



MONASH
University

Faculty of
Education

PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS AND TEACHING IN AUSTRALIA

AMANDA HEFFERNAN, FIONA LONGMUIR, DAVID BRIGHT,
AND MISOL KIM
NOVEMBER 2019

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the participants for taking the time to share their views and experiences with us.

As Australia's #1 Faculty of Education¹, and a world leader in education research, Monash Education places great value on education, on teachers, and on the future of the teaching profession. The research team would like to acknowledge the support of the faculty that enabled this study to be undertaken.

We would like to thank Bank First for their generous support of this research.



¹ Australian Rankings of World Universities, 2019

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	2
CONTENTS	3
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	4
INTRODUCTION.....	5
METHODOLOGY	6
Teacher Survey	6
Public Survey	6
FINDINGS	7
1. Teacher Satisfaction	7
2. Appreciation - Perceptions of the Teaching Profession	8
3. Teacher Workload	10
3.1 Teacher Perspectives on Workload	10
3.2 Public Recognition of Teacher Workloads	10
4. Teachers' Wellbeing, Health, and Safety	12
5. Perceptions of Challenges Facing Teachers	14
6. Attracting and Retaining Teachers to the Profession.....	15
6.1 Teachers' intentions to leave the profession.....	15
6.2 Recommending teaching as a career	16
REFERENCES.....	19

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report shares findings of a nationwide Australian study into public and teachers' perceptions of the teaching profession. The study was commissioned in response to ongoing concerns about recruitment and retention of educators and reports about the wellbeing of teachers and school leaders. It consisted of two large-scale parallel surveys. The first survey was completed by members of the teaching profession, and the second survey was completed by a nationally-representative sample of the public.

The teacher survey asked participants to reflect on their experiences as teachers and their satisfaction with their work, including current challenges and recommendations of how those challenges might be addressed. 2,444 members of the teaching profession completed this survey, contributing their views and experiences towards a large-scale understanding of teachers' work. Respondents were from all states and territories in Australia, and indicated that they worked across all of Australia's schooling sectors (early childhood, primary, secondary, and Vocational Education and Training) and were employed in both government and non-government schools.

The public survey was administered to a nationally-representative sample of the Australian public through a contracted market research company and focused on perceptions of teachers and the teaching profession, including the current challenges faced by teachers and schools. The sample of participants is weighted to the profile of the sample definition to provide a representative reporting sample. The profile is normally derived from census data or, if not available from the census, from industry accepted data.

There are six key findings of this research:

1. while just over half of teachers are satisfied with their job (56%), a third of teachers (34%) expressed dissatisfaction with their role as a teacher
2. although the public feels that teachers are respected and trusted, this is not consistently transferring to teachers feeling appreciated for the work that they do
3. teacher workload is an area of serious concern for teachers, and is also recognised as an issue by members of the public. Workload concerns are influencing teachers' intention to leave the profession, and form part of the reason people would not recommend teaching as a career
4. teachers are concerned about health, safety, and wellbeing, and these concerns have implications for the length of time respondents saw themselves remaining in the profession
5. teaching can be a challenging profession. Teachers' insights into the challenges they face can inform policy and practice
6. attention to workload and wellbeing factors that are concerning both teachers and the public may have the greatest impact on teacher retention, as well as attracting future teachers to the profession.

Our study showed that there are commonalities between teachers and the public in relation to perceptions of the teaching profession in Australia. This study suggests that these issues include workload, wellbeing and appreciation, and are impacting teachers' perceptions of being able to make the difference that they would like to.

It is imperative that these issues are addressed to ensure the strength of Australia's schooling system into the future. The findings of this study can contribute to evidence-based policy-making and inform public discussion and awareness about policy and practice.

INTRODUCTION

Teaching is a profession that affects all Australians. There are approximately 270,000 teachers working with almost 4 million students in 9,500 schools across Australia (ABS, 2018; ACARA, 2013). Teachers play a vital role in every community and they have far-reaching influence; their work shapes the future of Australia. The Australian Government recognised that the teaching profession is one of great importance and in November 2018 announced an inquiry into the status of the profession, with the intent of ensuring that teaching is 'fulfilling and rewarding for educators' (Wernert, 2019, p. 1). Research has reported a looming teacher shortage, particularly for teachers in specialist areas and in rural and remote schools, and 'alarming' rates of teacher attrition (Allen, Rowan & Singh, 2019, p. 99).

This research study was commissioned in response to ongoing concerns about recruitment and retention of educators (Allen, Rowan, & Singh, 2019; Gallant & Riley, 2017; Shine, 2015) and concerning reports about the wellbeing of teachers and school leaders (Beusaert, Froehlich, Devos, & Riley, 2016; McCallum & Price, 2015).

We wanted to better understand the factors that were influencing these key issues. Our nationally-representative public survey focused on perceptions of teachers and teaching, and our accompanying teacher survey invited teachers to comment on their experiences. Combined, these two large-scale surveys provide nuanced insights into the current state of these issues across Australia. The findings of this study will support ongoing public discussion about the teaching profession.

In the following report, we share the findings of each topic that was investigated through the surveys and offer key points that will contribute to ongoing discussion about the teaching profession. This report is divided into three sections:

(i) Methodology

(ii) Findings

1. teacher satisfaction
2. appreciation - perceptions of the teaching profession
3. teacher workload
4. teachers' wellbeing, health, and safety
5. perceptions of challenges facing teachers
6. attracting and retaining teachers to the profession

(iii) Implications

METHODOLOGY

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

TEACHER SURVEY

The survey was developed and administered using 'Qualtrics', anonymous online survey software. The survey was open from August 21 to September 19, 2019.

Invitations to participate were sent through:

- the project team's professional networks
- Monash university's alumni networks
- Monash university's social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram)
- the project team's social media networks (Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn)

Snowball sampling meant that these posts were shared widely and 2,444 participants completed the survey. Their responses form the Teacher Survey dataset for this report. Detailed demographic information is provided below in section 2.2 *Teacher Survey Participant Demographics*.

Qualitative survey data in the form of open-ended questions have been analysed through a thematic analysis wherein the researchers generated key recurring themes within the data.

PUBLIC SURVEY

This survey has been conducted using an online interview administered to members of the YouGov Plc Australian panel of 71,000+ individuals who have agreed to take part in surveys. Emails are sent to panelists selected at random from the base sample. The e-mail invites them to take part in a survey and provides a generic survey link. Once a panel member clicks on the link they are sent to the survey that they are most required for, according to the sample definition and quotas. (The sample definition could be "adult population" or a subset such as "adult females"). Invitations to surveys don't expire and respondents can be sent to any available survey. The responding sample is weighted to the profile of the sample definition to provide a representative reporting sample. The profile is normally derived from census data or, if not available from the census, from industry accepted data.

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 1082 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 22-26 August. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all Australian adults (aged 18+).

Table 1 Survey Methodology

TEACHER SURVEY PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Total Participants: 2,444

School Sector Demographics

48.44% of participants worked in primary schools
45.7% of participants worked in secondary schools
5.86% of participants worked in other roles, including early childhood educators and TAFE / VET teachers.

67.83% of participants worked in public / state schools
15.11% of participants worked in private / independent schools
15.46% of participants worked in faith-based schools
1.6% of participants worked in other school settings (e.g., special school, early childhood centre, alternative school)

Location Demographics

VIC – 835 participants
NSW – 603 participants
QLD – 416 participants
SA – 363 participants
WA – 83 participants
Tas – 66 participants
NT – 41 participants
ACT – 37 participants

FINDINGS

1. TEACHER SATISFACTION

The survey asked teachers the extent to which they agreed with the statement *Overall, I am satisfied in my role as a teacher*. Satisfaction is strongly associated with teacher retention and attrition, with recent research finding that teachers who report job satisfaction are between four and nine times more likely to remain in the profession (Kelly, Cespedes, Clara, & Danaher, 2019). We found that most respondents were satisfied with their roles, with agree (56%) the most popular response, indicating that just over half were satisfied in their role as a teacher. Of concern, however, is that a third of teachers responded disagree (30%) or strongly disagree (4%).

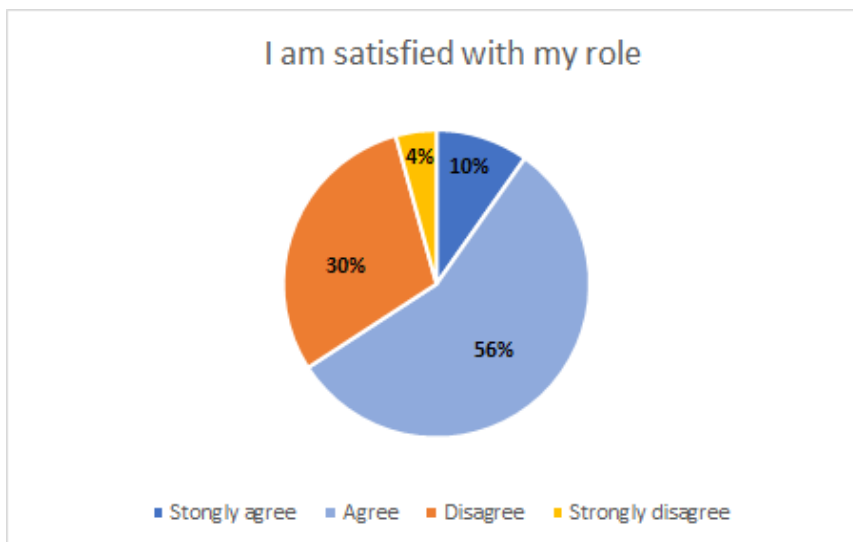


Figure 1.1: Teacher satisfaction with their role

This study's sampling of teachers in all sectors and locations provides a broad picture of the state of teachers' perceptions of their work. With 66% of teachers in total reporting varied levels of satisfaction in their work, our findings support previous research into career motivations and satisfaction for teachers, including the most recent *Staff in Australia's Schools Survey* (McKenzie, Weldon, Rowley, Murphy, & McMillan, 2014). Similarly, Watt and Richardson (2017) found that teachers find their work to be intellectually stimulating and rewarding, reporting high levels of job satisfaction, even at the same time as they acknowledged that pay and status do not play a large factor in teachers' motivations in choosing the profession.

Discussion Point: This study suggests that while most teachers are satisfied with their job, it is concerning that a third of teachers expressed dissatisfaction.

2. APPRECIATION - PERCEPTIONS OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION

Teacher participants were asked to indicate their agreement with the statement *I feel that the Australian public appreciates teachers*. Figure 2.1 shows that a large majority of respondents (71%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.

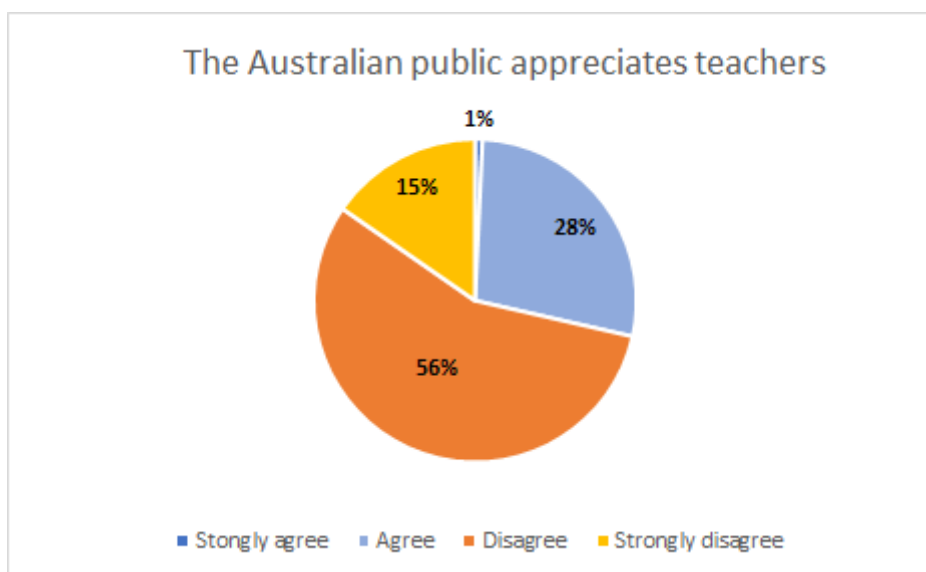


Figure 2.1: Teachers' perceptions of public appreciation

The teacher survey provided opportunities for open-ended responses which illustrated that many respondents felt unappreciated, disrespected, unsupported and not trusted in their work. When asked if they intended to leave the profession, 58% of participants indicated that they would. Of those respondents, 10% cited feeling unappreciated as contributing to their desire to leave. This was demonstrated in comments such as:

- *lack of feeling appreciated and valued for experience*
- *I feel unsupported and not valued*
- *I feel under-appreciated and disrespected in community, public and media*

At the conclusion of the survey of teachers, participants were asked to provide any further comments and many of these also reflected themes associated with a lack of appreciation, respect and trust. The following comment exemplifies these concerns:

I feel as though there is very little trust in teachers- this comes from parents, leadership within the school, government, general public and older students. I feel constantly criticised and as though I need to prove myself worthy over and over again. It is absolutely shattering when you're working hard and with passion, following best practice, constantly building skills to ensure you are continually improving and caring deeply for the individual outcomes of the young people in your care to be treated as though you are substandard.

The perceptions of the majority of teachers (71%) that teachers are not appreciated by the public is somewhat contrary to responses to items in the survey of the public. When asked how respected they felt teachers in Australia are, 82% of respondents selected 'well-respected' (19%) or 'moderately respected' (63%) as is shown in Figure 2.2 below.

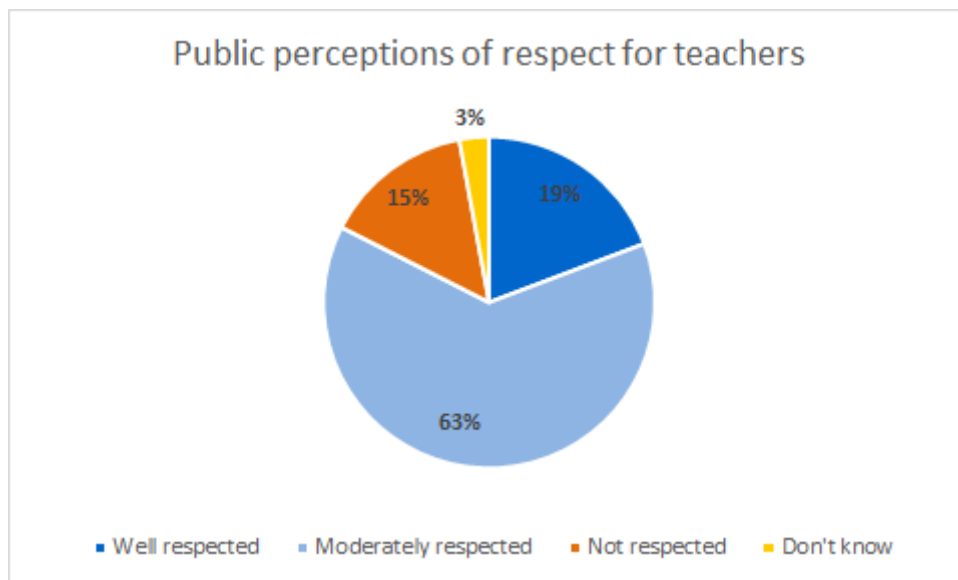


Figure 2.2: Public perceptions of respect for teachers

Participants in the public survey were also asked to indicate perceptions of trust for teachers. A large majority of respondents (93%) indicated that they felt the public 'trusted' (33%) or 'moderately trusted' (60%) teachers as is shown in Figure 2.3.

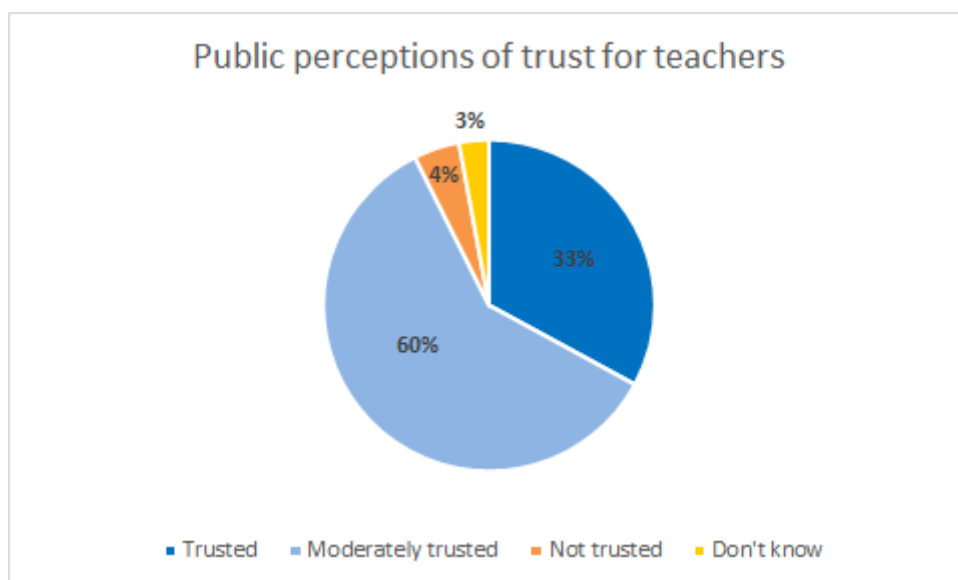


Figure 2.3: Public perceptions of trust for teachers

Perceptions of teacher status have been the focus of international research including an ongoing global research project into teacher status, which has found a correlation between teacher status and student achievement (The Varkey Foundation, 2018).

Watt and Richardson (2017) in their study on career motivations found that many teachers go into the profession to make a difference. Butler (2017) suggested that a sense of social contribution was a central motivation of this calling. Teachers' perceptions of how communities view their social contribution will influence their motivations. Ashiedu and Scott-Ladd (2012) highlighted the importance of public perceptions and status in maintaining the sense of motivation experienced by teachers. They noted that the importance of teaching needs to be recognised by communities and society in order for teachers to maintain the intrinsic motivations that led to them becoming teachers in the first place.

Discussion Point: This study suggests that although the public feels that teachers are respected and trusted, this is not consistently transferring to teachers feeling appreciated for the work that they do.

3. TEACHER WORKLOAD

3.1 Teacher Perspectives on Workload

Teacher participants were asked to indicate their agreement with the statement *I find my current workload manageable*.

A large majority of teacher respondents (75%) either disagreed (47%) or strongly disagreed (28%) that they found their current workload manageable. Out of 2,444 responses, only 42 teachers (2%) of respondents 'strongly agreed' that their workload was manageable.

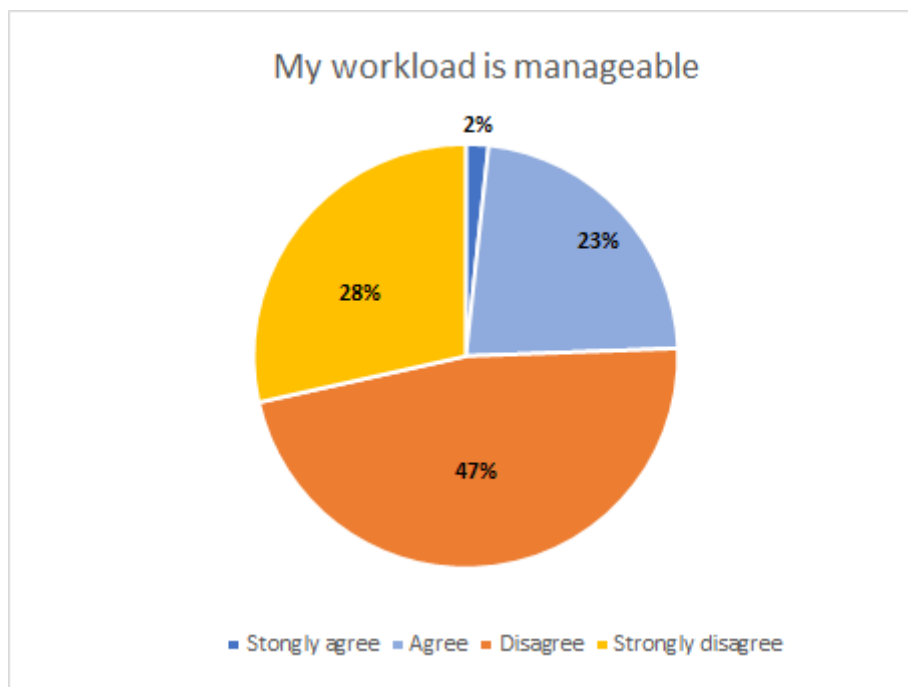


Figure 3.1: Teacher responses about workload

A majority of participants (58%) in the teacher survey indicated that they intended to leave the profession (we elaborate on this in Section 6.1). For those participants, workload was cited by 62% (696 teachers) as a reason that they would leave their teaching career before retirement. These participants described their heavy workloads as impacting on family time, their physical and mental health and wellbeing, and as distracting from their core focus of teaching and learning. Open-ended responses from participants are exemplified by the following:

- *I am currently finding a distinct lack of balance between my work and family life. I take work home to mark every day, I plan, prepare and organise each afternoon for the following day and am exhausted after each day falling into bed. I work hours every weekend and during the holidays. There's little switch off time.*
- *The long hours, workload and the emotionally taxing nature of the job. It's 24/7 work and my brain is constantly thinking about school or is at school. I don't think I can do it for more than ten years as a classroom teacher.*
- *The teaching workload and necessary hours to manage it are extraordinarily unreasonable. The impact of this on those teachers with families or caring for elderly parents is detrimental to their health and well-being.*

Even respondents who felt that their workload was manageable raised concerns about the long-term effects of heavy workloads:

- *It's exhausting and while my workload is manageable, I do believe that it will eventually wear me down.*

Heavy workloads are associated with higher rates of stress, burnout, and attrition for teachers (Sass, Seal, & Martin, 2010). Australian teachers have reported higher working hours than teachers in other OECD countries and this study supports previous research which suggested Australian teachers struggle to manage their workloads (Manuel, Carter, & Dutton, 2018). Garrick, Mak, Cathcart, Winwood, Bakker, and Lushington (2017) found that teachers in their Australian study commented on unreasonably high workloads and that Australian teachers' workload is increasing each year. Ashiedu and Scott-Ladd (2012) found that heavy workloads were a contributing factor for attrition from the teaching profession.

3.2 Public Recognition of Teacher Workloads

Members of the public were asked whether they would encourage a young person in their lives to take up teaching (See Section 6.2). When asked to elaborate on why they would not encourage teaching as a career for a young person in their lives, members of the public cited teacher workload as one of the main reasons. Teacher workload was the second

highest reason that they would not encourage teaching as a career, chosen after teacher wellbeing. Furthermore, when asked about the top challenges facing teachers and schools today, one of the main recurring themes in participants' responses related to teacher workload. An example of respondents' qualitative comments relating to workload is below:

- *Demands continue to increase. It is impossible to keep up with the demands and maintain a good work/life balance.*

This study's findings of members of the Australian public citing heavy workloads as a reason not to encourage a young person to pursue teaching as a career hold important implications for workforce planning and for school systems that are trying to encourage young people to consider teaching as a future career pathway.

Previous research into public perceptions of teachers' work has shown that the public has underestimated teachers' working hours when compared to teachers' actual working hours, often by more than ten hours per week (The Varkey Foundation, 2018). However, research commissioned by the New Zealand government found that public perceptions of the teaching profession carried negative connotations about heavy workloads and associated stress (Hall & Langton, 2006). Shine (2015) found that trends in media reporting included coverage of teachers' heavy workloads and resulting stress, which could influence the public's understanding of these issues.

Discussion Point: Teacher workload is an area of serious concern for teachers, and is also recognised as an issue by members of the public. Workload concerns are influencing teachers' intention to leave the profession, and form part of the reason people would not recommend teaching as a career.

4. TEACHERS' WELLBEING, HEALTH, AND SAFETY

Teachers were asked to respond to the question *Do you feel safe at work?* The majority of respondents (81%) reported feeling safe at work, but 19% of respondents indicated that they did not feel safe at work.

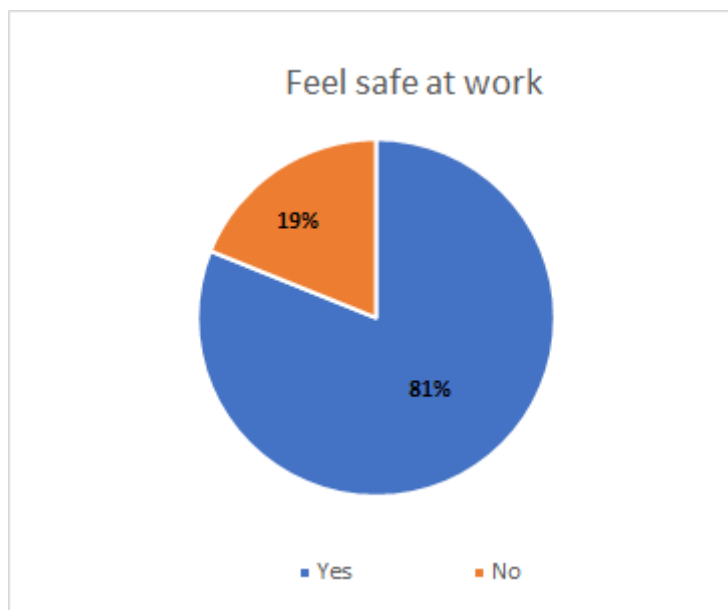


Figure 4.1: Teacher feelings of safety at work

Respondents who indicated that they did not feel safe at work were asked to elaborate on their reasons for feeling unsafe. Their qualitative responses included concerns about physical health and safety, and mental health and wellbeing. While the majority of teachers did feel safe at work, the responses from those who did not should be examined to understand their experiences and concerns. 455 participants provided further comment regarding their feelings of a lack of safety at work, and 54% of those respondents specifically mentioned violence, aggression, or physical assault.

Physical health and safety

Respondents who raised concerns about their physical health and safety included concerns or shared stories about violence or threats of violence. These experiences of violence are reported as coming from students and parents, and some respondents suggested that more protection needed to be offered to teachers:

- *I've had to confiscate knives from students and I've been punched in the stomach while pregnant by a student*
- *Parents can be aggressive and little protection is offered from verbal and physical attacks*

Mental health and wellbeing

Recurring more frequently in the qualitative responses to safety concerns were respondents' concerns about the health and safety impacts of ongoing stress, the emotional toll of teaching, and work/life balance and subsequent wellbeing concerns. Comments included explicit mention of the consequences of these concerns for teacher retention and career planning. The comments below are representative of these concerns. The length of teachers' service is included to show that this is being experienced by teachers at all stages of their careers:

- *[Teaching is] too stressful, impact on body health and work life balance. I love my job but it's not worth the toll it takes on my mind and body (teaching 7 years)*
- *I foresee the increasing workload to put too much demand and stress on my life - I love what I do but don't think that is a healthy way to live the rest of my life (teaching 4 yrs 9 months)*
- *[Teaching is] too draining and don't think I will have the mental and emotional stamina for more than 10 yrs (teaching 2 yrs 9 months)*
- *There has to be a job that allows you to have a better life. (teaching 17 yrs 4 months)*
- *I don't feel like I can last any longer than this. My job is having a negative impact on my health (teaching 33 yrs)*

It is difficult to find recent research into teachers' general physical safety in Australian schools, which contrasts with a number of media reports and reports issued by education unions about teacher safety (see, for elaboration: Billett, Fogelgarn & Burns, 2019). International research has found that the effects of workplace bullying (perpetrated by teachers, students, and leaders) have significant and negative impacts on teachers' physical and psychological safety and wellbeing (De Vos & Kirsten, 2015; Fahie & Devine, 2014). In Australia, issues of violence, hostility, and subsequent sense of safety have been reported as one of the stressors on teachers (Shine, 2015) and have been cited as factors

that influence teacher retention and attrition (Buchanan, Prescott, Schuck, Aubusson, Burke & Louviere, 2013). Increased job demands and subsequent stress, as highlighted above by participants, are noted as a key challenge influencing teacher retention and cited as a reason teachers leave the profession (Fetherston & Lummis, 2012).

Discussion point: Teachers are concerned about health, safety, and wellbeing, and these concerns have implications for the length of time respondents see themselves remaining in the profession.

5. PERCEPTIONS OF CHALLENGES FACING TEACHERS

Given the perceptions of teaching and the teacher profession described above, it is unsurprising that many view teaching as a challenging profession. Participants in both surveys were asked to describe the top challenges facing teaching and schools today. Recurring themes in their responses are summarised in the table below.

TEACHER SURVEY	PUBLIC SURVEY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - excessive workloads - public perceptions of teaching and schooling - loss of professional trust, judgment, and autonomy - heavy focus on data and testing, narrowed curriculum as a result - lack of feeling supported, affecting ability to carry out duties - needing more time to meet increased administrative demands, or needing more time to focus on teaching - student behaviour, community behaviour, behaviour of other staff members - bullying and safety concerns for students and for teachers / peers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - bullying and safety concerns for teachers (such as teachers being bullied by students, parents, or other staff members) - extended responsibilities for teachers (including teaching life skills, counselling, extra-curricular activities) - bullying and safety concerns for students - administrative demands (including workload) - mental health and wellbeing of staff (including self and peers)

Table 2 Challenges Facing the Teaching Profession

Teachers were asked to suggest possible solutions to the challenges they perceived. Analysing the qualitative data generated by teachers revealed the following recurring themes and suggestions:

- trust teachers to do the job they have trained to do
- define clearly set working hours and consider what workload can be achieved during those hours
- interagency and community cooperation to address systemic social issues that can't easily be addressed just by schools
- provide teachers with more time explicitly to undertake administrative work OR reduce administrative burden
- provide ongoing training and support in behaviour management for all staff members
- revise and streamline curriculum (try to minimise sense of overcrowded curriculum)
- focus explicitly on teacher / staff wellbeing and sustainability and consider this in making policy decisions
- introduce fewer initiatives simultaneously – let people solidify their practices and work before bringing in the next idea
- ensure more secure career and employment pathways for beginning teachers
- improve public perceptions of teachers & teaching
- position teacher voice more clearly in decisions / policy making
- strive for less 'busy'-ness, and work towards having calmer schools, do fewer things and do them well.

The collective voice of teachers has a key role to play in policymaking and can range from influence over school systems and structures, to curriculum and practice (Gozali, Claassen Thrush, Soto-Peña, Whang, & Luschei, 2017). Policy experts have suggested that policy and reforms are usually 'done to' teachers, rather than teachers having a collective voice or influence on policy decisions (Thomson & Riddle, 2019). Teachers' recommendations in this survey are drawn from their lived experiences of Australian schooling and from years of training and education. Today's teachers are highly-qualified educators who have graduated from accredited teacher education programs that are rigorous, and require years of focused knowledge and skill development (Bahr, Pendergast & Ferreira, 2018). Findings from this study provide an insight into teachers' suggestions about how to overcome some of the challenges they face.

Discussion point: Teaching is recognised as a challenging profession. Teachers' insights into the challenges they face can inform policy and practice.

6. ATTRACTING AND RETAINING TEACHERS TO THE PROFESSION

6.1 Teachers' intentions to leave the profession

Teachers were asked to indicate how long they intended to remain in the profession. As is shown in Figure 6.1 below, 38% of respondents indicated that they planned to remain in teaching for 1, 5 or 10 years.

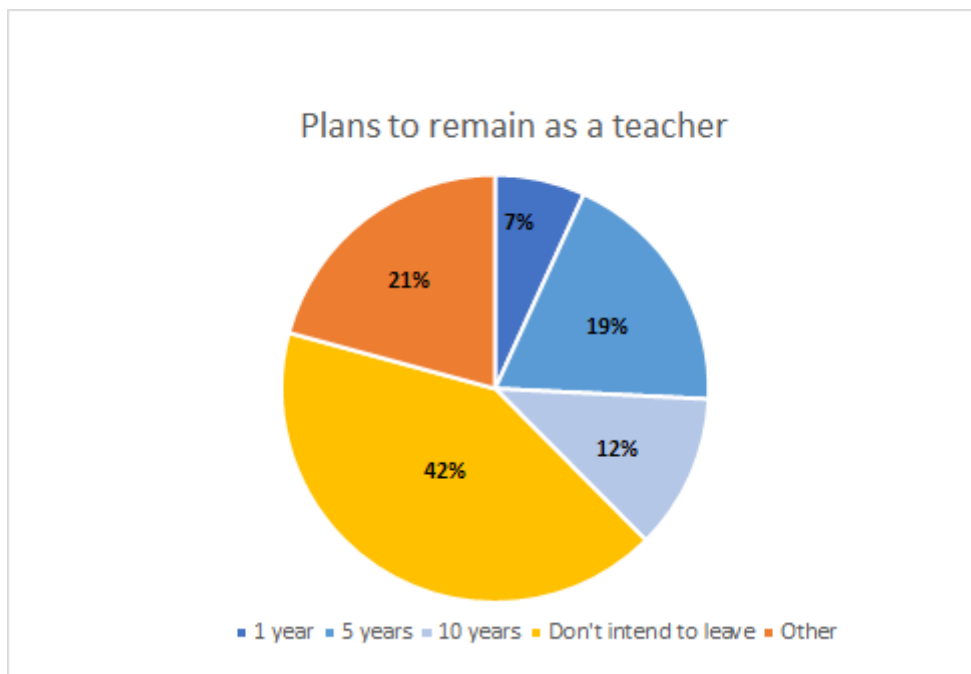


Figure 6.1: Teachers' intentions to remain in the profession

As Figure 6.1 shows, 21% of survey participants selected 'other' in response to this item and were prompted to provide a comment. Analysis of these comments showed that the majority (89%) of those who selected 'other' indicated that they would leave the profession if they could, or that they were planning to leave within an undefined or unknown time (including retiring earlier than planned, and also those retiring at their planned career juncture).

With only 42% of teacher respondents planning to remain, there is a serious trend of teachers planning to, or wanting to, leave the profession.

Those participants who indicated that they planned to leave the profession were asked to elaborate on the reasons for wanting to leave teaching. The question resulted in 1381 qualitative comments which were analysed to determine key themes that recurred. Recurring issues are presented below, alongside illustrative qualitative comments:

- excessive workload and hours worked (62% of comments):
Workload is unsustainable and work-life balance is non-existent. The government continues to cut funding and our workload continues to increase while teaching quality decreases because of the sheer amount of non-teaching related admin that is required.
- impact on health, wellbeing, family, and relationships, including descriptions of exhaustion, fatigue, stress, and burnout (21% of comments):
I love my job, but have genuine concerns for its sustainability. Vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, post-traumatic stress - these are all very very real things. A third of our teaching staff are seeing or have seen a psychologist in the past 18 months to assist them in managing the stress and anxiety associated with their job and also to develop coping mechanisms to handle the vicarious trauma and physical unsafety we face.
- increase in student and family challenges, including expectations to meet diverse and challenging student needs and demands from parents (20% of comments):
The expectation to meet all learners where they are and move them academically is unrealistic in classrooms with high numbers and such diverse needs, including high percentage of EALD students, speech and language delays, dyslexia, working memory disorder, traumatic home lives and low attendance rates, just to name a few.
There is less and less support from parents with their child's learning. We are expected to "fix" every problem in society from formal education, mental health, behaviour, values and the list goes on.
- extended responsibilities and duties beyond teaching, including changing focus of schooling and increase in focus on testing and narrowed curriculum (20% of comments):

The workload and pressure to perform to standardised testing is unbearable. The pressures from management and the government in accountability and all the administrative jobs that we are required to do every day take away from the core of what we are meant to do - teach children.

- lack of appreciation, recognition, and respect for the profession and loss of trust in teachers (10% of comments)

Lack of respect for the professionalism of teachers. Too many policies/teaching practices are dictated without teacher consultation.

- work conditions including precarious employment, casualisation, and insecure employment (3% of comments)

Lack of job security is ridiculous. I am still on contracts every year due to circumstances outside of my control.

6.2 Recommending teaching as a career

Participants in both the public and teacher surveys were asked whether they would recommend teaching as a career to a young person in their lives.

Teachers' responses are displayed in Figure 6.2 below which shows that 53% of teachers would not recommend teaching as a career.

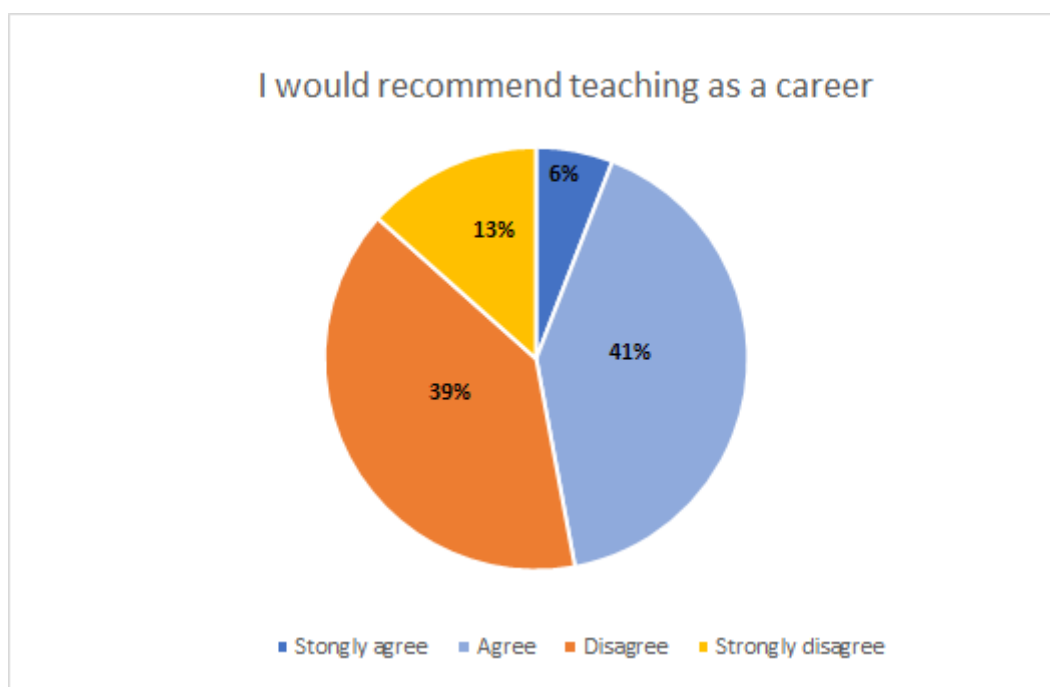


Figure 6.2: Teachers' recommendations of teaching as a career

The results from teacher respondents appeared to somewhat contradict earlier responses to the satisfaction with work item where 62% of respondents expressed overall satisfaction with their jobs. The number of teachers who felt strongly about recommending teaching as a career is of interest, with over twice as many teachers 'strongly disagreeing' as 'strongly agreeing'. This indicates more strongly negative feelings towards teaching as a career among participants. The number of teacher respondents who were planning to leave the profession (along with the reasons they gave for wanting to do so) potentially explains why teachers felt strongly that they would not recommend teaching as a profession.

Participants in the public survey were asked to respond to the question 'Would you encourage your child or a young person in your family to take up teaching as a career?'. Figure 6.3 shows that 59% of respondents indicated that they would not (30%) or that they were unsure (29%).

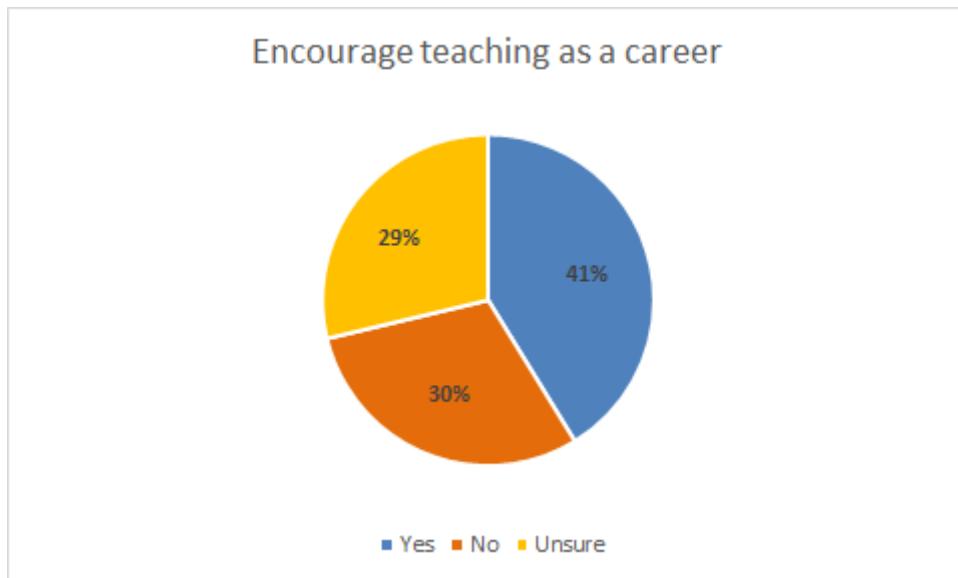


Figure 6.3: Public responses to encouraging teaching as a career.

Those who responded that they would not recommend teaching were asked to elaborate on their reasons, and the majority of those participants (54%) referred to teacher wellbeing as a reason not to go into the profession. This was followed by concerns about workload (44%), insufficient teacher salary (39%) and concerns about the status of the profession (34%).

Discussion Point: This research suggests that attention to workload and wellbeing factors that are concerning both teachers and the public may have the greatest impact on teacher retention as well as attracting future teachers to the profession.

IMPLICATIONS

Considering the data across the teacher survey and the public survey, there are some alignments between the public responses and those of teachers in relation to concerns about teaching as a profession. Similar ratios of teachers and the public felt that teaching was not a job to recommend or encourage, and some of the reasons given across both groups included concerns about the wellbeing of teachers and challenging workloads. Interestingly, the public respondents felt that insufficient salary was an issue that made teaching less attractive but in the analysis of comments from the teacher survey, concerns about salary were rarely raised. Of the 1,381 comments that teachers provided to elaborate on why they were considering leaving the profession, 44 mentioned salary and of those, 30 were not critical of teachers' salaries broadly, but rather connected the remuneration to the increased workload and hours required as this comment illustrates: *'the pay is not consistent with the incredibly long hours you need to keep to be a good teacher'*.

Concerns have long been raised in Australia about a forthcoming teacher shortage as a result of an ageing workforce and higher attrition rates of early career teachers (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012; Kearney, 2014). Schools in rural and remote locations, and particularly complex schools, are already finding it difficult to recruit and retain teachers (Kline, White, & Lock, 2013; Lampert & Burnett, 2016; Plunkett & Dyson, 2011). Responses from participants in both the teacher and public surveys support the concerns around both teacher attrition and attraction that have been identified as issues globally (OECD, 2005).

Teacher attrition carries with it a number of interrelated concerns. High attrition rates of teachers have been shown to have negative flow-on effects for student achievement (Kearney, 2014). There are also significant direct economic costs associated with high teacher attrition rates including the cost of recruiting, training and developing new teachers (Watlington, Shockley, Guglielmino, & Felsher, 2010) as well as non-economic costs to schools and communities (Brasche & Harrington, 2012; Sorensen & Ladd, 2018). For example, research suggest that achievement declines when 'students are taught by a succession of new teachers' (Watlington et al., 2010, p. 26). Therefore, understanding the reasons behind teachers' intentions to leave the profession could raise awareness and influence policy and practice in order to mitigate against the possibility of losing high proportions of teachers, as our teacher survey indicates is likely over coming years.

Coupled with the number of teachers who indicated their intent to leave the profession, the lack of encouragement for future teachers is a pressing issue for the future of the teaching profession. The results from this study suggest that there are broad perceptions about the attractiveness of teaching as a career in Australia which may deter future potential teachers from entering the profession. Social perceptions of teaching as a profession have been identified as important to the motivations of those who become teachers. Individuals who choose teaching see the profession as socially worthwhile and important through being able to make a difference to the lives of children and young people (Fray & Gore, 2018; Heinz, 2015). Watt and Richardson (2017) supported the notion that teachers often go into the profession to follow a calling, but that they find that the status and pay do not reflect the demands of the work.

Our study shows that there are commonalities between teachers and the public in relation to perceptions of the teaching profession in Australia. This study suggests that these issues include workload, wellbeing and appreciation, and are impacting teachers' perceptions of being able to make the difference that they would like to.

It is imperative that these issues are addressed to ensure the strength of Australia's schooling system into the future. The findings of this study can contribute to evidence-based policy-making and inform public discussion and awareness about policy and practice.

REFERENCES

- Allen, J., Rowan, L., & Singh, P. (2019). Status of the teaching profession - attracting and retaining teachers. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 47(2), 99-102. doi:10.1080/1359866X.2019.1581422
- Ashiedu, J. A., & Scott-Ladd, B. D. (2012). Understanding teacher attraction and retention drivers: Addressing teacher shortages. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 37(11), 23-41.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS]. (2019). 2018. *Schools. Australia*. Retrieved from: <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4221.0#:~:targetText=4221.0%20%2D%20Schools%2C%20Australia%2C%202018&targtText=ln%202018%3A,and%2014.6%25%20in%20independent%20schools>
- Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA]. (2016). *National Report on Schooling in Australia*. Retrieved from: <https://www.acara.edu.au/reporting/national-report-on-schooling-in-australia/national-report-on-schooling-in-australia-2013/schools-and-schooling/staff>
- Bahr, N., Pendergast, D., & Ferreira, J. (2018). *Teachers are NOT under-qualified and NOT under-educated: here's what is really happening*. Retrieved from <https://www.aare.edu.au/blog/?p=3197>
- Beausaert, S., Froehlich, D. E., Devos, C., & Riley, P. (2016). Effects of support on stress and burnout in school principals. *Educational Research*, 58(4), 347-365. doi:10.1080/00131881.2016.1220810
- Billett, P., Fogelgarn, R., & Burns, E. (2019). *Teacher Targeted Bullying and Harassment by Students and Parents; Report from an Australian Exploratory Survey*. Melbourne: La Trobe University.
- Brasche, I., & Harrington, I. (2012). Promoting teacher quality and continuity: Tackling the disadvantages of remote Indigenous schools in the Northern Territory. *Australian Journal of Education*, 56(2), 110-125.
- Buchanan, J., Prescott, A., Schuck, S., Aubusson, P., Burke, P., & Louviere, J. (2013). Teacher Retention and Attrition: Views of Early Career Teachers. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 38(3). Available at: <http://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte/vol38/iss3/8>
- De Vos, J., & Kirsten, G. J. C. (2015). The nature of workplace bullying experienced by teachers and the biopsychosocial health effects. *South African Journal of Education*, 35(3).
- Fahie, D., & Devine, D. (2014). The Impact of Workplace Bullying on Primary School Teachers and Principals. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 58(2), 235-252. doi:10.1080/00313831.2012.725099
- Fetherston, T., & Lummis, G. (2012). Why Western Australian Secondary Teachers Resign. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 37(4). doi:10.14221/ajte.2012v37n4.1
- Fray, L., & Gore, J. (2018). Why people choose teaching: A scoping review of empirical studies, 2007–2016. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 75, 153-163. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2018.06.009
- Garrick, A., Mak, A. S., Cathcart, S., Winwood, P. C., Bakker, A. B., & Lushington, K. (2017). Teachers' priorities for change in Australian schools to support staff well-being. *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*, 26(3-4), 117-126.
- Gallant, A., & Riley, P. (2017). Early career teacher attrition in Australia: inconvenient truths about new public management. *Teachers and Teaching*, 23(8), 896-913. doi:10.1080/13540602.2017.1358707
- Gozali, C., Claassen Thrush, E., Soto-Peña, M., Whang, C., & Luschei, T. F. (2017). Teacher voice in global conversations around education access, equity, and quality. *FIRE: Forum for International Research in Education*, 4(1). Retrieved from <http://preserve.lehigh.edu/fire/vol4/iss1/2>
- Hall, D., & Langton, B. (2006). *Perceptions of the Status of Teachers*. Retrieved from <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/ECE/2535/5971>
- Heinz, M. (2015). Why choose teaching? An international review of empirical studies exploring student teachers' career motivations and levels of commitment to teaching. *Educational Research and Evaluation*, 21(3), pp. 258-297. doi:10.1080/13803611.2015.1018278
- Kearney, S. (2014). Teacher attrition, retention and mobility: Where does Australia stand? *Education and Society*, 32(2), 5-24. doi:10.7459/es/32.2.02
- Kelly, N., Cespedes, M., Clarà, M., & Danaher, P. A. (2019). Early career teachers' intentions to leave the profession: The complex relationships among preservice education, early career support, and job satisfaction. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 44(3). <http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2018v44n3.6>
- Kline, J., White, S., & Lock, G. (2013). The rural practicum: Preparing a quality teacher workforce for rural and regional Australia *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 28(3),1-13. Retrieved from <http://jrre.psu.edu/articles/28-3.pdf>
- Lampert, J., & Burnett, B. (Eds.) (2016). *Teacher education for high poverty schools*. Singapore: Springer.
- Manuel, J., Carter, D., & Dutton, J. (2018). 'As much as I love being in the classroom ...': Understanding Secondary English Teachers' Workload. *English in Australia*, 53(3), 5-22.
- McCallum, F., & Price, D. (2015). Teacher wellbeing. In F. McCallum & D. Price (Eds.) *Nurturing Wellbeing Development in Education: From little things, big things grow* (pp. 122-142). Abingdon: Routledge.
- McKenzie, P., Weldon, P., Rowley, G., Murphy, M., & McMillan, J. (2014). *Staff in Australia's Schools Survey: 2013 Main Report*. Retrieved from https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/sias_2013_main_report.pdf
- Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). (2005). *Teachers Matter: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers*. OECD.
- Plunkett, M., & Dyson, M. (2011). Becoming a Teacher and Staying One: Examining the Complex Ecologies Associated with Educating and Retaining New Teachers in Rural Australia? *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 36(1), 32-47.
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD]. (2012). *Quality Matters in Early Childhood Education Care: Finland 2012*. OECD Publishing. doi:10.1787/9789264173569-en
- Sass, D. A., Seal, A. K., & Martin, N. K. (2010). Predicting teacher retention using stress and support variables. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 49(2), 200-215. doi:10.1108/09578231111116734
- Shine, K. (2015). Reporting the 'exodus': News coverage of teacher shortage in Australian newspapers. *Issues in Educational Research*, 25(4), 501-516. <http://www.iier.org.au/iier25/shine.pdf>
- Sorensen, L. C., & Ladd, H. F. (2018). *The Hidden Cost of Teacher Turnover* Washington, DC: National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research.
- The Varkey Foundation. (2018). *Global Teacher Status Index 2018*. Retrieved from <https://www.varkeyfoundation.org/media/4867/gts-index-13-11-2018.pdf>
- Thomson, P., & Riddle, S. (2019). *Who speaks for teachers? Social media and teacher voice*. In A. Baroutsis, S. Riddle, and P. Thomson (Eds.) *Education research and the media: challenges and possibilities* (pp. 119-134). Abingdon: Routledge.

- Watlington, E., Shockley, R., Guglielmino, P., & Felsher, R. (2010). The High Cost of Leaving: An Analysis of the Cost of Teacher Turnover. *Journal of Education Finance*, 36(1), pp. 22-37. doi:10.1353/jef.0.0028
- Watt, H., Richardson, P., & Smith, K. (2017). Why Teach? In H. Watt, P. Richardson, & K. Smith (Eds.), *Global Perspectives on Teacher Motivation: Current Perspectives in Social and Behavioral Sciences* (pp. Xv-Xvi). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/9781316225202.001
- Wernet, N. (2019). Teacher job satisfaction. *Snapshots*, (12), 2-4.
<https://research.acer.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1012&context=snapshots>



Further information

Monash University
Wellington Road
Clayton, Victoria 3800
Australia

T: +61 3 9905 9753
E: seshna.maharaj@monash.edu

monash.edu/education

CRICOS provider: Monash University 00008C