

## Principals often victims of violence in schools

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Australian school principals experience physical violence at more than six times the rate of the general population, with parents and students equally likely to be the perpetrators, according to a new study.

The latest Principal Health and Wellbeing Survey by Monash University, released on Monday, found alarmingly high levels of violence and intimidation reported towards principals.

Many principals contacted by Fairfax Media said the findings came as little surprise.

The national survey of just over 2000 principals found 38 per cent received a threat of violence in the preceding year, compared with 8 per cent of the general population. Twenty-seven per cent reported experiencing actual physical violence, compared with just 4 per cent of the general population.

Parents were more likely to be the perpetrator of threats of violence but students were just as likely to be the perpetrator of actual violence.

The president of the Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals, Frank Sal, said the findings were not surprising.

"It is an issue that principals in schools ... face reasonably regularly," he said. "We've certainly had principals punched and hit.

"It's something that we've raised with the Education Department regularly over the years."

He said a small number of parents acted aggressively towards principals but their behaviour had a widespread effect on schools.

"It's not just government schools," he said.

Steve McAlister, deputy president of the NSW Primary Principals Association, said principals tended to be well-supported by the Department of Education in NSW but some acts of violence were difficult to predict or prevent.

"Often there are students with anger management issues - they're not necessarily triggered by the act of the principals or the teaching staff," he said.

The report found the problems were across school sectors but principals working in more remote locations were most at risk.

Philip Riley, director of the survey and senior lecturer at Monash University, said the results pointed to the need to urgently address the issue of adult bullying in schools, preferably via an independent taskforce, and to better train and support principals in their job.

*This story was found at: <http://www.smh.com.au/national/principals-often-victims-of-violence-in-schools-20130722-2qevg.html>*