

**REDC**

**ASTI**  
A century of service

# Recruitment, Retention and Supply of Teachers and School Leaders.

April 2023

JOB Ref: 638323/CM



# 1

## Methodology and principal findings



# Research Objectives and Methodology



## Why?

The research objectives were twofold: to obtain data on teacher supply problems in schools in the current school year and to identify the factors impacting on teacher supply at second level.

## How Many?

2,106 ASTI members out of a sample of 12,500 took part in the survey. This represents a response rate of 17% - a strong response.

## Who?

The participants includes 1,975 classroom teachers, 56 principals and 75 deputy principals.

## When?

Fieldwork was conducted in March 2023.

## How?

The survey instrument was an online questionnaire sent by RED C to c.12,500 ASTI members on email database.

# Principal Findings - I



## All schools are facing recruitment problems

Almost every school has had recruitment problems in the current school year. Over three-quarters of principals confirmed that there were situations in their schools where no applicant applied for an advertised post. Almost half of schools – 46% – have unfilled posts due to recruitment difficulties. 81% of schools employed at least one unqualified teacher for a teaching post.

## Substitute teachers

Recruitment problems are compounded by the non-availability of substitute teachers for temporary absences. During the current school year, nine in ten schools have had situations where no substitute teachers were available.

Faced with this contingency, the school principal or deputy principal has had to take the class or pay student teachers to provide substitute cover. In over 80% of schools, non-qualified teachers had to be employed to provide substitution.

# Principal Findings - II



## Factors driving teacher supply problems

Remuneration is perceived as a key driver of supply problems by both school leaders and classroom teachers. 73% of principals stated that teachers are emigrating to get better paid teaching jobs elsewhere and 66% of classroom teachers cited better remuneration in other careers. Classroom teachers also emphasised that unequal pay structures for post-2010 entrants has impacted negatively on teacher supply.

The housing crisis is also a factor: 64% of classroom teachers stated that it is causing teachers to emigrate while 41% of principals stated that cost of local accommodation was a deterrent to working in their school.

## Other factors

The diminishing attractiveness of teaching as a career is significant: 67% of classroom teachers confirmed this as a factor as did 61% of school principals. The lack of permanent posts for entrants to teaching is also identified as problematic by 54% of classroom teachers.

Levels of job satisfaction impact on the perception of teaching as an attractive career. Classroom teachers reported lower levels of job satisfaction (44%) compared to school leaders (58%). Over two-thirds of classroom teachers (76%) have considered leaving teaching. The main reasons are occupational stress (63%), workload (59%) and poor work-life balance (47%).

The cost of initial teacher education via the Post-Graduate Masters (PME) entry route is perceived by 70% of principals as a cause of recruitment difficulties while 48% of classroom teachers regard it as prohibitive.

# Principal Findings - III



## Problems in the supply of principals in schools

Over 3 in 5 principals know of recruitment difficulties for the post of principalship in local schools. Workload, work-life balance and complexity of the role are key factors discouraging applications for the post. The solutions to this emerging supply problem are focused on strengthening school leadership capacity in schools: more administrative staff (72%); dedicated bursar/financial manager (63%); more allocated time for post-holders (55%).

The majority of principals reported that they had positive relationships across the school community. However, almost 2 out of 5 principals reported low job satisfaction. Just one third of principals (34%) reported their level of wellbeing as good. Poor work-life balance (59%) and inability to disconnect from work at weekends (46%) were reported.

Over two-thirds of principals (75%) have considered retiring from their posts. The main reasons: unsustainable workload (86%) and poor work-life balance (69%). Half (50%) stated health and wellbeing reasons.

# 2

## School leaders' experience of teacher supply problems

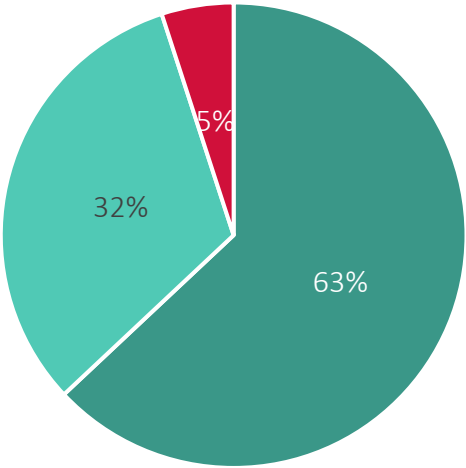


# Recruitment Difficulties



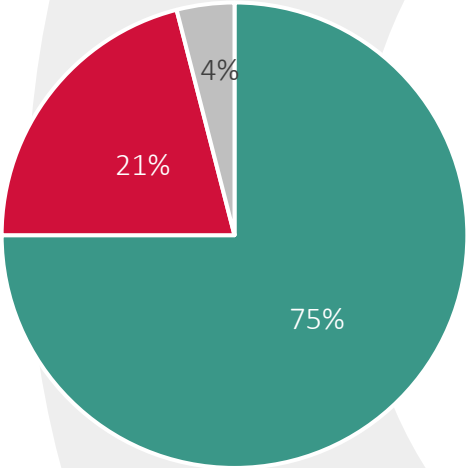
Almost every school cites difficulties in recruiting teachers since August 2022. Three quarters stated that there were situations where there was no application for an advertised teaching post.

### Teacher Recruitment Difficulties



■ Yes – a lot ■ Yes – a little ■ No

### No Application for Advertised Post



■ Yes ■ No ■ Did not advertise for any teacher post

Q. Has your school experienced teacher recruitment difficulties since August 2022?

Q. Since August 2022, has there been a situation where no teacher applied for an advertised teaching post in your school?

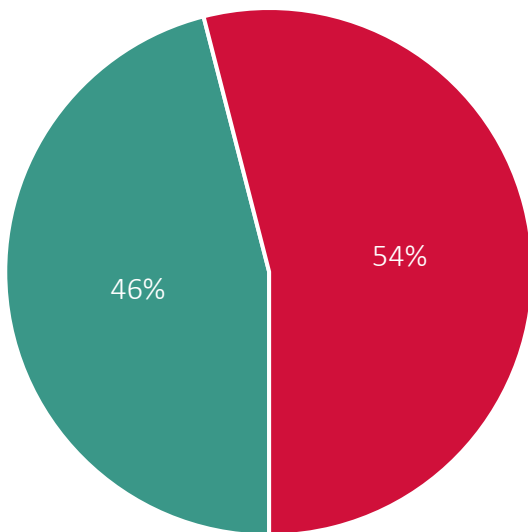
(Base: All Principals)



# Current Unfilled Vacancies

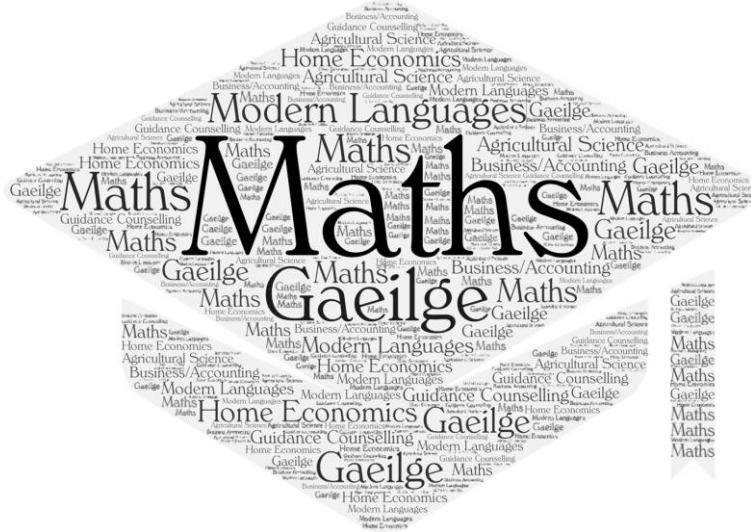


Almost half of schools claim to currently have unfilled vacancies owing to recruitment difficulties.



■ Yes ■ No

## Main Recruitment Challenges

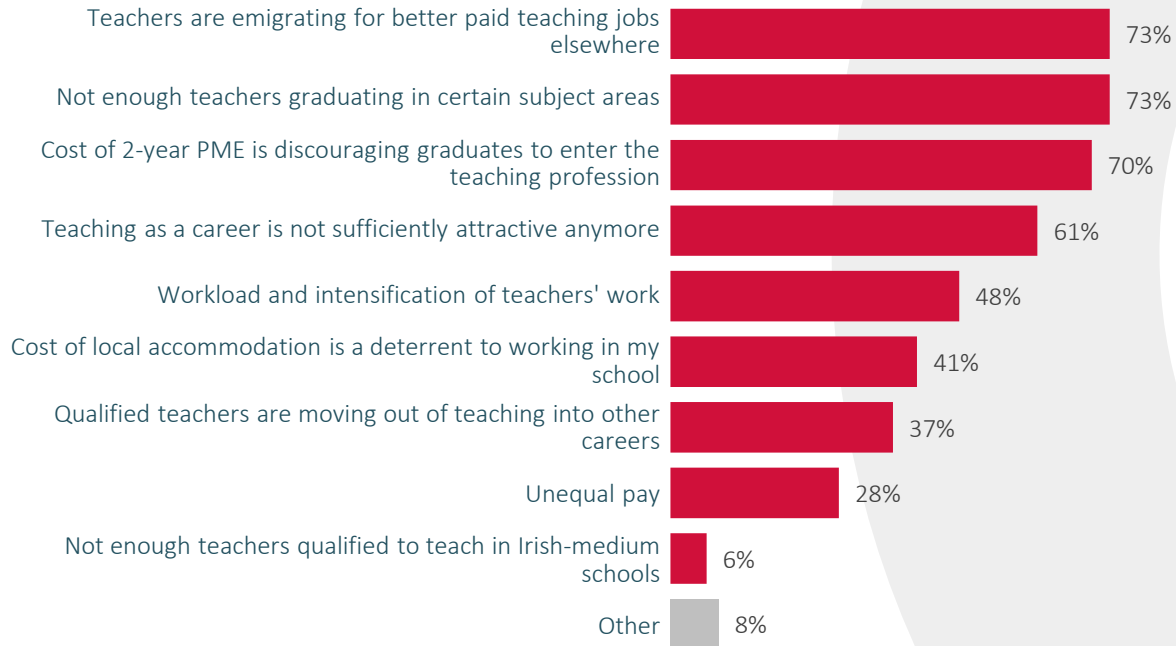


Q. Does your school currently have unfilled vacancies due to recruitment difficulties?  
Q. What are the top 3 subjects in which your school has experienced recruitment difficulties since August 2022  
(Base: All Principals)

# Primary Causes of Recruitment Difficulties



Emigration, lack of graduates and the cost of the 2-year PME are the key factors driving recruitment difficulties.



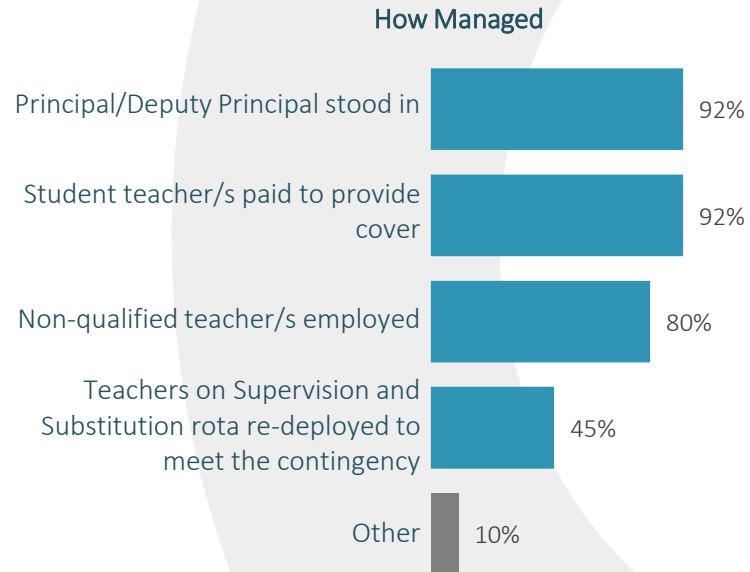
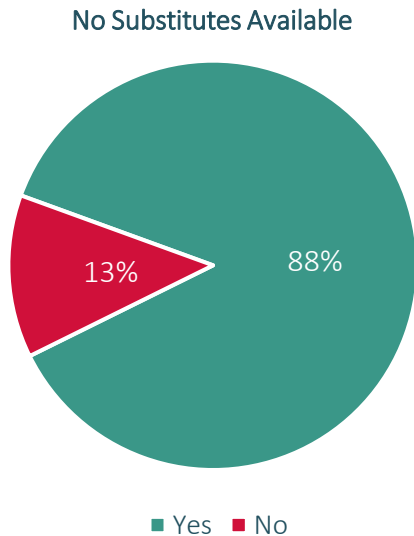
Q. In your opinion, which of the following, if any, are the primary causes of teacher recruitment difficulties at present?

(Base: All Principals/Deputy Principals)

# Availability of Substitute Teachers



9 in 10 schools have had situations where there was no substitute available. Principals and Deputy Principals stand in and/or student teachers are paid to provide cover in almost all cases.



Q. Since August 2022, has there been a situation where no substitute teacher/s was available to provide substitute teaching for absent teacher/s?

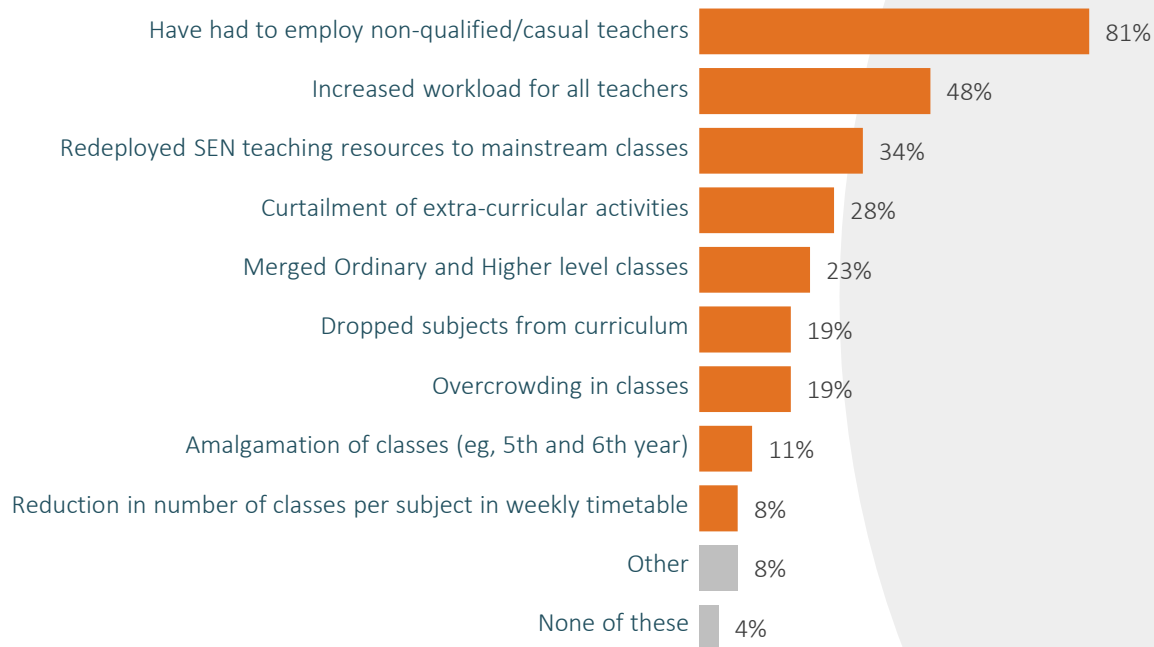
Q. Please select from the list below how you have managed without substitute teachers / supervisors?

(Base: All Principals)

# How The Supply Crisis Has Impacted Schools



The single biggest impact is the need to employ non-qualified/casual teachers to manage teacher supply issues.



Q. Overall, how has the teacher supply crisis impacted on your school in the current academic year?

(Base: All Principals/Deputy Principals)

# 3

## School leaders recruitment issues

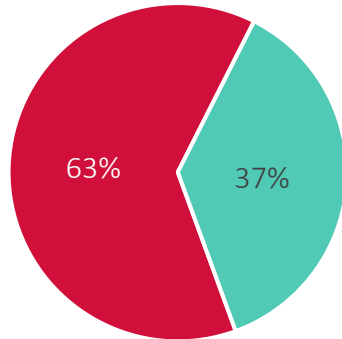


# Recruitment Difficulties for Post of Principalship



Over 3 in 5 know of recruitment difficulties for the post of principalship in local schools. Workload, work-life balance and complexity of the role are key barriers.

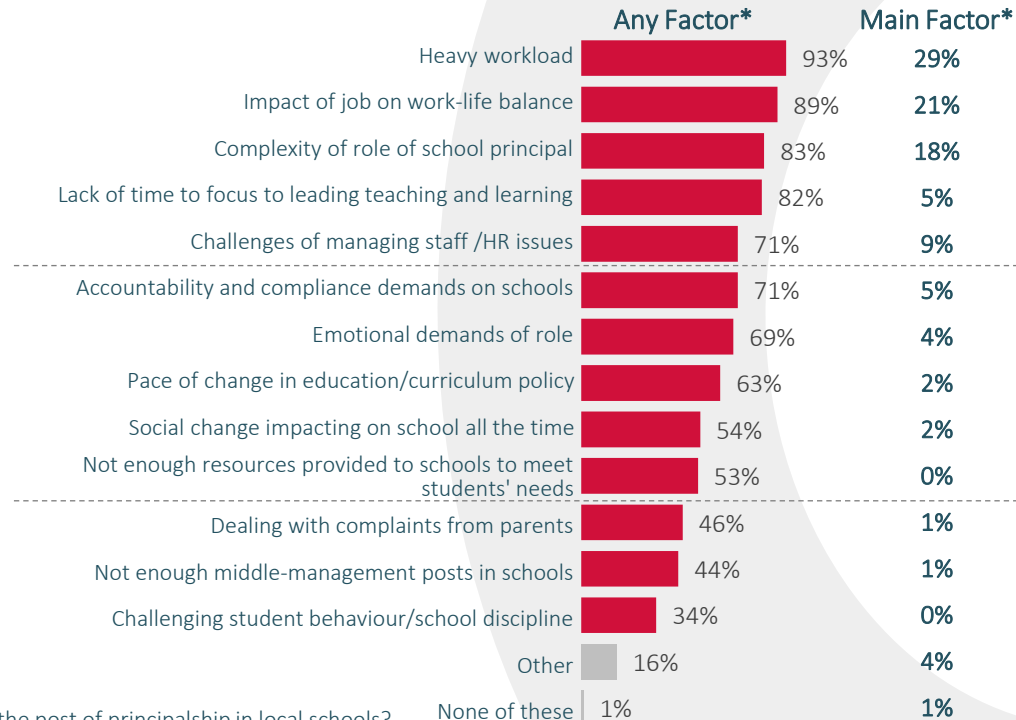
Awareness of Recruitment Difficulties For Post of Principalship



■ Yes ■ No

\*Any Factor : Multiple responses allowed from list

\*Main Factor : Single response allowed



Q. Are you aware of any recruitment difficulties for the post of principalship in local schools?  
 Q. Irrespective of your answer to the previous questions, what is discouraging applications for post of principalship?

(Base: All Principals/Deputy Principals)

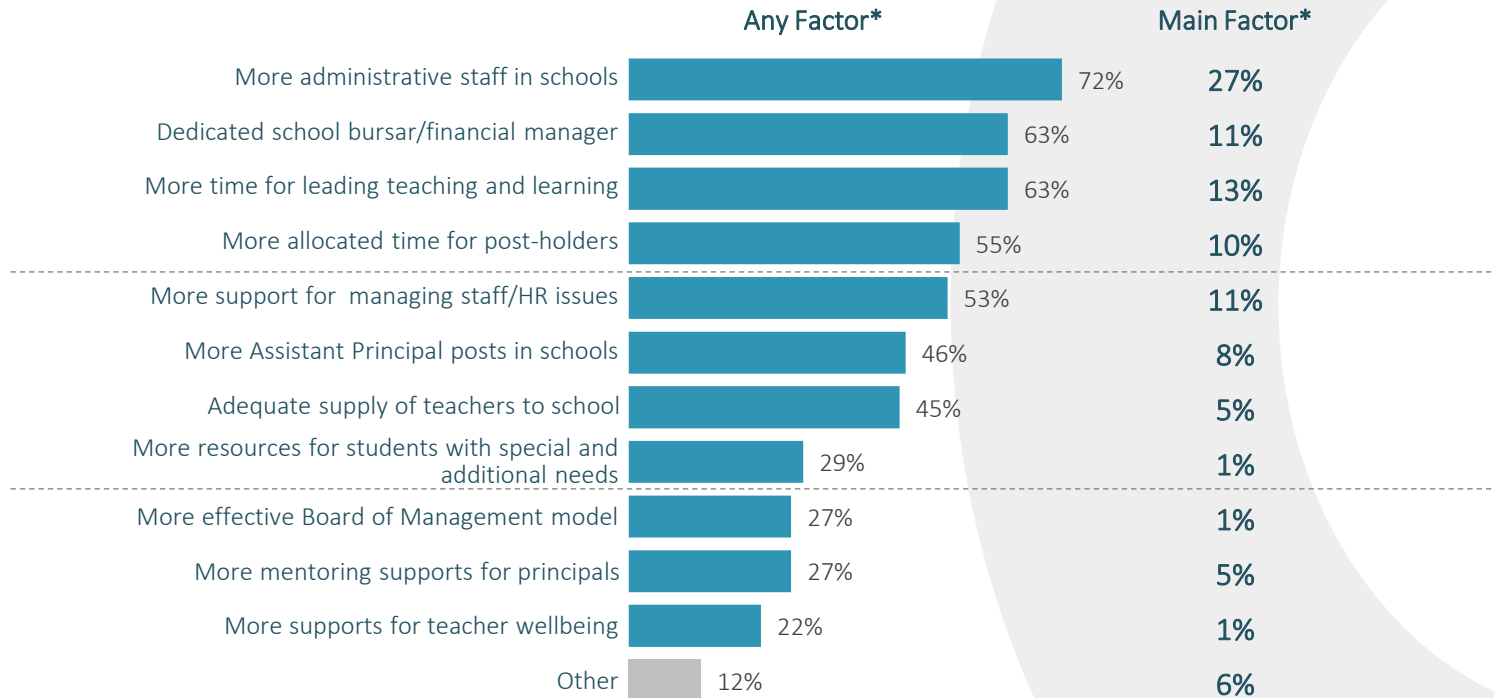
# What Would Encourage Applications for Role of Principal



More administrative staff in schools along with more time for leading teaching and learning were identified as key to encouraging more principalship applications.

\*Any Factor : Multiple responses allowed from list

\*Main Factor : Single response allowed



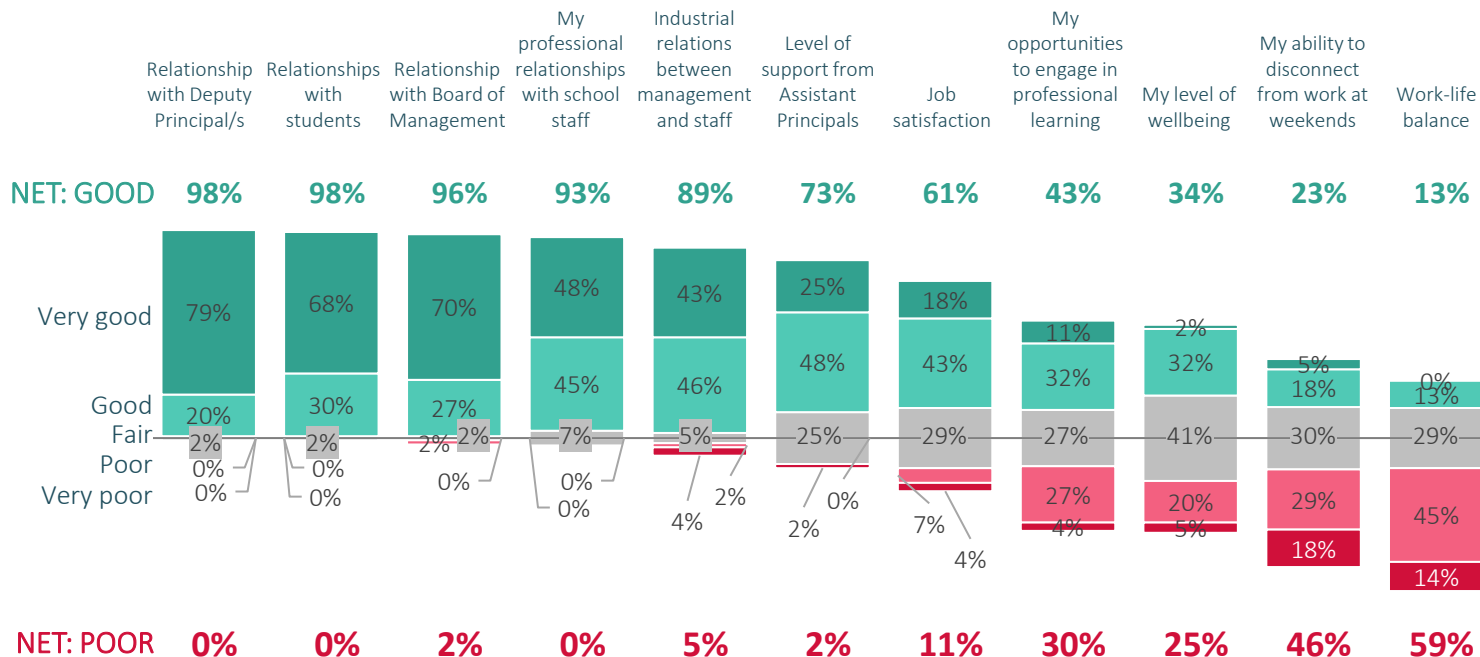
Q. What would encourage more teachers to apply for post of principalship?

(Base: All Principals/Deputy Principals)

# Quality of Principals' Working Lives



While working relationships are good with peers, students, Boards of Management and staff, inability to disconnect at weekends and poor work-life balance impact the quality of principals' working lives.



Q. How do you rate your self in relation to each of the following?

(Base: All Principals)

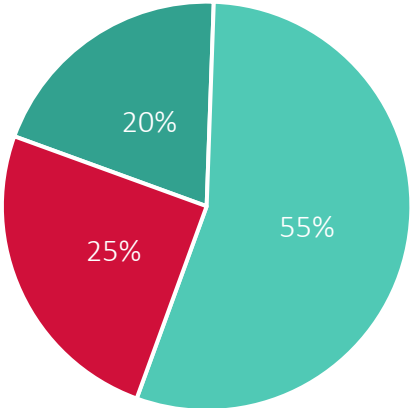


# Retention of Principals



Three quarters of principals have considered resigning; one fifth regularly. Unsustainable workloads and poor work-life balance are the most cited reasons.

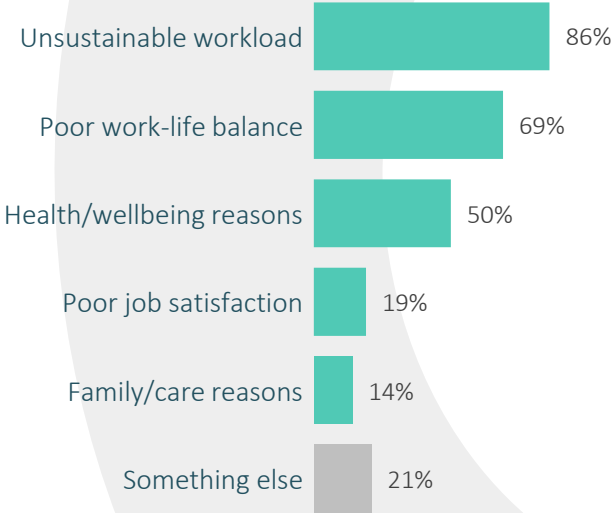
Considered Resigning As Principal



■ Yes – regularly ■ Yes – occasionally ■ No

NET:  
Yes  
75%

Reasons For Considering Resigning?



Q. Have you considered resigning from the post of principal?

Q. Why have you considered resigning?

(Base: All Principals)

# 4

## Teachers' views on teacher supply problem



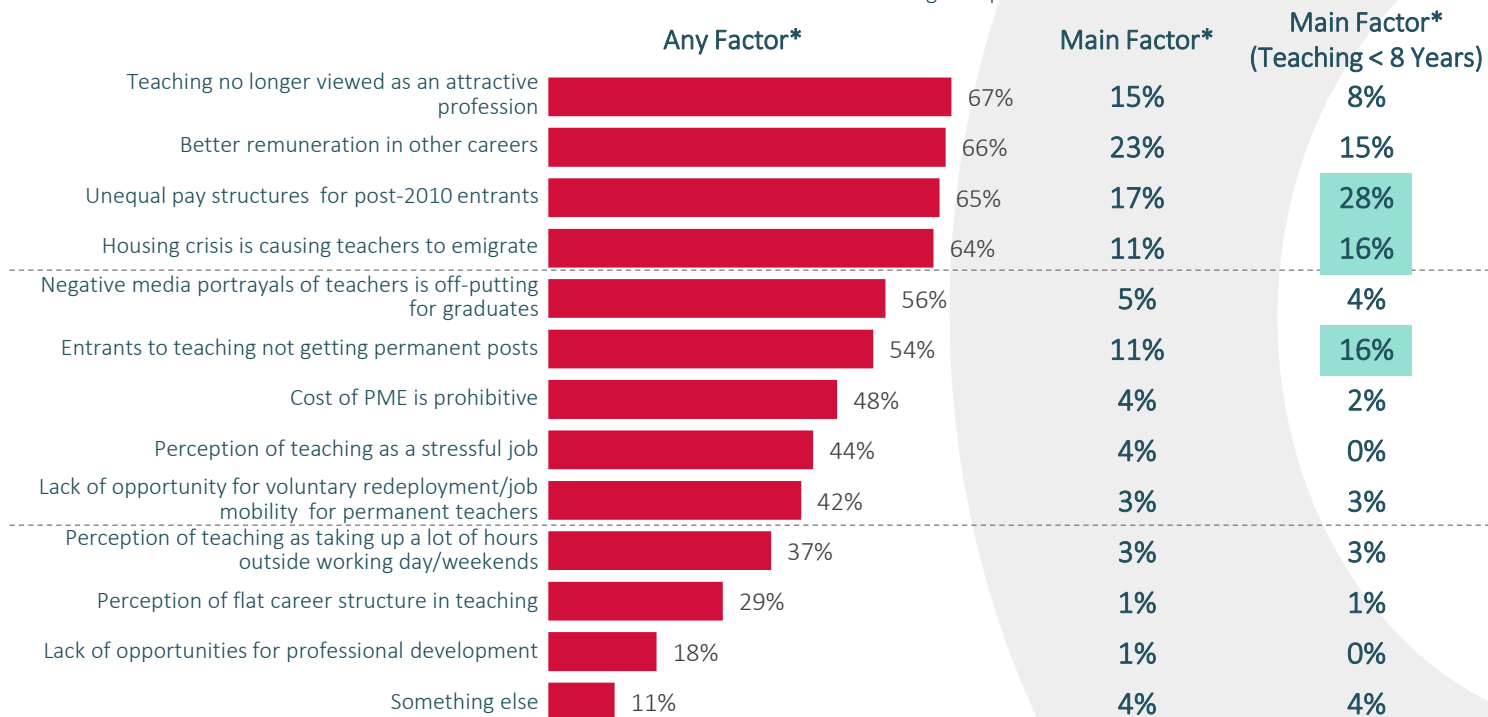
# Factors Behind Supply Crisis



Better remuneration in other careers is seen as the main factor behind the supply crisis by almost 1 in 4 teachers. A further 1 in 6 cite unequal pay structures post-2010.

\*Any Factor : Multiple responses allowed from list

\*Main Factor : Single response allowed



Q. In your opinion, what are the factors behind the teacher supply crisis in schools?

(Base: All Teachers)

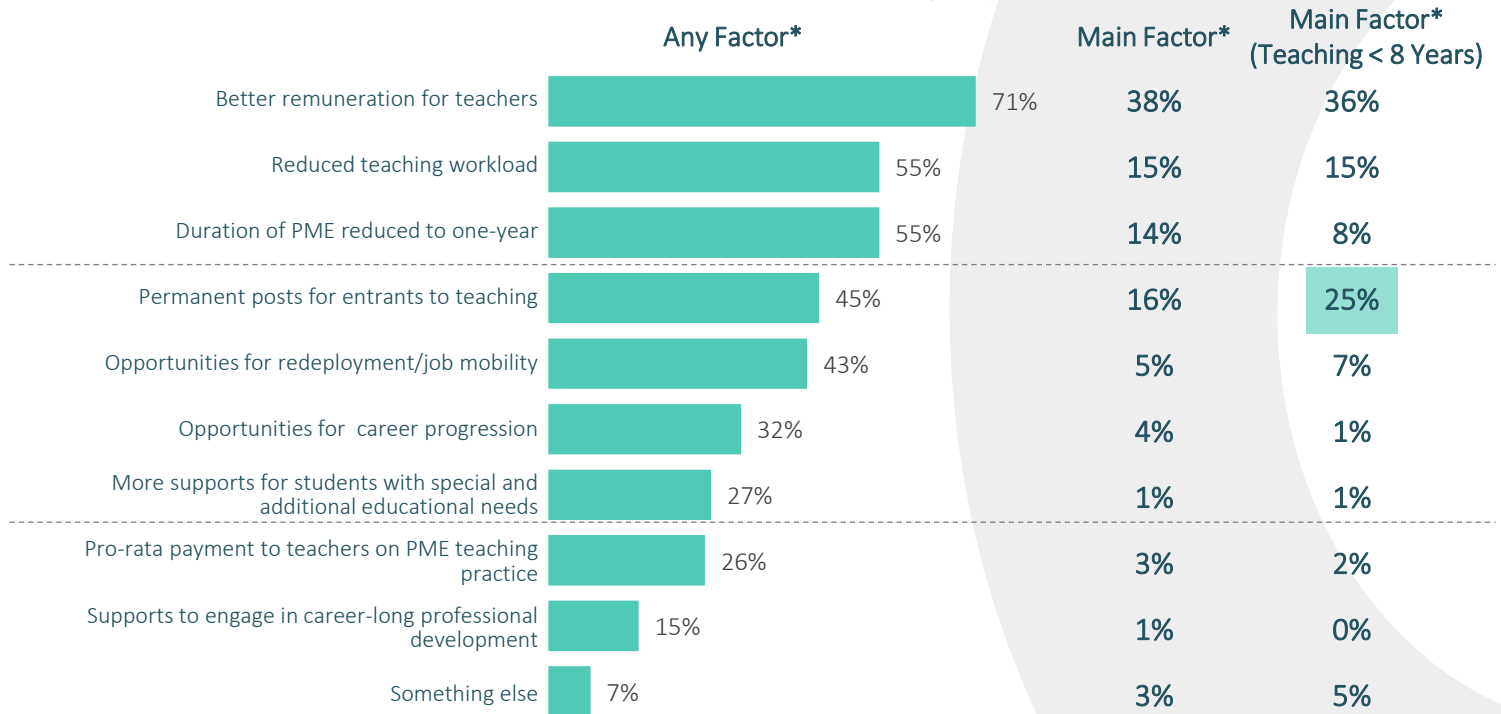
# Factors To Make Profession More Attractive



Better remuneration for teachers is key to enhancing the attractiveness of the teaching profession.

\*Any Factor : Multiple responses allowed from list

\*Main Factor : Single response allowed



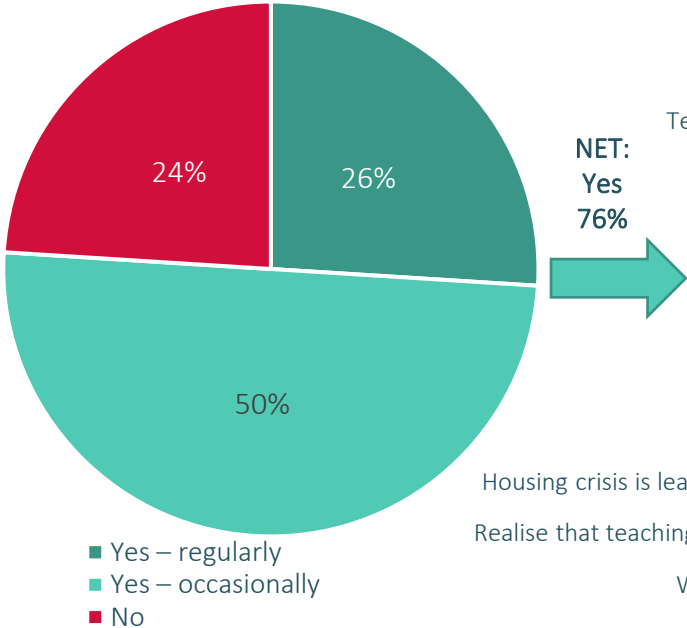
Q. In your opinion, what would make the teaching profession more attractive to graduates?

(Base: All Teachers)

# Retention of Teachers



Three quarters have considered leaving teaching. Stress, unsustainable workload and poor work-life balance are the most cited as reasons for considering leaving.



Q. Have you considered leaving teaching?

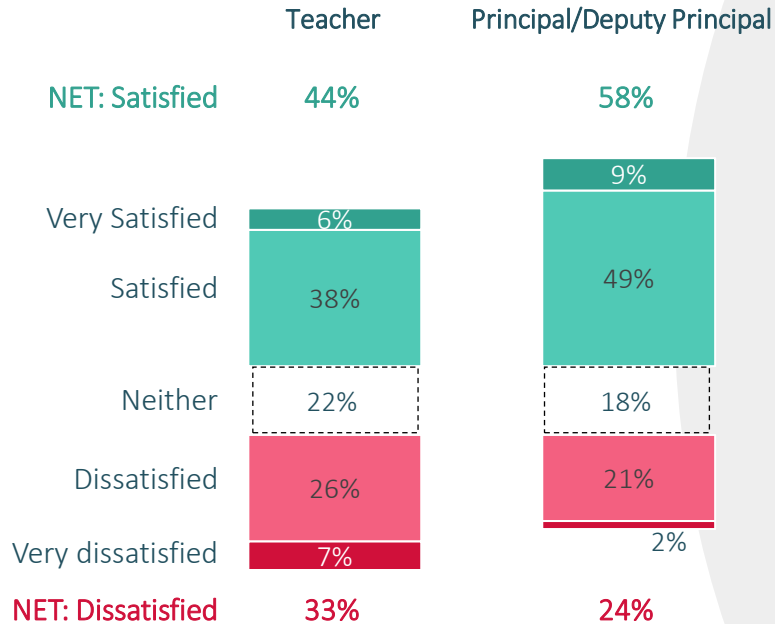
Q. Why have you considered leaving?

(Base: All Teachers)

# Job Satisfaction



Teachers are more likely to be dissatisfied with their job than principals / deputy principals.



NOTE: Scores may not add exactly to 100% due to rounding

Q. Taking into account your current work duties and work environment, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your job?

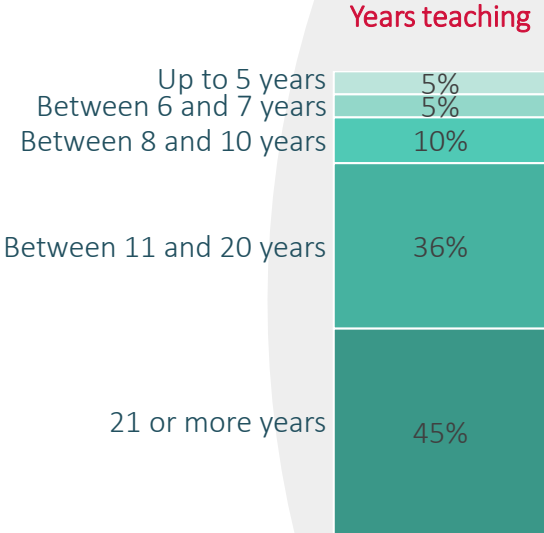
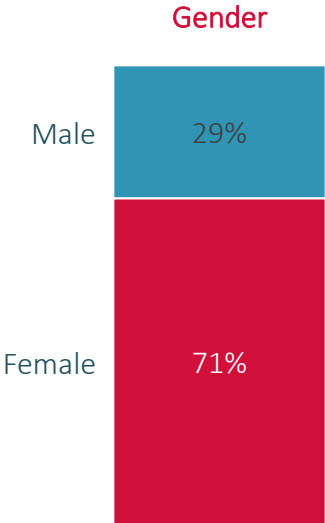
(Base: All Respondents)

# 5

## Profile of survey respondents



# Profile of Respondents



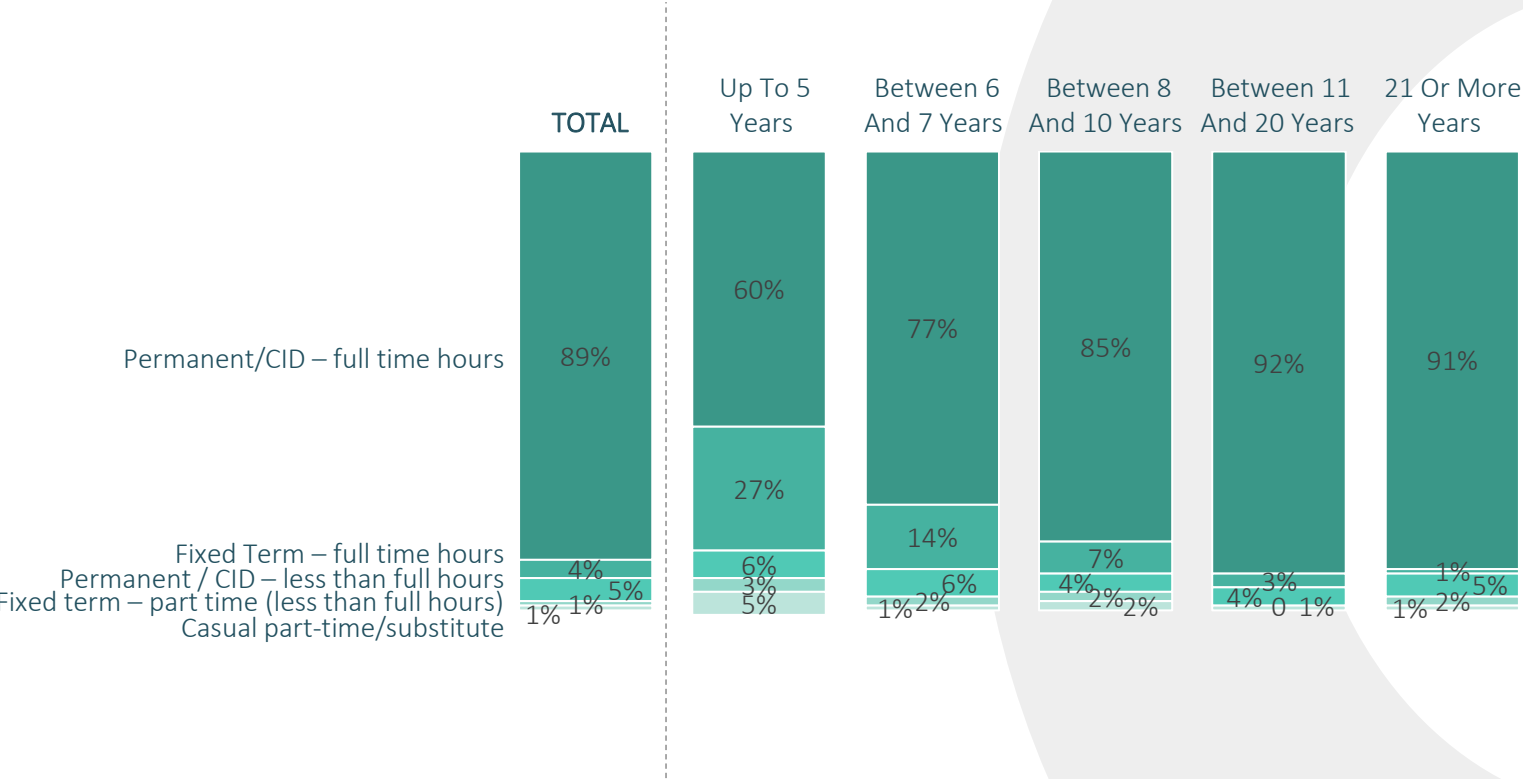
Q. Please select your gender

Q. How many years are you teaching?

(Base: All Respondents)



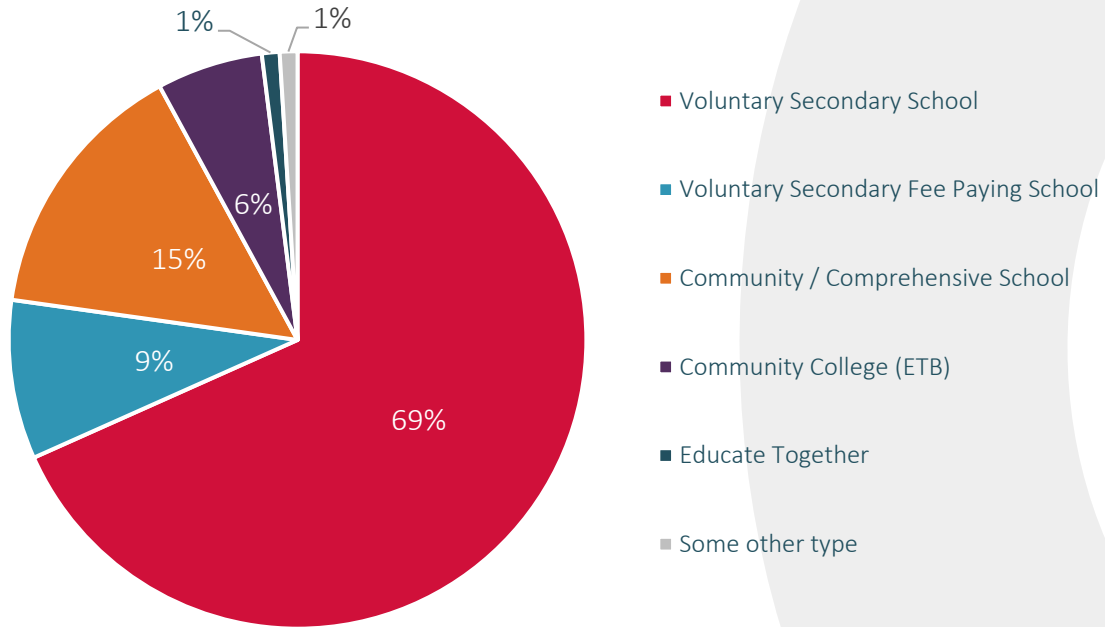
# Employment Status



Q. What is your employment status?

(Base: All Respondents)

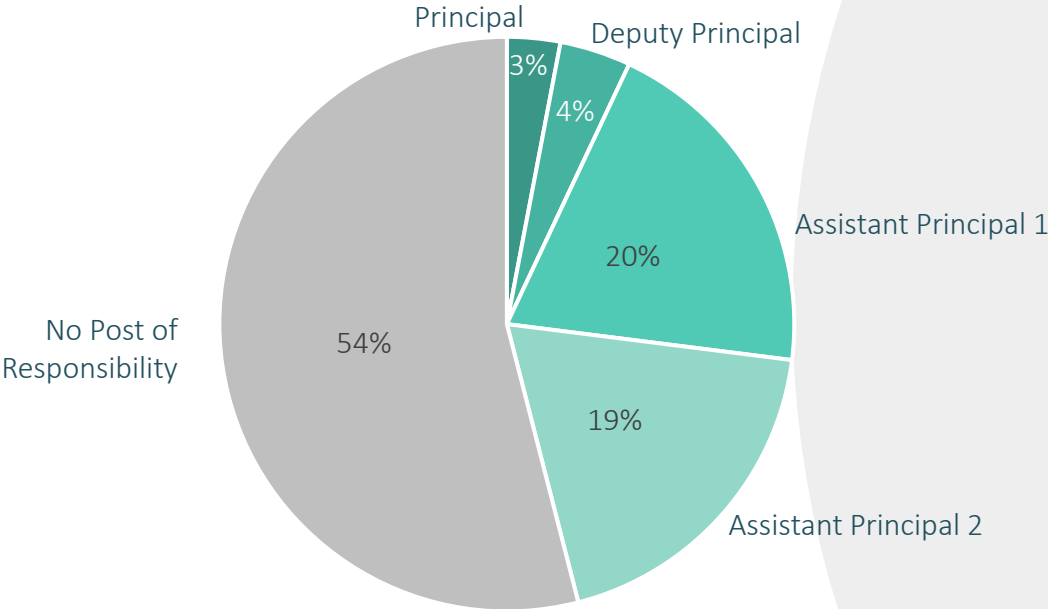
# Type of School



NOTE: Scores may not add exactly to 100% due to rounding

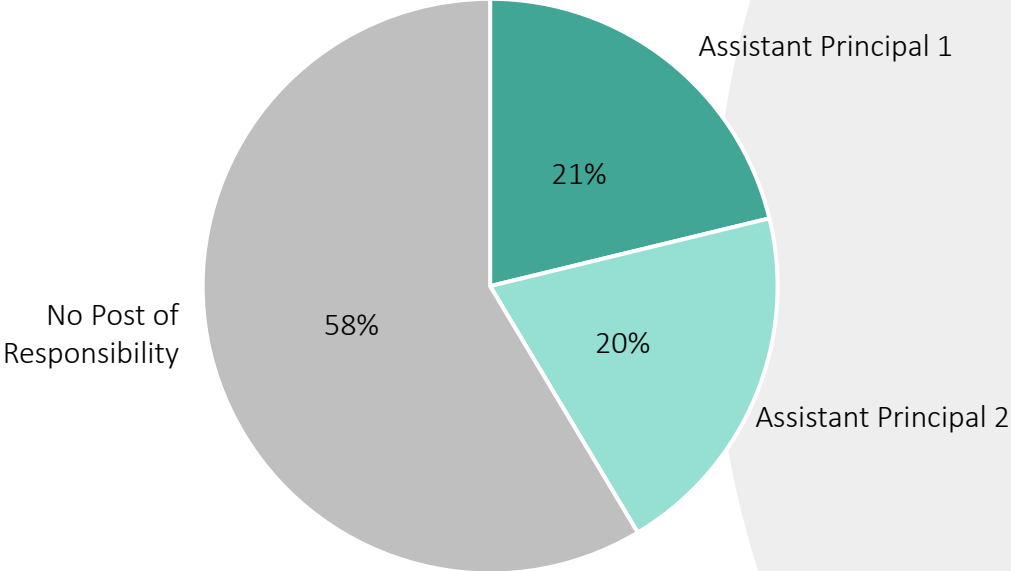
Q. What type of school do you teach in?  
(Base: All Respondents)

# Post of Responsibility



Q. Do you have a Post of Responsibility?  
(Base: All Respondents)

# Post of Responsibility - Teachers



NOTE: Scores may not add exactly to 100% due to rounding

Q. Do you have a Post of Responsibility as follows  
(Base: All Teachers)

# 6

## Key themes emerging



# Key themes emerging – Principals / Deputy Principals



*Note: This section is based on the replies to the open question, 'Please use this space to provide your personal views and experience of the teacher supply problem'.*

## The teacher supply problem is intensifying and impacting on students, teachers and school leaders

- Three quarters of school leaders reported that they received no applications for an advertised teaching post or posts in the current school year.
- 81% of principals/ deputy principals said they had employed at least one unqualified teacher this school year. Other strategies used by schools included delegating additional work to teachers in the school and reassigning Special Education Needs teachers to mainstream classes. Almost a fifth of schools were forced to remove a subject/ subjects from the curriculum.
- In addition to unfilled vacant posts, 88% of principals reported that no substitute teachers were available to teach required subjects. Schools coped with these contingencies in three main ways: principal/deputy principal supervised the class; student teachers were paid to substitute; and unqualified teachers were hired.
- Principals' statements reflected deep concern about the impact on students. The biggest concern of principals was reduction in subject choice overall and the loss of teaching time for students during the school year. This is particularly stressful for students sitting the State examinations; being supervised is not equivalent to being taught. A particularly worrying development is the fact that SEN teaching resources are frequently reassigned to meet short-term substitute or supervision needs.
- Many principals referred to having to amalgamate classes due to lack of supervision cover. A common concern was the adverse impact of teacher shortages on the school's extra-curricular activities and the resultant narrowing of opportunities for students. The latter was perceived by many principals as adversely affecting the ethos of their school and their commitment to holistic education goals.
- The teacher supply problem is clearly having a huge impact on principals' workload and wellbeing. Principals universally reported the high level of stress they experienced by always being on contingency-mode and having to reschedule their own work until after the school day due to the necessity of filling in for supervision.
- Classroom teachers' workload is also adversely impacted. In addition to having to teach subjects which they are not qualified in – which invariably causes extra work and stress – their Supervision and Substitution work is also increased. In 2023, 45% of principals reassigned teachers on this Rota.

# Key themes emerging – Teachers



*Note: This section is based on the replies to the open question, 'Please use this space to provide your personal views and experience of the teacher supply problem'.*

## Factors driving teacher supply crisis

- More noticeably than in previous years, the key factors identified as driving the teacher supply problem are economic. Pull and push factors are at work. In terms of the former, teachers are emigrating to better paid teaching jobs outside of Ireland as well as moving out of teaching altogether to other careers in Ireland. Push factors are the housing crisis, costs of commuting and the escalating costs of living. Underlying these push factors is the cost of the PME and the legacy of the introduction of unequal salary structures post-2010. The latter remains corrosive in terms of a widespread perception among teachers of being under-valued.
- This perception of being under-valued echoes teachers' views that their salary does not reflect the value of the work they do. Moreover, it does not reflect the volume of work required of teachers: workload is huge, growing all the time and carried over outside of the working day into the evenings and weekends. Significantly, teachers also reported pressure due to emails/WhatsApp communications after work advising of changes to the timetable due to staffing contingencies. Wellbeing is clearly undermined and levels of satisfaction are declining.
- The external environment of the housing crisis is also a key factor. In 2022, 25% of principals stated that the cost of housing was a deterrent to working in their school: this has increased to 41% in 2023. Among teachers, 64% stated that the housing crisis is causing teachers to emigrate. Many of the comments referred to the fact that even having two teachers' salaries coming into a home was not enough to purchase a house in the locality. Moreover, commuting costs are high and many teachers have long commutes: the latter is significant given the amount of preparation and marking work which teachers have to do in the evenings.

# Key themes emerging – Teachers continued



*Note: This section is based on the replies to the open question, 'Please use this space to provide your personal views and experience of the teacher supply problem'.*

## Declining attractiveness of teaching as a profession

- Compared to previous ASTI / RED C research, teachers' discourse on the declining attractiveness of teaching as a profession is more pronounced. The narrative has become mainstream and is attributable to trends and factors identified in this survey. Teaching is increasingly viewed by its practitioners as an unsustainable job for a number of reasons, including workload.
- Workload is not only influenced by the number of classes teachers teach: it is also impacted by the diversity of student need in every classroom. Such need is constantly evolving and teachers have to daily prepare and review lesson plans and tasks in response to same. This professional judgement-making is at the heart of teachers' pedagogical practice and is not new. Large classes, lack of professional time for peer collaboration and differentiated teaching to meet the additional learning needs of SEN students have greatly increased the overall workload. In addition, teaching new subject specifications and deploying a wide range of assessment strategies is intensifying teachers' work and requires significant additional hours work outside of the school day. This heavy workload is compounded by additional supervision and substitution duties due to teacher shortages.
- Again, compared to previous ASTI / RED C research, the issue of access to promotional opportunities for teachers is also very pronounced. Teachers feel that insufficient consideration is given to experience. This is proving to be extremely discouraging for many teachers who stated that their long years of commitment and extra-curricular work in the school are not being recognised.



# What principals are saying...



1

*Always amalgamating classes because I cannot get subs*

2

*I have advertised in the North and the UK for a teacher of Spanish as none available in Ireland.*

3

*Complete lack of qualified subs in maths, languages and science. Impacting on students.*

4

*Recruitment is now a nightmare and can absorb the entire three months of the summer...Young teachers going abroad to raise money to get deposit for a house.*

5

*In my opinion this is nothing short of a crisis. I advertised a full-time position last June and have yet to receive a single application. I work in an Irish-medium school. Teachers with Irish cannot be found and one is left in the invidious position of hiring teachers who cannot teach through Irish.*

6

*It has got to the stage where I don't see the point of advertising a short-term vacancy as there will be no applicants.*

7

*Daily supply issues: students are being supervised but they are not being taught.*

# What teachers are saying...



1

*Having the further worries of financial issues, housing on top of an ever-increasing workload is unsustainable and will lead people to leave the profession in droves – as we are currently seeing.*

2

*I am passionate about teaching and love my job! That said, the lack of permanency, the cost of housing, lack of CPD... are huge disincentives for many new entrants.*

3

*Mental health issues such as severe anxiety and suicidal thoughts are on the increase and parents turn to teachers for help. We are not trained well enough to deal with such serious issues.*

4

*Teaching is a great profession and can provide a great work-life balance. It needs to be kept this way.*

5

*There is a vicious cycle whereby the perception of teaching as a stressful job is discouraging people from choosing teaching.*

6

*Both my husband and I are permanent full-time teachers and we can't afford to buy a house where we live.*

7

*More needs to be done to explain the genuine work which teachers do and with such good faith.*

8

*Cost of living means that two teachers' salary in our home means we barely manage to pay the bills each month. Nothing left over to put into savings. Definitely need to put the heating off and wear extra clothes this winter.*

# THANK YOU

REDC

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