The New Zealand Primary Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey

2020 Data

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We would like to thank all teachers and school leaders for taking part in this important research, demonstrating their trust and commitment to this study and its contribution to improving the lives of school educators across New Zealand.

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Overview

This report is a brief snapshot of a comprehensive analysis of the 2020 New Zealand Primary Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey. The report contains five sections including, a brief explanation of aims and survey instrument, an overview of survey sample and demographics, and three technical sections on workload, resources and offensive behaviour- in particular bullying, threats of violence and actual physical violence. This report is both brief and general in nature and therefore may appear to oversimplify the situation across some results in the NZ. The survey does not include any data on structural or organisational factors impacting school functioning or community issues that predict violence in schools, both of which are extremely important to consider. Further, we cannot analyse policy settings which set the conditions for work in schools, as we do not collect data on this important aspect of leadership.

1. Research Aims and Survey Instrument

1.1. AIM – TO FIND FACTORS THAT IMPROVE SCHOOL LEADERS' HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The aim of this research project is to conduct a longitudinal study monitoring school leaders' health and wellbeing annually. School leaders' health and wellbeing in differing school types, levels, and size are being monitored, along with their lifestyle choices including exercise and diet, and the professional and personal social support networks available to individuals. The turnover of school leaders within schools will allow investigations of moderator effects, such as years of experience prior to taking up the role. The longitudinal nature of the study will allow the mapping of health outcomes on each of these dimensions over time.

1.2. PARTICIPANT CARE

Each participant received an interactive, user specific report of their survey responses benchmarked against responses of their peers and members of the general population upon their completion of the survey. Returning participants were also provided with a comparison of their 2020 results against their results from previous years.

The survey included the assessment of three "red flag" risk indicators: Self-harm; Quality of Life; and Occupational Health. The red flag indicators are calculated as follows:

- Self-harm – a participant response of "sometimes", "often" or "all the time" to the question "Do you ever feel like hurting yourself?"

- Quality of Life – when aggregate scores on quality of life items fell two standard deviations below the mean for the school leader population.

- Occupational Health – when the composite psychosocial risk score fell into the high or very high-risk groups.

The report of any individual or combination of the three triggers resulted in the participant receiving a red flag notification, informing them of the indicator(s). The notification also included links to Employee Assistance Programs and local support services.

1.3. THE SURVEY

The survey captured three types of information drawn from existing robust and widely used instruments.

1. Comprehensive school demographic items drawn from:

    a. The *Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study* (TIMSS; Williams, et al., 2007).
    b. *Program for International Student Assessment* (PISA; Thomson, et al., 2011).
    c. *International Confederation of Principals* surveys were used to capture differences in occupational health and safety (OH&S) associated with the diversity of school settings and types.

2. Personal demographic and historical information.

3. School leaders' quality of life and psychosocial coping were investigated by employing two widely used measures:

    a. The *Assessment of Quality of Life* – 8D (*AQoL-8D*; Richardson, et al., 2009; Richardson, Iezzi & Maxwell, 2014).
    b. *The Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire-II* (*COPSOQ-II*; Pejtersen, et al., 2010).
    c. *The Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test* (*AUDIT*: Babor et al., 2001), developed for the World Health Organization.
    d. Passion (Trepanier, Fernet, Austin, Forest & Vallerand, 2014; Vallerand, 2015).
    e. The Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS: Watson, Clark, and Tellegen, 1988).
    f. Basic Psychological Needs at Work Scale (BPNWS: Deci & Ryan, 2004).
    g. 'Life Events'.
    h. COVID-19 related questions were added.

The combination of items from these instruments allows for a comprehensive analysis of variation in both occupational health, safety, and wellbeing, as a function of geolocation, school type, sector differences and the personal attributes of the school leaders themselves.

Our survey instrument relies heavily on the Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire (COPSOQ-II). This questionnaire is regarded as the "gold standard" in occupational health and

safety self-report measures. It has been translated into more than 25 languages and is filled out by hundreds of thousands of workers each year. The structure of the COPSOQ-II consists of higher order domains and contributing subdomains/scales. These have been found to be very robust and stable measures, by both ourselves (Dicke et al., 2018) and others (Burr, Albertsen, Rugulies, & Hannerz, 2010; Kiss, De Meester, Kruse, Chavee, & Braeckman, 2013; Thorsen & Bjorner, 2010). All COPSOQ domain scores are transformed to 0-100 aiding comparisons across domains.

To maintain the participant anonymity, aggregate data is reported at demographic grouping levels. Some subgroups were unable to be reported due to insufficient sample size. Reporting results of subgroups of insufficient size may not provide a true reflection of the subgroup and risk identifying school leaders if reported by the small subgroup. As some participants only partially completed the survey, some of the participant numbers for domains and subscales may vary. Subgroup distributions will be reported as a percentage of the data sample size.

1.4. REPRESENTATIVENESS OF THE DATA

There are currently 473 school leaders in the 2020 database (408 principals, 46 deputies, 7 assistant principals and 12 in acting principals and other roles), which represents a substantial proportion of the nation's leaders. The data reported is a good representative sample of principals and deputy/assistant principals from across the country, with the exception of composite schools.

1.5. RELIABILITY

The reliability of each of the scales and subscales used were checked for internal consistency of responses. All scales were robust. The detailed reports are available at *www.principalhealth.org/au/reports.php*.

2. Snapshot of Primary School Leaders in New Zealand: Survey Sample and Demographics

2.1. PARTICIPATION AND SAMPLE SIZE

In 2020, of 473 participants who completed the survey, 80.8% were returning school leaders from previous years and 19.2% joined the research program for the first time in 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic is likely to have negatively impacted on participation rates. Participants who have retired, are on leave, are in non-school leader position in education, or have changed career, continue to take part in a shorter version of the survey. This report concentrates on the aggregated results of 2020 school leaders.

To maintain participant anonymity, aggregate data is reported at demographic grouping levels. Some subgroups were unable to be reported due to insufficient sample size. Reporting results of subgroups of insufficient size may not provide a true reflection of the subgroup and may risk identifying school leaders. As some participants only partially completed the survey, some of the participant numbers for certain domains and subscales may vary. Subgroup distributions will be reported as a percentage of the data sample size.

2.2. PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT

Role

Of the 473 participants that completed the survey 408 (86%) were Principals and 65 (14%) were Deputy/Assistant/ Associate/ Acting Principals.

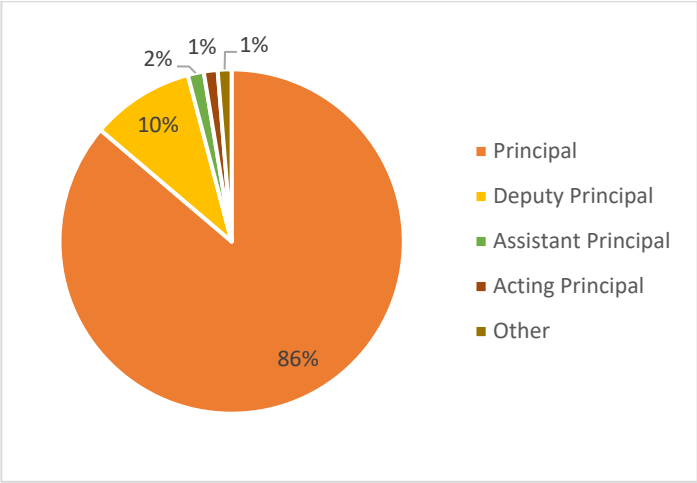

Figure 2.2.1 School leader distribution by role

Gender

The gender breakdown for the sample was 321 (68%) female, 151 (32%) male and 1 participant (0.2%) preferred not to say.

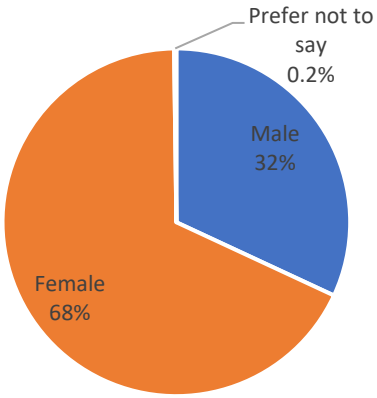

Figure 2.2.2 School leader distribution by gender

School Type

Of the participating school leaders, 415 worked in primary state schools (88%) and 52 (11%) worked in state integrated schools. Just 5 participants (1%) worked in Māori immersion schools. One participant (0.2%) reported they worked in private schools.

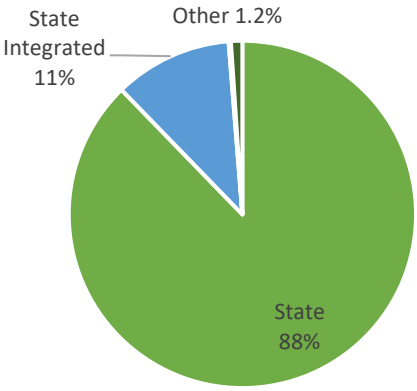

Figure 2.2.3 School leader distribution by school type

School Language

437 school leaders (92%) surveyed worked in English medium schools. 29 school leaders (6%) worked in a school with a Māori immersion unit or class and 5 (1%) worked in a full Māori immersion school. Only 2 (0.4%) leaders worked in schools with English medium with a language unit or class(es) other than Māori.

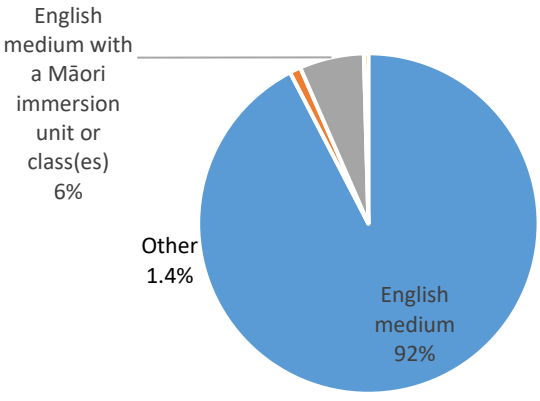

Figure 2.2.4 School leader distribution by school language medium

School leader experience

Many school leaders that completed the survey were very experienced. 59% had more than 13 years of experience in a leadership position and 30% had gained over 12 years of teaching experience prior to commencing their leadership role. Approximately half of all school leaders (48%) had been in their current role for more than five years. Note: the dividing figures of 13, 12 and 5 were calculated based on the measures of central tendency.

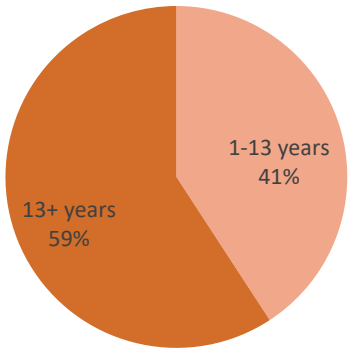

Figure 2.2.5 School leader by years of working in a leadership role

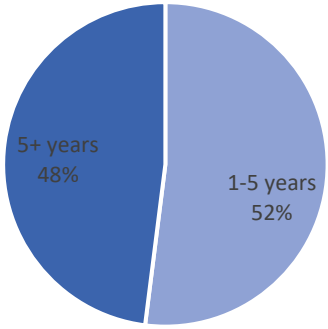

Figure 2.2.6 School leader distribution by years in current role

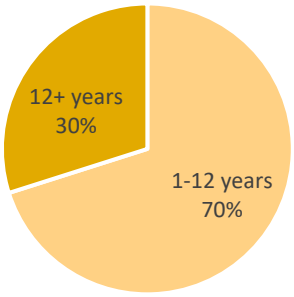

Figure 2.2.7 Distribution by years of working in a teaching role prior to undertaking a leadership role

3. Workload

Earlier rounds of this survey have shown that workload is a significant issue with many New Zealand primary school leaders facing heavy administrative workloads, long working hours, and an imbalance between their working and private life (Riley et al., 2019). In the following section, we report on results for hours worked, sources of job stress, demands at work and work-life balance for NZ school leaders in this year's survey.

3.1. HOURS WORKED DURING THE SCHOOL TERM

During the school term, the majority of school leaders (69.6%) reported working more than 50 hours per week. A large proportion reported working more than 55 hours a week (45.5%) and around one in five school leaders (19.9%) reported working more than 60 hours per week. Less than 8% of school leaders reported working less than 45 hours per week (see Figure 3.1).

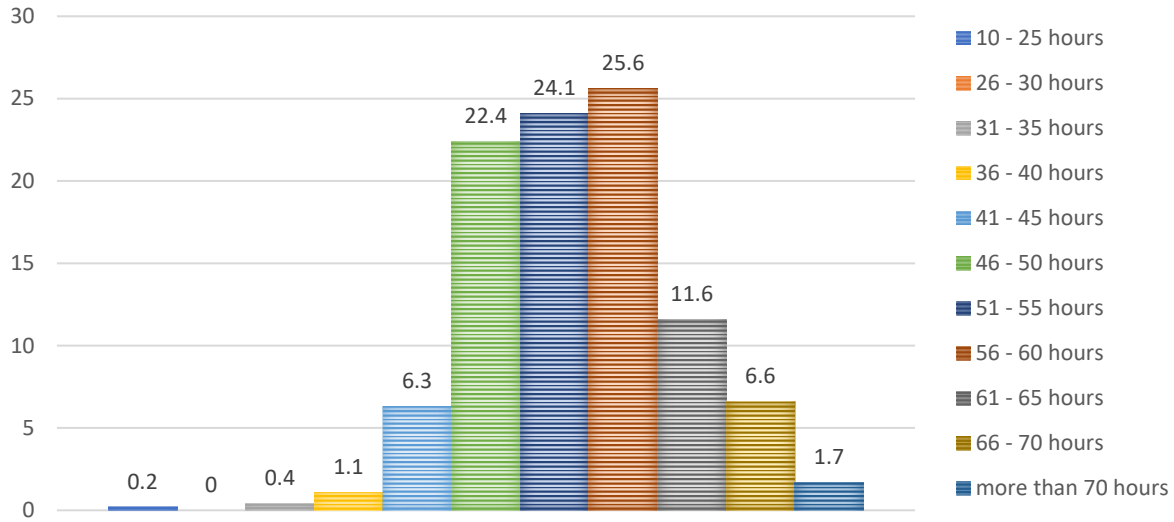

Figure 3.1 Average number of hours per week working during school terms

3.2. HOURS WORKED DURING SCHOOL HOLIDAYS

During the school holidays, 44% of school leaders reported working between 10-25 hours and 47.8% reported working more than 25 hours per week. Only 8.2% reported they worked less than 10 hours per week while the schools were closed for instruction (term breaks) (see Figure 3.2).

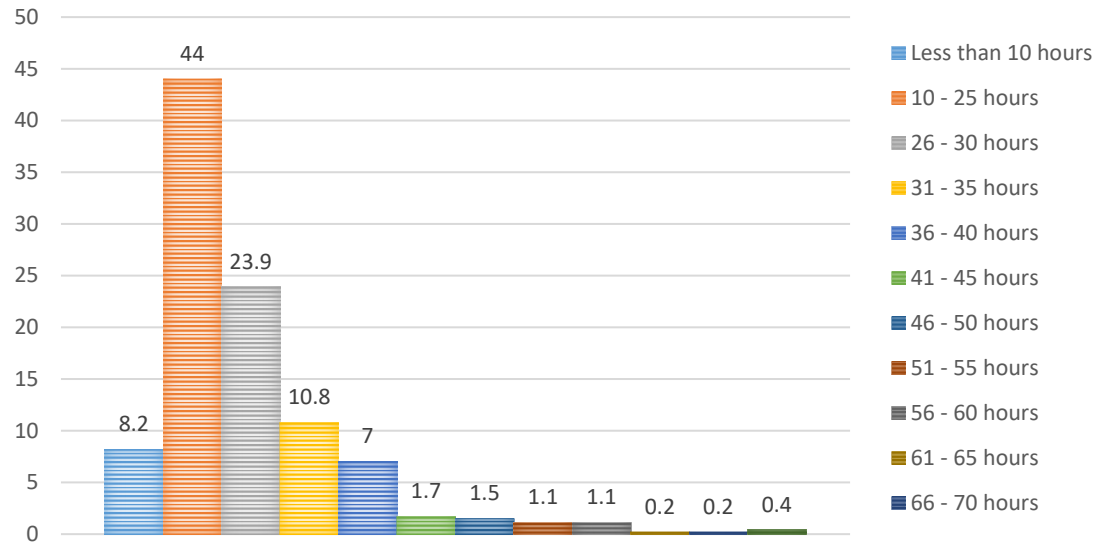

Figure 3.2 Average number of hours per week working while the school is closed for instruction (term breaks)

3.3. SOURCES OF STRESS RELATED TO WORKLOAD

In this year's survey, sheer quantity of work was reported as the biggest source of stress for school leaders. Lack of time to focus on teaching and learning was reported as the second biggest stressor. These two stressors far exceeded other the sources of stress listed in the survey (see Figure 3.3).

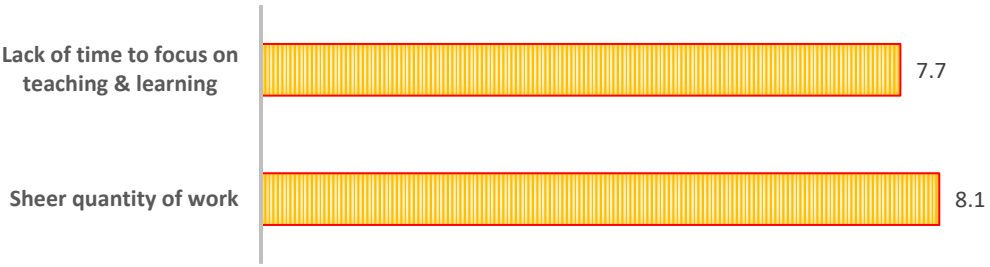

Figure 3.3 Sources of stress related to workload (average out of 10)

In the last five years of the survey, sheer quantity of work and lack of time to focus on teaching and learning have consistently been reported as the biggest sources of stress for New Zealand school leaders (see Table 3.3).

Table 3.3 Sources of stress school leaders

Sources of Stress	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Sheer quantity of work	7.84	7.89	8.36	7.97	8.1
Lack of time to focus on teaching & learning	7.97	7.77	8.22	7.86	7.7

While many other sources of stress have continued on a downward trend, sheer quantity of work has increased since 2019 and was reported at its second highest level since the survey began. Taken together with the data for working hours, this indicates that school leaders experience very intense workloads.

3.4. DEMANDS AT WORK

Job demands are the physical, psychological, social or organizational aspects of a job that require continuous physical and/or psychological (cognitive and emotional) effort. In this survey, demands at work measures five components of job demands:

- **Quantitative Demands** reflect the amount of work an individual experiences relative to their ability to complete that work. They can be assessed as an incongruity between the number of tasks and the time available to perform the tasks in a satisfactory manner.

- **Work Pace** assesses the speed at which tasks must be performed. It is a measure of the intensity of work.

- **Cognitive Demands** assesses demands involving the cognitive abilities of the worker. The relationship between Cognitive Demands and wellbeing is complex. Facing new tasks or overcoming new challenges triggers strain but because it involves task variation or learning, it can also increase job satisfaction and facilitate personal development. Facing new tasks and improving work are somewhat related to workplace wellbeing. However, engaging in tasks that the individual does not have the knowledge to solve is negatively related to workplace wellbeing

- **Emotional Demands** assesses when the employee must deal with or is confronted with other people's feelings at work or placed in emotionally demanding situations. Other people comprise both people not employed at the workplace (e.g., parents and students) and people employed at the workplace (e.g., colleagues, superiors, or subordinates).

- **Demands for hiding emotions** assesses when an employee must conceal their own feelings at work from other people. Other people comprise both people not employed at the workplace (e.g., parents and students) and people employed at the workplace (e.g., colleagues, superiors, or subordinates). The scale shows the amount of time individuals spend in surface acting (pretending an emotion that is not felt) or down-regulating (hiding) felt emotions.

In 2020, New Zealand school leaders report experiencing all five demands at work more often than the general population. School leaders report sometimes experiencing more work than they can complete and report regularly having to work at a fast pace. School leaders often experience cognitively challenging work. They also report regularly dealing with emotionally challenging situations (emotional demands) and frequently having to conceal their emotions at work (emotional labour).

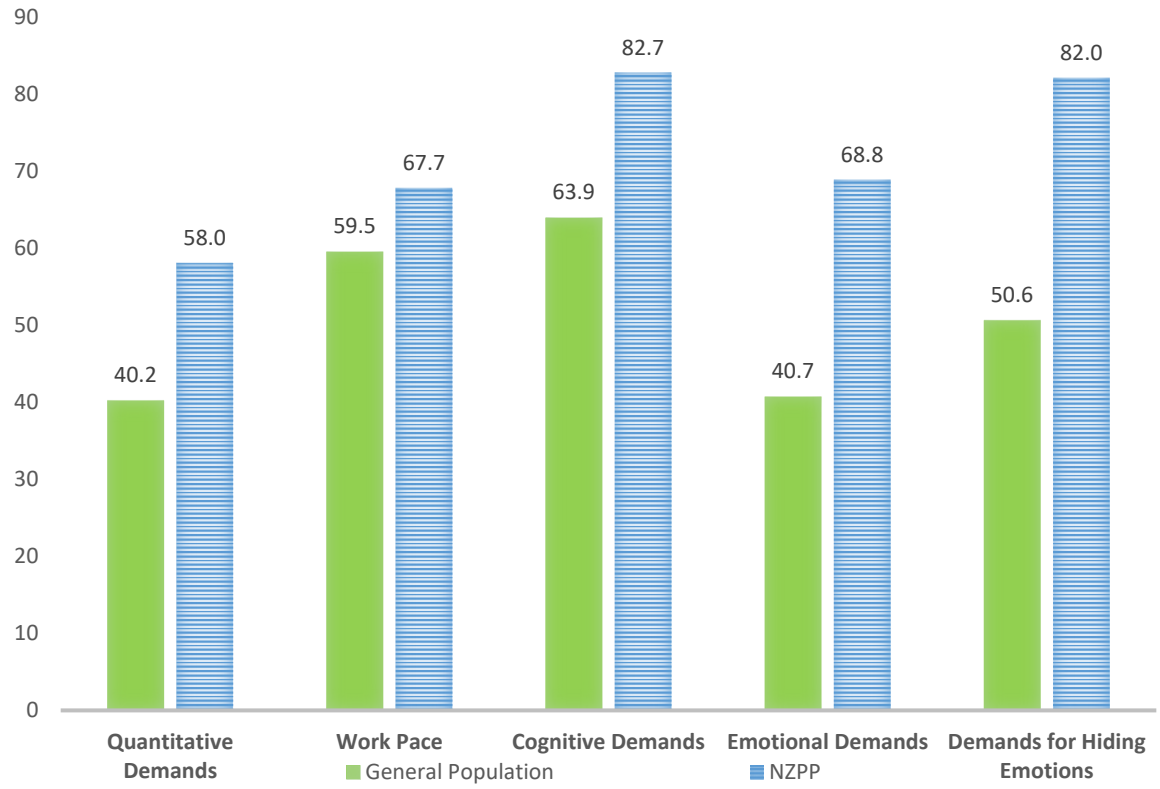

Figure 3.4 Demands at work

Compared to previous years of the survey, New Zealand primary school leaders reported a decrease in quantitative demands at work and the figure is at its lowest level since the survey began. Compared to all other years, this year school leaders reported less frequently experiencing more work than they had the ability to complete. This decrease in quantitative demands, comes alongside an increase in work pace since 2019. School leaders also report experiencing cognitive demands more frequently this year than in all but one of the previous rounds of the survey. This is a positive outcome and indicates that school leaders manage very heavy workloads by frequently using their cognitive skills and resources. These results are surprising given the heavy workloads reported by school principals. The 2021 round of the survey will enable us to identify whether this trend will continue.

Table 3.4 Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire-II subscale scores for school leaders 2016-19

Scale	**Subscale**	***Pop*^{n*}**	**New Zealand**				
			2016	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**
Demands at Work	Quantitative demands	*40.20*	60.67	61.00	64.13	61.18	58
	Work pace	*59.50*	68.62	67.82	69.08	67.05	67.7
	Cognitive demands	*63.90*	81.40	81.97	83.53	82.52	82.7
	Emotional demands	*40.70*	66.75	68.38	70.86	69.28	68.8
	Demands for hiding emotions	50.60	82.20	81.90	82.35	81.49	82

3.5. WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Work-Family Conflict measures the possible consequences of work on family/personal life. The focus is on two areas, namely conflict regarding energy (mental and physical energy) and conflict regarding time. This year's results indicate that school leaders experience high levels of conflict between work and home lives. Although this year's results continue the downward trend that started in 2018, school leaders' results are still well over one standard deviation above the rate of the general population rate. This result has serious implications for the long-term future of school personnel as their work is creating significant family stress. This finding should be cause considerable concern for policy makers, as it relates directly to the Quantitative Demands of the role.

Table 3.5 School leaders Work-Life Conflict 2016-2020

Subscale	***Pop^n***	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**
Work–family conflict	*33.50*	73.07	71.40	74.29	71.49	68

3.6. SUMMARY

With almost 70 % of New Zealand school leaders working more than 50 hours per week and 25% working more than 60 hours, too many leaders are working hours that place them at increased risk of experiencing adverse psychological and physical health outcomes.

The US Department of Health and Human Services (Caruso, Hitchcock, Dick, Russo, & Schmit, 2004) found the costs of working too much include:

- Working >10 hours a day led to a 60% increased risk of cardiovascular disease.
- 10% of those working 50–60 hours a week report relationship problems, and 30% for those working more than 60 hours.
- Working >40 hours per week is associated with
    - increased alcohol and tobacco consumption
    - unhealthy weight gain in men
    - depression in women
- Little productive work occurs after 50 hours per week.
- In white collar jobs, productivity declines by as much as 25% when workers put in 60 hours or more.
- Working >60 hours per week led to 23% higher injury hazard rate.

Sheer quantity of work is the major source of stress for school leaders and it has become an even more intense source of stress since last year's survey. Despite having intense workloads,

school leaders report having more work than they can cope with than in previous survey years. The increase in cognitive demands indicates that school leaders undertake complex work roles that require ongoing problem solving and learning.

School leaders' home lives are suffering as a result of the demands that they face at work. The current levels of demand are dangerous to the long-term health and wellbeing of school leaders who find consistently that the resources available to them are not concomitant with the demands. The cost to the nation of the mental health challenges produced by this kind of work culture is high.

Price Waterhouse Coopers (2014) have recently conducted a Return on Investment for addressing mental health in the Australian context. They found that the impact of not addressing mental health issues amounted to $10.6 billion annually. However, they also reported that every dollar spent on addressing the issue returned $2.30 (PWC, 2014). Addressing the problem in schools is also a good investment for the future of the nation, as it will save money in the long term.

4. Resourcing

Job resources are the physical, social, individual or organizational factors that help individuals to achieve goals and reduce stress at work. There are two main types of resources available in the workplace: workplace resources and personal resources. Workplace resources are the physical and social resources available in the workplace setting. They may include strong work relationships, clear leadership, and trust, among many other factors. Personal resources, are individual employee characteristics such as self-efficacy and optimism. In this section, we focus on school leaders' experiences of workplace resources.

4.1. SOURCES OF STRESS RELATED TO RESOURCES

School leaders reported that resourcing needs are a significant source of stress. This was reported as their biggest stressor after the workload stressors (see Figure 4.1).

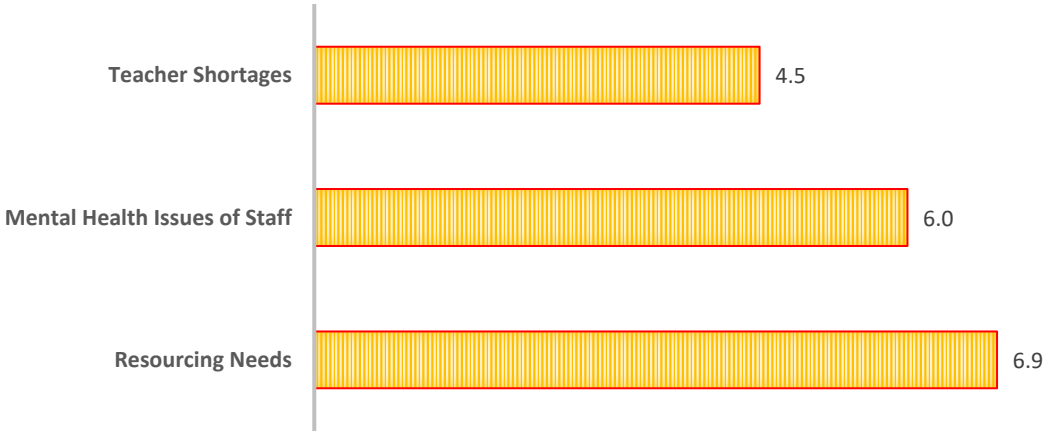

Figure 4.1 School leaders' sources of stress related to resources (average out of 10)

Data from the last five years of the survey shows that resourcing needs, mental health issues of staff and teacher shortages peaked as sources of stress for school leaders in 2018 and have since decreased in each of the following rounds of the survey. However, resourcing needs declined only slightly over the last year and remain a significant source of stress for school leaders. The 2021 round of the survey will provide us with a clear indication of whether the downward trend for this stressor is set to continue. Since 2019, mental health issues among staff members have increased as a source of stress and are now at the highest level since the survey began.

Table 4.1 Sources of stress school leaders

Sources of Stress	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Resourcing Needs	6.67	7.01	7.76	7.07	6.9
Teacher Shortages	3.78	5.23	6.46	5.4	4.5
Mental Health Issues of Staff	4.82	5.70	6.32	5.4	6

4.2. JOB RESOURCES

In this section we report on the following aspects of job resources: quality leadership, social support from colleagues, social community at work, trust, and justice. These resources are defined as follows:

- **Quality of Leadership** assesses the next higher managers' leadership in different contexts and domains.

- **Social Support from Colleagues Inside and Outside the School** assesses school leaders' impressions of the possibility to obtain support from colleagues if one should need it.

- **Social Community at Work** assesses whether there is a feeling of being part of the group of employees at the workplace (e.g., if employee's relations are good and if they work well together).

- **Trust Regarding Management (Vertical Trust)** assesses whether the employees can trust the management and vice versa. Vertical trust can be observed in the communication between the management and the employees.

- **Mutual Trust between Employees (Horizontal Trust)** assesses whether the employees can trust each other in daily work or not. Trust can be observed in the communication in the workplace, e.g., if one freely can express attitudes and feelings without fear of negative reactions.

- **Justice** assesses with whether workers are treated fairly.

At work, primary school leaders report experiencing quality leadership, social community at work, trust regarding management, mutual trust between employees and justice more often than the general population. However, school leaders reported experiencing social support from colleagues less often than the general population (see Figure 4.2).

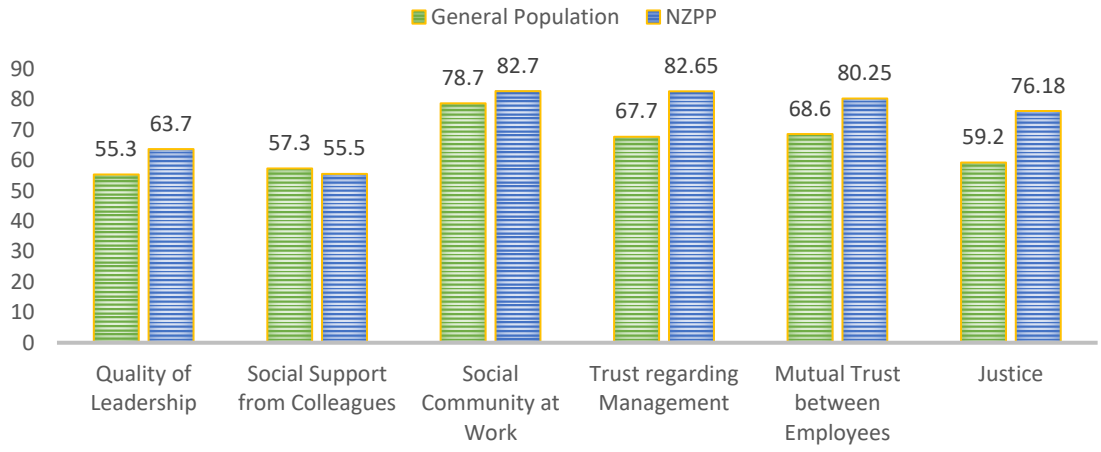

Figure 4.2 COPSOQ measures related to resources

The quality of leadership increased significantly from 2019 to 2020. Over the last five years, school leader reports of trust in management, trust between employees and justice have generally continued an upward trend and are now at their highest levels since the survey began. School leaders reported decreased levels of support on all three social support dimensions social since 2019. The 2021 survey will enable us to consider the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic may have had on these scores.

Table 4.2 COPSOQ measures related to resources

		Pop^{n*}	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**
Interpersonal Relations & Leadership	Quality of leadership	*55.30*	55.40	57.77	56.12	58.89	63.7
	Social sup: colleagues inside school	*57.30*	57.76	58.71	59.19	59.83	58.8
	Social sup: colleagues outside school	*57.30*	50.66	52.90	52.68	53.63	52
	Social support from supervisor	*61.60*	54.11	56.60	54.13	55.69	54.8
	Social community at work	*78.70*	78.63	79.01	79.26	80.66	82.7
Values at the Workplace	Trust regarding management	*67.00*	78.15	78.99	79.15	80.82	82.65
	Mutual trust between employees	*68.60*	74.30	75.65	76.6	77.58	80.25
	Justice	*59.20*	71.48	72.48	72.13	73.87	76.18

4.3. ACCESS TO SUPPORT

As indicated in Figure 4.3, 85% of school leaders reported their partner as a source of support and 74% reported their friend as a source of support. Colleagues from their place of work, and leaders or colleagues that they had a professional relationship with, were also reported as a source of support by a large proportion of school leaders.

Figure 4.3 Access to support for primary leaders in NZ (%)

4.4. SUMMARY

Resourcing needs at work and concerns about the mental health of staff members are significant sources of stress for school leaders. Work demands and resources need to be in balance for good psychological health at work. High job demands and low job resources may cause job strain and eventually result in burnout (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). However, high job resources buffer job demands, reducing their negative impact on individuals. School leaders report very high demands and view a lack of available resources as a considerable source of stress.

Professional support is a strong predictor of coping with the stresses of the role (job demands). However, school leaders report receiving social support from colleagues only sometimes. Compared to the 2019 survey, school leaders report that they feel supported by colleagues inside school, colleagues outside schools and supervisors less often. School leaders' main sources of social support at work come from outside of workplace. Previous rounds of the survey have shown that school leaders with the lowest levels of professional support cope least well with their daily tasks while those who cope well report the highest levels of professional support.

5. Offensive Behaviour

In this section we report on three key aspects of offensive behaviour: threats of violence, physical violence and bullying. School leaders were asked to report their experiences of these behaviours during the last 12 months of their work. The three key aspects of offensive behaviour are defined as follows:

- **Threats of Violence** is the exposure to a threat of violence in the workplace.
- **Physical Violence** is the exposure to physical violence in the workplace.
- **Bullying** is the repeated exposure to unpleasant or degrading treatment in the workplace, and the person finds it difficult to defend themselves against it.

5.1. OFFENSIVE BEHAVIOUR

In the last 12 months at work, 23% of New Zealand primary school leaders report experiencing bullying, 32% report receiving threats of violence and 35% have experienced physical violence. In comparison to the general population, school leaders are at far higher risk of experiencing offensive behaviours at work. New Zealand primary school leaders are almost three times more likely to experience bullying, four times more likely to experience threats of violence and almost nine times more likely to experience physical violence at work.

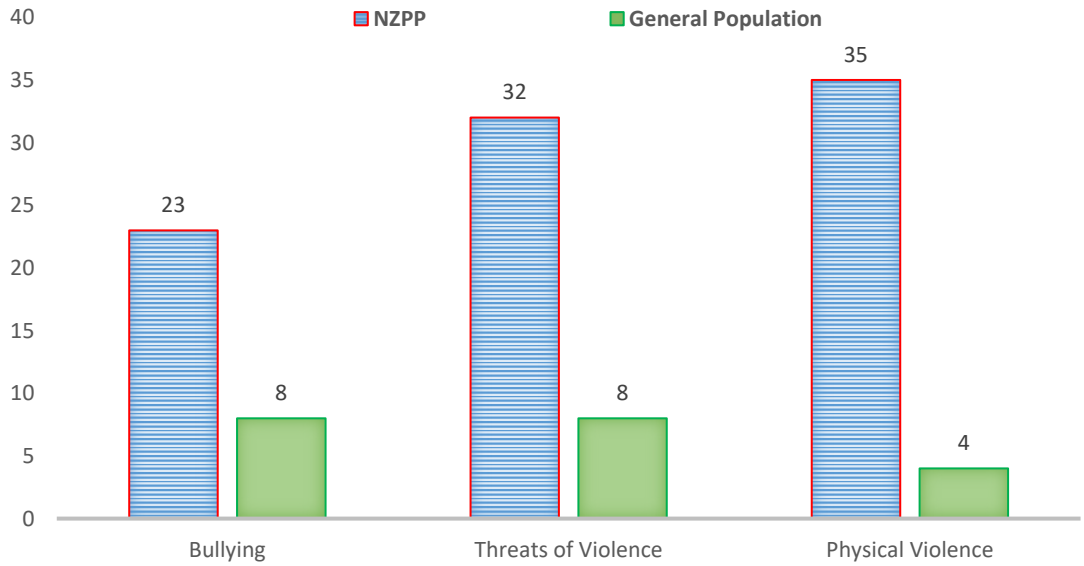

Figure 5.1 Percentage of school leaders at NZ primary schools who experienced offensive behaviours

The proportion of school leaders reporting experiencing bullying in the last 12 months at work has decreased from approximately 29% in 2019 to 23% in 2020. This continues the downward trend from a peak of 43% in 2018. Although a significant number of school leaders still experience bullying at work, it is reported at its lowest level since the survey began. The proportion of school leaders experiencing threats of violence also continued to decline from

a peak of 43% in 2018 and approximately 34% in 2019 to 32% in 2020. A major cause for concern in the data this year is that the proportion of school leaders experiencing the most aggressive form of offensive behaviour (physical violence) has increased from approximately 32.5% in 2019 to 35% in 2020.

Table 5.1 Prevalence of Offensive Behaviour among school leaders

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Bullying	34.9	38	43	29.13	23
Threats of violence	27.6	38	44	33.78	32
Physical violence	27.3	41	46	32.56	35

5.2. OFFENSIVE BEHAVIOUR: PREVALENCE BY GENDER

Women are significantly more likely to experience all forms of offensive behavior than men. Disaggregating the data on offensive behaviours towards New Zealand primary school leaders by gender shows that female school leaders in New Zealand primary schools are more likely to be targets of bullying, threats of violence or physical violence, than their male colleagues (see Figure 5.2). This needs to be systemically addressed.

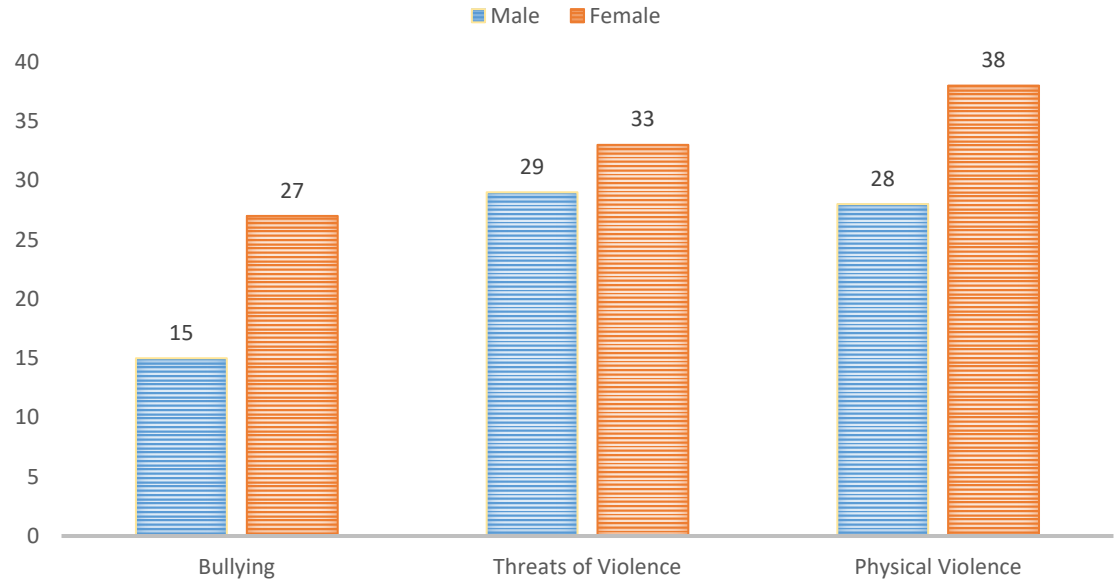

Figure 5.2 Offensive behaviour prevalence by gender

5.3. OFFENSIVE BEHAVIOUR: SCHOOL LEADERS' WORK EXPERIENCE

5.3.1. YEARS IN LEADERSHIP ROLE

Compared to colleagues with more years of leadership experience, greater proportions of those with less experience reported bullying and threats of violence in the last 12 months of their work. The number of years in a leadership role did not impact on school leaders reported experiences of physical violence.

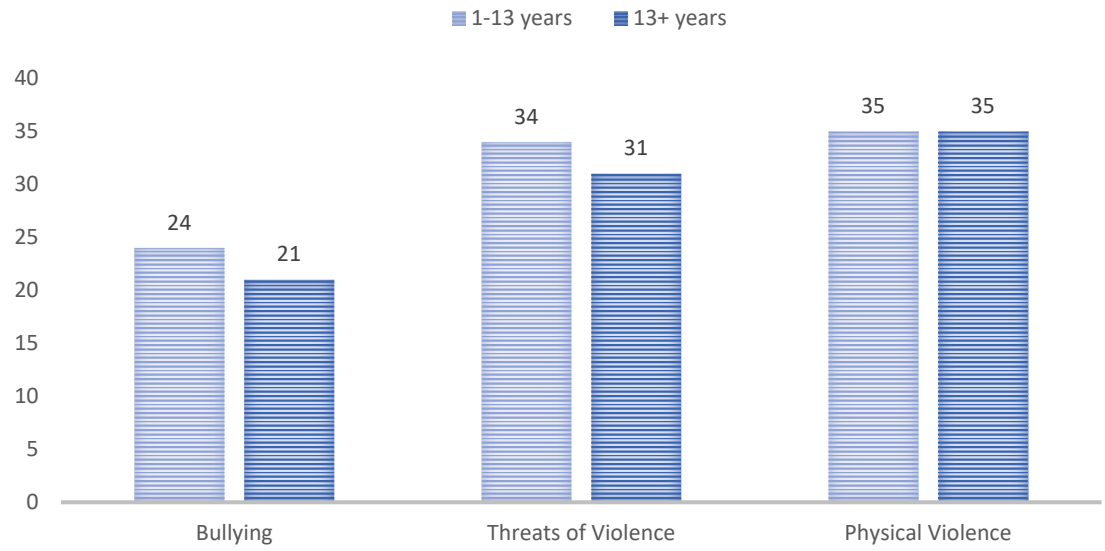

Figure 5.3.1 Percentage of school leaders at NZ primary schools who experienced offensive behaviours, broken down by years of working in a leadership role

5.3.2. YEARS TEACHING

The number of years teaching experience that school leaders had gathered prior with 1-12 years of teaching and those with more than 12 years of teaching experience in New Zealand, was around 23%. However, 33% of New Zealand school leaders of government primary schools with less than 12 years of teaching experience prior to undertaking a leadership, reported at least one threat of violence within a twelve-month period. This figure is 4% higher than school leaders of primary schools with more than 12 years of teaching experience.

Regarding exposure to physical violence, leaders of primary schools with 1-12 years of teaching reported 35%, which 2% more than those with more years of teaching experience (see Figure 5.3.2).

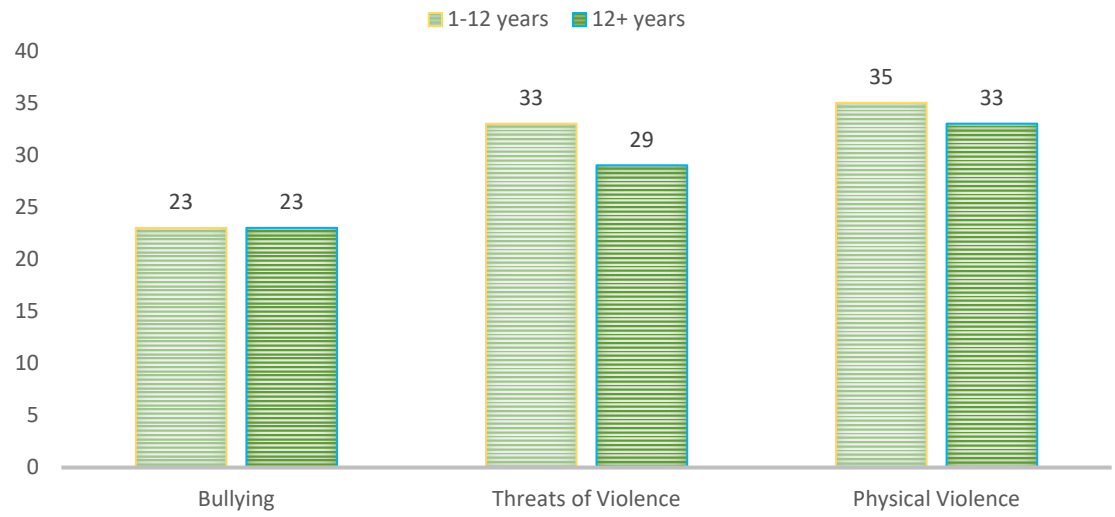

Figure 5.3.2 Percentage of school leaders at NZ primary schools who experienced offensive behaviours, broken down by years of working in a teaching role

5.3.3. YEARS IN CURRENT ROLE

The length of time that school leaders have spent in their current role also appears to impact on their experiences of offensive behaviour. When compared to those that have been in their current role for a longer period of time (more than five years), a greater proportion of those with less than five years of experience report bullying in the last 12 months of their work. Those with less than five years of experience in their current role are also more likely to report experiencing physical violence at work than their more experienced colleagues.

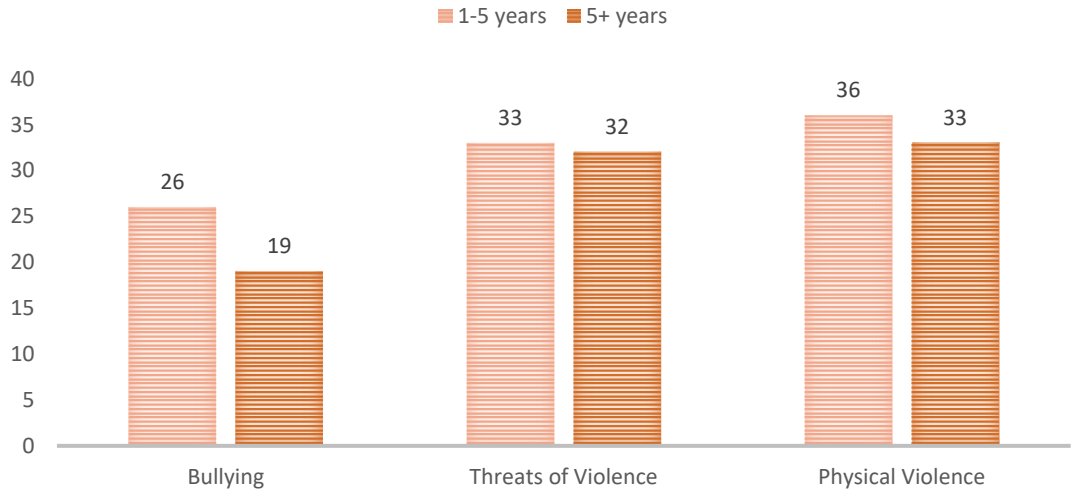

Figure 5.3.3 Percentage of school leaders at NZ primary schools who experienced offensive behaviours, broken down by years of working in current role

5.4. OFFENSIVE BEHAVIOURS IN RELATION TO GEOLOCATION IN GOVERNMENT PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN NEW ZEALAND

The geographic location of the school plays an important role in determining experiences of offensive behaviour for school leaders. The proportion of school leaders in urban areas reporting threats of violence and physical violence was significantly greater than those in non-urban (rural/isolated/off-shore island) locations. Compared to non-urban locations, in urban schools 9% more leaders reported threats of violence and 17% more school leaders reported physical violence in the last 12 months of their work.

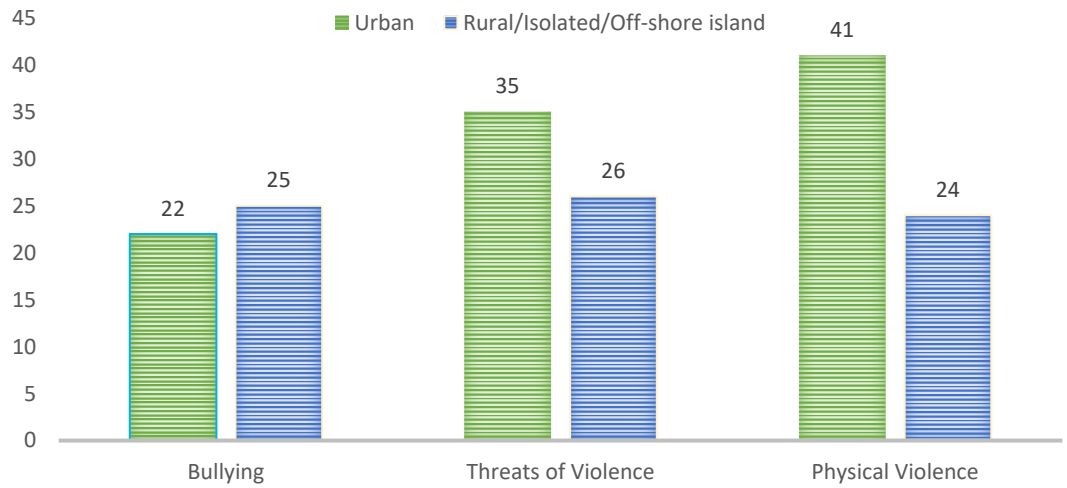

Figure 5.4 Offensive behaviours in relation to the school geolocation in primary schools in NZ

5.5. SUMMARY

While the declines in bullying and threats of violence against school leaders are welcome, they are still highly prevalent and well in excess of scores for the general population. The increase in the proportion of school leaders experiencing physical violence underscores that this is an issue in need of urgent policy attention. The consequences of offensive behaviour in schools are likely to become costly for employers, through time lost to ill health, OH&S claims against employers' and reduced functioning while at work.

In the last 12 months of their work, female school leaders reported experiencing higher levels of all three offensive behaviours than their male counterparts. The stark differences between male and female school leaders for bullying and physical violence demonstrate that this issue requires urgent consideration. There is also a need to consider why a greater proportion of less experienced school leaders are subjected to different types of offensive behaviour and how the school location impacts on leaders' experiences. These issues could be systematically addressed through a comprehensive investigation that examines; differences in the occupational risk of the different types of school leaders, to identify who is most at risk; why, and what can be done to protect them; and governance structures, information flow between adults, and external influences on school functioning.

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