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ONTARIO COUNCIL OF HOSPITAL UNIONS / CANADIAN UNION OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES

Workplace Violence Survey:  
*GTA Report*



May 2022

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## Background

The Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) commissioned Oraclepoll to conduct research among its hospital members across Ontario. The purpose of the poll was to gather information on issues related to workplace violence.

The following report contains the findings from a telephone survey of N=834 members from the GTA region.

## Reporting Notes

The survey questions were designed by OCHU / CUPE in consultation with Oraclepoll.

This report contains an executive summary of the findings as well as the results by individual question. Findings are presented in the order that they were asked in each survey. Some numbers presented in tables or graphs may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

# Methodology & Logistics

## Study Sample

A member database of contact names and phone numbers was provided by CUPE to Oraclepoll for data collection. The sample frame for this report included those from the Toronto / GTA region.

## Survey Method

A mixed mode approach to data collection was used. This included telephone interviews using computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) with live researchers. All the person-to-person calls were made by Oraclepoll research staff. A total of 20% of all interviews were monitored and the management of Oraclepoll Research Limited supervised 100% for quality assurance. Calls to each number were made between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m. Telephone interview appointments were made with those respondents unable to complete the survey at the time of contact, while those requesting a digital survey were sent a link through email or a text message. The text to phone method was also employed for those not responding to a live call as a follow-up (to cellular phones) to the initial attempt. The text contained a link to the survey.

No financial incentives were used, and respondents were assured of confidentiality and that the information they provided was for research purposes only. Oraclepoll adheres to strict privacy codes and no personal identifiers (in this case telephone numbers) will be shared with any outside party or will be reported.

## Logistics

Surveys were completed between the days of May 17<sup>th</sup> to May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

## Sample Confidence

The margin of error for the N=834 survey is  $\pm 3.2\%$ ,  $\frac{19}{20}$  times.

# Occupation

Respondents were first asked a series of questions about their workplace and employment status. In the first probe they were asked to identify their occupation.

*Q1. Which best describes your occupation?*

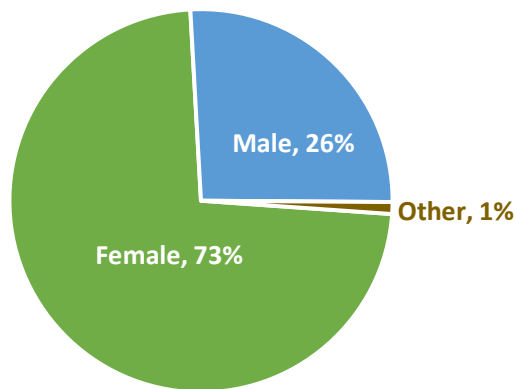
Work in a hospital as an RPN	39%
Work in a hospital as a PSW, healthcare aide, porter, or other hands-on caregiver such as paramedical, rehab care assistant	27%
Work in a hospital providing other important supports, such as administrative, maintenance, housekeeping, dietary, etc.	34%

While results were distributed among the three categories, the most named occupations were RPN and other support workers, followed by PSW's or other hands-on caregivers.

# Gender

They were next asked to identify their gender.

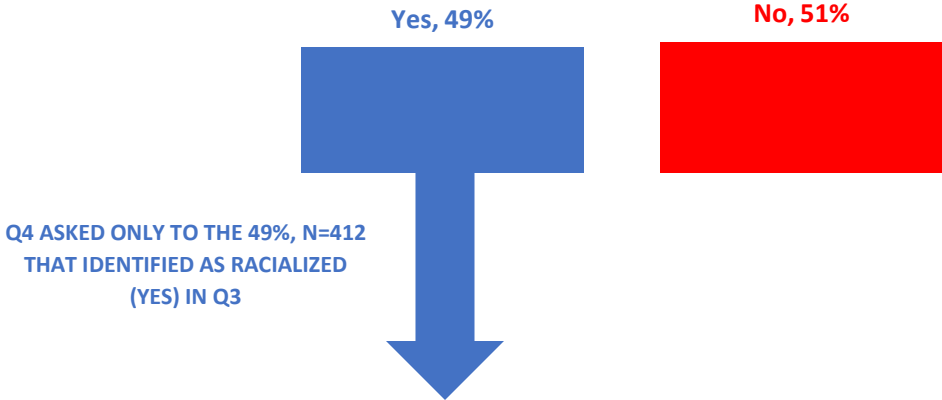
*Q2. What gender do you identify with?*



# Racial Identity & Harassment

The following question asked members if they identify as racialized. Those that said they did were then asked a follow-up question (Q4) about how often they experience harassment or abuse related to their race or ethnicity.

*Q3. Do you identify as racialized, that includes being Black, Indigenous/First Nations, Asian, or a Person of Colour?*



*Q4. In general, how often do you experience harassment or abuse that you believe is related to your race or ethnicity?*

Daily	17%	} <b>37%</b>
At least once a week	20%	
Occasionally	35%	
Never	15%	
Unsure	12%	

Among members that identify as racialized, 17% answered they experience harassment or abuse daily and 20% daily or at least once a week. When factoring responses of occasionally, 72% experience harassment or abuse related to their race or ethnicity.

## Violence Frequency

Respondents were then asked about how often they experience a series of areas related to violence, harassment, and assault at their workplace.

<i>"The next few questions are about violence and stress at work."</i>	<i>Daily</i>	<i>Once a week</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>Unsure</i>
<i>Q5. In general, how often do you experience physical violence, such as pushing, hitting, or having things thrown at you by patients or even their family members?</i>	10%	19%	26%	38%	7%
<i>Q6. In general, how often do you experience non-physical violence, such as name-calling, insults, threatening gestures, or intimidation by patients or even their family members?</i>	20%	19%	35%	21%	4%
<i>Q7. In general, how often do you experience sexual harassment such as comments or gestures of a sexual nature?</i>	7%	9%	25%	52%	7%
<i>Q8. In general, how often do you experience sexual assault of a physical nature such as groping or inappropriate touching?</i>	6%	6%	21%	63%	4%

Non-physical violence is most common as evidenced by the 39% that stated they experience it daily or weekly and 74% when including responses of occasionally. Next most experienced was physical violence by 29% that answered daily or weekly (55% when including occasionally).

Sixteen percent experience sexual harassment daily or weekly (41% when including occasionally) and 12% sexual assault daily or once a week (33% with responses of occasionally).

## Covid-19 & Incidents

In the next set of questions, members were asked about the increase in violent incidents they experienced and have witnessed since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic.

	<i>Much more</i>	<i>Slightly more</i>	<i>Same as before</i>	<i>Less than</i>	<i>Unsure</i>
<i>Q9. Since the beginning of the COVID pandemic, have you personally experienced an increase in violent incidents, including, physical, verbal, sexual or racial?</i>	32%	27%	28%	2%	11%
<i>Q10. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, have you witnessed an increase in violent incidents involving your coworkers, including, physical, verbal, sexual or racial?</i>	31%	21%	25%	4%	19%

Fifty-nine percent claimed they personally experienced much more (32%) or slightly more (27%) violent incidents since the onset of the pandemic. A lower but still majority of 52% said they witnessed much (31%) or slightly more (21%) incidents involving co-workers – 19% were unsure or did not know.

Members were then asked if they or a co-worker experienced violence with objects being used as weapons. They were read / presented with four options and were asked to name or select all that applied.

*Q11. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic have you or a co-worker experienced violence from a patient or their family member involving any of the following being used as a weapon?*

a. Hot/cold food or beverages	14%
b. A food or medicine tray	13%
c. A chair	5%
d. Any other implement like utensils, pens, books, magazines, hairbrush	18%
Have not experienced violence with these	32%
Unsure	19%

Half experienced violence with these objects, with other implements being most referenced followed by beverages and trays.



The next two questions asked about the number of weapons being brought in and used against staff since the beginning of Covid-19.

	<i>Much more</i>	<i>Slightly more</i>	<i>Same as before</i>	<i>Less than</i>	<i>No Incidents</i>	<i>Unsure</i>
<i>Q12. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, has there been an increase in the number of incidents of people bringing weapons including, knives or sharp implements, sticks or bats and guns, into your facility?</i>	11%	10%	10%	2%	25%	43%
<i>Q13. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, how often have weapons been used against staff at your facility?</i>	10%	6%	13%	1%	31%	39%

More than two in ten responded that there has been much more (11%) and slightly more of an increase (10%) in the number of incidents of people bringing weapons into their facility since the beginning of the pandemic. Only one-quarter said there were no incidents, and a high number (43%) were uncertain.

With respect to the number of weapons incidents used against staff, 16% answered much more (10%) or slightly more (6%). Slightly more than three in ten (31%) stated there were no incidents and in both instances very few said less incidents.

# Reporting & Incidents

Members were asked about the number of incidents of violence they have reported to their employer.

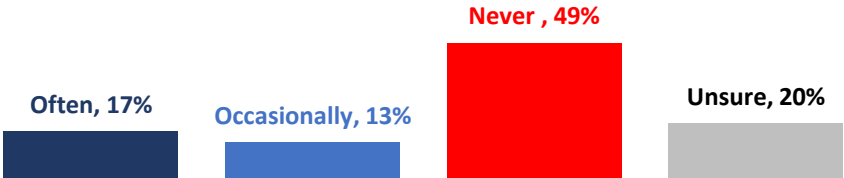
*Q14. In the past year, how many incidents of physical, non-physical, or sexual violence have you formally reported to your employer?*

Have not filed any reports in the past year	61%
One report	6%
Two reports	6%
Three	2%
Four	2%
Five	2%
Six	2%
Seven	1%
Eight	2%
Nine or more reports in the past year	2%
Unsure	12%

Sixty-one percent claimed they have not filed a complaint over the past year and 12% answered do not know or were unsure. There were 14% of responses that fell in the 1-3 range, 6% in 4-6 and 5% 7-9 or more.

They were then probed to find out how often they have been blamed by management for a violent incident.

*Q15. How often have you or a coworker felt you were being blamed by your supervisor/manager for a violent incident you experienced?*



Three in ten said they are often (17%) or occasionally (13%) blamed by a supervisor or manager for a violent incident they have experienced.

## Violent Individuals in the Workplace

The next three questions were about potentially violent individuals in the workplace and improvements to protect against violence.

*Q16. Does the hospital provide full disclosure regarding potentially violent individuals who have exhibited violent behaviour outside the hospital?*



*Q17. Do you ever work alone with potentially violent individuals?*



*Q18. In the past year has your employer made improvements to protect you and your co-workers against violence?*



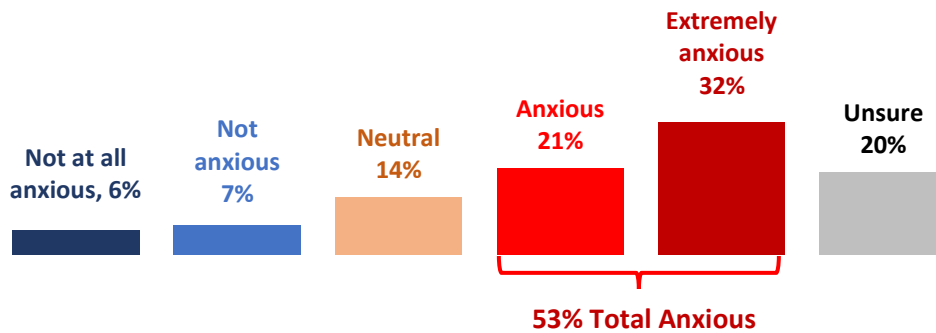
A low 17% claimed that their hospital provides full disclosure regarding potentially violent individuals who have exhibited violent behaviour outside the hospital.

There are almost four in ten or 39% that stated they work alone with potentially violent individuals, while only 19% answered that their employer has made improvements to protect workers against violence.

## Anxiety, Depression & Exhaustion

In the final question, members were asked about how anxious, depressed, or emotionally exhausted they feel most days because of conditions at work.

*Q19. Overall, how anxious, depressed, or emotionally exhausted do you feel most days because of conditions at work? Please use a scale from one being not all, to five extremely anxious, depressed, or emotionally exhausted.*



A 53% majority of members answered they feel anxious or extremely anxious on most days because of work, while 14% had a neutral neither anxious / not anxious response. Only 13% said they are not anxious or not at all anxious and two in ten were unsure.