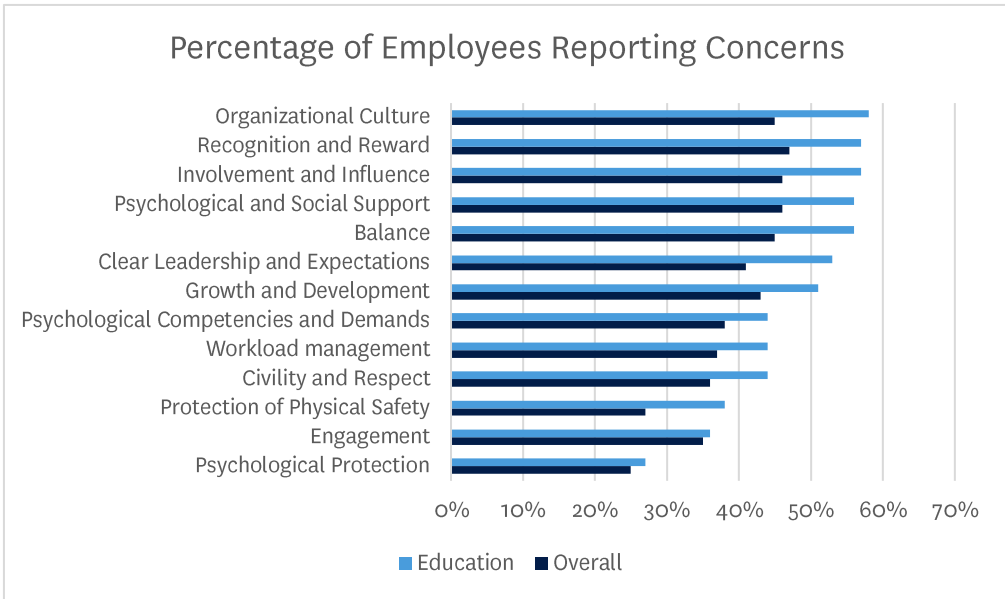


# A Pan-Canadian Snapshot: Psychological Safety in Canadian Education

Safe, caring, welcoming, and inclusive school environments are built on a foundation of psychological safety. Recent data from [Mental Health Research Canada](#) (2023) shows that there is room for improvement in the Canadian education sector. Canadian education workers (n=517) report **greater concerns** across all 13 psychosocial factors affecting workplace psychological health and safety than the average Canadian worker. Responses of never, rarely, or sometimes to statements such as “I am able to reasonably balance the demands of my work and personal life” were classified as concerns.



**Well at Work Advisors** work closely with school districts across Canada to develop holistic workplace wellbeing strategies. Using the detailed statements within the Guarding Minds at Work survey, the Well at Work team has identified common trends in how employees in K-12 education experience psychological safety and wellbeing at work.



There are often **significant differences in how employee groups experience psychological safety** and wellbeing in the workplace. For example, classroom teachers will have a very different work experience than clerical staff working in the central office due to the nature of their respective work.



**Burnout is one of the most common concerns**, especially among teachers and principals. In one district, 100% of teacher staff indicated that they feel “burned out in my job.” While an employee’s self-assessment may not reach clinical thresholds for burnout, it certainly indicates that educational staff are exhausted.



**Work-life balance is another area of significant concern**, especially among staff in education-focused (vs. operational) roles. Our qualitative data suggests that this may be related to staffing shortages: providing coverage during the day may result in additional work to be completed in the evening.



**All employee groups indicate that their psychological health is affected by work.** This seems to be strongly interconnected with concerns around burnout and work-life balance. It may also be related to gaps in psychological protection.

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**For additional resources please visit:**

[www.edcan.ca](http://www.edcan.ca) and [k12wellatwork.ca](http://k12wellatwork.ca)

We would like to acknowledge the support of Canada Life

## About the Survey

In [March and April 2023](#), [Mental Health Research Canada surveyed](#) 5505 Canadians, including 517 Canadians working in the Education sector (including early childhood education, kindergarten to grade 12 education, and post-secondary education), using the Guarding Minds at Work survey. Guarding Minds at Work assesses the 13 workplace psychological health and safety factors identified in the National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace.

The 13 psychosocial factors are work conditions that can have either a positive or a negative effect on employee psychological health and safety. These factors are within the influence and responsibility of employers and can include interactions with co-workers, clients, or management. They don't include factors outside the control of the employer such as family history, employee health or genetics.

- 1. Organizational culture:** the degree to which a work culture is characterized by trust, honesty, and fairness.
- 2. Psychological and social support:** a work environment in which coworkers and supervisors are supportive of employees' psychological and mental health concerns and respond appropriately as needed.
- 3. Clear leadership and expectations:** an environment in which leadership is effective and there is support that helps employees know what they need to do, how their work contributes to the organization and whether there are impending changes.
- 4. Civility and respect:** employees are respectful and considerate in their interactions with one another, as well as with customers, clients, and the public.
- 5. Psychological demands:** there is a good fit between employees' interpersonal and emotional competencies and the requirements of the position they hold.
- 6. Growth and development:** employees receive encouragement and support in the development of their interpersonal, emotional, and job skills.
- 7. Recognition and reward:** appropriate acknowledgement and appreciation of employees' efforts in a fair and timely manner.
- 8. Involvement and influence:** employees are included in discussions about how their work is done and how important decisions are made.
- 9. Workload management:** tasks and responsibilities can be accomplished successfully within the time available.
- 10. Engagement:** employees feel connected to their work and are motivated to do their job well.
- 11. Balance:** recognition of the need for balance between the demands of work, family, and personal life.
- 12. Psychological protection:** employees' psychological safety is ensured. Workplace psychological safety is demonstrated when workers feel able to safely ask questions, seek feedback, report mistakes and problems, or propose a new idea without fearing negative consequences to themselves, their jobs or their careers.
- 13. Protection of physical safety:** management takes appropriate action to protect the physical safety of employees. Appropriate actions may include: policy to protect workers physical safety, training in safety-related protocols, rapid and appropriate response to physical accidents or unsafe situations, and clearly demonstrated concern for employees' physical safety.

The Mental Health Commission of Canada, in collaboration with Ottawa Public Health produced [a series of videos describing the 13 factors](#).