



# Holocaust Education Research



## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The Azrieli Foundation was interested in conducting research with teachers to...

- Identify what proportion of teachers are teaching Holocaust education in their classroom.
- Understand how teachers are teaching about the Holocaust including the context, learning objectives, topics covered, and resources used.
- Understand how many hours teachers are spending on Holocaust education vs. what they think is ideal.
- Identify barriers & challenges to teaching about the Holocaust.
- Gauge satisfaction with the resources used and solicit feedback on the ideal resource.
- Measure awareness and usage of the Holocaust Survivor Memoirs Program.



## RESEARCH APPROACH



### METHODOLOGY

- Online survey conducted among Canadian teachers. Sample was sourced through a 3<sup>rd</sup> party online panel.



### QUALIFIERS

- Employed as a teacher in Canada;
- Currently employed as a full-time teacher with his / her own class, librarian or resource teacher;
- Has been teaching for at least 2 years;
- Teaches grade 5 to 12; and
- Teaches at least one of the following subjects: English, History, Social Studies, Civics / Human Rights, French, Religion, Humanities, Social Sciences, Geography, Visual Arts / Drama / Media Arts, Film, Music or Law.



### SAMPLE SIZE

200 completes



### FIELDWORK

August 2020

## REPORTING PERSPECTIVE

Throughout this report we will look at results overall as well as by key sub-groups such as region, age, grades taught, tenure teaching, etc.

Circles and squares have been used to denote significant differences between sub-groups.

-   **Circles / squares** show significant / directional differences between sub-groups (e.g., region age, grades taught). A circle signifies a number is higher than the numbers to which it is being compared. A square signifies a number is lower.
-   **Solid** circles and squares denote statistically significant differences at a 95% confidence level.
-   **Dotted** circles and squares denote directional differences at an 80 or 90% confidence level.



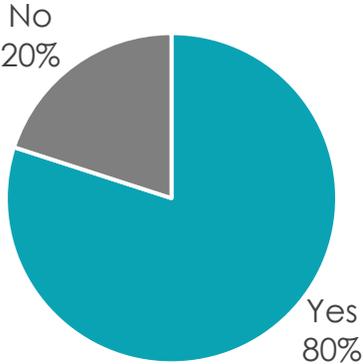
# Research Findings

# INCIDENCE OF EVER TEACHING ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST

Eighty percent of the teachers in our sample have taught about the Holocaust at some point in their teaching career. Teachers in Ontario, those who teach grades 9 or 10, and those who teach in a private secular school are more likely to have taught about the Holocaust than their respective counterparts.

## INCIDENCE OF EVER TEACHING STUDENTS ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST

Base: Total sample (n=200)



	REGION			AGE		TENURE TEACHING			GRADES TAUGHT			TYPE OF SCHOOL		
	West	Ontario	Quebec	<35	35+	2-5	6-10	10+	5-8	9-10	11-12	Public	Private Secular*	Catholic / Non-secular*
% Yes	78	86	73	78	80	80	81	78	77	86	77	79	89	71

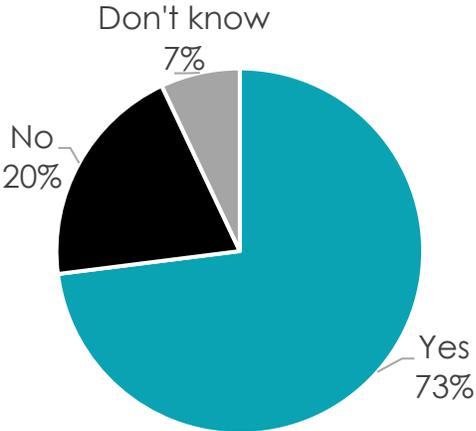
\*Small base size (less than 50), interpret as directional only  
 Q9a. Have you ever taught your students about the Holocaust?

# INCIDENCE OF TEACHING ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST IN UPCOMING SCHOOL YEAR

Nearly three-quarters (73%) of our sample plans to teach about the Holocaust this school year. This is particularly true among teachers in private secular schools.

## INCIDENCE OF TEACHING STUDENTS ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST THIS UPCOMING SCHOOL YEAR

Base: Total sample (n=200)



	REGION			AGE		TENURE TEACHING			GRADES TAUGHT			TYPE OF SCHOOL		
	West	Ontario	Quebec	<35	35+	2-5	6-10	10+	5-8	9-10	11-12	Public	Private Secular*	Catholic / Non-secular*
% Yes	72	79	65	69	74	74	79	67	68	75	72	72	82	62

Q7. In the upcoming school year, will you be teaching your students about the Holocaust? When answering, please assume that students return to school in September and regular curriculum / teaching resumes.

# REASONS FOR NOT TEACHING ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST IN UPCOMING SCHOOL YEAR

Among the 39 teachers who don't plan to teach about the Holocaust in the upcoming school year, the **topic not being part of the curriculum for the courses they teach** was the main reason. That said, there were also a few who cited the **difficult nature of the topic and / or feeling the subject matter is too mature for student** as barriers.

## REASONS FOR **NOT TEACHING ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST** IN UPCOMING SCHOOL YEAR

Base: Teachers who said they would not be teaching about the Holocaust in the upcoming school year (n=39\*)

"It does not fall under the curriculum expectations for the courses I teach."

"It is not an appropriate thing for me to teach students as I am an English teacher."

"Because I do not teach things related to history."

"Because they are not mature enough to understand this topic."

"This is not in my teaching agenda prescribed by the school management."

"Because I am the faculty of English department and I don't teach much about history."

"I won't be teaching my students about Holocaust because it is not included in my course."

"Because it gives me goosebumps talking about it and I just can't."

"Because it require efforts, in formal and non-formal settings, to teach about the Holocaust."

"It's not my assigned topic."

"We might touch on it as part of human rights but the grade 7/8 history only goes up to the beginning of WW1."

"We tried teaching about this subject during earlier academic sessions however the feedback was not too great from parents due to brutality it was associated with. Parents preferred stories about Martin Luther King to be used for teaching against racism and support equality."

"Teaching students in multicultural settings about the Holocaust is far from easy."

"Not part of my grade's curriculum."

"It is not a part of the curriculum for visual art and ceramics."

\*Small base size (n=39), interpret as directional only

Q8a. [IF 'No' AT Q7] Why won't you be teaching your students about the Holocaust in the upcoming school year? Please be as specific and detailed as possible.

# FACTORS THAT WILL INFLUENCE DECISION TO TEACH ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST THIS YEAR

Among the 15 teachers in our sample who are undecided as to whether they will teach about the Holocaust this year, the grade level and / or the subjects they get assigned will have the greatest influence on their decision.

## FACTORS THAT WILL AFFECT DECISION TO TEACH STUDENTS ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST THIS YEAR

Base: Those who don't know whether they will teach students about the Holocaust this year (n=15\*)



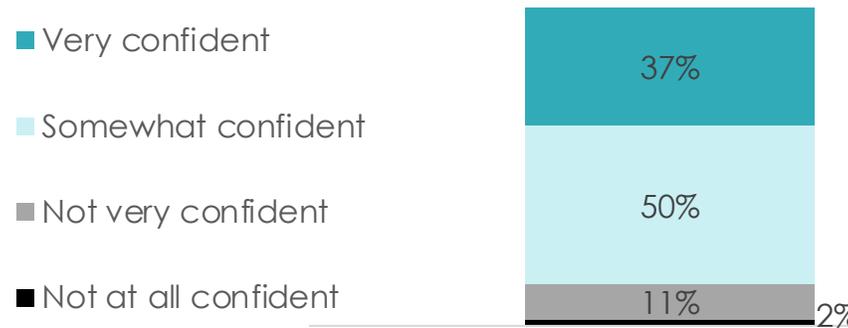
\*Very small base size (n=15), interpret as directional only. Q8b. [IF 'Don't know' AT Q7] Which of the following factors, if any, will affect your decision to teach students about the Holocaust in the upcoming school year? Again, when answering please assume that students return to school in September and regular curriculum / teaching resumes.

# CONFIDENCE TEACHING ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST

Most teachers, even those who plan to teach about the Holocaust this year, are not overly confident teaching the material.

## PERCEIVED **CONFIDENCE** TEACHING ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST

Base: Total sample (n=200)



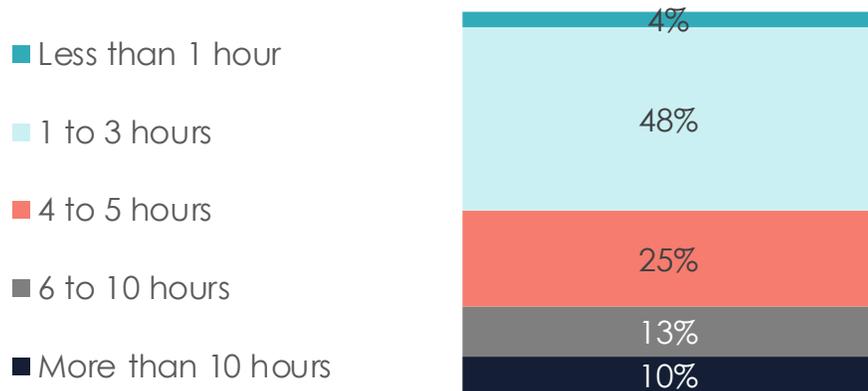
	REGION			AGE		TENURE TEACHING			GRADES TAUGHT			TYPE OF SCHOOL			PLAN TO TEACH ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST THIS SCHOOL YEAR	
	West	Ontario	Quebec	<35	35+	2-5	6-10	10+	5-8	9-10	11-12	Public	Private Secular*	Catholic / Non-secular*	Yes	No / DK
% Very confident	31	45	35	33	39	39	47	26	34	39	30	32	52	35	47	9

# TIME ALLOCATION FOR TEACHING ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST – ACTUAL VS. IDEAL

Generally speaking teachers allocate less time to teaching about the Holocaust than they feel is required, spending an average of 5 hours teaching about it when 7 hours is required.

## # OF HOURS (IN SCHOOL YEAR) **ALLOCATED** TO TEACHING ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST

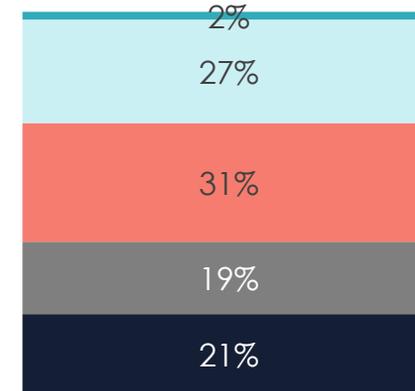
Base: Those who have taught students about the Holocaust in the past 3 years (n=131)



Average: 4.6 hours

## **ACTUAL HOURS** (IN SCHOOL YEAR) **NEEDED** TO TEACH ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST

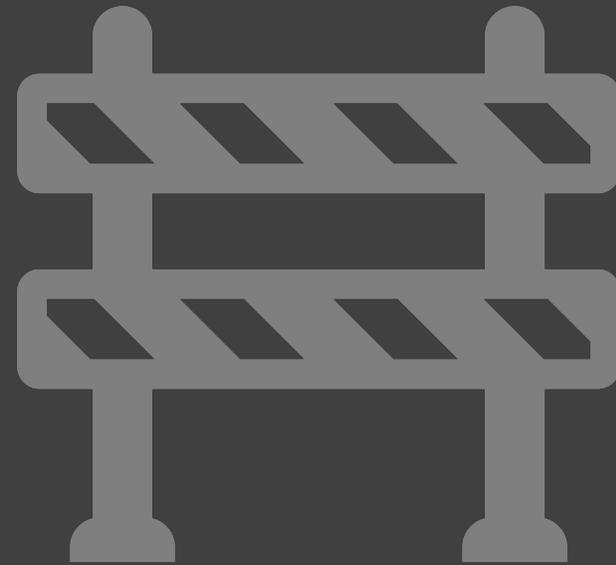
Base: Those who have taught students about the Holocaust in the past 3 years (n=131)



Average: 6.7 hours

Q10a. [IF '2019-2020 school year, '2018 – 2019 school year OR '2017 – 2018 school year' AT Q9b ASK] When you teach your students about the Holocaust, how many hours in a school year, in total, do you typically allocate to the topic? Q10b. [IF '2019-2020 school year, '2018 – 2019 school year OR '2017 – 2018 school year' AT Q9b ASK] How much time in a school year do you think you **actually need** to teach your students about the Holocaust?

# BIGGEST CHALLENGES FACED WHEN TEACHING ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST



The biggest challenges when teaching students about the Holocaust tend to be **getting students to connect with the topic** and truly **understand the severity of what happened**, **dealing with different reactions** from students, and finding **age appropriate resources**.

“**Students who have denialists in their families**, because they come to school and reiterate the denialism they heard at home. There are also **few resources appropriate for my grade level—the horrific imagery and stories is just too much for some of them** at such a young age.”

“Students sometimes have **difficulty connecting to the topic**. Other times, they **feel too emotional about the topic which makes it difficult to discuss**. There is so much information and so many primary texts that it can be **difficult to choose what to include and what not to**.”

“**Making students believe that something like that actually happened** in the past. Check that students **are actually learning important lessons from the study** and start believing in equality and harmony.”

“It’s a very emotionally charged topic. **keeping the students engaged but still level headed can be troublesome**. The **students also react in different ways**. Some find it too disturbing to watch, some are enraged. Sometimes this leads to confrontations with parents over curriculum.”

“Trying to get students to **truly understand what happened and why**.”

“**Finding resources is one of the biggest challenges**. Interpreting those resources and having students do some critical thinking about the reliability of resources they find online.”

“The student composition is diverse and direct impacts of Holocaust have been scattered among certain populations. It is a **difficult task to ensure that all students, irrespective of their race, caste, religion, creed, country of birth, etc. are able to understand the enormity of the event**.”

“**Lack of age appropriate resources**.”

“The biggest challenges I have faced is with students **not taking it seriously**, as the internet has produced some horrible memes and fake news about the Holocaust. Confronting some of these things has proven to be difficult, as students sometimes seem to believe the internet more than real fact. **There is also a level of maturity that needs to exist in some classes to have meaningful conversation**.”

# CONTEXT FOR TEACHING ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST

Most teach the Holocaust as a case study of discrimination, racism, antisemitism, civil rights and / or ethics or as part of the history of World War II.

## CONTEXT USED TO TEACH ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST

Base: Those who have taught students about the Holocaust in the past 3 years (n=131)

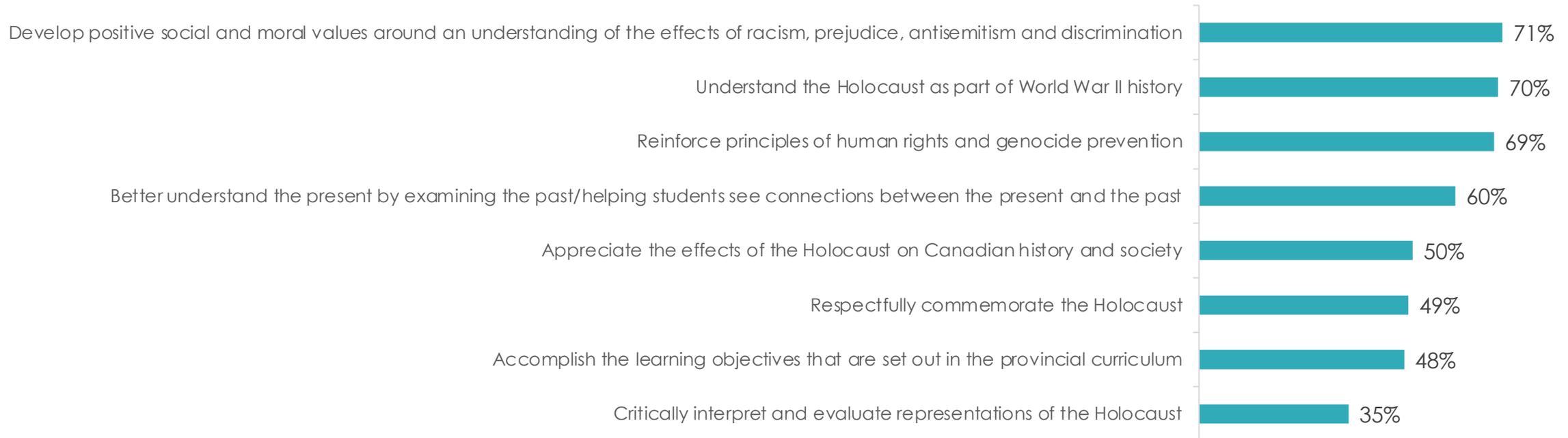


# DESIRED EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES WHEN TEACHING ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST

The primary learning objectives when teaching about the Holocaust are developing social and moral values, understanding the Holocaust as part of WW2 and reinforcing principles of human rights and genocide prevention.

## DESIRED EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES / LEARNING OBJECTIVES WHEN TEACHING ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST

Base: Those who have taught students about the Holocaust in the past 3 years (n=131)



# TOPICS MOST LIKELY TO COVER

When teaching about the Holocaust, teachers are most likely to cover antisemitism and racism, the Holocaust as genocide and concentration camps.

## TOPICS MOST LIKELY TO COVER WHEN TEACHING ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST

Base: Those who have taught students about the Holocaust in the past 3 years (n=131)



Q15. [IF '2019-2020 school year, '2018 – 2019 school year OR '2017 – 2018 school year'] When you teach about the Holocaust, what topics are you most likely to cover?

# RESOURCES USED TO TEACH ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST

Textbooks, videos and films / documentaries are the most common resources used to **teach** about the Holocaust.

## RESOURCES USED TO **TEACH** ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST

Base: Those who have taught students about the Holocaust in the past 3 years (n=131)



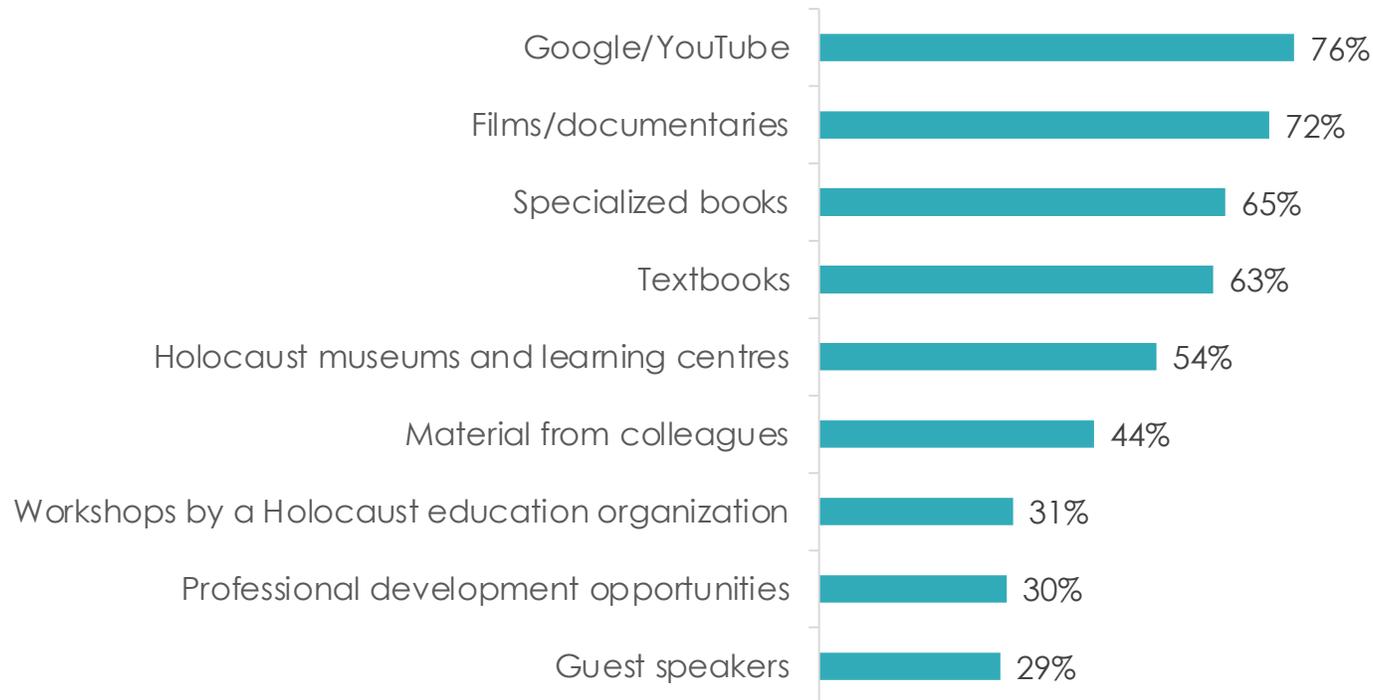
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# RESOURCES USED TO LEARN ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST

To **learn** about the Holocaust, teachers most commonly turn to Google / YouTube and films / documentaries.

## RESOURCES USED TO **LEARN** ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST

Base: Those who have taught students about the Holocaust in the past 3 years (n=131)

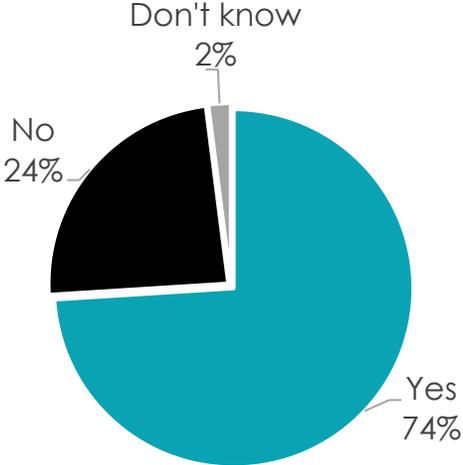


# INCIDENCE OF INCORPORATING SURVIVOR TESTIMONY WHEN TEACHING ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST

Most say they typically incorporate survivor testimony when teaching about the Holocaust.

## INCIDENCE OF **INCORPORATING SURVIVOR TESTIMONY** (VIDEOS, MEMOIRS, DOCUMENTED WRITTEN TESTIMONY OR GUEST SPEAKERS) WHEN TEACHING ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST

Base: Those who have taught students about the Holocaust in the past 3 years (n=131)



13b. [IF '2019-2020 school year, '2018 – 2019 school year OR '2017 – 2018 school year' AT Q9b ASK] Do you typically incorporate Holocaust survivor testimony (videos, memoirs, written testimonies, or guest speakers) when teaching about the Holocaust?

# BEST / IDEAL RESOURCE

When it comes to their ideal resource, teachers are looking for resources that will **help keep their students engaged and help them integrate the Holocaust into a broader social context**. Some specifically mentioned a desire for **memoirs from Holocaust survivors**.

## BEST / IDEAL RESOURCE FOR HOLOCAUST EDUCATION

Base: Those who have taught students about the Holocaust in the past 3 years (n=131)



"The book **'Hana's Suitcase'** is, by far, the best resource I have come across. It presents the Holocaust in a way that **clearly explains the experience of those who lived through it**, and it is **age-appropriate** for the grades I teach."



"Our study includes analyzing the book - **'The diary of a young girl'** by Anne Frank. To support the literature, I utilize the Anne Frank house/attic virtual tour as well as **survivor testimonies**."



"Videos of holocaust **survivors, diaries** would be very helpful."



"Having **guest speakers** or people who **can speak out of experience helps to keep students engaged**."



"**Testimonials and memoirs, speakers** who have lived through the hard times and museums dedicated to the Holocaust."



"**Relate it to a current event** - where do we see the same thing today but under a different name?"



"**Memoirs** from Holocaust survivors."



"The ideal resource would include **survivor testimonials** and also **fictional stories to help younger students understand what happened**."



"Something that seamlessly **integrates the Holocaust into broader social context**."



"The best resource I have found is the **Montreal Holocaust Museum website**. It gives a lot of information about teaching middle school children about the Holocaust."



"Something that includes both **historical fiction and non-fiction** that will **educate my students and keep them engaged**."



"I don't know if I have found a great resource, but this survey has made me want to find one. I think a great resource would be a **one stop shop** from someone of Jewish descent that would include **stories, history and politics**."

Q16. [IF '2019-2020 school year, '2018 – 2019 school year OR '2017 – 2018 school year'] Describe in detail the best resource you have found for Holocaust education. Please explain what the resource is and what makes it great in your opinion. Is there a particular activity that you do with this resource that the students find engaging? If you have not come across any resource that you find particularly helpful, please describe what you think the ideal resource would look like.

# PATH FORWARD

While the majority of teachers in our sample have taught about the Holocaust and plan to teach about it this year, most are **not overly confident teaching the material**.

The biggest challenge to teaching about the Holocaust is **making the topic engaging** and **age-appropriate**, while still **helping students appreciate the significance** of the event.

While most teachers are not dissatisfied with the resources they are using, there is **definite interest in a comprehensive resource** that **makes teaching about the topic easier** for them and **more engaging for students**. This in turn, will make teachers more confident teaching the topic.

## CRITICAL COMPONENTS OF A HOLOCAUST RESOURCE INCLUDE....



ABILITY TO **CUSTOMIZE** BASED ON  
GRADE / AGE



**ENGAGING** FOR STUDENTS (INTERACTIVE,  
HANDS-ON)



**LINK TOPIC** TO A **BROADER SOCIAL**  
CONTEXT / PRESENT DAY



**PROVIDE TIPS / SUGGESTIONS** FOR  
TEACHING (E.G., LESSON PLANS,  
ACTIVITIES)



**EASY** FOR TEACHERS TO IMPLEMENT



**INCORPORATE SURVIVOR TESTIMONY /**  
MEMOIRS

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Appendix



# RESPONDENT PROFILE

	Total Sample (n=200) %	
<b>REGION</b>	BC	12
	Prairies	17
	Ontario	40
	Quebec	24
	Atlantic Canada	7
<b>AGE</b>	Under 35	28
	35+	72
	Average age (yrs)	39.8
<b>TYPE OF TEACHER</b>	Full-time teacher	99
	Librarian	1
<b>TENURE TEACHING</b>	2 to 5 years	27
	6 to 10 years	35
	More than 10 years	38
<b>GRADE(S) CURRENTLY TEACH</b>	Grade 5 to 8	44
	Grade 9 or 10	49
	Grade 11 or 12	35

# RESPONDENT PROFILE

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		Total Sample (n=200) %
<b>TYPE OF SCHOOL CURRENTLY TEACH IN</b>	Public	59
	Private secular	22
	Catholic	10
	Private non-secular	7
	Jewish	2

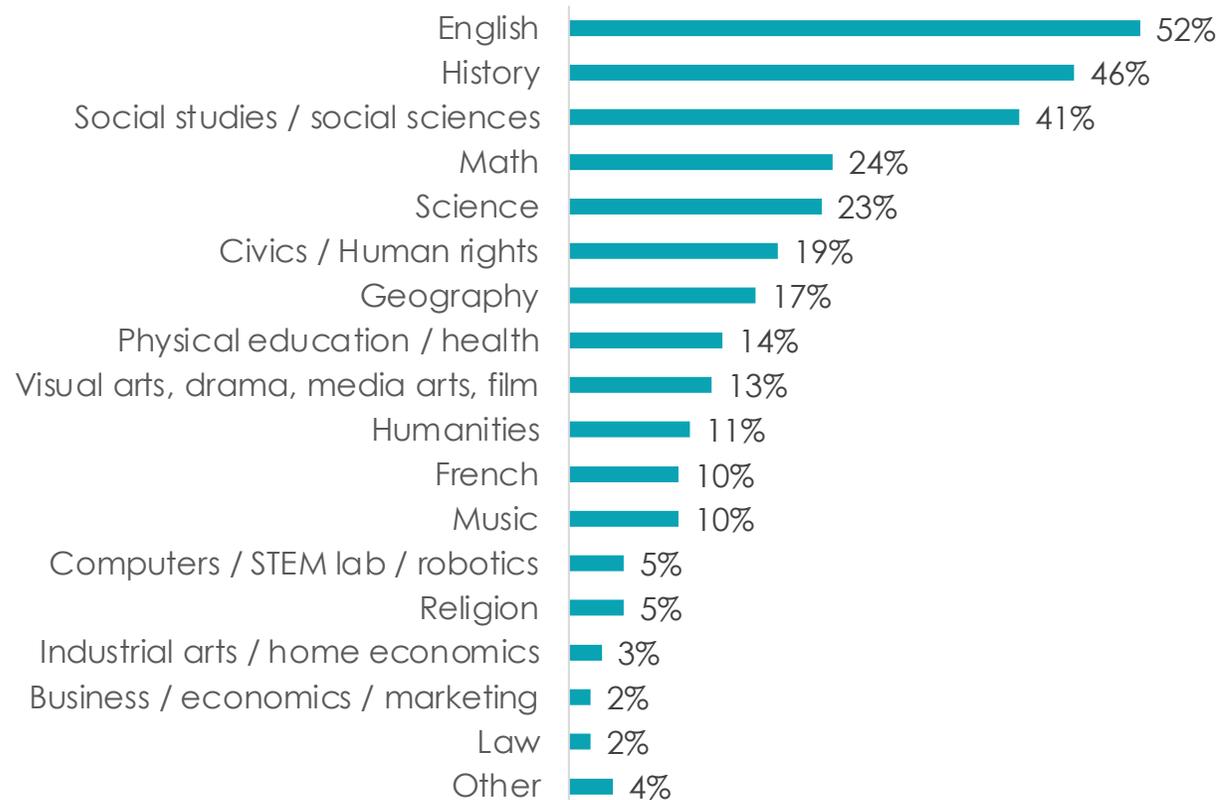
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# RESPONDENT PROFILE

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## SUBJECTS CURRENTLY TEACH

Base: Total sample (n=200)



# TOPICS MOST LIKELY TO COVER

The topics covered are similar across grades, with Antisemitism and Racism key topics across grades.

## TOPICS MOST LIKELY TO COVER WHEN TEACHING ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST

Base: Those who have taught students about the Holocaust in the past 3 years (n=131)

	Total	GRADES TAUGHT		
		Grades 5 to 8	Grades 9 or 10	Grade 11 or 12*
Antisemitism and racism	60	<b>63</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>56</b>
The Holocaust as a genocide	60	<b>61</b>	<b>66</b>	51
Concentration camps	60	<b>63</b>	57	49
The experience of Jewish people during the Holocaust	56	<b>61</b>	51	<b>61</b>
Historical and political context	54	51	<b>60</b>	<b>56</b>
Holocaust overview	51	54	48	44
Survivor stories	51	60	45	54
Moral dilemmas/ethics	50	56	46	49
Rise of Hitler and Nazism	47	51	45	49
Justice	40	42	40	37
The experience of non-Jewish victims of Nazi persecution	28	33	25	32
Resistance	28	32	30	32
Pre-war Jewish life	27	28	22	32

Teal font = Top 2 per grade

\*Small base size (Less than 50), interpret as directional only

Q15. [IF '2019-2020 school year, '2018 – 2019 school year OR '2017 – 2018 school year'] When you teach about the Holocaust, what topics are you most likely to cover?