

Violence Against Teachers Among the 50 Largest U.S. School Districts: Predictors, Consequences, and School Responses

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Purpose of the Research

- There is a growing concern about violence toward and victimization of teachers across the United States, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. A growing number of empirical studies on violence against teachers suggest a high prevalence of teacher victimization by students at schools and negative effects on victimized teachers.
- Despite these impressions, there is no nationwide empirical study investigating the prevalence/risk factors and negative consequences of teacher victimization and how schools respond to violence against teachers after resuming in-person classes across the nation.
- To address this gap, the present two-wave longitudinal research, funded by the National Institute of Justice, has been implemented to understand the prevalence and predictors of seven different types of victimization against teachers at schools, negative effects of teacher victimization, and school responses to teacher victimization among the 50 largest U.S. school districts.
- This data brief reports findings from Wave I survey, with approximately 4,000 middle and high school teachers responding from among the 50 largest school districts across the U.S., which generate a comprehensive knowledge base about teacher victimization, and will be a resource for the development of effective prevention and intervention strategies to improve and enhance school safety, especially among teachers.

Data Collection and Sample

- The present longitudinal research has employed a stratified multistage cluster sampling design to collect a random sample of teachers among the 50 largest school districts across the nation. First, the middle and high schools in each of the 50 largest schools were enumerated.¹ Then schools were categorized into 9 groups, depending on the percentages of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch and academic performance. Depending on the number of schools in each group, approximately 18 to 90 schools (including replacement schools) were randomly selected. Second, the names and email addresses of all teachers among randomly selected schools were collected from publicly available school/teacher websites or provided by school districts.
- Using a secure web-based survey system (Qualtrics survey platform), all teachers in randomly selected schools were invited to participate in the web-based survey in Spring 2022. Overall, 4,005 teachers from approximately 600 middle, high, and middle/high schools participated in the first wave online survey, with 94% completing the entire questionnaire.

Table 1: Social and demographic characteristics (N = 4,005)

Gender	Percentage	Number
Male	31 %	1,251
Female	68 %	2,724
Transgender/Non-binary	0.7%	30
Race/Ethnicity		
White	64%	2,556
Black	16%	632
Hispanic	11%	459
Asian	5%	185
Other	4%	173
Duration of Career		
0 – 5 years	25%	989
5.1 – 10 years	22%	885
10.1 – 45 years	53%	2,231
School Level		
Middle School	39%	1,546
Middle-High Mixed School	5%	208
High School	56%	2,251

- In the sample (see Table 1), 68 percent of teachers (N=2,724) are female, while 31 percent (N=1,251) are male. Less than one percent of teachers (N=30) in the sample reported that they are transgender or identify as non-binary.
- Regarding the distribution of race/ethnicity in the sample, 64 percent of teachers (N=2,556) are White, followed by Black (16%, N=632), Hispanic (11%, N=459), Asian (5%, N=185), and those reporting other race/ethnic categories (4%, N=173).
- The findings in Table 1 show that a quarter of teachers (N=989) in the sample have five or fewer years of teaching experience as teachers, while 53 percent (N=2,231) of the participants reported their teaching experience in excess of 10 years.
- Regarding the levels of schools, the findings indicate that 39 percent of teachers (N=1,546) teach at middle schools, while 56 percent of participants (N=2,251) in the sample are high school teachers. Five percent of teachers (N=208) in the sample teach at middle/high mixed schools.

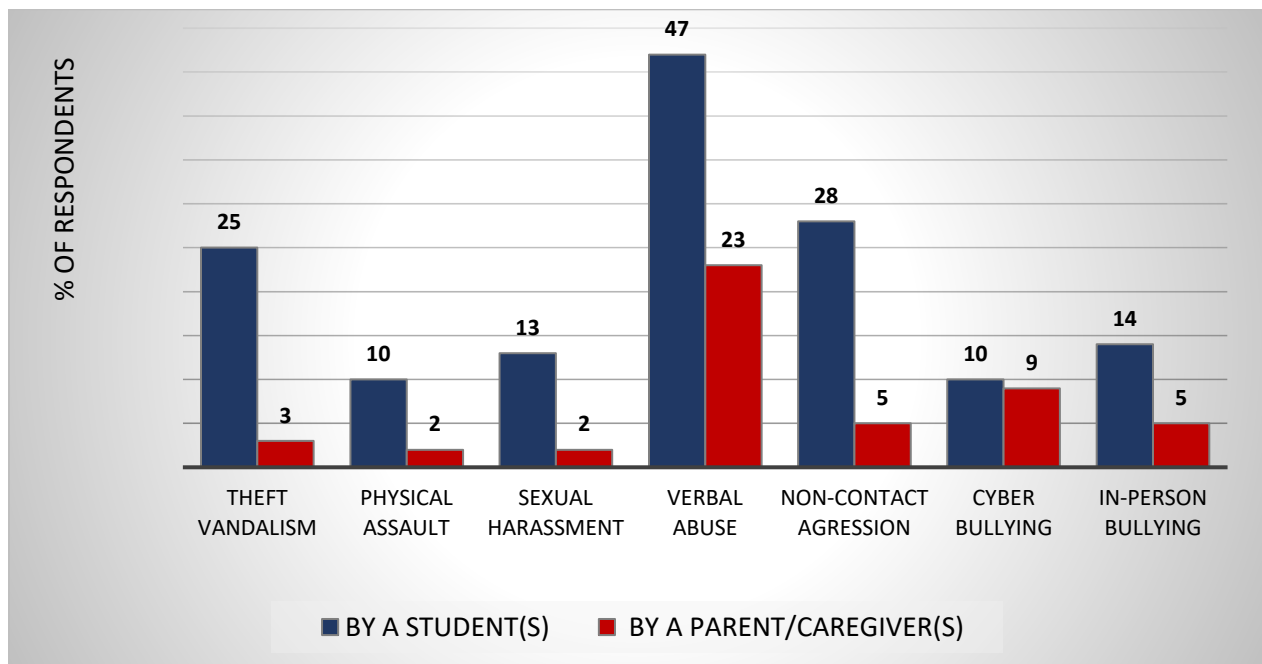
Note 1: As described, the research design anticipated sampling teachers from all 50 of the largest school districts. This became impossible, however, due to several technological barriers, which we strongly surmise to be Independent School Districts' email firewall systems blocking emails from Qualtrics, or survey emails being directed to teachers' junk folders. Thus, no or extremely small numbers of teachers in 12 out of the 50 largest independent school districts participated in the wave I survey. Due to covid-19 travel restrictions, our ability to ascertain or obtain alternative electronic access was severely curtailed.

KEY FINDINGS

Prevalence of victimization

- The results in Figure 1 show the prevalence of seven different types of victimization (including theft/vandalism, physical assault, sexual harassment, and verbal abuse) by a student(s) and a student’s parent/caregiver(s) during the last 12 months prior to the wave I survey.
- Results indicate that 10 percent of the participants in the survey reported being the victim of physical assault by a student(s) and two percent by a parent/caregiver(s) during the last 12 months respectively.
- Nearly half (47%) of the teachers in the sample reported experiencing verbal abuse by a student(s), while 23 percent indicated experiencing verbal abuse from a student’s parent/caregiver(s) during the last year.

Figure 1: Prevalence of teacher victimization by a student(s) and parent/caregiver(s) during the last 12 months



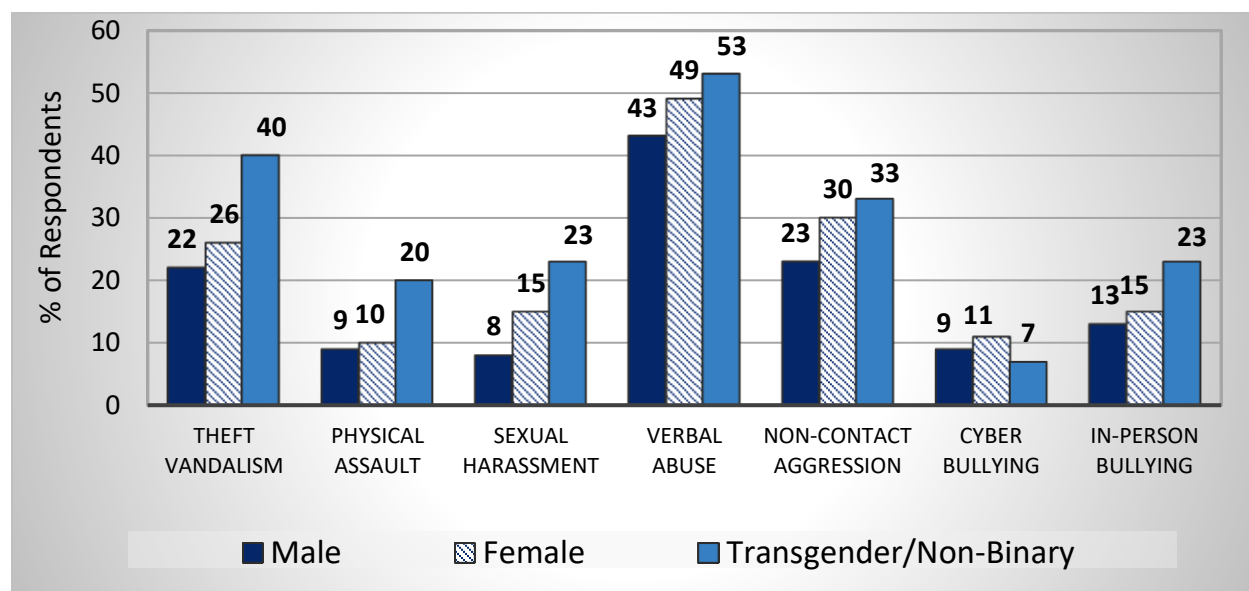
- Ten percent and 9 percent of the participants in the sample reported their victimization of cyberbullying by a student(s) and a student's parent/caregiver(s) respectively.
- Overall, the findings indicate that verbal abuse and non-contact physical aggression (e.g., throwing, kicking, destroying items in front of teachers) are the most common types of teacher victimization both by a student(s) and a student's parent/caregiver(s), while serious victimization (e.g., physical assault) is much less prevalent.



Gender differences in the prevalence of victimization

- The findings in Figure 2 indicate gender differences in the prevalence of various types of victimization by a student(s) during the last 12 months. As noted in Table 1, 31 percent and 68 percent of the participants in the sample are male and female teachers, while less than one percent are transgender/non-binary.
- The most substantial differences between male and female teachers are in the prevalence of sexual harassment (8% in male teachers vs. 15% in female teachers) and non-physical contact aggression victimization (23% in male teachers vs. 30% in female teachers) during the last 12 months prior to the survey.
- Overall, the results show similarities in the prevalence of students who caused theft/vandalism, physical assault, and bullying victimization between male and female teachers.
- With the exception of cyberbullying victimization, transgender/non-binary teachers reported substantially higher percentages of victimization, especially theft/vandalism (40%), physical assault (20%), and sexual harassment (23%).

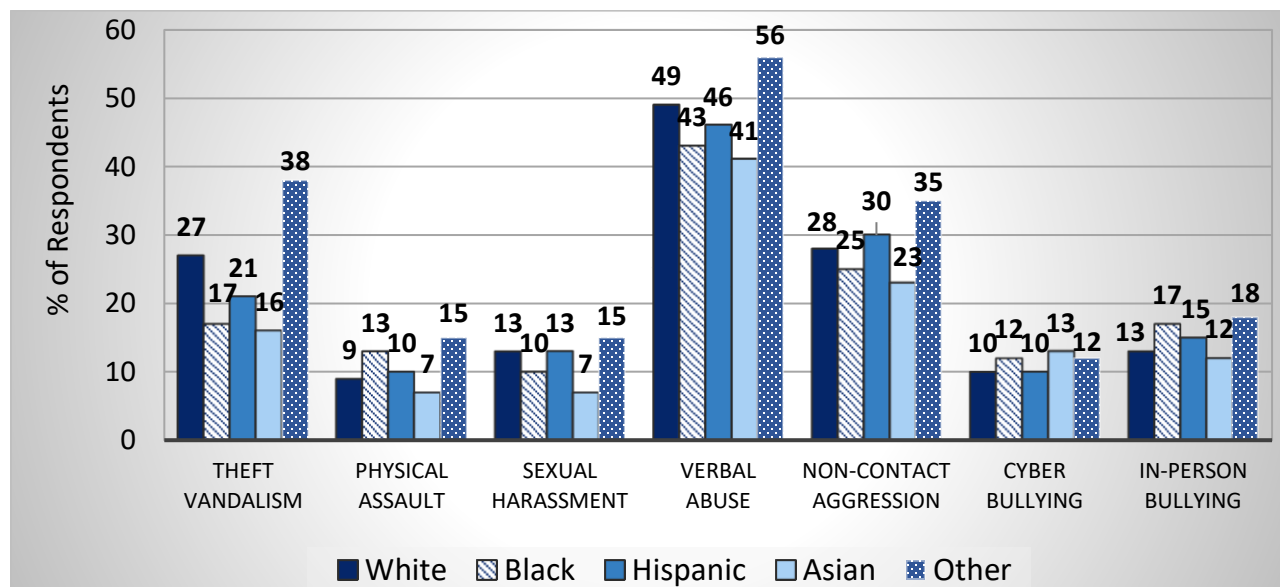
Figure 2: Gender difference in the prevalence of victimization during the last 12 months



Race/ethnicity differences in the prevalence of victimization

- Figure 3 shows race/ethnicity differences in the prevalence of seven different types of victimization by students during the last 12 months.
- Overall, the findings indicate that White teachers reported a higher prevalence of victimization on theft/vandalism and verbal abuse, compared to Black, Hispanic, and Asian teachers. Black teachers reported a higher percentage of physical assault victimization in comparison to White, Hispanic, and Asian teachers, while Asian teachers reported the least victimization (with the exception of cyberbullying victimization).
- Other-race teachers, which comprises Native American and those reporting multiple races (4%, N=173) reported a distinctly higher percentage of various victimizations by students, especially theft/vandalism, verbal abuse, and non-physical contact aggression, compared to all other race/ethnicity groups.

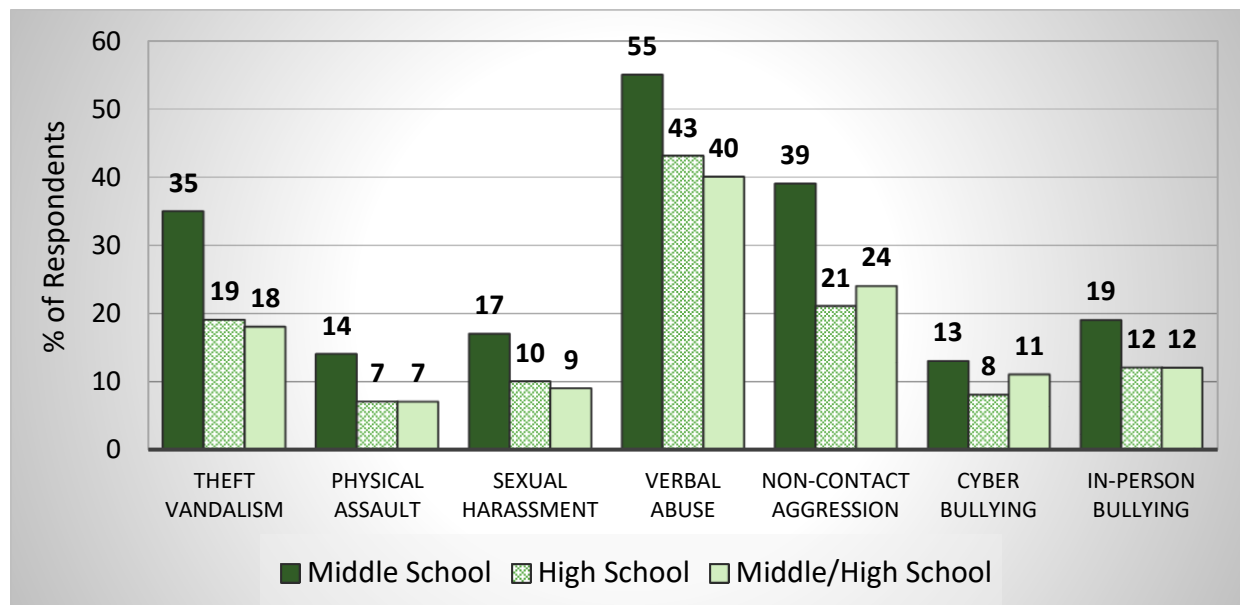
Figure 3: Race difference in the prevalence of victimization during the last 12 months



The prevalence of victimization by school type

- The results in Figure 4 show the comparison of the prevalence of victimizations by students among middle school teachers, high school teachers, and middle/high school teachers during the last 12 months.
- The findings indicate that middle school teachers consistently reported a substantially higher prevalence of all types of victimizations, compared to high school teachers and middle/high school teachers. For example, 14 percent of middle school teachers reported physical assault victimization, while 7 percent of high school and middle/high school teachers experienced physical assault by students respectively.
- However, there are no major differences in the prevalence of teacher victimization by students between high school teachers and those teaching in hybrid middle/high school environments. For example, differences ranging from 0 (e.g., physical assault) to 3 percent (e.g., verbal abuse) are observed across the seven types of victimization when high school teachers are compared to middle/high school teachers.

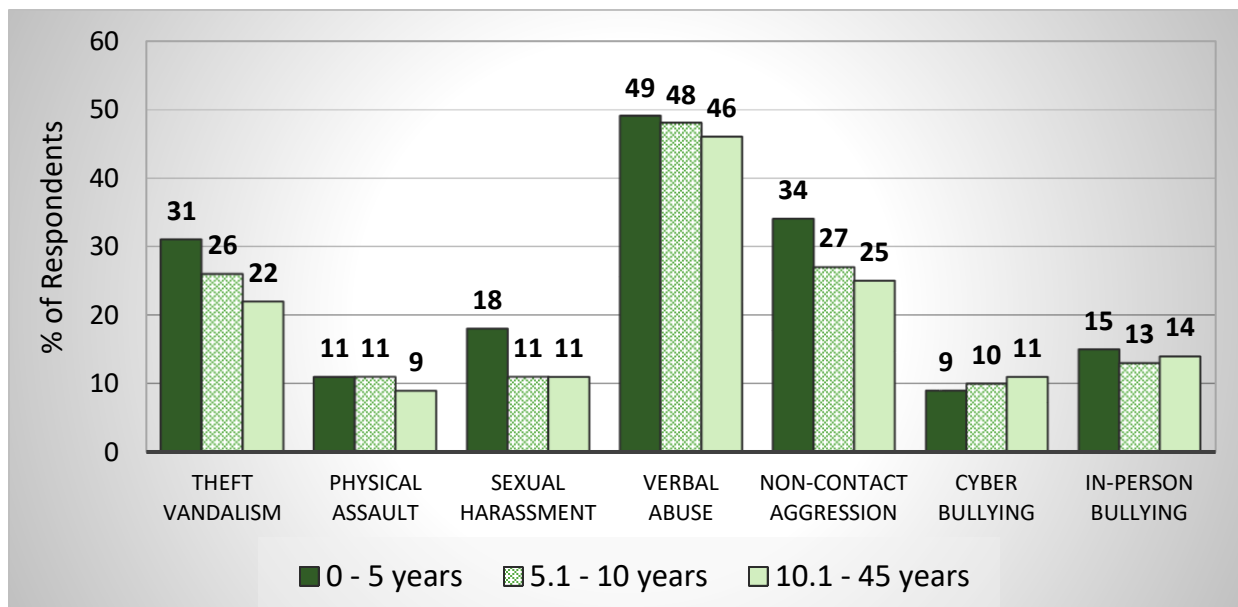
Figure 4: School level difference in the prevalence of victimization during the last 12 months



Prevalence of victimization by the length of career

- Figure 5 displays the last twelve months' prevalence of teacher victimization by students by the length of their teaching career.
- A general pattern indicates that teachers with less teaching experience (0 to 5 years of teaching experience) reported a higher percentage of various types of teacher victimization such as theft/vandalism, sexual harassment, and non-physical contact aggression, compared to teachers with 5.1 years or more of teaching experience.
- However, there are no noticeable differences in teacher victimization between teachers with 5.1 to 10 years of teaching experience and those with 10.1 years or more teaching experience.
- Also, the findings show that the prevalence of physical assault, and cyber and traditional bullying victimizations are similar among these three groups.

Figure 5: Prevalence of victimization by the length of career during the last 12 months



Thank You!

- As the data collection and research continues, we expect to share more results. We are greatly thankful for the cooperation of the teachers who were surveyed and responded to our questionnaire.
- We hope that all respondents will consider continued participation in Wave II, which we anticipate will commence data collection in Spring 2023.