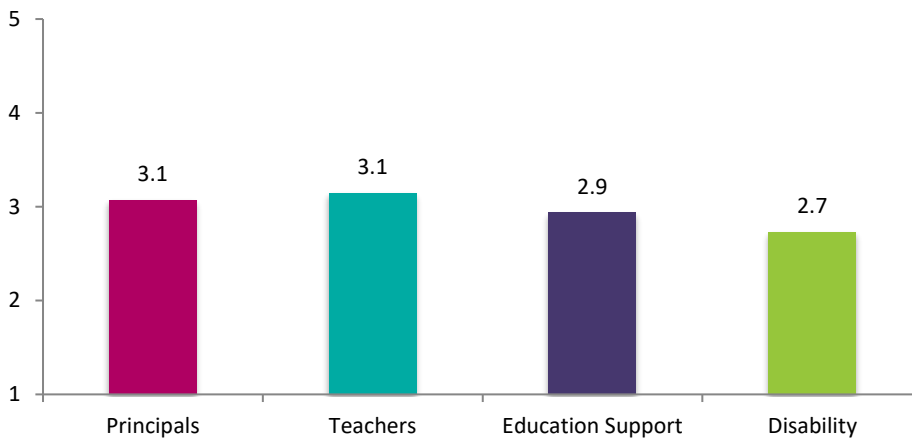


FIGURE 39: MINDFULNESS BY MEMBER GROUP

4.7 Engagement and intentions to leave

Figure 40 displays the scores for the work engagement scale where scores range from 0 (low engagement at work) to 6 (high engagement). The average engagement score across all respondents was 4.3 ($SD = 1.2$), indicating a high level of engagement overall. A comparison across groups shows that principals reported higher levels of engagement at work compared to the other groups, while disability workers reported the lowest levels of engagement.

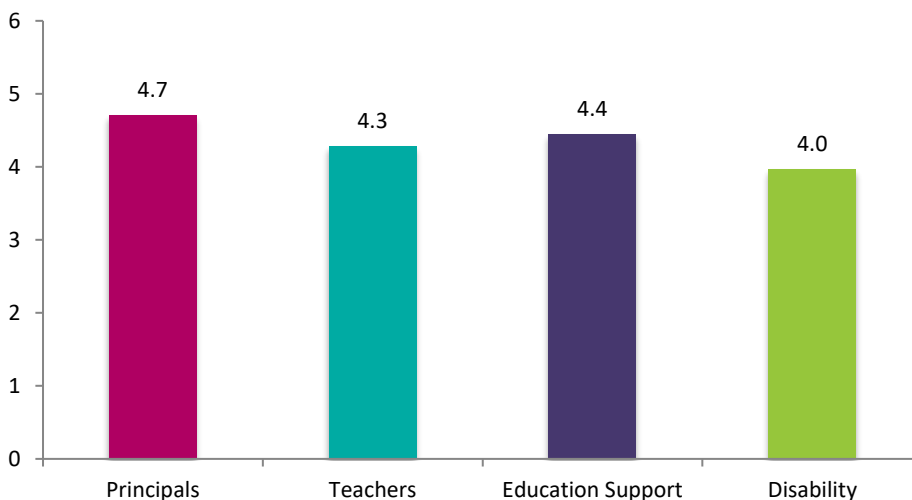


FIGURE 40: ENGAGEMENT AT WORK BY MEMBER GROUP

Figure 41 displays the scores for the intention to leave (job) scale where a score of 1 means that there is no intention to leave, and a score of 7 indicates imminent resignation. On average, the intention to leave (job) score across all respondents was 4.0 ($SD = 2.0$) indicating a moderately high intention to leave their jobs. A comparison across groups shows that teachers and disability workers have, on average, higher intention to leave their jobs compared to the other member groups. Principals reported a lower intention to leave their job compared to other member groups.

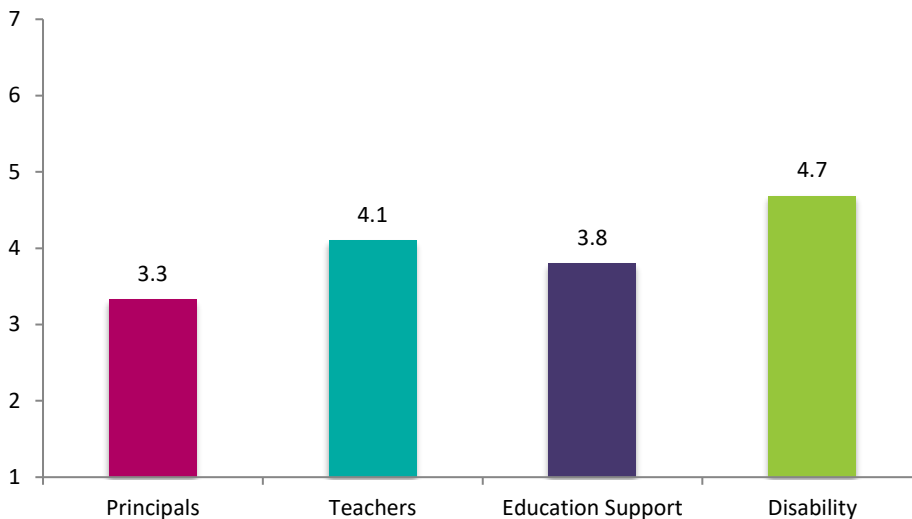


FIGURE 41: INTENTION TO LEAVE THE JOB

Figure 42 displays the scores for the intention to leave (profession) scale, where a score of 1 means that there is no intention to leave the profession and a score of 7 indicates high intention to leave the profession. On average, the intention to leave (profession) score across all respondents was 3.4 ($SD = 1.9$) indicating a relatively low intention to leave their profession. A comparison across groups shows that teachers and disability workers have, on average, higher intention to leave their profession compared to the other member groups. Principals reported a lower intention to leave their profession compared to other member groups.

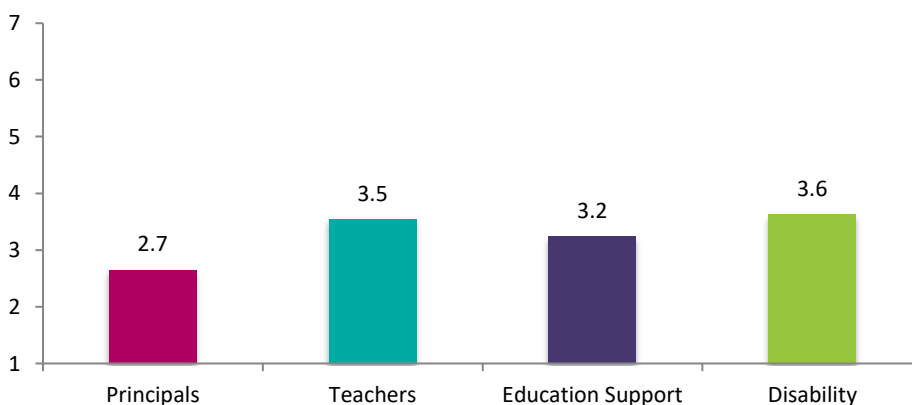


FIGURE 42: INTENTION TO LEAVE THE PROFESSION

5 COMPARING RESPONDENT VIEWS BETWEEN 2014 AND 2019 SURVEYS

There are several new measures in the 2019 survey that will provide a baseline for future data collection. It is therefore not possible to comment on changes over a period of time with respect to these measures. There is an opportunity, however, to compare the measures that were used in both the 2014 and 2019 surveys. It is important to note that, although the survey population source is the same (the AEU, Victoria), we do not know if respondents were the same individuals as survey respondents were guaranteed anonymity.

5.1 Comparing respondents and their workplaces

A major difference between the 2014 and 2019 surveys was the number of respondents. In the 2014 survey, there were 4,750 usable responses from members compared to the 1,109 usable responses in 2019. The difference in responses translates to a drop in the response rate from 10% to 2%. While we cannot be certain of the reason for a substantial difference in sample size between the two surveys, it is possible that the difference in recruitment strategies may have led to a smaller number of respondents in 2019. In the 2014 survey, all AEU members were emailed directly with an invitation to complete the survey, while in 2019, a link to the survey was embedded in an AEU member newsletter, and as such may not have had the visibility of the earlier survey. Given the difference in response rates, the following set of figures provides information about the two data sets.

Figure 43 below displays the distribution of survey participants by gender between the two surveys, 2014 and 2019. In 2019, 82% of participants were female, which was a slight increase on 2014. The percentage of male participants decreased in 2019. This difference was significant ($p < .001$).

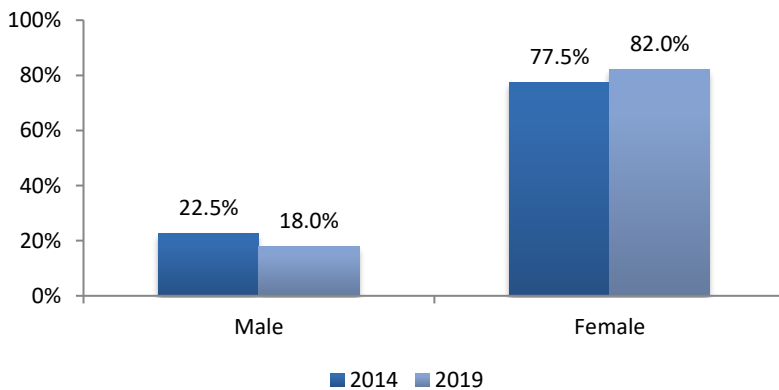


FIGURE 43: COMPARISON OF RESPONDENT GENDER BETWEEN SURVEYS

Figure 44 below displays the distribution of survey participants by age between the two surveys, 2014 and 2019. In both surveys, the majority of participants were aged between 46 and 65 years. However, there was an increase in respondents in the younger age groups in 2019 compared to 2014, and this difference was significant ($p < .001$).

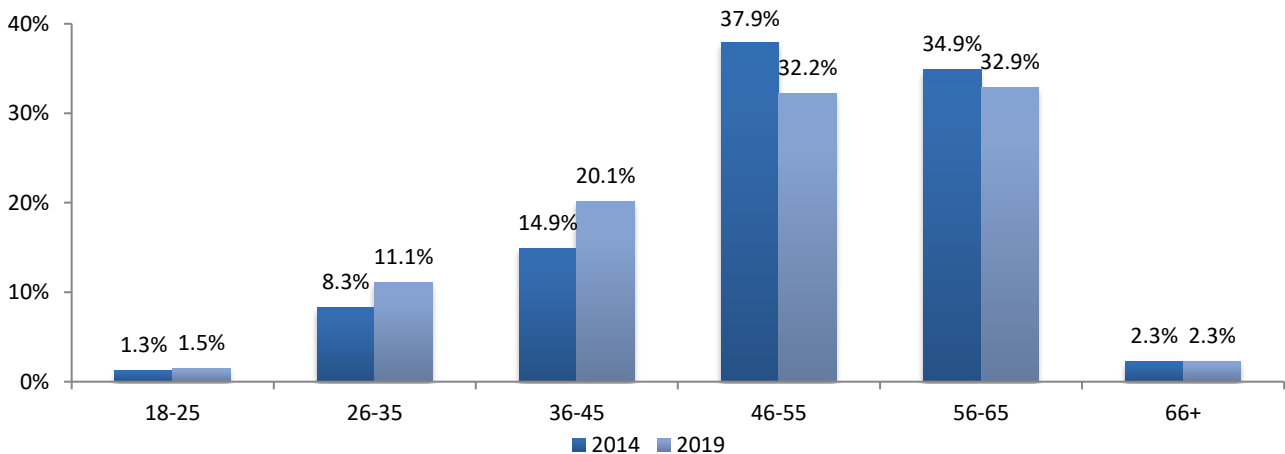


FIGURE 44: COMPARISON OF RESPONDENT AGE BETWEEN SURVEYS

Figure 45 below displays the distribution of survey participants by time spent working in their respective organisations between the two surveys, 2014 and 2019. In both surveys, the majority of participants were fairly equally divided among the following three groups: having spent 1 to 5 years in their current organisations, having spent 6 to 10 years at their current organisations, and having spent 11 to 20 years at their current organisations. The difference for workplace size between the 2014 and 2019 surveys was not significant ($p > .05$).

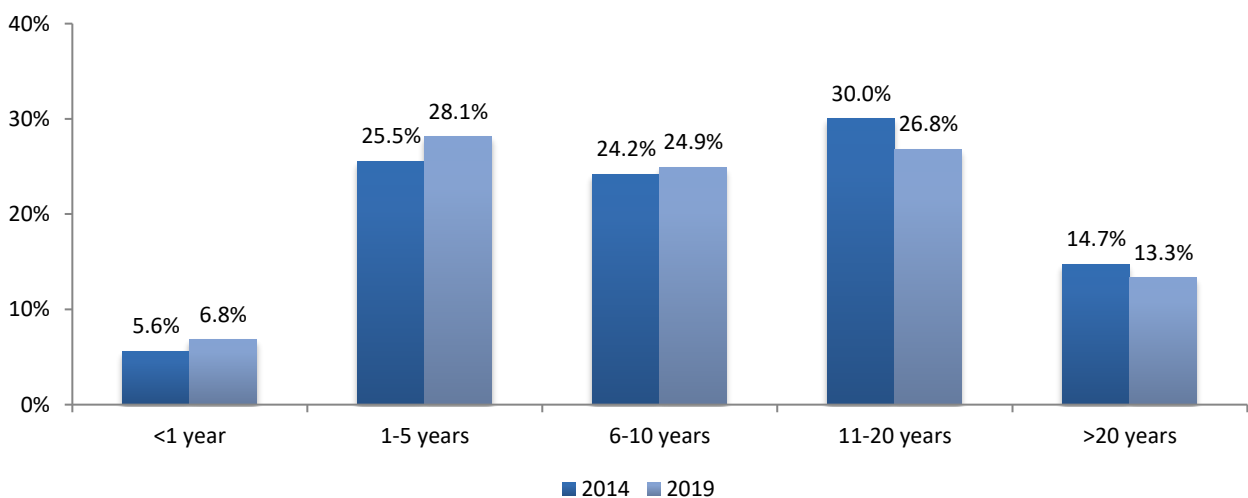


FIGURE 45: COMPARISON OF RESPONDENT WORKPLACE TENURE BETWEEN SURVEYS

Figure 46 below shows the distribution of survey participants across different working arrangements. In both the 2014 and 2019 surveys, over 80% of respondents were engaged on a permanent or ongoing basis. However, the percentage of respondents who were employed in permanent/ongoing positions was higher in 2019 compared to 2014, and the percentage of respondents who had been employed in contract positions in 2019 had decreased. These differences in employment status were significant ($p < .001$).

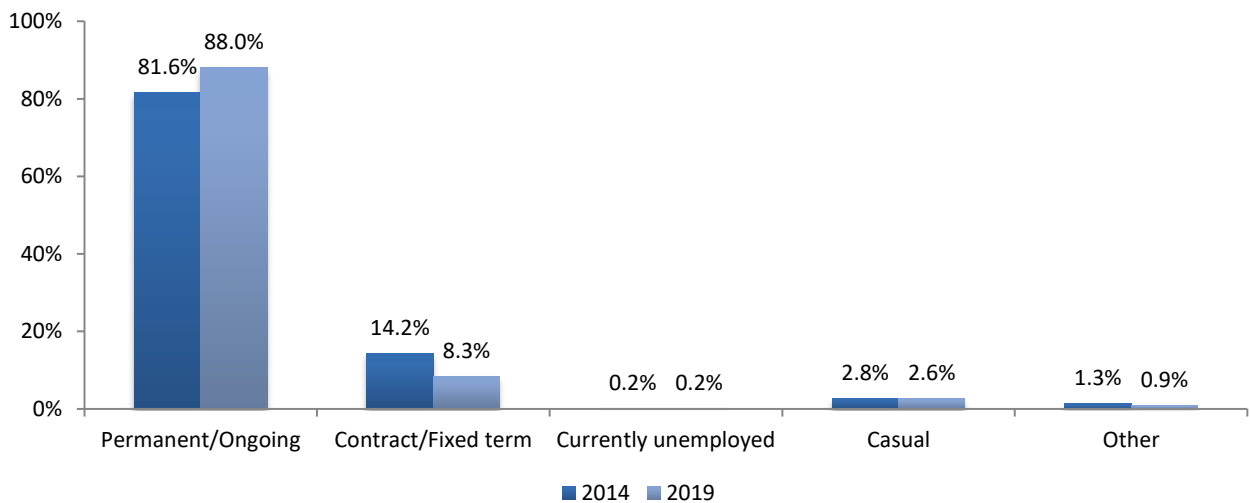


FIGURE 46: COMPARISON OF RESPONDENT EMPLOYMENT STATUS BETWEEN SURVEYS

Figure 47 below shows the distribution of survey participants by organisation type. In both the 2014 and 2019 surveys, over 70% of respondents were engaged at primary and secondary schools. In 2014, slightly more responses were from members who work in secondary schools or TAFE facilities. These differences were significant ($p < .001$).

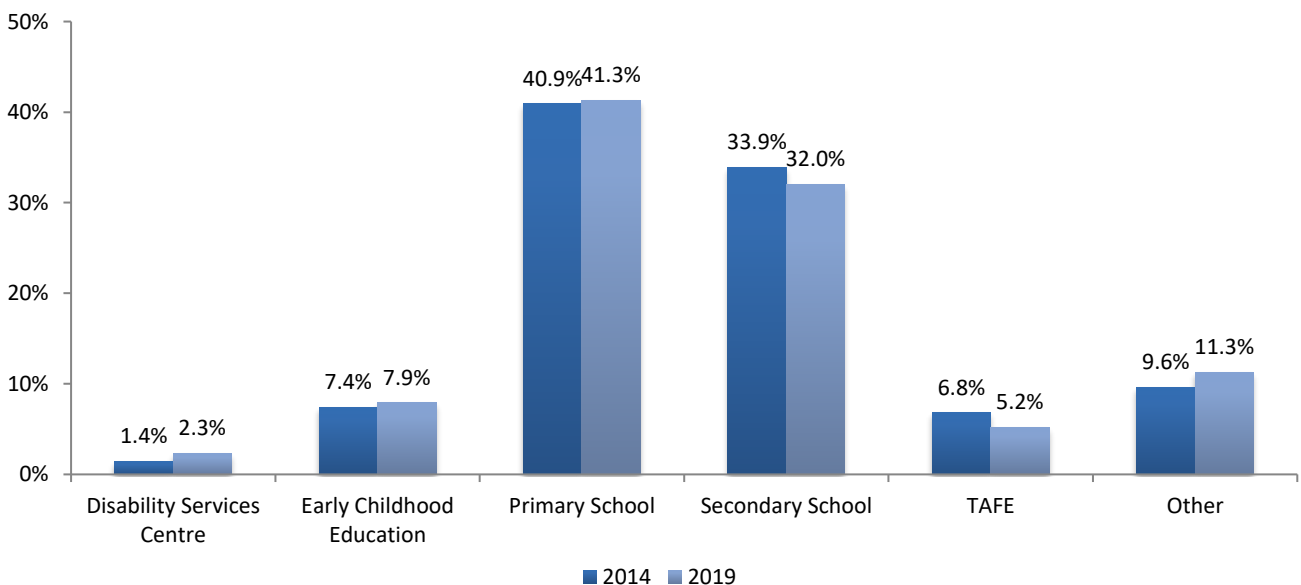


FIGURE 47: COMPARISON OF RESPONDENT ORGANISATIONS BETWEEN SURVEYS

Figure 48 below shows the distribution of participants across workplace size. In both years, 2014 and 2019, few participants worked in micro workplaces (1–4 employees). In both years, slightly more than half of all respondents worked in medium-sized workplaces (20–199 employees). However, these differences were not significant ($p > .05$).

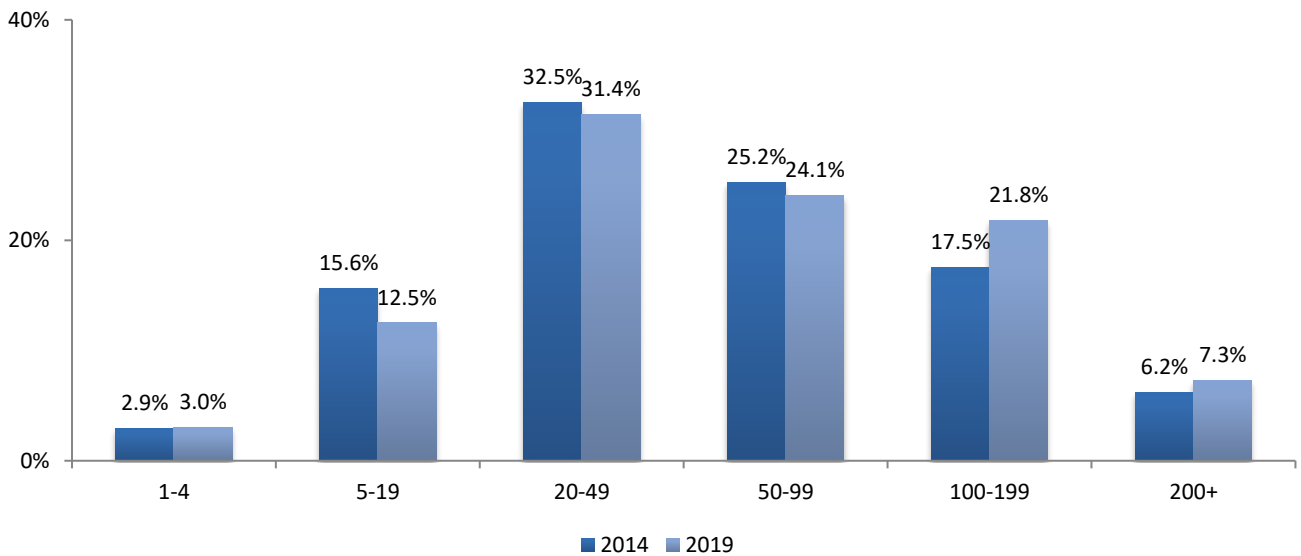


FIGURE 48: COMPARISON OF WORKPLACE SIZE BETWEEN SURVEYS

5.2 Comparing OHS and other measures

Figure 49 below shows the average number of OHS incidents across the two surveys. There was a decrease in OHS incidents overall from 2014 to 2019, and this was particularly evident for incidents that were not reported to management. However, only incidents that were not reported to management decreased significantly ($p < .01$). No significant differences were observed for incidents that were reported to management, nor for near misses ($p > .05$).

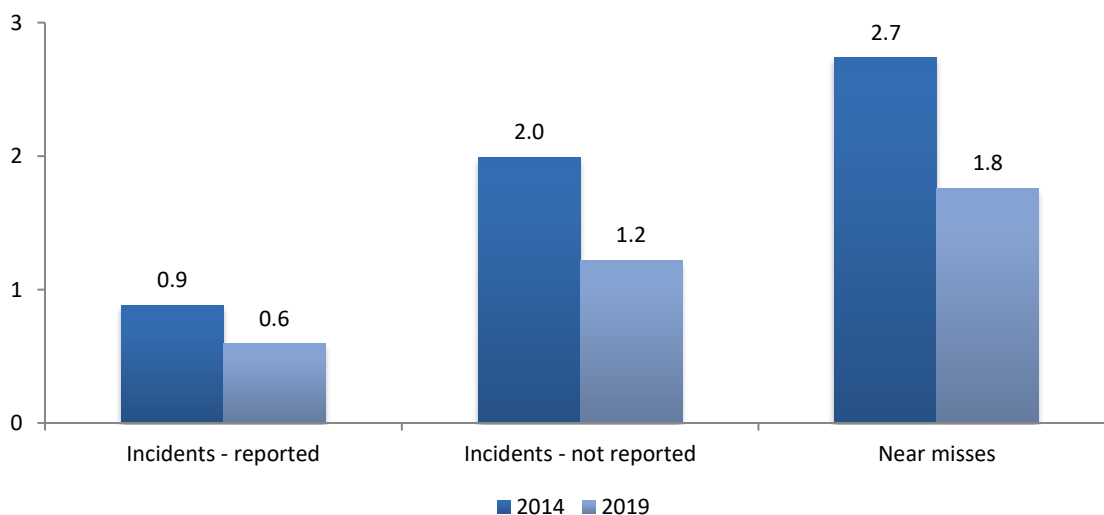


FIGURE 49: COMPARISON OF OHS INCIDENTS BETWEEN SURVEYS

Figure 50 below displays the perceptions of respondents for leading indicators of OHS (as measured by OPM-MU), safety motivation and other safety behaviours for the two surveys. While there were slight decreases in reported OPM-MU and safety control scores, the average scores for safety motivation and other safety behaviours increased slightly from 2014 to 2019. These differences in perceptions of safety were significant ($p < .05$).

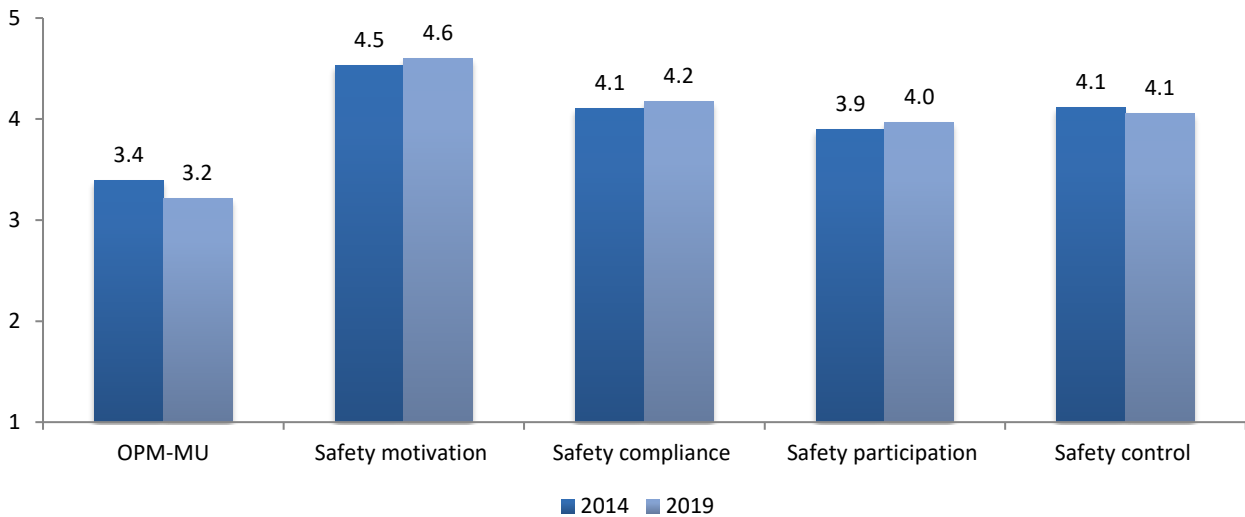


FIGURE 50: COMPARISON OF PERCEPTIONS OF OHS AND EMPLOYEE SAFETY BETWEEN SURVEYS

Figure 51 below shows that the percentages of survey respondents who took part in occupational health and safety training differed between the surveys of 2014 and 2019. In the 2014 sample, approximately 65% of respondents had accessed OHS training, while in the 2019 sample, that percentage had decreased slightly to 62%. However, this difference was not significant ($p > .05$).

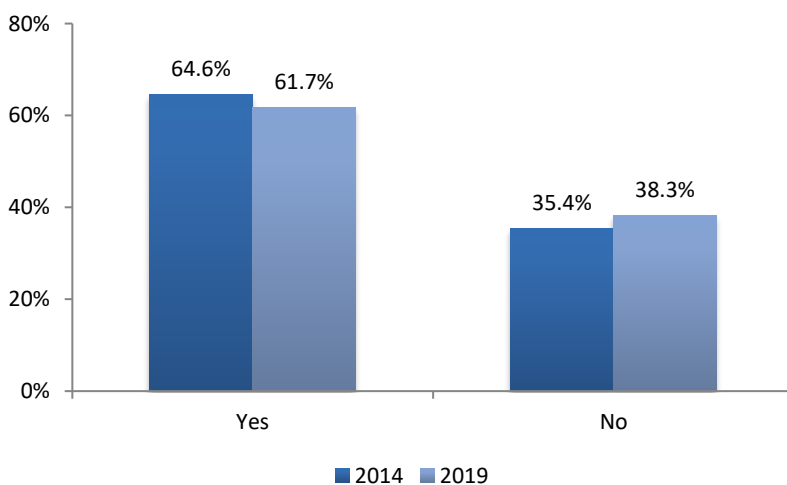


FIGURE 51: COMPARISON OF OHS TRAINING BETWEEN SURVEYS

Figure 52 below displays survey respondent perceptions of the effectiveness of their OHS training between the 2014 and 2019 surveys. In both years, approximately half of the respondents indicated that the OHS training they had received was somewhat effective. The percentage of respondents who said that OHS training was very effective decreased from 20% in 2014, to under 17% in 2019. However, this difference was not significant ($p > .05$).

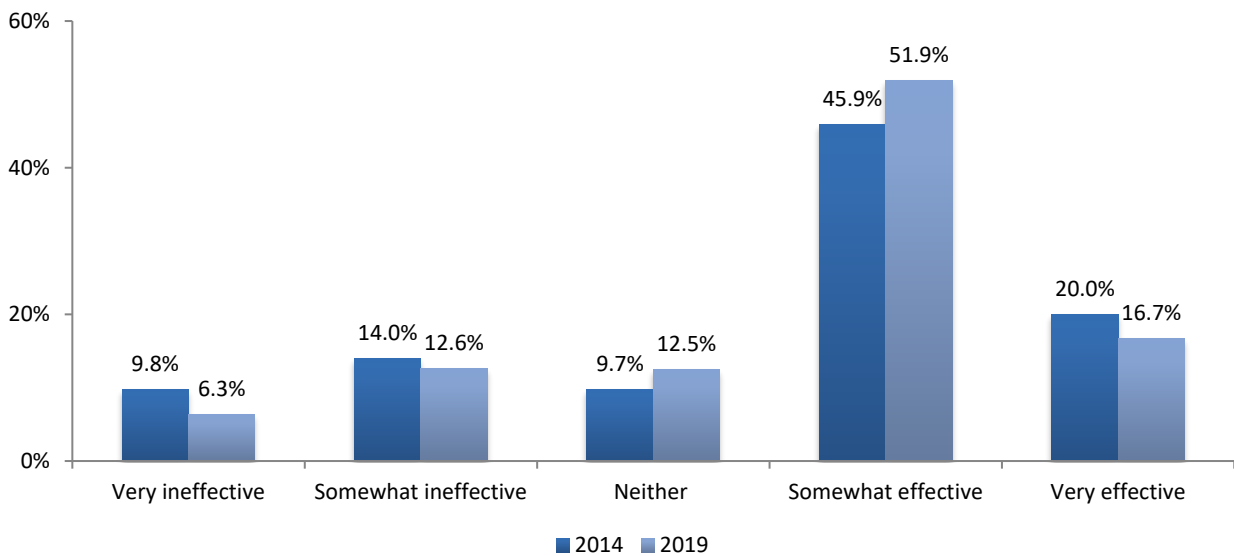


FIGURE 52: COMPARISON OF OHS TRAINING EFFECTIVENESS BETWEEN SURVEYS

Figure 53 below shows the percentages of respondents who had a health and safety representative working on their behalf. There was a decline from 2014 to 2019 in the percentage of respondents who indicated having OHS representation at work, and an increase in respondents who were unsure of whether they had an OHS representative. These differences were significant ($p < .001$).

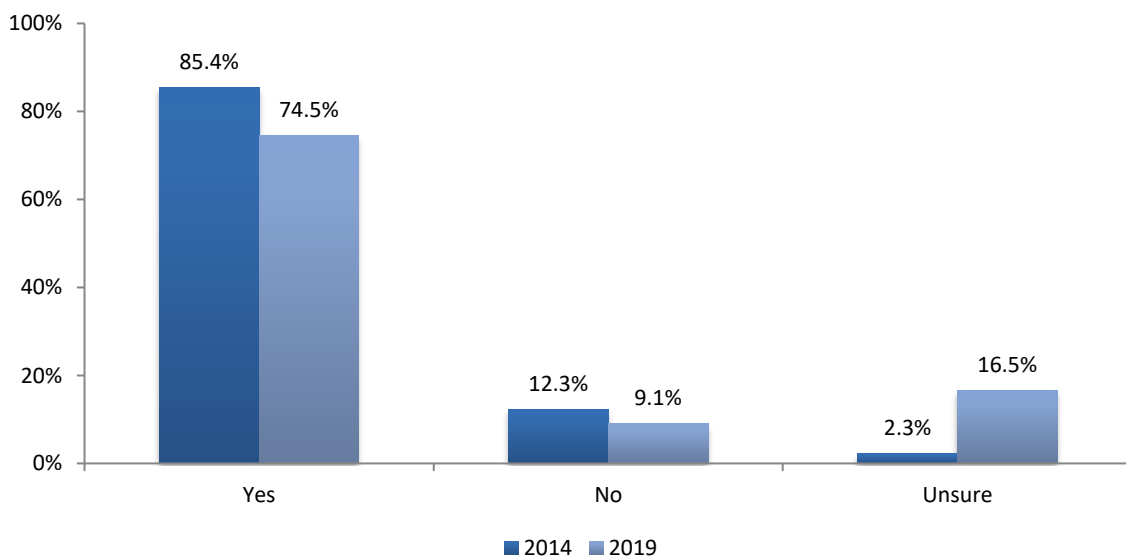


FIGURE 53: COMPARISON OF OHS REPRESENTATION BETWEEN SURVEYS

Figure 54 below shows respondents' average experience of emotional burnout between survey years. There was a substantial increase in burnout from 2014 to 2019. AEU member scores on burnout increased from 42.4 to 66.0 between 2014 and 2019, and this difference was significant ($p < .001$).

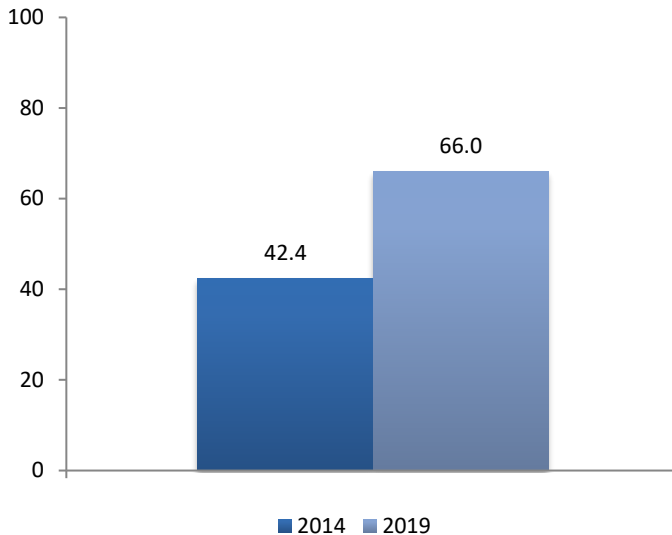


FIGURE 54: COMPARISON OF EXPERIENCED EMOTIONAL BURNOUT BETWEEN SURVEYS

Figure 55 below shows differences between the 2014 and 2019 survey groups in perceptions of silence and bureaucracy. While there were increases across all measures, it is notable that there were greater increases in average scores for both quiescent silence (employees who are silent because of their fear of the consequences of speaking up) and acquiescent silence (employees who have given up hope for improvement and are not willing to exert the effort to speak up). These differences were both significant ($p < .001$). There was a slight increase in bureaucracy but it did not register at one decimal place.

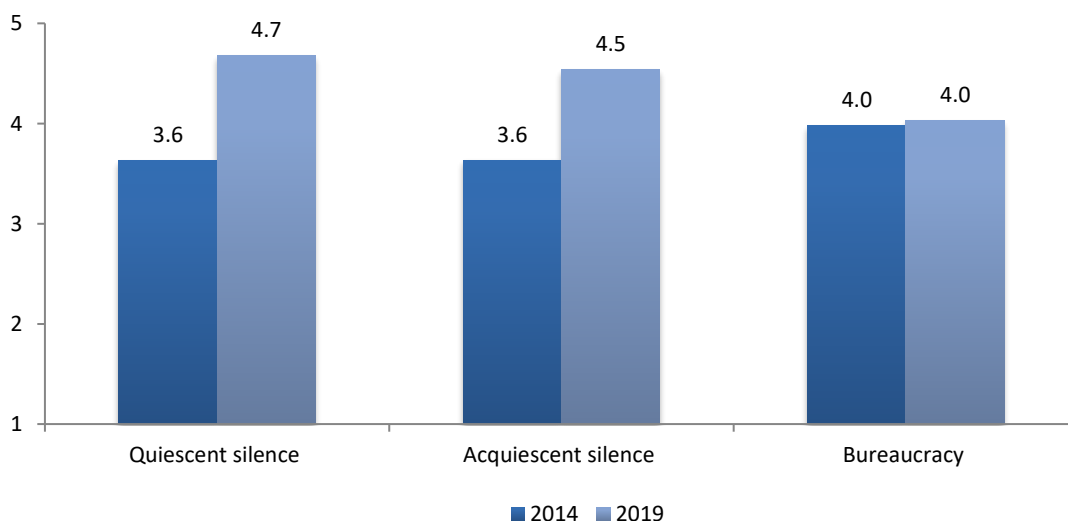


FIGURE 55: COMPARISON OF EMPLOYEE SILENCE AND BUREAUCRACY BETWEEN SURVEYS

Figure 56 below shows a notable increase in the total average scores for intention to leave the profession between respondents of the 2014 and 2019 survey years. There was, on average, a lower intention to leave among respondents in 2014 compared to respondents in 2019. This difference was significant ($p < .001$).

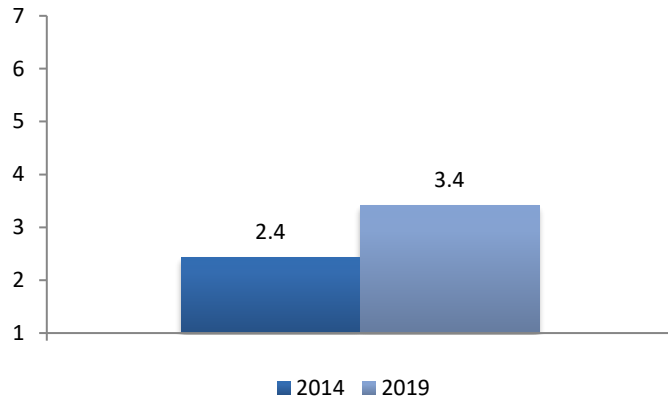


FIGURE 56: COMPARISON OF INTENTION TO LEAVE THE PROFESSION BETWEEN SURVEYS

6 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This report has presented the key findings from a survey of AEU members conducted in August and September 2019. The aim of this survey was to examine AEU member perceptions of OHS, safety behaviours, self-reported OHS outcomes and other elements of work-related experiences. More broadly, we also examined respondent perceptions of workplace stress, wellbeing and engagement at work. Where relevant, we also compared results from the current survey to those in our report on AEU member experiences of safety that was released in 2015.³⁹

6.1 Survey results

Responses were received from 1,109 members with the largest group of respondents from primary and secondary school teachers. The remaining respondents were from different education facilities including early childhood education, special schools, TAFE and disability services. Most respondents worked in major cities, however there was a substantial proportion of respondents from regional areas. Respondents also tended to be female, older than 45 years and well established in their career (more than 10 years). The majority of respondents were employed on a full-time basis in a permanent position.

6.1.1 OHS and safety behaviours

Overall, respondents rated their own safety behaviours and motivations at a relatively high level but rated perceived workplace safety at more moderate levels. The variation between ratings of safety behaviours and motivations and the perceived safety of the workplace has been found in our earlier studies in the education sector³⁹, healthcare⁴⁰ and elsewhere.⁴¹

Respondents tended to indicate higher levels of incidents that they did not report to management and near misses, compared to OHS incidents that were reported. This outcome was consistent across groups with principals, teachers, education support and disability workers experiencing higher levels of unreported incidents and near misses. Notably, disability workers indicated experiencing a higher level of OHS incidents that they did not report to management. With respect to training, of those respondents who indicated accessing OHS training, most said that their training was effective.

6.1.2 Experiences of incivility, aggression and violence

Experiences such as obscene remarks, obscene gestures, intimidation and verbal threats tended to be experienced on multiple occasions over the past 12 months, while physical attacks, theft of property, threats with a weapon and damage to personal property were more likely to be reported as one-off experiences. Although incidents were primarily perpetrated by students or clients, other reported perpetrators included family of students or clients, supervisors and colleagues.

Most respondents reported some experiences to their manager or supervisor, however the number of incidents that were experienced by respondents and not reported was substantially higher. Reasons why respondents did not report their experiences were categorised into job-related factors (e.g., part of the job), pastoral care (e.g., protecting students) and reputation (e.g., not wanting to be seen as weak). The most common reasons respondents did not report their experience were because they saw it as part of the job and they wanted to diffuse the situation rather than make it worse. Not reporting for reputational reasons and in order to protect the perpetrator or other students, were less common.

Respondents who reported incidents of violence and aggression were more likely to get post-incident support than those who did not report. Non-reporting meant that only a small percentage of respondents received post-incident support.

An examination of respondent perceptions of perceived violence safety climate shows that around two thirds have violence reporting procedures in place and that the reporting of physical violence is encouraged. However, less than half of the respondents thought that the reporting of verbal violence

was encouraged and that reports of violence were taken seriously. Approximately 23% of respondents reported that they were aware of policies in place to prevent violence in their workplaces, and around two thirds of respondents reported that they had not been provided with violence prevention training from their employer.

6.1.3 Experiences of workplace bullying

Overall, 41% of respondents indicated experiencing WPB with 15% reporting their experiences of WPB a few times in the past year, while 26% of respondents indicated that they had experienced WPB monthly, weekly or daily. The dominant source of WPB was from colleagues, however members also experienced WPB from their immediate superior, other superiors and students or clients. Reports of WPB from family of students or clients, and subordinates were less common. Daily forms of bullying included being ignored or excluded, persistent criticism and excessive teasing or sarcasm. Being shouted at, gossip and rumours and being reminded of errors were less frequently reported as daily experiences of WPB than other forms but were still reported as occurring by more than 40% of the sample.

Approximately half of the respondents reported their experiences of WPB to managers or supervisors. While the number of unreported incidents of WPB was greater for all groups, disability workers experienced more incidents of both reported and unreported WPB, on average, compared with all other groups. Respondents who reported WPB were much more likely to get post-incident support than those who did not report WPB. The non-reporting of WPB meant that only a small percentage of respondents received post-incident support.

The reporting of WPB is clearly more complex compared to the reporting of incidents of aggression or violence, given that the dominant source of WPB is someone in a managerial or supervisory position. However, while this does highlight the necessity of reporting WPB in order to obtain support, it does suggest the need for a confidential reporting system to encourage more reporting.

6.1.4 Workplace stress and bureaucracy

In general, respondents in the sample reported high levels of workplace stress. This is particularly evident with respect to job demands, job control, management of workplace change and manager support. While respondents scored the peer support, relationships at work and role clarity subscales at relatively high levels, average scores still indicated that respondents experienced high levels of stress in these areas compared to benchmarked data collected by the Health and Safety Executive in the UK. Levels of bureaucracy were reported to be high by respondents in the sample.

6.1.5 Emotional burnout and employee silence

Respondents indicated that they experienced moderate levels of emotional burnout. With respect to employee silence, both quiescent silence (fear of the consequences of speaking up) and acquiescent silence (having given up hope for improvement) were high.

6.1.6 Wellbeing

Psychological wellbeing can be measured by a range of indicators⁴² and in this survey we have included several indicators including the World Health Organization measure of wellbeing (WHO-5), a measure of thriving (vitality and learning) and a measure of mindfulness. Each of these measures touches on different elements of psychological wellbeing that have associations with employee health and performance.

Respondents in this sample reported low levels of wellbeing as measured by the WHO-5. The average scores for thriving (vitality) and mindfulness were moderate, indicating substantial room for improvement. Interestingly, thriving (learning) was rated relatively high compared to the other measures

of psychological wellbeing. A greater sense of wellbeing in this area might be associated with the educational nature of the work and priorities of respondents in this sample, where learning is a central focus.

6.1.7 Engagement at work

The high scores on the work engagement scale, moderate scores on intention to leave the job and lower scores on intention to leave the profession indicate that the respondents in the sample were engaged in, and committed to, their work.

6.1.8 Comparing responses between 2014 and 2019 surveys

There were fewer respondents to the 2019 survey than to the 2014 survey—1,109 compared to 4,750—providing a 2% response rate in 2019 (down from 10% in 2014). However, respondent demographics in the 2019 survey were similar to those of the respondents surveyed in 2014. In 2019, there were slightly more respondents who were female and more respondents in lower age groups. Patterns for career tenure, employment status and distribution across workplace type and size were roughly the same.

There was a greater percentage of permanent employees in the 2019 sample—88%, up from 81.6% in the 2014 sample. We also asked about full-time versus part-time status. Although most respondents have been employed on a permanent/ongoing basis, only two thirds (68%) of respondents in 2019 were employed full-time; this proportion was similar to the 2014 sample of 66.5% of respondents who were employed full-time. In the 2019 survey, respondents were also asked to indicate reasons for being employed on a part-time basis. Approximately 40% did so for life priorities, about one quarter reported only having been offered part-time employment, while another quarter did so in order to cope with work pressure.

With respect to OHS and safety behaviours, there was a slight decrease in scores on OHS leading indicators of safety and employee safety control in 2019 compared to the 2014 survey. However, there was a slight increase in respondent ratings of their own safety motivation, safety compliance and safety control. Interestingly, despite respondent perceptions that their workplaces were less safe, the average number of OHS incidents experienced by respondents decreased from the 2014 to the 2019 surveys. Fewer respondents reported having an OHS representative at their workplaces in 2019 and there was an increase in respondents who were unsure whether they had an OHS representative at their workplace.

Finally, respondents in the 2019 sample reported higher levels of emotional burnout, silence, bureaucracy and intention to leave the profession compared to the 2014 sample.

6.2 Conclusion

The job of the educator is demanding. Similar to other professional roles, educators are expected to have a grasp on a relevant body of knowledge and be compliant with professional practice. They are also expected to pursue lifelong learning that matches developments in their chosen discipline. Unlike professional jobs that exist within clear parameters and guidelines about expected behaviours between professionals and clients, educators are often working in unpredictable learning environments. They usually manage students as a group, potentially characterised by complex relationships, rather than dealing with one client at a time. Along with the requirement that educators impart necessary knowledge and meet diverse individual needs while often managing group dynamics, educators are expected to be inspirational. The ideal educator is someone who, in some way, imprints on us a set of aspirational life values.

With respect to those educators who are working as classroom teachers, Andreas Schleicher, Special Advisor on Education Policy to the Secretary-General at the OECD, in his foreword to the 2018 OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), acknowledges these challenges for the classroom teacher. He adds that teachers manage these multiple demands while other students watch on and

parents carefully track the success or otherwise of teacher classroom strategy.⁴³ The challenge of this monitoring is further amplified when interactions with teachers become readily available via social media channels.

Despite the increasing complexity of the role of the educator, a key conclusion of the OECD TALIS review of training opportunities and working conditions, is the need to “make the teaching profession more financially and intellectually attractive in order to meet a growing demand across the world for high-quality teachers”.²⁶ In Australia, TALIS data indicate that, although people are choosing to enter the profession, it is not always their first career choice. In 2018, teaching was the first-choice career for 58% of teachers in Australia compared to 67% in OECD countries and economies participating in the TALIS.

Having entered the profession, teachers may not necessarily stay, with evidence that the stressful nature of the education role prompts turnover.⁴⁴ Philip Riley’s longitudinal research into the experience of Australian school principals indicates that, compared to the general population, Australian school principals experience job demands that are 50% greater, and emotional burnout levels 60% above, those for the general population. Riley explains that levels of work demand and emotional burnout for school principals are accompanied by above average stress, sleeping disorders and depression experiences.⁴⁵ Riley adds that significant changes introduced by the federal and state governments, such as the introduction of a national curriculum tied to national testing (NAPLAN) and public accountability via the My School website, have exacerbated the role demands for principals.⁴⁶

Riley’s longitudinal work has provided valuable insight and commentary related to the challenges facing school principals in Australia and the implications for their wellbeing. There is, however, less research tracking the health and safety issues facing the broader group of educators who are at the front line, working in the classroom or working in disability services roles. The current research, in part, addresses that gap and provides data about the health and safety issues facing these educators in Victoria.

The results of the research indicate that the challenges being faced by school principals, and the resultant impact on wellbeing, are similarly being experienced by teachers and those professionals working in disability services and education support roles. The comparison of scores in this 2019 study compared to 2014 show a decrease in the score for OHS leading indicators of safety, a measure of the predictors of strong OHS performance in a workplace. Respondents in the 2019 sample also reported higher levels of emotional burnout, silence, bureaucracy and intention to leave the profession compared to the 2014 sample. Notably the increase in silence, both quiescent and acquiescent, reflect decisions by educators to not speak up because they are worried about consequences and have reduced hope for improvement.

New measures in the 2019 survey that detail issues associated with work demands show high levels of workplace stress, as measured by the HSE-MSIT. Compared to benchmarked data from the UK, respondents’ perceptions of stress in their workplaces indicate that there is a need to address work-related stress in the Victorian educator workforce. This is particularly evident with respect to job demands, job control, management of workplace change and manager support.

Overall the research at hand provides useful data to track OHS issues in Victorian education workplaces. Although there have been a number of insights, the results must be interpreted in light of the low response rate. Future research is warranted to more comprehensively capture the nature of emerging trends.

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