

Written evidence submitted by Now Teach

Introduction:

By way of background, Now Teach was founded in 2016 to help experienced professionals become teachers. We believe passionately in the value their experience of the world of work brings to students, schools and the broader teaching and education community.

At Now Teach our expertise is in helping career switchers make the decision to move into teaching; aiding their transition into teacher training and school and supporting them on their journey to becoming confident, effective classroom teachers.

Now Teachers benefit from our bespoke programme of coaching and mentoring to help them thrive throughout their training and early teaching years; while our Network of over 500 existing Now Teachers connects them to a sounding board, support system and community or others who have retrained to teach.

This means, in our Now Teacher population, we have a wealth of experience of previous professions. Now Teachers have worked for, on average, 26 years in their careers before moving into teaching. With an average age of 49, they have the maturity, life skills and accumulated know-how to get the best outcomes for their students, the schools in which they teach and the broader world of education.

Many Now Teachers have joined teaching from careers in financial services; business, consulting and management; media; marketing, advertising, PR and other areas of education, such as Higher Education. They know, first-hand, how other professions work. Their experience of different management styles, corporate cultures and structures means they are able to make direct comparisons between their previous professional lives and teaching. This makes them rare in the teaching world.

It also makes their perspective on the question asked by the Committee - how teaching compares with other professions – of particular interest. We have therefore focused our response to the Committee's questions in this area. We hope you will find their insights and their recommendations valuable.

Methodology:

In response to the inquiry into teacher recruitment and retention, Now Teach designed and delivered a survey to our Network. The survey contained a combination of closed- and open-ended questions. The survey was designed to understand the unique perspective that career changers bring, particularly in relation to how teaching compares to other professions or sectors.

The survey was delivered digitally. We received 115 total responses from 327 requests (35%). It was sent to all qualified teachers in the Now Teach Network who are currently teaching. The demographic split of respondents is comparable to the Network as a whole.

The Sample:

Ethnicity Makeup – 24% non-white, 72% White, remainder – prefer not to say

Gender Makeup – 46% Female, 54% Male

Industry Makeup – 20 different industries – 44% come from three main industries (Business, Consulting & Management, Financial Services, & Media), and average NT Teacher has ~23 years of previous experience before entering the classroom.

Subject Makeup – 16 Different secondary subjects, 65% come from four main subject areas – Maths (27%), English (15%), Physics (12%), and Chemistry (11%)

Regional Makeup – Majority are based in London (69%), with East of England (18%), South East and South Coast (10%), and West Midlands (3%) making up the rest.

FT/PT Makeup – Full time = 74%, Part Time 26%

Age Makeup – Average Age of respondent = 52 years old, Groupings are – 46% in their 50s, 31% in their 40s, 18% are 60+, and 5% in their 30s.

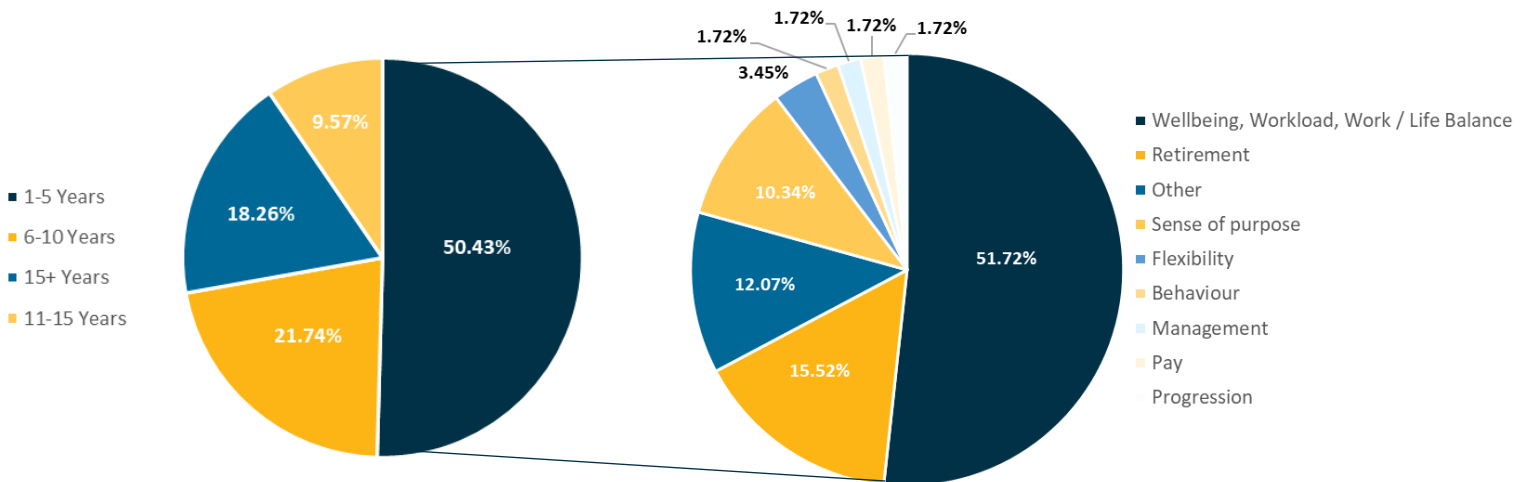
The current situation regarding teacher recruitment and retention:

Much of the evidence in this paper will focus on comparisons to other professions or industries. However, respondents also shared their perspectives on retention more generally. This data provides useful context for the concerns of respondents. It may also be valuable when compared to other evidence.

We asked respondents to rank the factors most in need of immediate improvement to retain qualified teachers. The following factors ranked highest by a significant margin: **workload, teacher pay, hours worked per week** and **classroom behavior**. **Management support** and **Mental health/wellbeing** were also ranked highly.



50% of Now Teachers surveyed anticipate a risk they remain in teaching for less than five years. Over half of those cited **workload, wellbeing or work / life** balance as the reason for leaving the profession.



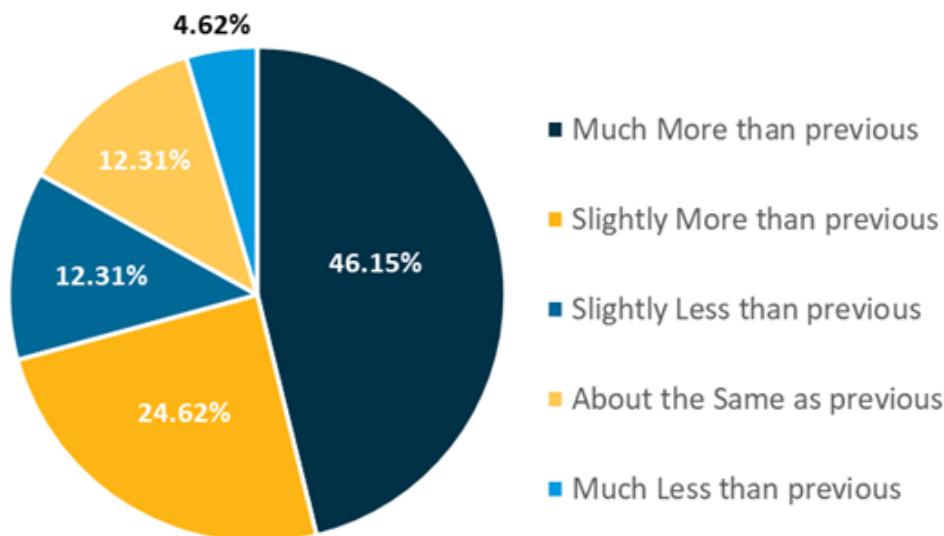
How do challenges in teacher recruitment, training and retention compare to those being faced in other professions/ sectors of the economy, and is there anything that can be learned from other professions/ sectors of the economy?

Comparisons between other professions / sectors and teaching make up the main focus of this response. Now Teachers are uniquely placed to identify and reflect upon these comparisons. The evidence here has been separated into three key themes which were most commonly identified by survey respondents: **Workload, Leadership & Management** and **Flexibility**.

Workload

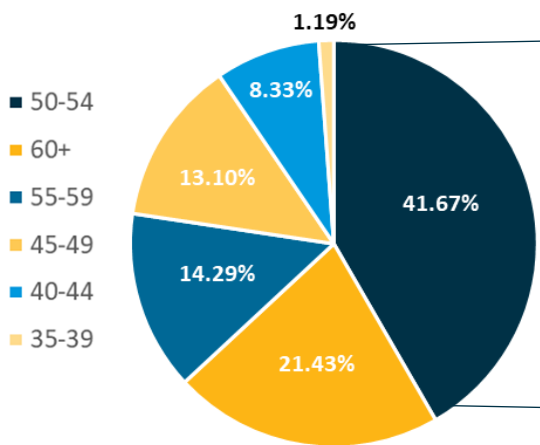
We recognise and celebrate the important work which the DfE and schools have already undertaken to reduce teacher workload. The findings of this survey reinforce quite how critical this work is.

Our evidence demonstrates that **teaching has a very high workload compared to other professions or sectors**. We asked how respondents’ current workload compared to their previous profession. Over 70% agreed that teaching had a higher workload than their previous profession, with 46.15% saying that it was *much more* than their previous roles.

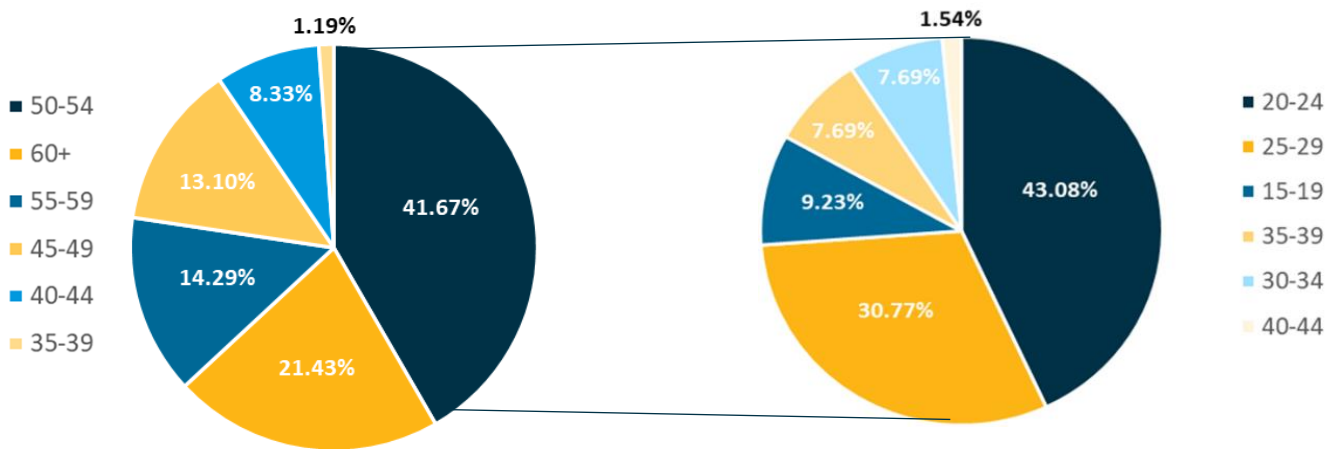


The vast majority (77.39%) of full-time career change teachers work more than 50 hours per week when including time spent outside of the classroom on marking, planning, or meetings.

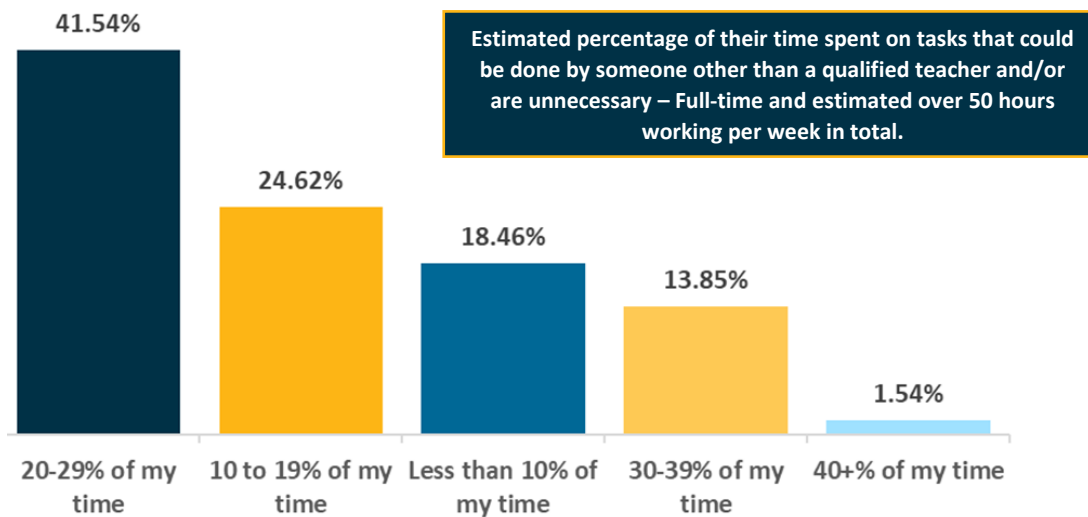
Estimated Hours Worked per Week – Full Time



Estimated Hours per Week Working *Directly* with Students



Of those full-time career change teachers who said they worked more than 50 hours per week, the majority (73.85%) said they spent around half that time working directly with young people - either in-classroom or within student-focused extracurricular activities.



66.16% of the same group estimated that 10-29% of their time was spent on tasks which could be done by someone other than a qualified teacher and/or are unnecessary. Further qualitative evidence

supports this, suggesting that it is not only the number of hours worked, but also the unrealistic expectations within these hours which leads to attrition within the teaching profession.

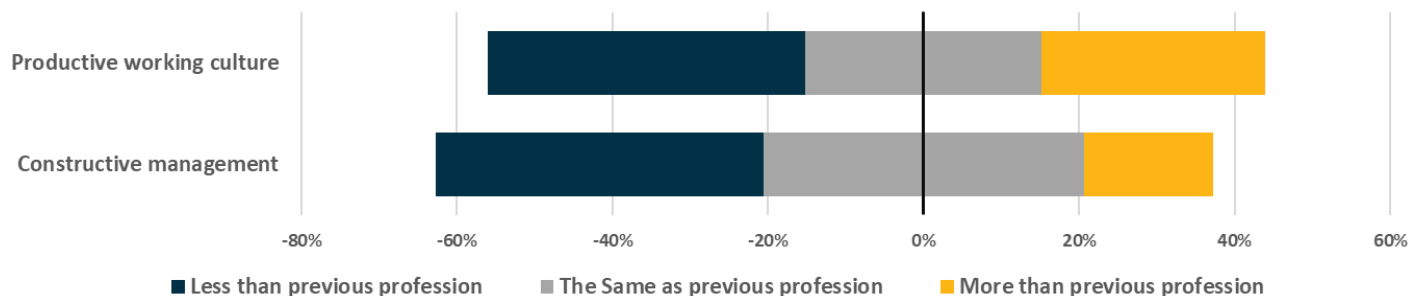
A former Senior Media Executive and magazine editor, is one of a number to talk about the unrealistic expectations: *“I am used to working hard (10hr days plus working at weekends/holidays in my previous career), but the expectations of teachers are unachievable.”* The expectations on productivity, hour by hour, in teaching, are too high. Many Now Teachers addressed this question of pace both within the day and across the year. Those who care the most, she suggests, will burn out.

These challenges are partly to do with funding, administration and managerial support. As a former solicitor points out: *“Yes, sometimes the weekly hours as a lawyer were longer (80+ at times) but overall the sustained pressure on teachers, lack of resources and support and the nature of demands on them are far more challenging.”*

Leadership and Management

Management is difficult and Now Teachers felt an overwhelming sympathy for and understanding of the challenges of SLT. Nonetheless across the board they feel it needs improvement in comparison to other professions.

When asked how **constructive management** was compared to their previous profession, 42% of Now Teachers felt that their management was worse in teaching than in their previous role compared to 17% who said it was better. Similarly, when asked about **productive working culture**, 41% of Now Teachers felt that this was worse than their previous industry, compared to 29% who said it was better.



Given the opportunity to elaborate on these answers, 44 gave open text responses. **20 cite Low or Variable Quality of Management/Leadership**, 7 say schools are less efficient than previous organisations.

The majority of comments about quality of management and leadership were not accusations of toxicity but that school leaders lacked experience or competence compared to the industries where Now Teachers had had decades of experience.

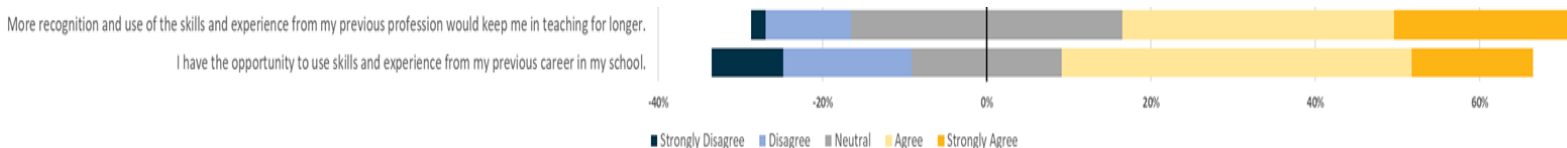
“A significant problem is the lack of management experience among senior teachers. Many are ill equipped for their management role...” **History teacher and former communications director. Teaching since 2019.**

This commentary also illustrates the relationship between management and workload, which has already been identified as a key factor in retention, where school management is inefficient.

“Teaching practices are far less efficient than in the accounting profession. Lots of time and effort wasted/ duplicated. Things could be so much better organised, centralised and communicated. Hours and workload would improve dramatically.” **Maths teacher and former chartered accountant. Teaching since 2021.**

Now Teachers, as career changers, are uniquely placed to comment upon the differences between school management and management structures in other industries. Their experience can also position them as part of the solution. 57% of Now Teachers surveyed felt that they have already had the opportunity to use their previous career experience in their current role, however 24% have not had the opportunity. Furthermore, 55% agreed that the opportunity to use their career experience would keep them in teaching for longer.

In the open text response that followed this question, 37 gave written responses. Of these responses 14



mentioned that their career experience was not valued or recognized by school leadership. There was a consistent feeling that colleagues, management or the education system more broadly lacked the mechanism to allow them to enact change based on their previous experience.

“My experience of teaching having experienced 5 different schools is that teachers are not very open to new and different ideas. This limits the input that people coming into the profession can make.” **History teacher and former management consultant. Teaching since 2017.**

Whilst some respondents felt that they were able to use their previous career experience in school to their personal benefit, this did not indicate that it was valued by their school in general. A **French teacher and former researcher, teaching since 2017** shared that “I use skills from my previous job mainly in the class room and in the way I use data for teaching. There does not seem to be a market for insights into how we might improve the way we run ourselves.”

Flexibility

Both within the day and across the working week Now Teachers feel a distinct lack of flexibility and autonomy not only over their work patterns. Many schools continue to insist on teachers remaining on school site during particular after school hours because this is ‘directed time’. Secondary schools tend still to struggle to arrange flexible or part time working.

Where teachers are able to suggest practical arrangements, schools often are amenable to creative ideas. This is reflected in the comments from respondents who explained their reasons for how long they viewed themselves remaining in teaching. A Spanish teacher, teaching since 2020 states: *“If I can go down to part time I'll stay indefinitely. I love the school, I love the job, but the workload is insane, I don't have enough time for my family, let alone friends. I can't imagine any other career for me that is so rewarding in terms of the kids.”*

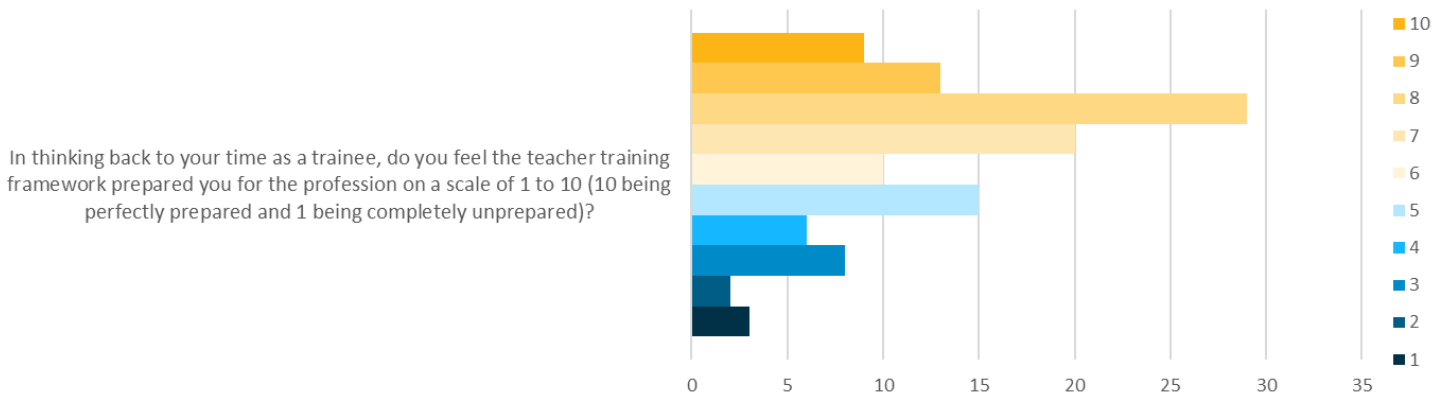
This is echoed by a history teacher and former lawyer, teaching since 2021 who says *“I would hope to teach until I retire but without flexible working opportunities being available I cannot see that it is feasible; so I could be teaching for 15+ years but without that flexibility being available I could easily decide to take my career in a different direction.”*

It is worth noting that flexible or part-time working options must be supported by robust systems within the school for managing workload. 66% of Part-time teachers who responded to this survey estimated that they worked over 40 hours per week. Simply being contracted to work fewer hours is not a solution in and of itself.

We welcome all the work the DfE has been doing around the issue of flexible and part-time work and are keen to continue to support. Now Teachers have creative ideas formed from previous careers in similarly demanding professions such as medicine and law and know that it is achievable and will be enormously valuable for retention not only for those with children but also for those approaching the end of their careers.

How well does the current teacher training framework work to prepare new teachers and how could it be improved?

On the whole, Now Teachers felt that the teacher training framework prepared them for teaching. However, it is worth noting that current trainees and those who either did not complete their training or have since left teaching were not surveyed.



Some respondents shared specific feedback or suggestions regarding teacher training, including starting training in the Summer *“with plenty of time to observe and coteach lessons when other teachers have more time to spend planning and discussing with the trainee [...] This would give much more opportunity to fill gaps in knowledge up to GCSE and allow others to refresh A’level knowledge and build confidence in teaching topics, planning sequences of actual lessons on selected topics.”*

What action should the Department take to address the challenges in teacher recruitment and retention?

The key recommendations from the evidence presented above can be summarised as follows:

- **Workload** – Teaching workload is high and Now Teachers have identified that, compared to their previous organisations, schools’ management inefficiencies are a significant a factor in high workloads, as well as the sustained pressure on teachers across a term. Schools could address this both by looking at the how the school day is structured (In schools in Finland, for example. breaks are scheduled into the teacher’s working day) and by ensuring teachers are supported to share and use centralized resources and efficient marking systems.
- Understanding where administrative support and resources could be better allocated could also be part of the solution.
- **Leadership and Management** – This has clear links with workload, especially where management is viewed as inefficient. The findings indicate the schools could have better mechanisms for recognising and valuing management experience, especially where it is external to teaching.
- Many Now Teachers are struck by the fact that there is only one type of career progression for those who are ambitious: management; yet teachers are recruited largely for their talent and desire to teach. Other paths which they would recommend include specialist teachers and teacher educators.
- Linked to the above points, Now Teachers feel that schools could better deploy the skills and talents of their workforces – from those who show an aptitude for leadership and management to those with experience of data management or other specialist skills.
- Now Teachers recognise the enormous challenges placed on leaders and managers in schools and that their previous organisations were able to invest more in this area. However, they believe good management is the single most important lever any organisation has, to retain talent and develop a collegiate, professional culture.
- Many Now Teachers comment on how communication styles within schools do not reflect best practice in other sectors. Supporting schools to improve the ways in which SLT motivate and guide could be a cost-effective tool in aiding retention.
- **Flexibility** – This evidence demonstrates that in many individual cases, flexible or part time working options enable longer careers in teaching. The findings also demonstrate that creative solutions which protect teachers’ time and allow them to maintain genuine flexibility, rather than simply contract them to work fewer hours, are an essential component in this.

Many individual respondents shared additional specific solutions to the recruitment and retention of teachers. Now Teach would welcome the opportunity to work closely with the Education Select Committee and to share these responses in more detail.

April 2023