

Written evidence submitted by *Understanding Society*, the UK Household Longitudinal Study, Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of Essex

Key points

- Pay is a factor, but so are workload, working hours and job satisfaction
- Teachers want more opportunities for part-time working
- Financial incentives may help to retain teachers in subjects where staff numbers are low
- Housing subsidies could help to recruit teachers in expensive areas (especially London)
- A 2018 report showed that teachers worked longer hours and were less satisfied with their leisure time than other professions, but this had improved by 2023
- Teachers still report less control over their workload than other graduates
- Although demanding/stressful, teaching does not appear to be linked to poorer physical health

1. Introduction

1.1. Understanding Society, the UK Household Longitudinal Study, is a world-leading longitudinal survey of continuity and change in UK life. From an initial sample of around 40,000 households, the same people are invited to participate in annual surveys. Together with its predecessor, the British Household Panel Survey, the data now span 28 years. Understanding Society is based at the Institute for Social and Economic Research at the University of Essex. It is an important part of CLOSER, a partnership of leading social and biomedical longitudinal population studies in the UK (www.closer.ac.uk).

1.2. Understanding Society is primarily funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, part of UK Research and Innovation, and has received funding from a number of government departments, devolved administrations and agencies. Anonymised data from the surveys are made available to registered researchers to use in their own research projects.

1.3 We have identified research which uses Understanding Society data and is relevant to the committee's questions on:

- the main factors leading to difficulties recruiting and retaining teachers
- the most affected subjects
- the most affected area(s)
- comparison with other professions

2. Factors in recruitment and retention

2.1 The rates at which teachers leave the profession and move school have both risen since 2010, giving schools more staffing uncertainty, and greater recruitment costs.

2.2 Seeking to improve job satisfaction is a prime motivation for leaving teaching. 78% of teachers were satisfied with their jobs in 2015-16, but for those who leave, job satisfaction declines in the years before, and rises considerably after they leave.

2.3 Pay is not the most important factor. On average, teachers who leave the profession earn 10% less than they did before, and their satisfaction with their income falls. This

suggests that many teachers take a pay cut in favour of other benefits such as improved job satisfaction or the chance to work part-time.

2.4 More pay is likely to affect retention, but workload, working hours and job satisfaction should also be considered.

2.5 There are not enough opportunities for part-time working. 20% of full-time secondary teachers who leave teaching take up part-time work. A lack of part-time and flexible working opportunities is one of the main barriers for people who want to return to teaching.

3. Most affected subjects

3.1 Maths, science, and modern foreign language teachers have above-average leaving rates, and numbers of new teachers being recruited into these subjects has been below government targets.

3.2 Financial incentives may be needed to encourage retention in the first few years after training.

4. Most affected areas

4.1 The challenge is greatest in London. Considerably more teachers are leaving the profession in London compared to other areas, including other large cities.

4.2 Housing subsidies could help to recruit teachers in high-cost areas.

4.3 More research into trainees' geographical movements could inform other policies to tackle the issue.

5. Comparison with other professions

5.1 Teachers work considerably longer hours during term time than nurses and police officers do in a normal working week, and may be working additional hours when schools are closed.

5.2 In 2018, teachers had the lowest satisfaction with their amount of leisure time compared to nurses and police officers, and had a higher rate of leaving their profession.

5.3 These jobs were chosen as comparators because they are also in the public sector and are comparable in the sense of mission which often motivates people to take them up.

5.3 Schools should consider having a governor, trustee, or member of the management team who is responsible for staff welfare.

5.4 Recent improvements in workload have led teachers to feel more satisfied with their amount of leisure time (the closest thing we have to a measure of work-life balance). Their satisfaction in this area is now comparable to that of other graduates.

5.5 During the 2010s, around three-quarters of teachers reported that they were satisfied with their job overall, which was comparable to similar graduates. Overall job satisfaction was higher in 2020/21, probably as a result of teachers' relatively high job security during the pandemic.

5.6 Teachers' self-reported job-related stress has consistently been around two on a scale from one to five (low to high). This was slightly higher than for similar graduates throughout the 2010s, but the difference was small.

5.7 Teachers' self-reported job-related stress is now comparable to that of other graduates, but this is because job-related stress has been rising since 2017/18 for similar graduates, rather than falling for teachers.

5.8 Teachers consistently report lower workplace autonomy than similar graduates. This shows how much control they feel they have over working patterns and day-to-day tasks, and how manageable their workload feels, and is strongly linked with job satisfaction and retention.

5.9 Teachers consistently report a three on the four-point workplace autonomy scale, with four meaning 'a lot' of influence, and one meaning 'none'. Three indicates that teachers have 'some' autonomy, which is lower than for similar graduates.

5.10 Although teaching is demanding, and stress is linked to poorer physical health, research using objective health measures does not show a link between teaching and poor physical health compared to other professions.

References

2.1-5.2 Jack Worth, Sarah Lynch, Jude Hillary, Connie Rennie, and Joana Andrade, *Teacher Workforce Dynamics in England*, National Foundation for Educational Research, 2018: <https://www.nfer.ac.uk/teacher-workforce-dynamics-in-england/>

5.3 Timothy Besley and Maitresh Ghatak, Competition and Incentives with Motivated Agents, *American Economic Review*, 2005: <https://doi.org/10.1257/0002828054201413>

5.4-5.9 Dawson McLean, Jack Worth, and Henry Faulkner-Ellis, *Teacher Labour Market in England Annual Report 2023*, National Foundation for Educational Research, 2023: <https://www.nfer.ac.uk/teacher-labour-market-in-england-annual-report-2023/>

5.10 Sam Sims, John Jerrim, Hannah Taylor, and Rebecca Allen, Is teaching bad for your health? New evidence from biomarker data, *Oxford Review of Education*, 2021: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2021.1908246>