



Building Organizing Power: Investigating Boston Teachers Union Physical And Emotional Hazards

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Background

- Boston Teachers Union
 - 10,000 members teachers, nurses, paras, etc.
- Boston Public Schools
 - 80%+ students of color
 - Average building: 80 years



Objectives

- Frame health & safety as **organizing issue**
- Inspire **member interest**
- Hear **directly** from BTU members
- **Survey 100** members and **interview 10** members



Photo of a floor tiles crumbling as a result of flooding.



Survey



BTU Workplace Hazards Survey

Thank you for filling out the workplace hazards survey. This summer BTU is hosting two occupational health and safety interns from OHIP who will investigate workplace hazards members face. We are welcoming Leela Berman who is studying history at Brown University, and Diana Vasquez, who is a master's of public health student at Boston University. They will be working out of the BTU office this summer, be sure to stop by and say hello. If you are curious, you can learn more about OHIP at ohipintern.org.

The purpose of this survey is to learn more about the hazards and risks members are facing in order to improve health and safety and prevent future injuries or illnesses. This survey is anonymous and deadline to respond is Friday, July 22.

 dianavas@bu.edu (not shared) [Switch account](#) 

How many years have you worked in education?

1 - 5 years

- Created via Google Forms
- Shared in newsletter and through committees
- 129 responses



Work site visits

- Visited 3 sites
- Informal walkthroughs and conversations
- Physical hazards

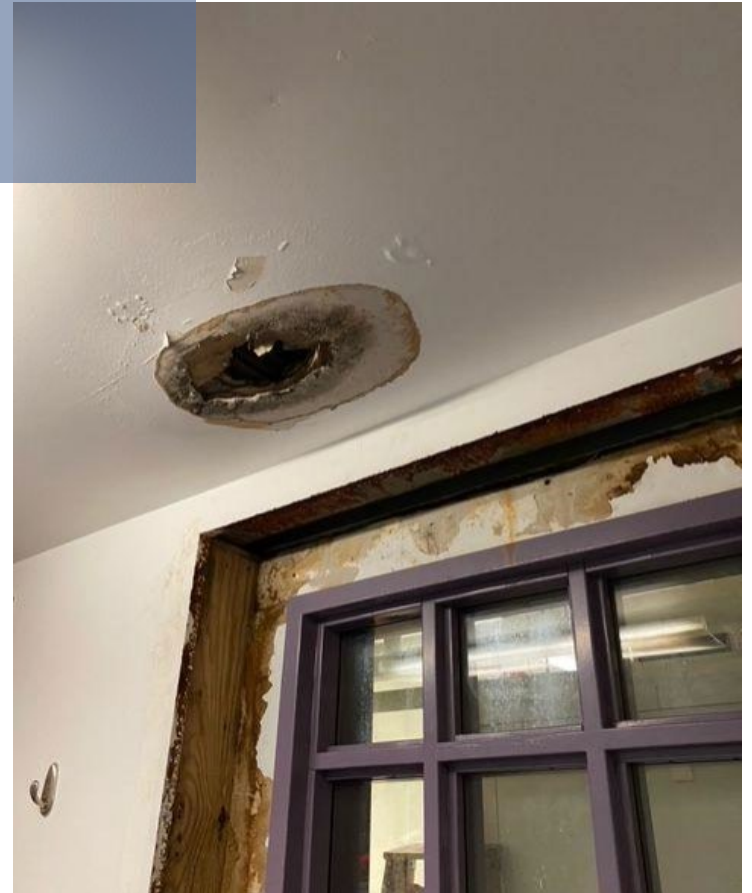


Photo of ceiling water damage.



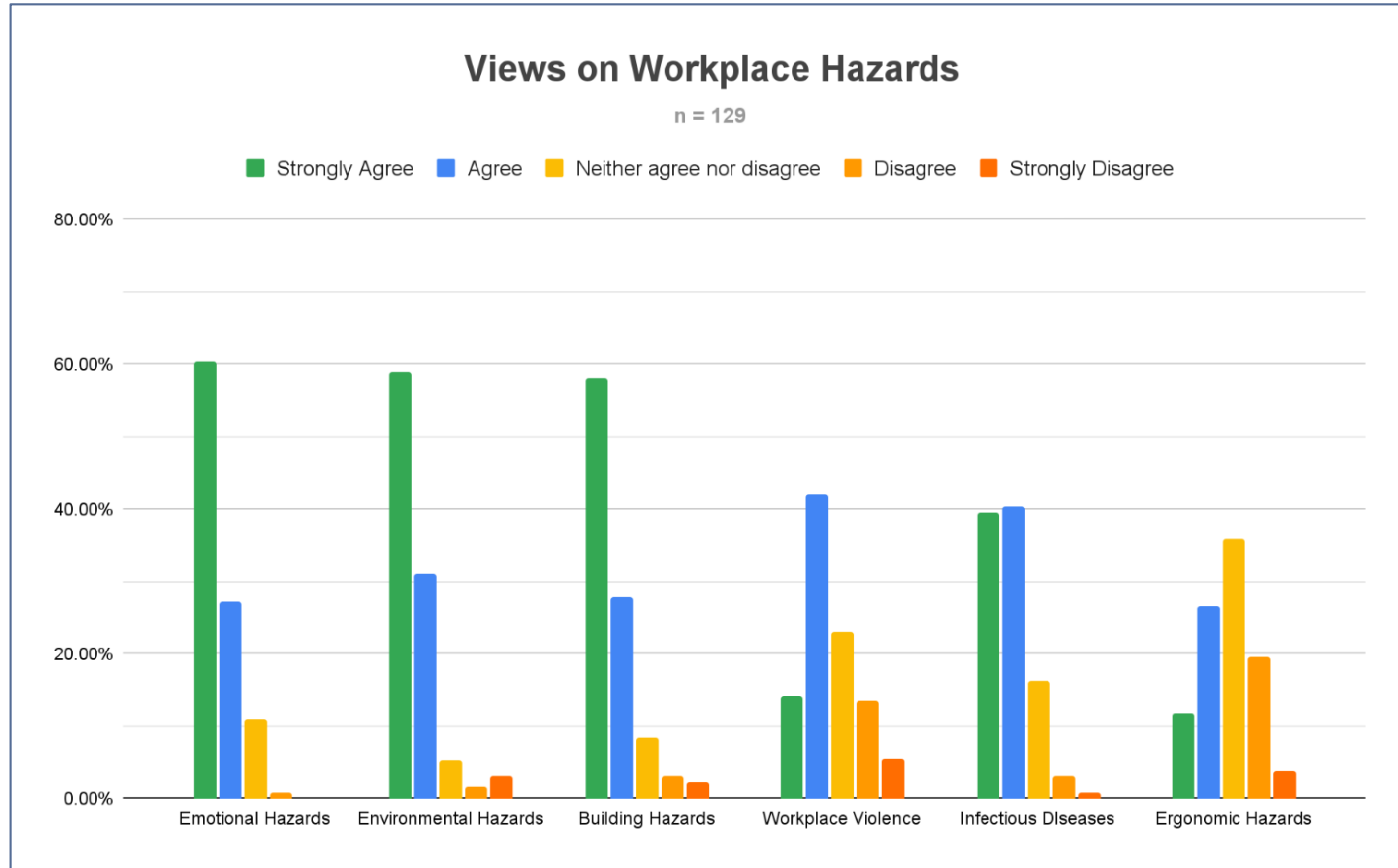
Diana at a BTU rally against state receivership.

Interviews

- Designed interview guide
- 11 one-on-one interviews conducted
- Thematic coding using transcriptions

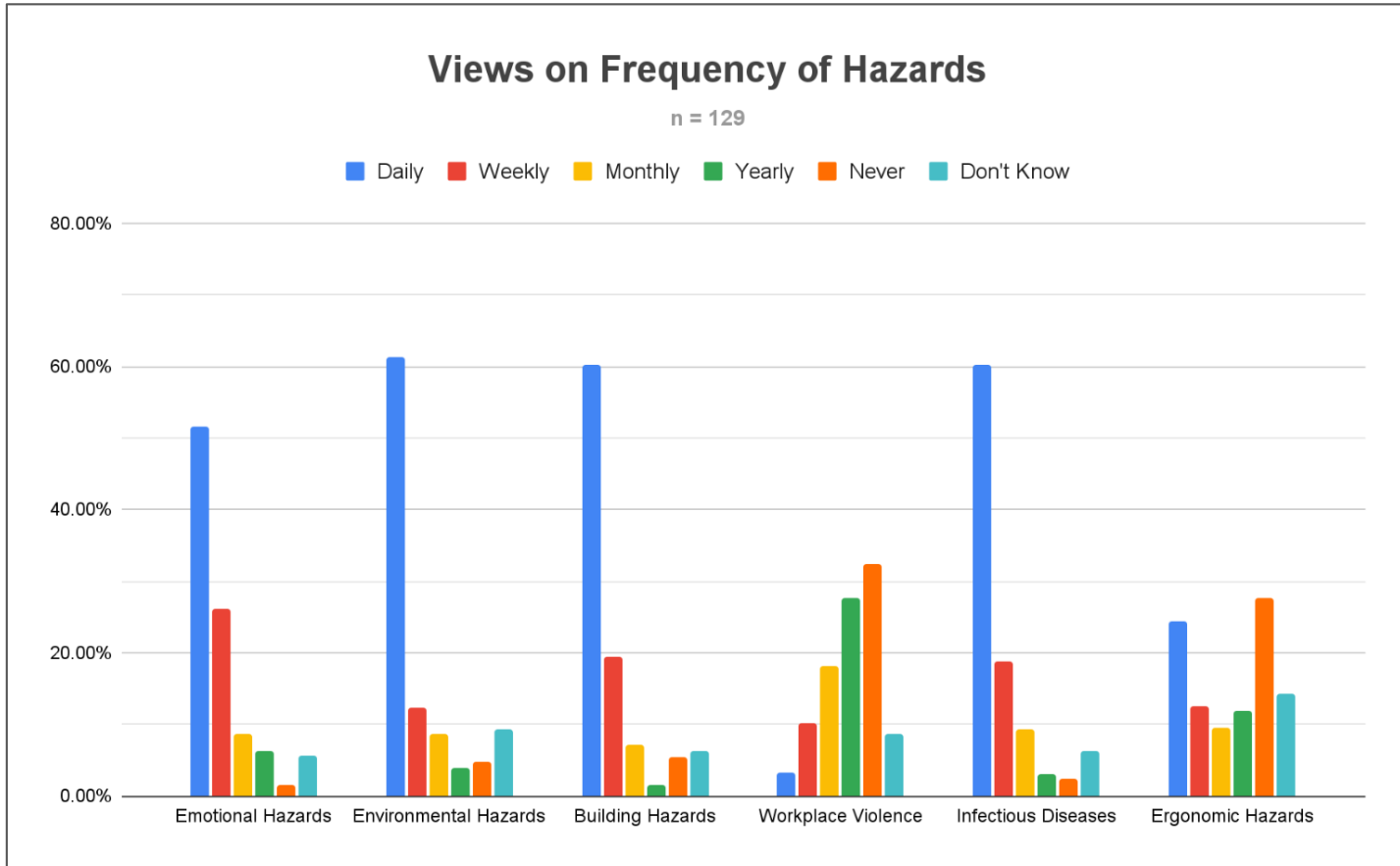


Is this hazard a serious issue for BTU members?





How often do you encounter the following hazard?





44%

Survey respondents cited
excessive heat as one of
their top 3 hazards of
concern

40%

Survey respondents got
injured or sick while
working

52%

Survey respondents
experienced emotional
hazards daily



“For one thing, **our building is literally condemned**, has been for years, and **we're still in it.**”

“Initially they're like you're safe, you're good. We want you to be here, we want this diversity, we value you. **Then you start living in it and you're like 'oh no.'**”

“I just want a building that looks like it was **made to honor** the people who are in it.”

—BTU members

ORGANIZING SCHOOLS TOWARD & HEALTH & SAFETY

"I JUST WANT A BUILDING
THAT LOOKS LIKE IT WAS
MADE TO HONOR THE PEOPLE
WHO ARE IN IT"



produced by Leela Berman & Diana Vasquez
OHIP 2022

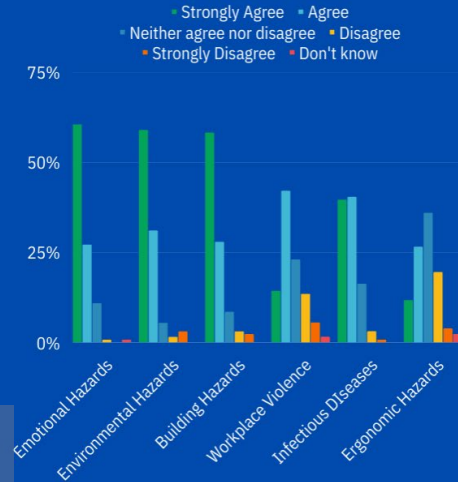
Pamphlet
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Preview of
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RESULTS

MOST SURVEYED MEMBERS STRONGLY
AGREE THAT **ENVIRONMENTAL**, **BUILDING**,
AND **EMOTIONAL** HAZARDS POSE SERIOUS
ISSUES FOR MEMBERS.

VIEWS ON WHETHER THIS HAZARD IS A SERIOUS ISSUE:



4 OUT OF 10 MEMBERS
INTERVIEWED HAD BEEN
INJURED ON THE JOB





Temperature inside teacher's classroom.

Recommendations

- Document and record hazards
- Member led organizing
- Integrate workplace health & safety in priorities
- Campaign for stronger contract language
- Heat standard & infrastructure for the future



Limitations

- BTU members on vacation during the summer
- Several priorities emerging at once at BTU
- Limited sample

Highlights

- Meaningful discussions
- Summer Organizing Union Leaders (SOULs)
- Supporting the growth of OHS as a BTU priority



Personal Reflections

- Appreciation for educators
- Student needs
- Hearing from educators directly





Thank You!

Lea Serena

Erica Kouka

Everyone at Local 66

Elise Pechter

Nancy Lessin

Matt London

AOEC

AFT

NIOSH

MassCOSH

