

## Chapter 17

# Primary and second-level schools

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- 17.01** Children's education in Ireland is provided for at primary and second-level through the primary, vocational and secondary school system. Attendance at full-time education was compulsory for all children between six and 14 years until 1969 when the official school-leaving age was increased to 16 years. Primary education has been universally free in Ireland since the nineteenth century, and second-level education became universally free in 1967. There are also private fee-paying day and boarding schools at both primary and second-level.<sup>1</sup>
- 17.02** The majority of primary schools are publicly funded parish schools. Prior to 1975 the schools were managed by an individual manager, usually the parish priest. In 1975 the administration and management of the schools were transferred to boards of management, who included representatives of the parents, teachers, school patrons and the local community. School patrons were usually the local bishops. In recent years multi-denominational and non-denominational schools have been established.
- 17.03** Second-level education is provided through secondary, vocational, community and comprehensive schools. Secondary schools are generally State funded and are privately owned and managed, generally by boards of governors or trustees, the majority of whom are religious communities. Vocational schools are State funded and administered by vocational education committees. Community and comprehensive schools are State funded and managed by boards of management.

### *Witnesses*

- 17.04** This chapter presents evidence given to the Confidential Committee by 70 witnesses, 56 male and 14 female, of their experiences of abuse in schools in Ireland between 1932 and 1992. Witness accounts of the abuse they experienced, the circumstances in which the abuse occurred, and the response of others to the abuse is reported. The information provided by witnesses at their hearings regarding their current life circumstances and the reported impact of childhood abuse on their subsequent physical, psychological and social development is also recorded.
- 17.05** There were 82 reports of abuse by 70 witnesses in relation to 73 different schools over a 60 year period between 1932 and 1992. Fifty five (55) primary schools were the subject of witness reports, 22 of which were mixed gender schools under the auspices of the local parish. A further 33 schools were under the auspices of Catholic religious communities, other denominations and secular management structures.
- 17.06** Eighteen (18) second-level schools were the subject of reports of abuse by 22 witnesses. Fourteen (14) of these schools were second-level schools for boys, two were second-level schools for girls, and two were mixed gender vocational and technical schools. Four (4) second-level schools were each reported by two male witnesses. Nine (9) male witnesses reported being abused in both primary and second-level schools. Twelve (12) of the 22 witnesses reported abuse in second-level schools prior to 1967.

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Education and Science: [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie).

**17.07** Eleven (11) schools were fee-paying boarding schools, three of which were primary and eight were second-level schools.

**17.08** The reports related to abuse in 36 city schools, 25 schools in provincial towns and 12 rural schools.

### ***Social and demographic profile of witnesses***

**17.09** The majority of witnesses were between 50 and 60 years of age at the time of their hearing. Three (3) witnesses were aged over 70 years and two were less than 30 years of age, as shown in the following table:

**Table 99: Age Range of Witnesses at Time of Hearing – Male and Female Primary and Second-Level Schools**

<b>Age range</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Total witnesses</b>
20–29 years	2	0	2
30–39 years	7	0	7
40–49 years	11	4	15
50–59 years	21	6	27
60–69 years	13	3	16
70 + years	2	1	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>70</b>

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

**17.10** Fifty nine (59) witnesses, 45 male and 14 female, were residing in Ireland at the time of their hearing. Eleven (11) witnesses were living in the UK and one witness was living in North America.

**17.11** Twenty three (23) witnesses reported that they were born in Dublin and 43 witnesses were born in 18 other counties in Ireland. Four (4) witnesses were born outside the State.

**17.12** Sixty four (64) witnesses, 50 male and 14 female, reported that their parents were married at the time of their birth. Four (4) male witnesses reported being born to single mothers and two male witnesses' parents were separated or widowed at the time of their birth.

**17.13** In most instances witnesses provided information to the Committee about their parents' occupational background as described in Table 100.<sup>2</sup>

**Table 100: Occupational Status of Witnesses' Parents – Male and Female Primary and Second-Level Schools**

<b>Occupational status</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Total witnesses</b>
Professional worker	7	1	8
Managerial and technical	6	0	6
Non-manual	6	6	12
Skilled manual	10	5	15
Semi-skilled	10	1	11
Unskilled	13	0	13
Unavailable	4	1	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>70</b>

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

<sup>2</sup> The categorisation is based on *Census 2002*, Volume 6 Occupations, Appendix 2, Definitions – Labour Force. In two-parent households the father's occupation was recorded and in other instances the occupational status of the sole parent was recorded, insofar as it was known.

**17.14** It is of note that the majority of female witnesses reported that they were from a non-manual or skilled manual background. The majority of male witnesses reported being from semi-skilled or unskilled backgrounds. Information was not available regarding the parental occupational status of five witnesses.

**17.15** Sixty two (62) witnesses reported that they had siblings, and the majority were from families of under six children.

### **Family and care circumstances**

**17.16** Sixty seven (67) of the 70 witnesses who reported abuse in primary and second-level schools were in the care of their parents at the time they experienced abuse in school. Fifty eight (58) witnesses lived at home with their families and attended day school and nine witnesses were in fee-paying boarding schools. Three (3) male witnesses were in out-of-home care, two of whom reported that they were placed in boarding schools by the authorities in their Industrial Schools. The other witness was resident in a Children’s Home and attended a primary school.

**17.17** The official school leaving age prior to 1969 was 14 years. Table 101 illustrates the witnesses’ school leaving age reported at their hearing:

**Table 101: Age on Leaving School – Male and Female Primary and Second-Level Schools**

<b>Age on leaving school</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Total witnesses</b>
<13 years	4	0	4
14 years	11	2	12
15 years	7	1	8
16 years	12	2	14
17 years	9	3	12
18+ years	13	5	18
Unavailable	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>70</b>

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

**17.18** Three (3) of the four witnesses who reported leaving school at 13 years or under stated that they left for reasons associated with their special needs and the fourth left on completion of sixth class.

### **Record of abuse**

**17.19** The Committee heard 82 reports of abuse from 70 witnesses in relation to 73 different schools. The 82 witness reports of abuse in primary and second-level schools heard by the Committee related to a 60-year period between 1932 and 1992. The report of abuse by a witness may either refer to descriptions of single episodes or to multiple experiences of being abused over time in a school. Witnesses reported physical and sexual abuse, neglect and emotional abuse. The frequency of witness reports about each school is as follows:

- Fifty one (51) primary schools were each the subject of a single report, the majority of which were mixed gender schools.
- Fourteen (14) second-level schools were each the subject of a single report, 12 of these were boys’ schools.
- Three (3) boys’ primary schools were the subject of two reports each, totalling six reports.
- Four (4) boys’ second-level schools were the subject of two reports each, totalling eight reports.

- One boys' primary school was the subject of three reports.

**17.20** Twelve (12) male witnesses reported abuse in more than one school. Nine (9) witnesses reported abuse in national and secondary schools and three reported abuse in two national schools. Evidence from five witnesses who also reported abuse in Children's Homes, foster care and Industrial Schools is included in the relevant chapters of this Report.

**17.21** The 82 witness reports of abuse varied over a period of seven decades, as follows:

- Twenty three (23) witness reports refer to witnesses who left school prior to 1960.
- Thirty four (34) witness reports refer to those who left school during the 1960s.
- Sixteen (16) witness reports refer to those who left school during the 1970s.
- Nine (9) witness reports refer to those who left school during the 1980s and 1990s.

**17.22** Twenty five (25) of the 70 witnesses described experiences of abuse between 1970 and 1992, and more than half of the witness reports of sexual abuse relate to that period. Combinations of abuse types reported by the witnesses are illustrated in Table 102:

**Table 102: Abuse Types and Combinations – Male and Female Primary and Second-Level Schools**

<b>Abuse types and combinations</b>	<b>Number of reports</b>
Physical	21
Sexual	17
Physical and emotional	12
Physical and sexual	11
Physical, neglect and emotional	6
Physical, sexual and emotional	5
Sexual and emotional	5
Physical, sexual, neglect and emotional	2
Emotional	2
Sexual and neglect	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>82</b>

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

**17.23** The most frequently reported types of abuse were of physical and sexual abuse alone, of which there were 21 reports, 20 male and one female, and 17 reports, 15 male and two female, respectively. In addition there were high numbers of reports of physical abuse combined with either sexual abuse or emotional abuse. Many of the witnesses reported being abused on a daily basis while they were pupils in the class of particular teachers, including school Principals. Others reported acute single episodes of abuse in circumstances where they were isolated from their peer group.

## **Physical abuse**

*The wilful, reckless or negligent infliction of physical injury on, or failure to prevent such injury to, the child.<sup>3</sup>*

<sup>3</sup> Section 1(1)(a).

**17.24** This section describes witness reports of incidents of physical abuse, non-accidental injury, and lack of protection from harm. Witness evidence included reports of both single incidents and multiple episodes over time in a school. The forms of physical abuse reported included: beating, kicking, punching, and other bodily assaults.

### ***Description of physical abuse***

**17.25** The Committee heard 57 reports of physical abuse by 50 witnesses, 40 male and 10 female. The reports were in relation to primary and second-level schools, both day and boarding. Thirty nine (39) primary schools and 14 second-level schools, including one vocational/technical school, were the subject of physical abuse reports. Seven (7) witnesses reported physical abuse in two schools. Four (4) schools were each the subject of two reports of physical abuse.

**17.26** In the majority of instances the abuse was reported to have occurred in the classrooms, corridors, and within the general school environs. Witnesses commonly reported being physically abused as a punishment for mistakes in lessons, not giving the correct answer in class, being unable to do school work to the required standard or for no reason they could understand. A witness described being punched, kicked and hit for failing to give a correct answer in class. Witnesses also reported being punched, beaten and stood on in the context of being sexually abused or for disclosing sexual abuse.

*There was a priest in ...named boarding school.... I was tiny, he beat the living crap out of me from the time I went in, for 3 years. He was Fr... X ... (Principal).... He was a bully and picked on me for no reason, he battered me for fun.*

**17.27** Witnesses described being beaten with leather straps, canes, wooden dusters, cricket bats, sally rods, and wooden sticks including chair legs and map poles. They reported being beaten on their hands, legs, on both covered and bare buttocks, and while held down on the desk. In addition to being hit with implements, male and female witnesses also reported being punched in the face, hit around the head, back and shoulders, pulled and lifted by their hair and ears, and kicked to the ground. The following is a report of physical abuse by a male religious teacher:

*He'd grab you by the hair like that and he'd pull you up to the blackboard by the hair. He'd grab me by the nose, eventually my nose was broken, the doctor confirmed for me the nose was broken .... He'd slap you on the bottom, pants was down, 4 slaps and he would always go up higher on the spine for the last 2 slaps. He'd tell you to pull trousers down and if you did not pull it down he'd pull it down ...*

**17.28** Witnesses commented that pupils who appeared to have learning difficulties or were from disadvantaged backgrounds were beaten and punished more severely than others. One witness described a pupil with learning difficulties being beaten regularly on the back of the hands for not holding his hand up high enough. Another witness stated that '*...it depended on your family, or where you came from, ... maybe people that were not that well-educated, or that were not that assertive...*' were more vulnerable to abuse.

**17.29** Ten (10) male witnesses reported being distressed while in the class of specific teachers in primary school due to the constant, and at times severe, physical abuse. They described a general atmosphere of fear where physical abuse was unpredictable, for reasons they could not understand, and at times in association with sexual abuse. Four (4) male witnesses gave accounts of being beaten or kicked to the ground. One witness stated that he and another pupil were often selected for beatings because they were the biggest boys in the class '*I was beaten into a heap on the floor for no reason except my height*'. Another witness reported that on an occasion when a leather strap was not available the teacher tore the wooden roller from the wall map, broke it in half and hit everyone in the class.

**17.30** Two (2) of the above witnesses who gave evidence of severe physical abuse described constant beatings. One stated that the teacher insisted that he sat at the end of a row of desks and as he passed said; *'Are you paying attention? ... and with that his foot would go out and he'd give me a kick on the shin'*. The witness reported the Brother said prior to beating him on the bare buttocks *'I hate your guts. I'll give you something to remember for the rest of your life'*. The other witness stated that he and his fellow pupils were either made to stand at the back of the class or lie across their desks waiting to be beaten.

**17.31** Thirteen (13) witnesses reported to their parents or others that they were physically beaten in association with sexual abuse or in the context of disclosing sexual abuse. One witness described his experience of persistent physical and sexual abuse:

*While this...(sexual abuse)... was going on I used to get some pretty bad beatings from him in the classroom. One day he was beating me really badly across the back and on the shoulders with the leather and I remember wetting my trousers with the fright of it... I could never tell anyone, no one would really believe you... and I started getting some bad beatings in the yard and the cloakroom from other boys and that was it. I just kept moving, stayed away from everyone as much as I could.*

### **Injuries**

**17.32** Thirteen (13) witnesses, 11 male and two female, reported sustaining injuries as a result of physical abuse following which a number were temporarily unable to walk or write. The injuries reported included: head and leg injuries, lacerations to hands and backs, bruising, and loss of teeth. One witness reported that he suffered a lacerated skull and damage to one eye, which led to partial blindness. Another witness reported being taken to hospital after he had been beaten unconscious. A female witness described being beaten on the tips of her fingers, palms and backs of her hands on occasion until her *'hands were red raw'*.

### **Reported abusers**

**17.33** Witnesses reported being physically abused by teachers including school Principals. They also reported being physically abused by older pupils, care staff in boarding schools, and by a visiting priest. Of the 80 individuals reported to be perpetrators of physical abuse witnesses identified 57 by name, while others were identified by their role or position in the school, as illustrated in the following table.

**Table 103: Position and Number of Reported Physical Abusers – Male and Female Primary and Second-level Schools**

<b>Position of reported physical abusers</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>
<b>Religious</b>		
- Principal	6	0
- Teacher	29	6
- External priest	1	0
<b>Lay</b>		
- Principal	4	0
- Teacher	23	6
- House-parent	1	0
<b>Other pupil</b>	4	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>12</b>

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

- 17.34** Forty one (41) religious teaching staff, six of whom were priests, were named by witnesses as perpetrators of physical abuse. Thirty three (33) lay teaching staff were also named as abusive. Ten (10) of those named as abusers were identified by witnesses as the schools' Principals. Two (2) other individuals reported as abusers were a visiting priest and the house-parent in a boarding school.
- 17.35** Four (4) male witnesses reported being abused by other pupils, one of whom stated that he was caned by older boys and that when he became a prefect he caned younger pupils himself. The other three witnesses gave accounts of being beaten by older boys whom they believed were forced by two religious and one lay teacher to 'deliver' punishments. One of these witnesses described being made to kneel with his hands on the floor while a fellow pupil was instructed by his teacher to take his trousers down and beat the witness in front of the class.
- 17.36** Three (3) witnesses reported being abused by male and female lay teaching staff. The abuse described was beating with a stick on the hands and legs for being late for school or for academic failure. A female witness gave an account of being beaten by a male lay teacher when she attempted to disclose that he had sexually abused her. Another witness stated that a lay teacher stood on her toes and punched her in the chest in order to intimidate and restrain her while he sexually abused her.

## Sexual abuse

*The use of the child by a person for sexual arousal or sexual gratification of that person or another person.<sup>4</sup>*

- 17.37** This section presents evidence reported by witnesses to the Committee of their experiences of sexual abuse in primary and second-level schools. The abuse reported ranged from contact sexual abuse involving vaginal and anal rape and sexual molestation to non-contact abuse including voyeurism and exhibitionism. Some witnesses provided detailed accounts of the sexual abuse they experienced. Other accounts were sufficient to clarify the acute or chronic nature of the abuse.
- 17.38** Forty (40) witnesses, 34 male and six female, made 40 reports that they were sexually abused in 35 schools: 23 primary, 11 second-level and one vocational/technical school. Nine (9) of the schools that were the subject of reports of sexual abuse were fee-paying boarding schools, two of which were primary-level schools. One male witness reported being sexually abused in both primary and second-level schools. Five (5) primary schools were each the subject of two reports of sexual abuse. The reported abuse in these schools was perpetrated by religious teaching staff, five of whom were identified by name.

### *Description of sexual abuse*

- 17.39** The Committee heard reports from witnesses that they were sexually abused by various means including rape, fondling, oral/genital contact and masturbation. Witnesses described being abused in various locations including classrooms, dormitories, toilets, recreation areas, and staff rooms. Witnesses also reported being abused outside the schools in places such as hotels, private homes, and while away on school outings or holidays.
- 17.40** Twenty seven (27) witnesses reported chronic sexual abuse continuing over a number of years by a named abuser, generally a class teacher. Others described single acute episodes of abuse, including vaginal and anal rape.

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<sup>4</sup> Section 1(1)(b).

**17.41** Of those witnesses, 22 described being sexually molested in public situations, including hallways, corridors and classrooms. Witnesses described teachers fondling their breasts and genitalia while reading to the class. A number of female witnesses described male teachers, including a school Principal, moving from pupil to pupil, at the back of the class on the pretext of helping or checking schoolwork while fondling their breasts. *'He would lean over you, down on top of you, you can't even think.'* The following witness accounts refer to abuse in primary schools:

*I was around 10 or 10 and a half, it was ...named primary school.... He'd ...(Br X)... used ask me up to the desk, he'd start putting his hand up my trousers fondling my genitals and backside and he would stand up in front of all the pupils who were about the same age as myself. ... He'd stand up behind me and rub himself up against me at the back. This went on for about a year that I was in that class, it happened everyday, maybe twice a day...*

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*We went to the local school ...named primary school... there. We grew up with the fact that the Principal was always very interested in girls. We came to accept it as normal even though deep down in our heart we knew it wasn't normal. Growing up through those years, trying to avoid him.... We'd sneak in in the morning and try to hide ... and sneak down to our classroom without confronting him. In the morning he would expect you to come up and say "Dia is Muire dhuit", and hold us, as girls, in between his legs and you know, hold us into him. ... The same would happen with play.... He'd hold you into himself.... You would try to run and he would catch you ... hiding from him, you would be ashamed of yourself if you were the one picked on....There was a lot of fondling that you didn't want. You ran and looked for cover, dodged at every opportunity.*

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*This Brother, I can't remember his name ... after he saw I was interested in learning about the equipment used to take me into a corner behind the stage where he would take my penis out and play with it and then I'd have to take his out ... (witness described oral/genital contact) ... It just went on like that..*

**17.42** Other witnesses gave accounts of being forced to watch their abuser masturbate or being masturbated by their abuser. One female witness reported that her abuser put her under his desk, blocked her from view of the class and then exposed and masturbated himself.

**17.43** A total of nine witnesses, seven male and two female, reported being raped while pupils in primary or second-level schools by seven named male religious teaching staff, one lay teacher, older unnamed pupils and by a visiting priest. Witnesses reported being raped when they were isolated from their peer group and other staff, including when they were locked into classrooms, when they were taken away from home overnight by religious teaching staff, when visited in hospital, and in the dormitory of a boarding school. One witness who reported being raped when taken from the classroom gave the following account:

*He took down his trousers and raped me. There was blood ... he took out his hanky and wiped it off and folded it and put it in his pocket. I was very quiet, I said nothing. He brought me back to the class, I could hardly walk, I sat down beside ...named classmate... and was asking her if she had this test, he heard me talking to her and he ... he hit me .... I had never been hit before.... I was terrified.*

**17.44** The Committee heard accounts from two witnesses of attempted rape, both witnesses described using physical force to resist the sexual assault.

**17.45** Five (5) witnesses, four male and one female, reported digital vaginal and anal penetration. The reports described such abuse taking place 'quietly' at the back of the class and in private locations when they were coerced to comply with the abuse either by physical force or explicit verbal threats. In one instance a witness described the religious teaching staff member in a primary school putting a cloak over his head and holding him close with the belt of his cassock while abusing him. Other reported experiences of abuse included:

*It began, I thought the priest was just being friendly, arms around you kissing you. He used to come into the showers after a game.... First of all I should say I didn't know what sexual abuse was at that time, I didn't know what physical abuse was. I might use the phrase "he hit me".*

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*He ...(Fr X)... he used to come to the dormitory at night and he would attempt oral sex, I didn't know what he was doing, like kissing and all this.... The next thing he'd say "I hope you haven't got any dirty photographs in your locker". I didn't even know what a dirty photo was at the time. The next thing he started showing me pornography photographs, he'd say he found them in so-so's locker. It wasn't homosexual nature, it was heterosexual. I couldn't tell my mother, the priest could do no wrong, she said "a priest wouldn't do a thing like that". ... He was waiting for me and attempted a serious assault ...witness described attempted rape....*

**17.46** Six (6) witnesses reported that sexual abuse, including oral/genital abuse and masturbation, was associated with physical violence. A number of those witnesses described being forcefully coerced to submit to sexual molestation. Seven (7) other witnesses stated that they were beaten if they disclosed or resisted the assault. A male witness who reported being sexually abused by a teacher stated that threats not to tell were reinforced by physical violence 'he...(Br X)... gave me terrible beatings, he destroyed my life'.

**17.47** Reports of non-contact sexual abuse included three accounts from male witnesses of being watched by a religious staff member while urinating or being forced to watch their abuser urinate. Other witnesses reported being photographed and shown pornographic pictures.

**17.48** Six (6) witnesses described being sexually abused when taken out of the school. Five (5) of those witnesses stated that they were taken away overnight by teachers. This abuse included masturbation, fondling and attempted rape. Three (3) of the male witnesses reported that the teachers became friendly with their parents and were allowed to take them away overnight for trips during which they were abused. One male witness reported being blindfolded and being forced to touch the genitalia of a lay male teacher who had taken him to his home and locked him in a room. The abuse reported in these instances was extensive and continued over a period of years. Two (2) witnesses who reported being sexually abused over a number of years in primary and second-level schools described their experiences:

*He ...(Br X)... took me to ...named isolated place.... I can remember the place vividly, there were lots of hedges, protruding rocks and that sort of thing. He would be fondling me, he'd take my trousers down, he turned me around and sodomised me, he did other things as well. Br ...X... he had a camera, he photographed myself naked, primarily around the genitals.... It was horrendous, absolutely horrendous up there with him.*

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*He ...named lay Principal... would give me tasks to do and follow me into a room or a corner. ... He opened his trousers, masturbated himself and held on to me with the other hand.... On another occasion ... he pushed me into a cubicle, took down his trousers and underwear... witness described attempted rape.*

**17.49** Six (6) witnesses described being selected by a teacher to help with tasks after school, being given treats, extra tuition and other privileges. These witnesses reported being abused including by oral/genital contact, masturbation and anal rape. One female witness reported sexual abuse that was perpetrated both in the school and at outside venues when a teacher took inappropriate photographs, and allowed his male friends to molest the pupils. Aspects of the abuse perpetrated by a Principal was described *'he put his arms around me and pulled me close ...breathing on you...he kissed me on the lips. He would lean over girls to help with homework, everyone disliked it'*. Other male and female witnesses stated:

*He had a pupil every year that he picked out to collect the roll book; they were always seen as the teacher's pet, he was the Principal. There were 2 other teachers in the school, who were women; they were in the junior classes. I had him in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class. I'm sure I wasn't the only one but I was that person one year. I had to collect the roll book and when I was coming back he would be waiting for me in the corridor.*

*He gave me ... (gifts)... to give to my dad. At that stage he was getting to know the family.... He brought me into town, into ...named hotel.... That was after he got to know my mum and dad. All I can remember was going up a stairs, a passage.*

**17.50** A number of witnesses commented on the disparity of power between them and their abusers. They stated that children of widowed or lone mothers, parents of devout religious background and families in poor circumstances were more vulnerable and a number of witnesses described being abused in such circumstances.

### **Reported abusers**

**17.51** The Committee heard evidence from witnesses of sexual abuse by religious and lay teaching staff, including school Principals, external priests, external professionals, and house-parents. Thirty eight (38) of the 40 reported perpetrators of sexual abuse were identified by name. The two unnamed abusers were described as older pupils. Table 104 illustrates the position and number of abusers reported:

**Table 104: Position and Number of Reported Sexual Abusers – Male and Female Primary and Second-level Schools**

<b>Position of reported sexual abusers</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>
<b>Religious</b>		
- Teacher	16	1
- Principal	6	0
- External Priest	3	0
<b>Lay</b>		
- Teacher	4	0
- Principal	5	0
- Vice-Principal	1	0
- House-parent	1	0
<b>External professional</b>	1	0
<b>Other pupil</b>	2	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>1</b>

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

**17.52** Male and female witnesses reported being sexually abused by 17 religious teaching staff and by four lay teachers. Eleven (11) school Principals, six religious and five lay, were also identified by witnesses as perpetrators of sexual abuse. Three (3) witnesses reported being abused, including by vaginal and anal rape, by external priests who had an association with the school in a pastoral role. Two (2) witnesses reported being sexually abused by unnamed older pupils in two boarding schools, including one report of rape. One female religious staff member in a boarding school was reported by a male witness to have sexually abused him by inappropriate fondling.

**17.53** A male witness reported that he was abused both in primary and second-level school by two religious Brothers from the same Community. He described being first abused before he was 10 years old while isolated from other pupils. The reported abuse progressed to masturbation and oral/genital contact. The witness stated that in the course of being sexually abused he was severely physically abused and was hospitalised as a result. The witness also reported that when he moved to the second-level school he was subjected to various forms of sexual abuse, including rape, by a different teacher who was also a religious Brother attached to the same Community. The witness reported that in both schools he was deliberately separated from his peers by his abusers prior to being abused.

## Neglect

*Failure to care for the child which results, or could reasonably be expected to result, in serious impairment of the physical or mental health or development of the child or serious adverse effects on his or her behaviour or welfare.<sup>5</sup>*

**17.54** This section presents the evidence of witness reports of neglect in primary and second-level schools. The reports referred to the neglect of safety and failure to protect witnesses from abuse, contributing to neglect of their education and welfare.

**17.55** Nine (9) witnesses, five male and four female, reported neglect in relation to nine primary and second-level schools. The accounts were combined with reports of physical, sexual and emotional abuse. The most frequently reported combination of abuse with neglect was emotional abuse.

### *Description of neglect*

**17.56** Neglect of education and lack of protection were the most commonly reported areas of neglect by witnesses from primary and second-level schools, the majority of whom were in the care of their parents and living at home.

**17.57** A number of witnesses commented that their abusive experiences left them lacking confidence and fearful of teachers. They reported being unable to benefit from further educational opportunities, were unsuccessful in exams and in some instances withdrew from school. Two (2) of those witnesses stated that a pattern of truancy and school avoidance developed in an effort to avoid abuse and that their persistent absences left them without skills or academic achievements.

**17.58** Other witnesses reported that their education was neglected as a result of abuse, criticism and fear in the classroom. Six (6) witnesses stated that they were stigmatised because they had learning difficulties or were from socially deprived backgrounds and, therefore, were considered to be undeserving of an education. Three (3) of those witnesses reported that they left school before the official school leaving age and that no assessment was made of their specific

<sup>5</sup> Section 1(1)(c) as amended by section 3 of the 2005 Act.

learning needs. One male witness commented that he was illiterate when he left school having been ignored by his teacher who regarded him as 'riff-raff'.

- 17.59** Most of the nine witnesses reported that teachers and other lay and religious staff did not protect them, despite having observed inappropriate behaviour or having been informed of physical and sexual abuse.
- 17.60** In a number of instances witnesses believed their parents were prevailed upon by their abusers to dismiss the witnesses' reports of abuse. One witness commented '*no one asked me what was wrong, I wanted to die so badly*'. A male witness who stated that his mother reported his persistent and severe physical abuse to the religious Principal in charge of the school was subsequently beaten and warned not to make any further complaint.
- 17.61** Others believed that their safety and welfare was neglected by school staff and external professionals due to the status of their abusers as religious persons, teachers or prominent members of the community.

## **Emotional abuse**

*Any other act or omission towards the child which results, or could reasonably be expected to result, in serious impairment of the physical or mental health or development of the child or serious adverse effects on his or her behaviour or welfare.*<sup>6</sup>

- 17.62** This section describes witness accounts of emotional abuse by failure to protect from abuse and harm resulting in fear for their own and others' safety. Emotional abuse refers to both actions and inactions by school staff who had responsibility for the safety of pupils. The Committee further heard reports of being verbally abused by critical, hostile and demeaning comments. Witness experiences of humiliation and ridicule were also described. Emotional abuse was reported to have had a negative impact on witnesses' social, psychological and emotional well-being and to have had an enduring effect on their lives.
- 17.63** The Committee heard 32 reports of emotional abuse from 24 male and eight female witnesses. Two (2) primary schools were each the subject of two reports of emotional abuse and the remaining 28 schools were the subject of single reports. Twenty one (21) of the 28 schools were primary schools and seven were second-level schools.
- 17.64** There were 30 witness reports of emotional abuse in combination with other forms of abuse. The majority of accounts of emotional abuse referred to the circumstances in which the respective witnesses reported being either physically or sexually abused.

### **Description of emotional abuse**

- 17.65** Witnesses from a number of schools reported that they experienced persistent emotional abuse in the context of being exposed to criticism, ridicule and humiliation. They also described being constantly vigilant about the next episode of physical abuse and of feeling ashamed and fearful regarding their experiences of sexual abuse.

### **Humiliation**

- 17.66** Twenty four (24) witnesses described being routinely humiliated and ridiculed for reasons including being the child of single parents or of impoverished background, academic failure, poor hygiene, having an unusual name or accent and having a physical disability. A male witness reported that he was made to wear a girl's dress while he was publicly beaten. A female

<sup>6</sup> Section 1(1)(d) as amended by section 3 of the 2005 Act

witness stated that she was forced to stand in a corner wearing a placard declaring that her family were poor. The religious Sister who taught her repeatedly told the class 'you don't want to turn out like ... (witness's name)...'.

- 17.67** Two (2) male witnesses who described being exposed to ridicule and humiliation in front of the class gave the following accounts of their experiences:

*The rubbish bucket was a thing that was put on your head and left on it all day, and you were left standing in the corner. The headmaster came in ...(to the classroom and said)... "He's going nowhere and don't you know he never will go anywhere, don't you know his mother wasn't married".*

•

*Br ...X ... constantly picked on me in front of the whole class.... He made disparaging comments about my clothes, hygiene and general appearance. He did not like me, he beat me from one end of the school to the other and dragged me about by the ears and hair.*

- 17.68** Two (2) witnesses described being humiliated by the attentions of a teacher who sexually abused them in public places. Others recounted the humiliation of being beaten on their bare buttocks in front of the other pupils, or being ostracised by being made to kneel or stand while being physically abused in public by their teacher, as one witness explained:

*He was cruel ... he knew I wasn't bright and I knew he knew I wasn't bright so whenever he wanted a victim ... he'd bring you up and slap you across the face in front of everyone.*

### **Fear**

- 17.69** Nineteen (19) witnesses described an atmosphere of fear in the school that contributed to the overall experience of abuse and made it difficult to learn. A witness who reported being abused in the classroom commented 'fear was every day, will I be abused today?'
- 17.70** Seven (7) witnesses reported that witnessing the abuse of others was disturbing, and in a small number of schools they described a general atmosphere of intimidation and threat. One witness reported that he was 'terrified' at the prospect of moving to a senior class where he could hear the teacher administer severe beatings. Another witness commented on the atmosphere created by a teacher who was verbally and physically abusive: 'what was particularly traumatic was his shouting all day, which struck terror into the pupils'. A male witness described witnessing a fellow pupil having to be carried home following a 'severe assault' by a lay teacher.
- 17.71** Five (5) witnesses described being constantly vigilant in the context of being sexually abused and told that if they did not behave in a particular way and comply with their abusers' wishes they would be punished, shamed and blamed for participating in the abuse. A male witness stated that over a two-year period he was repeatedly raped and was constantly threatened that he would be sent away. He stated that he was 'kept in terror by Br ...X...' in case the secret of his sexual abuse became public.
- 17.72** A number of witnesses who reported being sexually abused also described an accompanying sense of guilt and shame that was reinforced by being told that behaviour of a sexual nature was sinful. One female witness who reported being raped by a visiting priest said 'he told me I would go to hell, I thought maybe he was right'. A male witness described his distress in this regard:

*It was the mortal sin of it ...distressed ... you had all this stuff about being prepared to die and dying in your sleep. Even still I don't go to sleep, would be 2 or 3 in the*

*morning. I think maybe it's connected in some way in having to go into Mass the next morning and go to Communion, that was an even bigger sin, I already had a sin on my soul, a mortal sin ... distressed ...*

- 17.73** Four (4) witnesses described being made a scapegoat by religious staff in boarding schools through being segregated from their peers, constantly verbally abused, deprived of family visits and subjected to various threats. A witness who reported being sent to a boarding school from the Industrial School where he was placed commented:

*He ... (Fr X)... threatened to send us back to ...named Industrial School.... We were scared, you spent all your life in fear. For us ... (pupils from Industrial School)... I got more of the leather strap, you rarely saw any of the other boys get hit by Mr ...Y... (lay teacher).... Fr ...X... would hit you ... all over, the hands, the legs, the backside, all over the body.... Always up in his room. There was not many days in the 3 years that I wasn't hit by him. I'd be black and blue all over. I used to be crying with fear.*

## **Knowledge of abuse**

- 17.74** Witnesses consistently commented that the public nature of the abuse, in the presence of staff and other pupils, made awareness inevitable. The Committee heard evidence of abuse disclosures to family members, staff and professionals, both within and external to the schools. A small number of witnesses commented that their parents were highly vigilant and protective due to the level of awareness in the local community about certain teaching staff who were abusing pupils. A number of other witnesses who were subject to persistent sexual abuse described being ridiculed, or shunned by other pupils leading them to believe that there was a general level of awareness about the abuse in the school. Witnesses believed there was awareness among school staff due to the inappropriate attention they received publicly from particular male teachers. Sexual abuse was believed to be known to female teachers who in some instances 'shielded girls'.

*The other teachers must have known something but they couldn't say anything, you know how it was then with jobs. But I remember some of them hanging around sometimes and taking you out of his ...(abusive teacher)... way.*



*The female teachers were lovely but they never took a stand against this, I don't know if they were able to or not. They would try to protect you, they were grand, they were lovely. When we were away ...(on school related activity)... we were staying in a hotel he came up into the room, you pretended you were asleep. The female teacher was there she stayed with him to make sure, like, that he didn't do anything to us, they protected us. What he did was take some photographs of girls asleep. He started sex education with us, it was unusual at the time. I remember the female teachers saying "they're not ready". They were trying to verbalise their own disapproval.*

- 17.75** Witnesses commented that where abuse was perpetrated by more than one abuser or in the presence of a second adult awareness was inevitable. Two (2) witnesses gave accounts of being abused by more than one male religious staff simultaneously. Another witness reported that he was raped by a teacher outside the school in the presence of another religious Brother.

## **Disclosing abuse and outcome of disclosure**

- 17.76** Twenty eight (28) witnesses reported that they disclosed the fact that they were being abused. The majority of witnesses who disclosed abuse were male. The reports related to 22 primary and six second-level schools. Witnesses stated that the response to the disclosure of their

abuse ranged between being listened to and protected, to being punished, and in a number of instances the reported abuse was investigated.

- 17.77** Eighteen (18) witnesses stated that they told their parents that they were being abused. In 10 instances witnesses reported that their parents believed them and some stated that physical abuse was seen as part of the culture of the school, where parents accepted physical abuse as routine punishment for misbehaviour:

*You couldn't go home and tell your mother, my father was in England. There was no work here at the time ... if I went home and told my mother she'd say "well you must have done something to deserve it". You wouldn't be given your sixpence for the cinema. I didn't say very much. She'd say "were you bold in school today?"*

- 17.78** Seven (7) male witnesses reported that their parents confronted the abusers or the school authorities. One of the witnesses reported that his parents were asked by two priests to 'hush up' the abuse, another witness reported that his mother was verbally abused by the Principal following her complaint about his abuse. The mother of another witness who attended part of her son's hearing with the Committee described her encounter with the school authorities:

*I went to see Fr ... X ... (named priest) ... he was walking up and down in the church grounds. I was walking behind him telling him the story. "All lies, all lies" he says. I says "my children has no need to tell lies, they can come home and talk about it and they're not beaten". I said "Am I going to send for the father or are you going to do something?"...the priest said... "Oh, don't tell...(her husband)..."...So anyhow I left it to him. He...(lay teacher)...was brought up before them, they knew what was going on.*

- 17.79** The Committee heard evidence that in some instances while the abuse was initially denied, following the intervention of parents the witnesses were protected from further abuse. In five primary schools witnesses reported that abusers were removed. Other reported responses by parents to disclosures of abuse included a parent threatening to make a report to the Gardaí and two witnesses being moved from the school by their parents and sent to another school.

- 17.80** Nine (9) other witnesses reported disclosing their experiences of abuse to adults in positions of authority including, school Principals, religious staff, Gardaí and staff in a Children's Home. Five (5) of these witnesses reported being punished or further abused following their disclosure. One witness reported that when he disclosed abuse in Confession, he was assaulted and raped by the confessor. The other four witnesses commented that their reports of abuse were investigated and that they were protected either immediately or at a later time.

- 17.81** Six (6) witnesses who disclosed abuse in second-level schools reported that no protective action was taken and the abuse continued. Five (5) of the reported disclosures were to persons in authority. One witness stated that he told another pupil of his experiences of abuse. Two (2) witnesses reported being punished for what were regarded as false allegations. A female witness commented that she was '*really, really annoyed that other teachers never said anything*'.

- 17.82** One male witness reported that following ongoing sexual abuse over two years he refused to continue attending school. The witness stated that investigation by the school attendance officer led to him being threatened with being sent to an Industrial School. On returning to school his abuser kept him in the classroom during break time and continued to abuse him on a more frequent basis. Another male witness reported that when he attended hospital for treatment following both sexual and physical assault no enquiries were made regarding how he had sustained his injury. The witness reported that the school Principal who had sexually abused him had '*an air of authority and high standing in the community*' and that, when he was confronted by the witness's parents, he denied the abuse. A witness who reported abuse in both

national and second-level schools stated that as an adolescent he took an overdose in order to avoid persistent abuse and that he tried to tell others but was unable to describe what happened. Another witness commented that he developed skills *'by crying, mitching, avoiding confrontation and cheating ... to survive the regime of brutality on a daily basis'*. He stated that he attended the Committee because he wished to speak about what *'surpassed even that ... (daily brutality).'*

- 17.83** Seventeen (17) witnesses reported being unable to tell their parents at the time about the abuse they experienced. They believed their parents thought the abuse was justified punishment for some misconduct. Other witnesses described being ashamed of being abused, and thought that their parents would not believe they were being sexually abused as *'priests would not do that'*. A male witness who reported being physically and sexually abused stated that he wished the teacher who abused him would disfigure him in some way so that people could see something happened to him, and that they would then believe him.

*I wanted him to burst my hands so that everyone would see. I'd hoped he'd break my fingers or my face, that someone would believe me. He'd ...(Br X)... call us in and give out, say he would call the guards ...(Gardaí).... We hoped he would but he never did.... He bought me lots of things but it was never worth it... (witness reported sexual abuse) ...*

- 17.84** A number of witnesses stated that on occasion they were protected from abuse and removed to safety by teachers who were not directly involved in the abuse. Other witnesses commented that due to their parents' care and diligence they were protected from abuse.

- 17.85** Five (5) witnesses reported that a number of years after leaving school, investigations were carried out by the Gardaí following official complaints of abuse. Two (2) other witnesses stated that they were offered money as compensation by or on behalf of their abusers subsequent to disclosures of abuse.

## Current circumstances

- 17.86** The Act enabled the Committee to hear both evidence of child abuse and the enduring effects on those who suffered abuse. Seventy (70) witnesses who reported abuse in primary and second-level schools gave accounts to the Committee of their adult life circumstances. In the course of their hearings witnesses provided information about their social circumstances, relationships, and the enduring effects of abusive experiences on their psychological, emotional and physical health<sup>7</sup>.

### Relationships

- 17.87** Many witnesses stated that their experiences of abuse had a traumatic impact on their subsequent relationships and made it difficult to sustain secure, stable attachments in adult life. Others described having partners who had been supportive and understanding and that they had achieved some happiness, notwithstanding occasional difficulties. A number of male witnesses commented that they were unable to sustain close relationships and had a tendency to *'run from relationships'* or felt *'unable to love people'*.

- 17.88** Thirty nine (39) witnesses reported being married at the time of their hearing, 21 of whom described being happily married. Others described being involved in satisfying second partnerships having had difficulties in earlier marriages. Table 105 outlines the relationship status of witnesses at the time of their hearing:

<sup>7</sup> This section contains some unavoidable overlap with the details provided by five witnesses who also reported abuse in other out-of-home settings.

**Table 105: Status of Witnesses’ Relationships at the Time of Hearing 2000-2008 – Male and Female Primary and Second-level Schools**

Status of relationship	Males	Females	Total witnesses
Married	29	10	39
Single	14	1	15
Separated	4	0	4
Widowed	2	2	4
Co-habiting	6	1	7
Divorced	1	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>70</b>

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

**17.89** Twenty six (26) witnesses reported having had difficulties establishing and maintaining relationships. They commented that they lacked confidence, found it difficult to socialise and had trouble trusting others, as one witness remarked: ‘*I don’t trust no one*’. Other witnesses reported being isolated, withdrawn and being preoccupied by details of past abuse to the detriment of adult relationships.

**17.90** Fifteen (15) witnesses stated that they had difficulties in intimate relationships, generally attributed to childhood experiences of sexual abuse. Some witnesses described ambivalence about sexual and gender identity at some point in their lives. Others described life-long difficulties in their intimate relationships:

*I had relationships, there was one getting very close to marriage. I bailed out .... I had great difficulties in sexual relationships. I had a lot of anger in myself...*



*There’s a lot of frustration there and my marriage is not particularly great ... (sexual relationship) ... because of this whole thing ....*

**Parenting**

**17.91** Witnesses described having variable relationships with their children ranging from being overprotective to being harsh, and in some instances abusive. Others commented that relationships with their children changed over time depending on the developmental age of the child and their own development as parents. Witnesses commented that their confidence as parents was linked, at times, with their own progress and recovery from past abuse. A number of witnesses reported parenting difficulties to be the result of their depression or in the context of marital disharmony.

**17.92** Forty nine (49) witnesses, 39 male and 10 female, reported having children. Twenty four (24) described their children as doing well in many aspects of their lives. They enjoyed regular contact, supportive and mutually rewarding relationships with their children.

*I did try to commit suicide ... I was on a bridge and the light of my children’s faces... (prevented suicide attempt) ... that’s probably why I’m here today ...*

**17.93** Nineteen (19) witnesses described being strict, overprotective and at times harsh parents, leading to relationship breakdown with their children. One witness commented: ‘*I became a bully, I became an abuser too. My boy, I clattered him. I hurt my wife, I hurt everybody*’. Another witness stated: ‘*In the last year or so I have been angry with... (children).... I’ve never hit my... (children)... but I shout. They’re great, lovely...*’.

**17.94** Two (2) witnesses reported that three of their children were sexually abused, both within and outside the family.

**17.95** Five (5) male witnesses were non-custodial parents and generally described inconsistent contact with their children. A small number of witnesses reported that they co-parented their partners' children.

**17.96** Six (6) witnesses did not provide details about their parenting experiences.

### **Occupational and employment status**

**17.97** Forty three (43) witnesses reported a stable and consistent history of employment in a wide range of occupations. They reported successful careers in trades, professional and managerial positions, factory and labouring work, and a number were self-employed. Seventeen (17) of the 43 witnesses reported that they had successful careers following further education and training as adults. Table 106 outlines the employment status reported by witnesses at the time of their hearing:

**Table 106: Witnesses' Employment Status at Time of Hearing – Male and Female Primary and Second-level Schools**

<b>Employment status</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Total witnesses</b>
Employed	24	9	33
Retired	11	0	11
Self -employed	10	0	10
Unemployed	6	1	7
Disability income	5	0	5
Working at home	0	4	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>70</b>

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

**17.98** Six (6) male witnesses reported difficulties maintaining stable employment due to alcohol or drug abuse and two witnesses reported that they had never been employed. Four (4) female witnesses reported having worked in the home since they married. Others reported that they were no longer employed, were retired or were in receipt of disability income.

**17.99** Table 107 illustrates the level of education attended, but not in all instances completed, by witnesses who reported abuse in schools:

**Table 107: Highest Level of Education Attended – Male and Female Primary and Second-level Schools**

<b>Highest level of education</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Total witnesses</b>
Primary	13	1	14
Secondary	26	7	33
Third level	17	6	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>70</b>

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

**17.100** A number of witnesses reported that they attended second-level school but were unable to successfully complete their education due to the trauma of their abusive experiences. They described being fearful, unable to concentrate and distracted by the risk of further abuse or memories of past abuse. Seventeen (17) witnesses gave accounts of attending third-level education as mature students.

### **Accommodation**

**17.101** Most witnesses reported having stable and secure housing arrangements as illustrated in the following table:

**Table 108: Accommodation of Witnesses at Time of Hearing – Male and Female Primary and Second-level Schools**

Accommodation	Males	Females	Total witnesses
Owner occupiers	36	12	48
Local authority/council housing	7	0	7
Private rented accommodation	5	0	5
With relatives	4	1	5
Sheltered housing	1	0	1
Hostel	1	0	1
Unavailable	2	1	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>70</b>

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

- 17.102** Fifty five (55) witnesses described having stable accommodation arrangements at the time of their hearings, either as home owners or as council housing tenants. A number of the 15 witnesses in other types of accommodation reported a history of unsettled lives, broken relationships and periods of ill-health.

### **Health**

- 17.103** During the course of their hearings witnesses provided general information about their physical and mental health, either directly or in the context of describing their current life circumstances. For the purpose of writing this Report the Committee categorised the witnesses' physical and mental health status as good, reasonable or poor based on the information they provided regarding their past and current health history.
- 17.104** Witnesses more frequently reported experiencing good physical health than good mental health. The following table illustrates the status of physical health described by witnesses:

**Table 109: Current Physical Health Status – Male and Female Primary and Second-level Schools**

Physical health status	Males	Females	Total witnesses
Good	32	9	41
Reasonable	20	4	24
Poor	4	1	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>70</b>

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

- 17.105** The majority of witnesses indicated that they experienced good physical health, while some may have had age-related conditions that required treatment. The five witnesses who described poor physical health reported chronic illness, some of which they associated with trauma and their childhood abuse experience or with disability. Others described poor health in the context of recent illness, surgery or accident. Witnesses who described having reasonable physical health described some stress-related conditions including chronic fatigue syndrome, irritable bowel syndrome and physical conditions associated with alcohol abuse. The most commonly reported areas of physical ill-health for this group of witnesses were: arthritis, diabetes, back pain, heart, gastric and thyroid conditions. Two (2) witnesses reported having had hepatitis.
- 17.106** The following table illustrates the witnesses' current mental health status as described by them:

**Table 110: Current Mental Health Status – Male and Female Primary and Second-level Schools**

<b>Mental health status</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Total witnesses</b>
Good	23	5	28
Reasonable	17	7	24
Poor	16	2	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>70</b>

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

**17.107** Witnesses whose mental health was categorised as good gave accounts of being generally able to leave the memories of their past abuse behind, and being sustained by supportive relationships and a fulfilled work life. Six (6) of those witnesses who described generally good mental health also reported a past history of depression and alcohol abuse, and had attended mental health services and counselling in relation to their past difficulties.

**17.108** Twenty four (24) witnesses gave accounts of having reasonably good mental health while they also reported histories of depression, suicidal thoughts and attempts. Many described a level of continued distress and alcohol abuse leading to some day-to-day difficulties that were manageable.

*At that stage of my life I was heavy into drink ... huge problem. I was into drugs as well ... I was going downhill. I started stealing for my habits ... The drinking got so bad I decided myself I had to do something about it,...(I was drinking )... a bottle of whiskey or brandy a day ... It was great for me at the time to get over those years, it helped me black out... (memories of abuse)....I went away to ...treatment centre... When I was there drying out ... I told part of my story ... (of sexual abuse) ...*

**17.109** There was a marked gender difference between witnesses who described poor mental health. Sixteen (16) male and two female witnesses, reported a history of repeated admissions to psychiatric hospitals, many suicide attempts, disabling anxiety and depression, leading at times to isolation and withdrawal from social and family life. A number of witnesses reported that their past abuse had a profound impact on all areas of their lives and that they were unable to benefit from the help that they had repeatedly sought. Six (6) male and one female witness gave accounts of substance abuse.

### ***Effects on adult life***

**17.110** The most frequently reported effect of childhood abuse on the adult lives of witnesses who reported abuse in primary and second-level schools was the impact on their emotional wellbeing and the consequences for their personal, family and social relationships. Table 111 illustrates the effects described by the 56 male and 14 female witnesses. The effects are not mutually exclusive and were not prioritised by witnesses.

**Table 111: Reported Effects on Adult Life – Male and Female Primary and Second-level Schools**

<b>Male witnesses</b>		<b>Female witnesses</b>	
<b>Effects on adult life*</b>	<b>Number of reports</b>	<b>Effects on adult life*</b>	<b>Number of reports</b>
Counselling required	38	Lack of self-worth	9
Alcohol abuse	28	Anxious and fearful	8
Lack of trust	25	Counselling required	8
Angry	24	Abuse not easily forgotten	7
Loner	24	Feelings related to being a victim	7
Abuse not easily forgotten	23	Feeling isolated	6
Lack of self-worth	21	Issues of self-worth	6
Suicidal feelings or attempt	21	Angry	5
Feelings related to being a victim	18	Mood instability	5
Unable to settle	18	Somatic symptoms	5
Post-traumatic effect	17	Suicidal feelings or attempt	5
Anxious and fearful	15	Alcohol abuse	4
Mood instability	15	Feeling different from peers	4
Withdrawal	14	Feelings related to being powerless	4
Feeling different from peers	13	Loner	4
Nightmares	12	Post-traumatic effect	4
Feeling isolated	11	Sexual problems	4
Gender and sexual identity problems	11	Overprotective of children	3
Sleep disturbance	11	Withdrawal	3
Aggressive behaviour – physical	10	Tearfulness	2
Aggressive behaviour – verbal	10	Eating disorder	2
Sexual problems	10	Issues of self-blame	2
Unable to show feelings to partner	9	Overly-compliant behaviour	2
Somatic symptoms	8	Substance abuse	2
Over harsh with children	6	Aggressive behaviour – physical	1
Substance abuse	6	Aggressive behaviour – psychological	1
Unable to show feelings to children	6	Aggressive behaviour – verbal	1
Tearfulness	5	Fear of failure	1
Feelings related to being powerless	5	Issues of needing approval	1
Overprotective of children	5	Nightmares	1
Issues of needing approval	5	Over harsh with children	1
Eating Disorder	4	Unable to settle	1
Issues of self-blame	4	Unable to show feelings to children	1
Aggressive behaviour – psychological	3	Unable to show feelings to partner	1

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009.

n = 57 male and 14 female

\*Witnesses could report more than one effect and male witnesses reported a wider variety of effects

**17.111** Many witnesses reported difficulties encountered in their day-to-day lives, and stated that enduring anger and distress continued to affect them. A female witness stated '*there was nothing normal about life*'. Another witness described herself as an angry person who puts on a mask to hide her pain, sadness and loneliness: '*You are never sure when it ... (memories of abuse)... will raise its ugly head*'. A number of male witnesses commented that they had suppressed memories of abuse at a cost to their personal and family relationships: '*You put up a front, I blanked it out*'. Another witnesses commented:

*The anger started coming at me again. I went on an anger management course... the anger went on and on. I was still saying nothing ... (to spouse) ... I broke down and told her the whole thing .... It explained to her a lot of the behavioural problems I had, because I had good positions...(employment)... but I never let anyone come near me...*

**17.112** Witnesses consistently reported that the damaging consequences of their childhood abuse also affected the next generation. Twenty two (22) reports were heard by the Committee of witnesses being excessively harsh, overprotective or of being unable to demonstrate affection to their children.

*They'll have a good childhood ... I'll find a balance. I'm sure it shows through sometimes ... (spouse) ... thinks I'm too liberal with them ...*



*I don't think I've ever damaged them since... I love them ... they treat me now as the child ... I love it ... we've had some hard times together but we get on and they're great.*

**17.113** Twenty seven (27) witnesses reported that the traumatic effect of their abusive experiences had led to significant distress and reported that they suffered from panic and anxiety attacks. Witnesses also described other continuing effects that had a negative influence on work, social and personal areas of adult life. Many witnesses commented on struggling with anxiety, feelings of guilt, fear of failure and powerlessness. Twenty six (26) witnesses reported that they experienced impulsive anger and at times were aggressive in their behaviour. A male witness who reported sexual abuse over a number of years gave the following description of its enduring effect on many areas of his adult life:

*I just ran and ran and I'm running since.... I was on the move and have stayed on the move for last 35-40 years. A lot of jobs, a lot of places, big jobs, small jobs, dirt jobs, high jobs.... business is gone, no money... You feel so powerless,... a non-entity...*

**17.114** Forty six (46) witnesses reported that they had required counselling and psychiatric treatment in order to enable them cope with the enduring effects of their childhood abuse. Thirteen (13) of these 46 witnesses reported having received in-patient psychiatric treatment. Eleven (11) of the 46 witnesses reported actively attempting to take their own lives and a further 15 reported that they experienced suicidal thoughts currently or in the past. A witness stated that he had '*a lot of problems with health... I was in hospital... I spent a year really suicidal.*'

**17.115** Thirty two (32) witnesses reported abusing alcohol, and described other associated distress, including disturbed sleep and at times excessive vigilance and suspicion: '*If I see people talking I wonder is it about me, I am still running away from it ... (memories of abuse) ...*'

**17.116** Many witnesses commented on the benefit for them of being believed, understood and supported by their counsellors, others in the health services and fellow survivors of abuse. A witness commenting on the value for him of group support stated: '*... I feel when I come out of the group I'm not on my own, I'm not a freak ...*'

**17.117** Others who reported being repeatedly subjected to severe sexual and physical abuse over a sustained period of time reported that, in spite of their abuser's criminal conviction, monetary

compensation or family support their lives continued to be troubled by feelings of anger and despair. A small number of male witnesses expressed anger that their abusers were transferred to other schools: *'The rate at which they were moved, I don't understand why.'*

*The thing that hurts most is that there was a paedophile ring running in that school, I know 5 guys that were abused and are now dead. Nobody did anything ... dead pupils don't count .... If they put their hands up and said "what happened was well out of order, what can we do to help?" ...(but)... nobody gives a shit, they do nothing.*

**17.118** A number of witnesses commented that adversarial processes and criminal investigations in recent years had both reactivated the trauma of past abuses and brought some relief and validation.

*It isn't like as if it was all those years ago, it's like as if it was 5 minutes ago ...crying....*

