



Tomorrow's teachers

A roadmap to get Gen Z into the classroom



This report has been written in collaboration with Public First, a policy - research, opinion and strategy consultancy. We work with global companies, governments, start-ups, institutions and foundations around the world to tackle major public policy and strategic challenges.

The education practice, which is made up of experts with experience of work in government, the civil service, schools, academia and the third sector, has worked on major reports and strategy initiatives across the schools, skills and higher education sectors.

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Teach First is a charity that believes education is the most powerful tool to help a child fulfil their potential.

We are a community of leaders, working within the classroom and beyond, to give children facing the biggest barriers the opportunities to thrive in school and in life.

Since 2003, we've helped over two million children by training brilliant teachers to work in the schools that need them most, equipping school leaders, supporting local teacher training providers, championing careers education, building strong networks of support and expertise, and campaigning to end educational inequality.

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Foreword: A unique opportunity to make teaching the "go to" profession for graduates

Every child has huge potential, but too many in the UK's poorest areas are denied the education their wealthier peers take for granted. A third of children are living in poverty and the education gap is widening.

This isn't right. This isn't wise. It needs to change.

High-quality teaching is the strongest lever we have inside schools to ensure all pupils can thrive. For 20 years, Teach First has proudly partnered with the Department for Education to recruit, attract and place more than 17,000 teachers in schools serving the country's most deprived communities. We know firsthand the difference teachers can make having seen countless examples of dedicated Teach First teachers and their colleagues raising school standards, transforming pupil outcomes and breaking down barriers to opportunity.

But for many graduates, teaching involves trade-offs. Salaries in England lag behind other graduate roles, and flexibility is also limited. On the other hand, teaching offers job security, good holidays, generous pensions, and deeply fulfilling work.

This trade-off is no longer compelling enough for graduates. Recruitment is falling, and many teachers are turning to industrial action, or leaving the profession, due to concerns over pay and conditions. The problem is felt most acutely in schools serving deprived communities – Teach First's focus – and in shortage subjects like Maths, Physics and Business Studies, which we also prioritise, as graduates can earn higher salaries elsewhere.

The Government's pledge to recruit 6,500 more teachers is a welcome step in the right direction. But given the scale of the challenge, action to realise this must begin now. The untapped potential of our young people is vast; failing to invest in their education could cost the UK economy around £38 billion.[1]

At Teach First, we've always believed that attracting the brightest graduates requires more than just the traditional recruitment offer. That's why we've focused on creating a strong social mission, a competitive recruitment model, rigorous training in pedagogy and leadership development, partnering with businesses to offer wider opportunities and building a community of ambassadors inside and outside the classroom, committed to ending educational inequality.

The first, brave cohort of Teach First graduates are now in their forties. Many are leading some of the country's best schools and MATs. To ensure we can continue attracting the education leaders of the future, we now need to understand fully the motivations and priorities of Gen Z, both so that Teach First can continue to attract talented individuals into schools serving the most deprived communities, and so that the Government can achieve its ambitious recruitment targets.

This report, commissioned from Public First, outlines our vision for attracting the next generation of teachers. With a new Government in place, there is a rare opportunity to set a fresh agenda—one that makes teaching a top choice for graduates, offers competitive benefits, and rewards expertise fairly.

By investing in our schools and teachers and making the necessary interventions, we can break the cycle of inequality and unlock the potential of every child. The future of our young people—and our nation—depend on it.

Russell Hobby
Teach First CEO



Executive summary



Executive summary

Most teachers join the profession because they want to make a difference and change lives, yet for many graduates deciding whether to enter the teaching profession, there have always been trade-offs. On the one hand, teaching salaries in England have not remained competitive compared to other graduate salaries in the private sector, and the structure of the school day means some schools believe flexibility and remote working are difficult to achieve. On the other hand, teachers enjoy job security and stability, good holidays, and generous pensions. Above all, teachers' work is widely seen as fulfilling: it has a clear social purpose and involves working with children while teaching a subject or age group one loves. It is this blend of stability and fulfilment that teacher recruitment strategies have tended to emphasise in years gone by.

It has become clear in recent years, however, that this trade off is no longer working. As has been documented widely elsewhere, recruitment numbers have been falling year on year, and teachers are expressing misgivings about pay and conditions both by leaving the profession and by taking industrial action. The problems are particularly pronounced for schools serving areas of high deprivation and in shortage subjects, such as Maths, Physics and Business Studies, where graduates can command significantly higher salaries elsewhere.

The new Government has demonstrated its awareness of these challenges, as well as the urgent need to fix them, by pledging to recruit an additional 6,500 teachers and awarding current teachers a well-deserved pay rise. But if they are to reach their ambitious target, we need to see a clear, decisive and radical shift. Recruiting 6,500 additional teachers is not just the responsibility of the Government alone. **We need to see charities, businesses, trusts, schools and teachers themselves work together to redefine the environment.**

Earlier this year, Teach First commissioned Public First, a policy, research, opinion and strategy consultancy, to investigate the attitudes of Gen Z towards careers, and teaching in particular. They undertook a literature review, ran a nationally representative poll of 3,031 young people, conducted segmentation analysis, ran four online focus groups with A Level and undergraduate students, and conducted four interviews with sector experts.

Across the course of their research, they established that the traditional teacher recruitment offer is struggling due to several reasons:

- Our poll found that most members of Gen Z are frustrated idealists. Although they see teaching as a socially valuable profession and can point to positive experiences of individual subjects and teachers during their own schooldays, they also want to buy a house and earn a good salary while 'making a difference'. Given that rising housing prices and the broader cost of living crisis have made such steps harder, the job security and social purpose of teaching have failed to counterbalance the lagging pay.
- Furthermore, Gen Z values flexibility alongside security: there is a general sense that careers today are less linear and more varied than they have been in the past, and that this is welcome. The change has been accelerated by the rise of remote working since the pandemic. Our poll respondents and focus group participants rejected the notion that enjoying this flexibility should entail compromise on earning a good salary and achieving material stability in their early careers.
- Although teaching would allow them to make a social impact, Gen Z also recognise that they would earn better money in other careers, and that while teaching is rewarding, it can also be perceived as stressful and difficult. In addition to this, there was a widespread belief that the salary is not competitive and schools in general lack funding.

With this in mind, we believe that there are three avenues for action.

- ✓ First, there is scope to **reframe the narrative around teacher salaries in terms of total compensation rather than just pay**. To do this, work must go into improving work-life balance and increasing flexibility. We must improve the conditions under which teachers are working to address the 'stressful' and 'difficult' nature of the role.
- ✓ Gen Z said they want to **gain new skills and to develop professionally**; for a less linear career trajectory and about the possibility of 'teaching later'. With this in mind, adopting an 'open door' recruitment model and exposing teachers to other professions in short term placements, could prove mutually beneficial. While teaching already offers daily variety, a new model could further diversify the career, enhance professional development and widen the benefits available to teachers within the profession.
- ✓ That said, there is no getting away from the fact that the **Gen Zs we surveyed and spoke to would like to see a more generous pay offer for teachers**. Higher initial salaries were the most impactful incentive, even among those who were already seriously considering teaching; this should be understood to include trainee salaries too. This reflects Gen Z's desire to establish themselves within their careers and achieve a degree of material security prior to considering the social impact they could have.

Key findings

1.

Gen Z want to make an impact, but not at the cost of stability and good pay.

86% of Gen Z want a career where they're making a difference, and 94% said they want a high salary.

2.

The most important aspect of the job search that we polled was a job with a good work-life balance (56%).

80% of Gen Z want some degree of hybrid work in their jobs, which means that addressing stress and flexibility in the profession is key.

3.

Stability, strong pay, progress, change and ongoing development are all important to Gen Z.

69% expect to be promoted in their first two years, while 44% expect a promotion within 18 months.

4.

Gen Z think teachers make a serious difference, and that teaching is important to society.

73% said that teaching was a job that had purpose, the highest of the options we tested.

5.

Helping children fulfil their potential and building confidence and abilities in young people were seen as the most positive aspects of working as a teacher.

Overall, 77% see helping all children fulfil their potential as a positive aspect of working as a teacher, the highest option we polled.

6.

Gen Z wants variety in their careers and many believe they cannot access that in teaching.

45% said it would be easier to develop professional skills in another sector. 57% said it would be easier to do something new or innovative in another sector.

7.

There is a significant pool of Gen Z who would consider working as a teacher and think they could do the job if they wanted to.

9% of respondents said they would actively like to work as a teacher and 29% said that they would consider teaching but would consider other careers more.

8.

Nearly half (47%) of respondents said they think they would enjoy teaching for a few years, but very few think they could teach for their whole career.

This is compared to only 14% of respondents who said that they would enjoy teaching for their whole careers.

9.

The door to teaching should be held open well into Gen Z's career.

In focus groups, there was a strong sense that teaching was a career for later, not now. There was an appreciation for the expertise that a career prior to teaching can bring, and an openness to the idea that teaching could be a desirable second career following a period in the wider professional world.

10.

Gen Z view teaching as having three main downsides: the salary is poor, it's stressful, and schools lack funding.

42% listed the stress of teaching as a downside of the job, and 36% listed salary as a downside. Working long hours was also a key negative aspect.

11.

Changing salaries could have a significant impact on the recruitment crisis.

When we tested a range of incentives which could be used to motivate people to choose teaching as a career, the top four responses were all salary related. 71% of poll respondents said that it would be easier to achieve earning a lot of money in another sector than it would be to achieve in teaching.

12.

The narrative around teaching needs to change to reflect Gen Z's priorities.

Our experts agreed that despite a political environment that is instinctively pro-social, valuing careers like teaching and medicine, Gen Z are more likely to make career decisions based on what's best for them individually, and their media reputation as a generation of idealists is an exaggeration.

Chapter 1

Introduction



Introduction

The last few years have seen teacher recruitment and retention return to the forefront of education discourse in England. Low recruitment, particularly in key subjects such as Maths and Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) in the secondary phase, and poor retention have contributed to rising pupil-to-teacher ratios, increased working hours for teaching staff and higher teacher vacancy rates.[2] These problems have been particularly pronounced in areas with high levels of disadvantage.[3] The pandemic saw a short-term rise in teacher recruitment and retention as people sought stable professional employment, but this gave way to a longer-term fall as workers saw both the workload issues the Covid-19 pandemic generated in schools and the flexible working patterns that other sectors could adopt more readily than schools.[4]

It is into this environment that Gen Z students are now graduating. Characterised as a generation of lonely young people following extended periods of isolation during the pandemic,[5] Gen Z (born between around 1995 and 2012)[6] are now entering the workforce and looking for security, connection and a challenge.[7] As the recruitment and retention crisis shows, however, they are eschewing the teaching profession, exacerbating existing problems. In response to the crisis, the newly-elected Labour Government has set aside £450m (from private school VAT receipts) to recruit 6,500 new teachers,[8] with £50m of this money likely to go towards early-career retention bonuses.[9] This can be seen as an effort to offset some of the lingering gap between public- and private-sector wage growth; the latter has been stronger over the last several years,[10] and so lessons from the education sector regarding recruitment and retention may be applicable to other parts of the labour market.

For Teach First, recruiting high-quality graduates to become teachers, and work where the need is greatest, is a critical part of our mission to end educational inequality. With the attainment gap widening in recent years[11] and high-quality teachers being a key factor in significantly improving pupil outcomes,[12] attracting high-quality candidates to teaching is the best option that the Government has for improving outcomes for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.

In order to understand the factors affecting recruitment and retention of young people today, Teach First commissioned Public First to investigate Gen Z's attitudes and views towards teaching, and careers more generally. The following research questions were asked

- What are the facilitators and barriers for young people when it comes to their future career plans (e.g. salary, location, flexibility, social value)?
- How do young people currently view teaching as a profession, and what distinguishes those who would consider teaching as a future career?
- What are the characteristics of those "most likely" to teach, and more importantly, those who could be "persuaded" into teaching?
- For "persuadable" groups, what are the identifiable policy levers which could be pulled to make teaching more attractive for upcoming cohorts?
- How much does purpose and mission drive decision making, particularly considering attracting teachers to disadvantaged areas, or schools with high levels of disadvantage?

This paper outlines our findings.

Chapter 2

Methodology



Methodology

Our work proceeded in four stages.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

To begin, we reviewed literature relating to teacher recruitment and retention, in addition to the habits, beliefs and attitudes of young people from Gen Z. This literature review included academic publications, policy briefings, reports, news stories, political outputs and quantitative sources. The findings from this literature review shaped subsequent stages of our research. These findings are outlined in a dedicated section of the report below.

2. POLL

To understand the habits, beliefs and attitudes of Gen Z, we conducted an online poll of 3,031 16 to 24-year-olds in England from 21 May to 4 June 2024 on topics related to values, careers and teaching. Results were weighted by Iterative Proportional Fitting to be representative of national demographics along lines of age, gender, region and ethnicity. This poll consisted of three core elements:

- a. **Attitudes towards careers, especially teaching:** we asked about young people's attitudes towards careers, with a particular focus on teaching. We asked them about their attitudes towards the world of work, their view of the benefits, disadvantages and opportunities available in teaching, and their own intentions regarding career choice.
- b. **Segmentation:** we grouped respondents into four major segments based on their attitudes towards careers. We then looked at how each of these segments varied in their attitudes towards teaching and the demographics that characterised these segments, helping us to see the connection between career attitudes and opinions towards teaching.
- c. **Experiment:** To understand the possible impacts of different policies on Gen Z's willingness to teach, we conducted a choice-based experiment where we presented poll respondents with a set of four random options that might make them more likely to consider becoming a teacher. We then asked them to choose which made them the most and least likely to consider becoming a teacher.

As with all polls, there is a margin of error in the answers. This margin of error is bigger when sample sizes are smaller (such as for very small and specific cross breaks). For this poll, the margin of error is 2%. Public First is a member of the British Polling Council. Our full polling tables are available on our website and at [this link](#).

3. FOCUS GROUPS

We used four independently recruited online focus groups between 26 June and 3 July 2024 to deepen our qualitative understanding of the insights provided by our poll. Two of these were with university students (one of which was composed exclusively of students from the DfE's list of high-tariff universities)[13] and two of these were with students studying Level 3 qualifications, predominantly A levels. Participants hailed from across England.

4. EXPERT INTERVIEWS

We conducted four interviews with five experts regarding graduate and specifically teacher recruitment and retention among young people between 1 May and 15 July 2024. They were:

- **Natasha Porter OBE***, CEO, Unlocked Grads
- **Jack Worth and Dawson McLean**, School Workforce Economists, National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER)
- **Professor Bobby Duffy**, Professor of Public Policy and Director of the Policy Institute, KCL
- **Loic Menzies***, Chief Research Officer, Centre for Education Systems

* denotes Teach First Ambassador.

Chapter 3

What do Gen Z want from their careers?



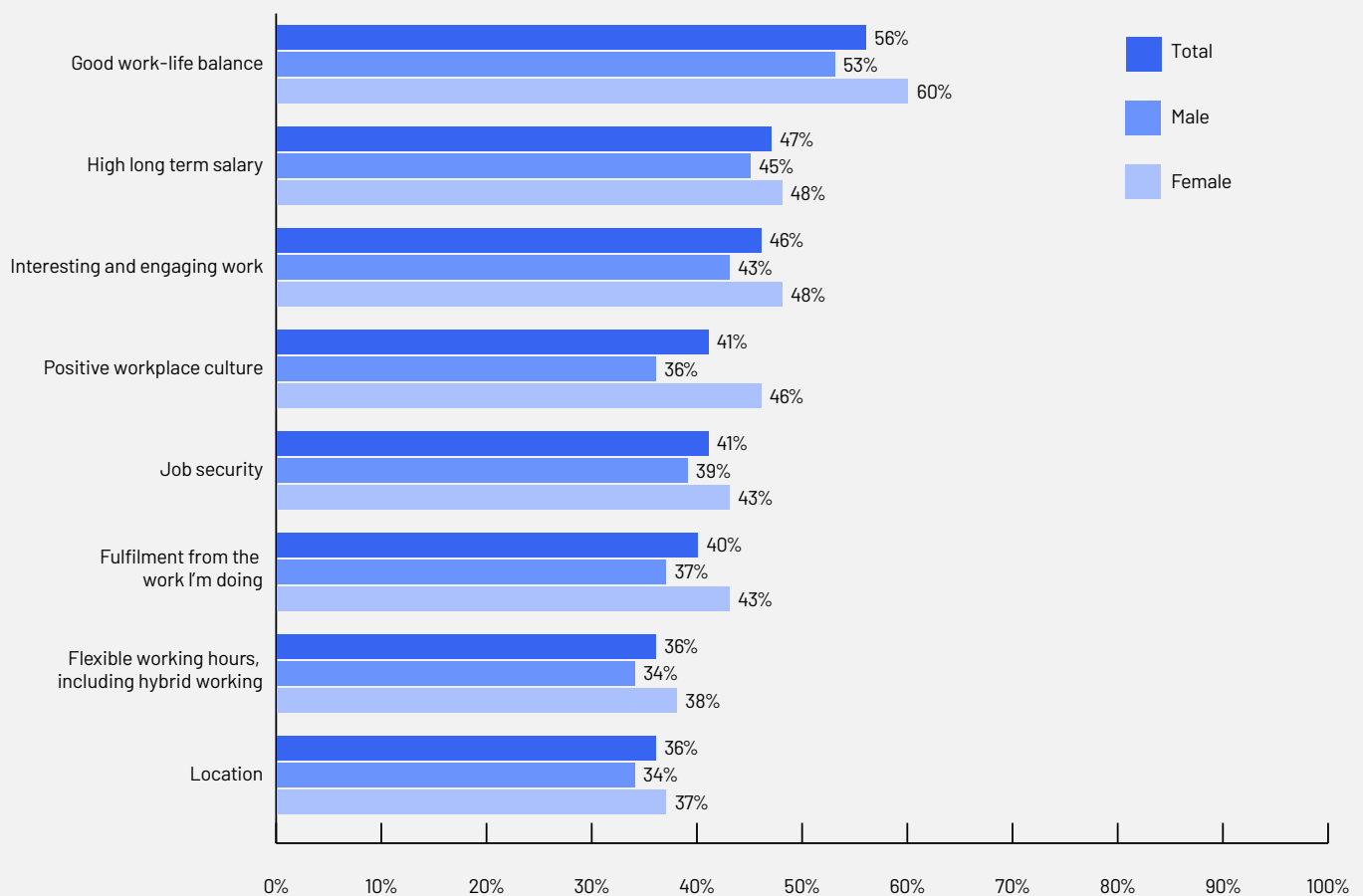
What do Gen Z want from their careers?

1. THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT OF GEN Z'S JOB SEARCH IS ESTABLISHING A GOOD WORK-LIFE BALANCE.

The only aspect of finding a job listed by a majority as important across our sample was establishing a **good work-life balance (56%)**. This was followed by a **high long-term salary (47%)**, **interesting and engaging work (46%)** and a **positive workplace culture (41%)**, each of which was more important to women than men. 80% of respondents indicated a preference for some degree of hybrid work combining in-person and remote activities.

When it comes to finding a job, which of the following aspects are most important to you? Please select all that apply.

Public First | 16 to 24-year-olds in England | sample size: 3,031 | Fieldwork 21 May - 4 June 2024



This prioritisation of work-life balance emerged in focus groups and expert interviews as well, often in a way that did not recognise the inevitable trade-off between work-life balance and income:

“I think a work-life balance is really important...I think it’s really important to be able to have time off and have a lot of holiday and have those experiences outside of work.”

21-year-old female, maths student, high-tariff university, Southampton

“Lots of the drivers with Gen Z are pretty similar: there’s a lot more about work-life balance, but they want to make money, they want a good social life at work.”

Natasha Porter OBE, Unlocked Graduates

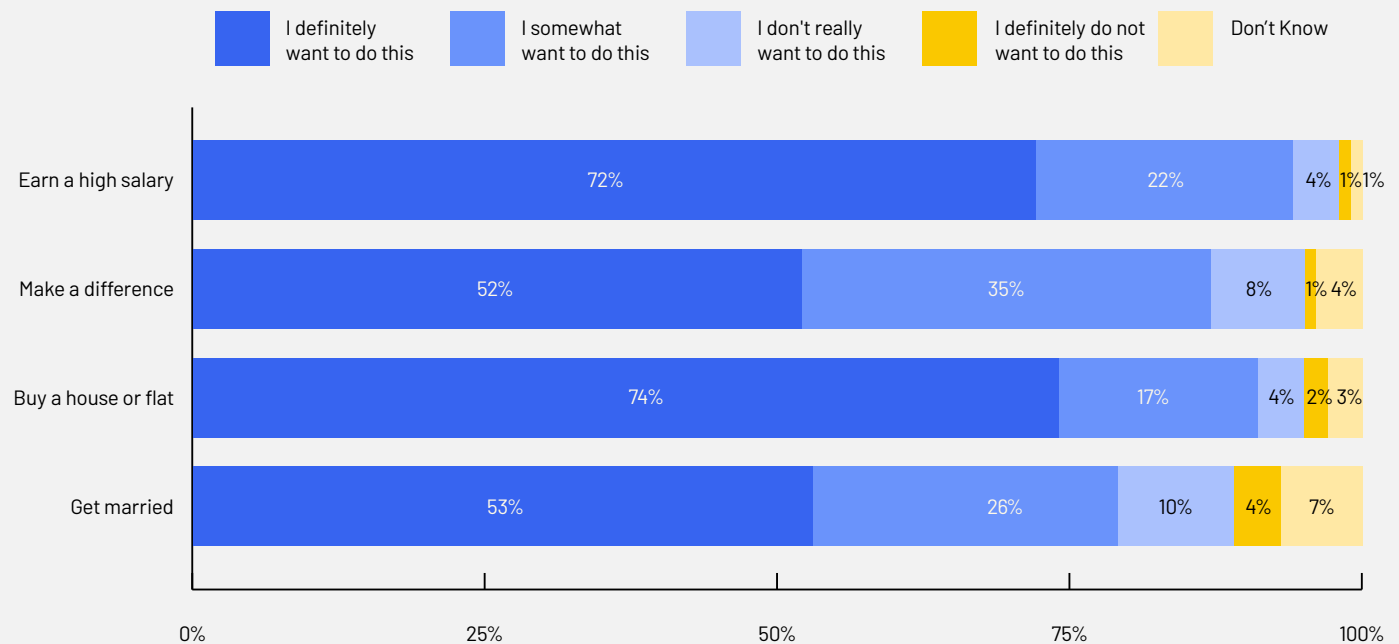
2. GEN Z WANT TO MAKE AN IMPACT, BUT NOT AT THE COST OF STABILITY AND GOOD PAY.

Gen Z want a career in which they're making a difference (86%), but they also want to achieve goals related to obtaining stability and security, such as earning a high salary (94%) and buying a house or flat (91%).

And two-thirds of younger respondents (16-17) said they wanted to be happy and feel fulfilled, while only half of older respondents (23-24) said the same.

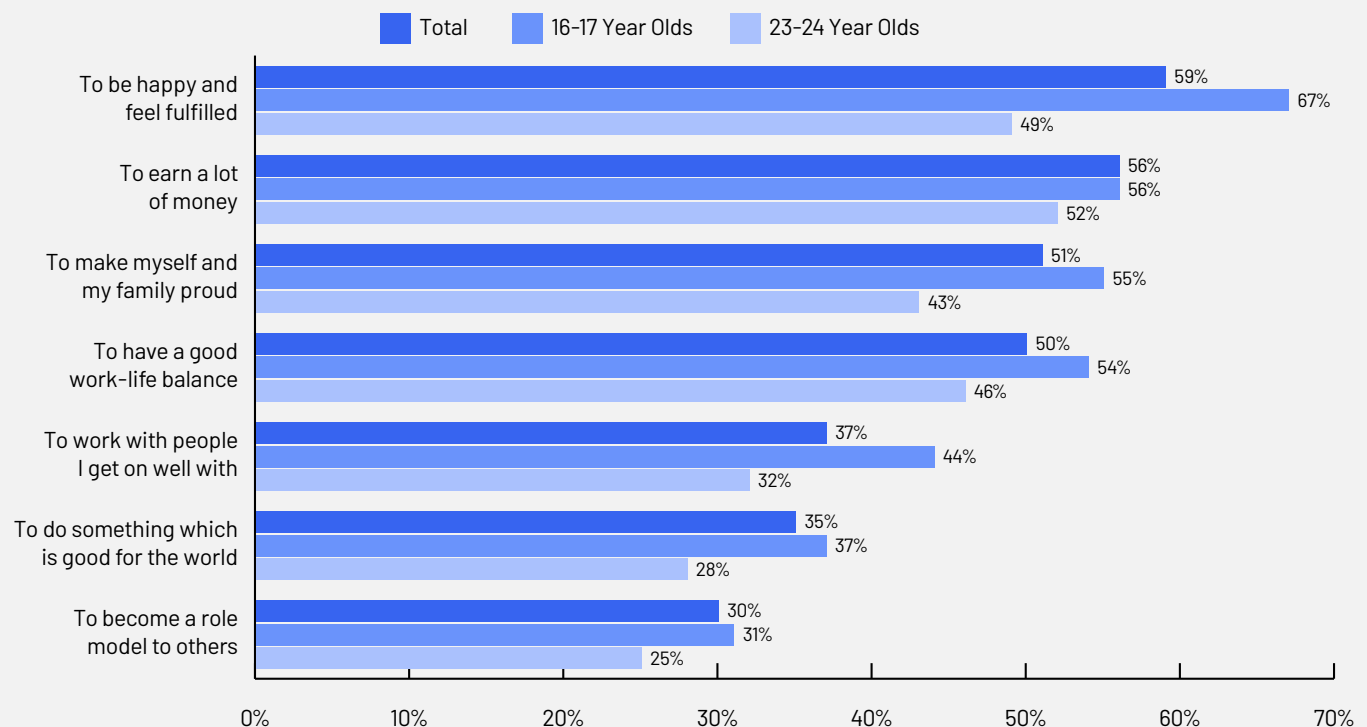
When it comes to your future goals, which of the following would you like to do, if any?

Public First | 16 to 24-year-olds in England | sample size: 3,031 | Fieldwork 21 May - 4 June 2024



What are your overall career goals? Please select all that apply.

Public First | 16 to 24-year-olds in England | sample size: 3,031 | Fieldwork 21 May - 4 June 2024



This desire for stability came across in our focus groups, with participants expressing a want for both stability and wellbeing.

“I just say with the current economic crisis that's going on and the cost of living, I think everyone needs to account for the fact that we're in that point of our lives where we now may be looking at getting our own place, or even maybe starting a family. So money is definitely going to be important.”

21-year-old-male, sport and exercise science graduate, non-high-tariff university, Slough

“I think personally, because of the economic uncertainty and decline we've had since the 2010s, I think that's really shaped the way in which we view work. In the past, people valued much more materialistic things. Now because of this uncertainty, both economically but also health wise with COVID, I think our generation are more set on experiences rather than materialistic things.”

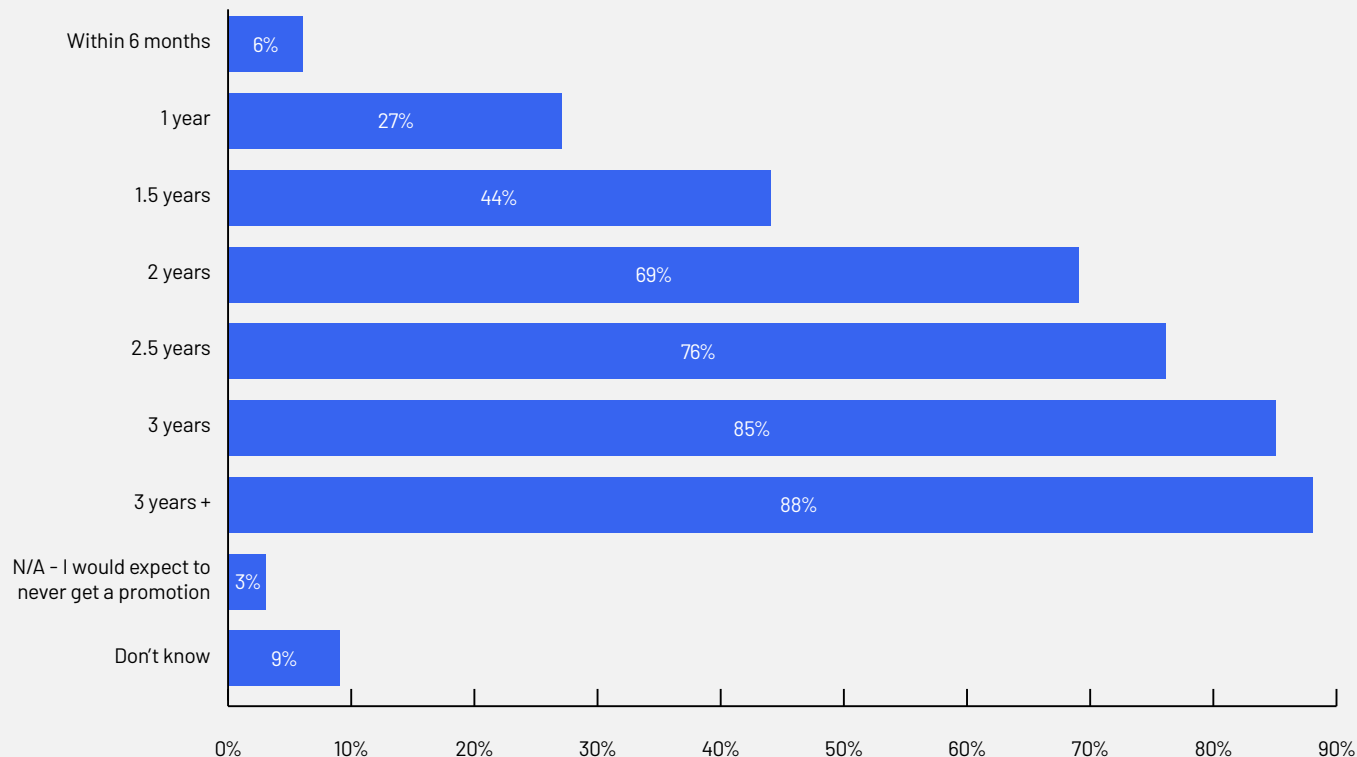
21-year-old male, geography graduate, high-tariff university, Lewes

3. PROGRESS, CHANGE AND ONGOING DEVELOPMENT ARE ALSO IMPORTANT TO GEN Z.

When we asked Gen Z how quickly they want to move on in their careers, they expect rapid growth and development: 69% expect to be promoted in their first two years, while 44% expect a promotion within 18 months. 59% expect their first raise within a year of beginning a new job.

In your view, how soon after starting a new job would you expect your first promotion?

Public First | 16 to 24-year-olds in England | sample size: 3,031 | Fieldwork 21 May - 4 June 2024



Our focus group participants corroborated this view:

“Fresh out of uni, you want...more money, more progression.”

21-year-old female, politics student, high-tariff university, Reigate

This was connected to a strong desire for movement across the labour market, which was seen as important for development as well as for maintaining interest and curiosity. This was particularly present among our A level Gen Zs.

“I couldn't see myself working at the same place years on end. I don't think I could even see myself working the same job on end - I'd like to try different careers... progress through onto different things.”

17-year-old male studying maths, biology and chemistry, Bradford

“If I do an office job, I wouldn't want to stay, I don't know, 35 years with the same one. I'd like to jump between companies just to get a different taste of the atmosphere. I think I'd get bored easily.”

18-year-old female studying philosophy, psychology and Spanish, Ottershaw

“COVID really made me realise that I do not want an office job. I cannot sit still for loads of hours, I have to be doing something. I came to the conclusion that I have to be constantly putting my mind on something and not sitting around at a desk.”

17-year-old female studying biology, geography and English literature, Birmingham

Understanding Gen Z attitudes to careers: introducing our segments

To supplement our understanding of Gen Z attitudes to careers, we conducted a segmentation analysis on 16 to 24-year-olds in England. Segments break down the population into different sub-groups by attitudes, rather than by demographic.

Using the opinion data collected from the poll, respondents are grouped together with similar respondents based on their answers to a range of questions. This allows us to create a typology of the different natures of Gen Z in the population and understand how each group reacts to different proposals and ideas.

The segmentation is data-driven, meaning the patterns identified here are produced from the data itself, and then interpreted. Sometimes these patterns reflect unique attitudinal clusters, and sometimes they reflect survey response styles.

Our segmentation analysis allowed us to break down the poll sample of Gen Z into different segments with shared opinions based on their views towards careers, and to teaching.

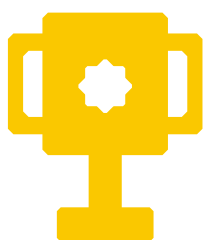
Introducing our segments



Fulfilment Finders (18%)

Fulfilment Finders are driven by making a difference, enjoying their lives, and finding fulfilment in their work. They are the most likely to say that doing meaningful work is more important than earning a lot of money, and the most likely to prioritise a good work-life balance over earning money.

They were equally likely to want to pursue a career in healthcare or education, and the most likely group to say they have considered being a teacher before. They also said they prefer hands-on work and would enjoy working with young children. Fulfilment Finders are more likely to describe teaching as rewarding than stressful.



Ambitious Achievers (17%)

Ambitious Achievers are high achievers but are more likely to be driven by earning a high salary than doing meaningful work. They were well-liked in school, but also performed well and are likely to have attended a high-tariff university. They are also most likely to have plans to pursue higher education.

Ambitious Achievers would rather work hard and progress rapidly and were more likely to have considered careers in banking, law, and consulting than teaching. Despite this, they were impacted by their teachers and think highly of the profession. Ambitious Achievers are more likely to describe teaching as stressful than rewarding.



Decision Delayers (22%)

Decision Delayers are somewhat ambitious but find change difficult and don't know what they want to do with their lives. This is reinforced by the fact that they have yet to consider most careers. They lack confidence and are more shy, likely because they are younger and more likely to still be in school.

They are the most likely to be from rural areas, the least likely to say they enjoyed learning at school, and the least likely to have ambitions to pursue higher education (after A levels). They fear public speaking, prefer to work by themselves, and prefer working with their hands.



Money Motivated (17%)

Money Motivated individuals prioritise their earnings over all other aspects of life. They are the most likely to say that earning a lot of money is more important than doing meaningful work and would sacrifice a good work-life balance if it meant earning a lot of money.

They are much more likely to want to pursue a career in finance than any other industry and were the least likely group to want to pursue a career in education. They are relatively ambitious and were well-liked in school. They are more likely to be men and to have attended a high-tariff university.

In addition, the sample include two segments which we have excluded from the analysis in this report:

1. **Overconfident:** The Overconfident, while confident in their teaching ability, tended to have a bias towards agreement across several questions. Although they were highly ambitious and well-performing in school, some of their response patterns are inconsistent.
2. **Uninterested:** The Uninterested had little to differentiate them from the other groups besides their tendency to be around the middle-of-the-pack on a range of measures. They tend to be more disengaged, likely because many more of them are older and already employed, making career change harder to visualise. They often responded neutrally about their ambitions and future career and were less likely to be positive about teaching in general.

The reason that we have excluded 'Overconfident' and 'Uninterested' from our analysis is because while the other segments reflect attitudes to teaching, these two groups reflect attitudes to the survey itself. Overconfident responders were more likely to respond affirmatively to a wide array of questions, regardless of their substance, and Uninterested responders were more likely to respond negatively.

The full demographic breakdown for our segments is included in the table on the next page:

Group	Fulfilment Finders (18%)	Ambitious Achievers (17%)	Decision Delayers (22%)	Money Motivated (17%)
Gender Identity				
Male	24.51%	51.71%	50.09%	61.65%
Female	75.49%	48.29%	49.91%	38.35%
Age Group				
16	8.29%	14.71%	13.97%	10.68%
17	9.93%	12.54%	16.46%	8.48%
18	12.79%	9.82%	10.38%	11.04%
19	14.01%	9.73%	9.05%	11.56%
20	11.32%	9.93%	9.27%	10.52%
21	15.23%	9.69%	11.42%	9.80%
22	10.39%	10.19%	9.31%	13.74%
23	8.92%	12.97%	8.94%	13.93%
24	9.12%	10.43%	11.19%	10.25%
Current Status				
In school	28.06%	30.90%	36.71%	28.07%
In university	33.74%	35.66%	21.58%	36.18%
In neither	38.19%	33.45%	41.71%	35.75%
Area				
Urban Area	61.04%	67.82%	60.13%	68.55%
Rural Area	38.96%	32.18%	39.87%	31.45%
Ethnicity				
White	89.11%	76.63%	88.45%	76.29%
Ethnic minority (excluding White minorities)	10.89%	23.37%	11.55%	23.71%
High Tariff (university-goers only)				
High-Tariff	27.08%	30.69%	20.33%	31.44%
Non-High Tariff	72.92%	69.31%	79.67%	68.56%

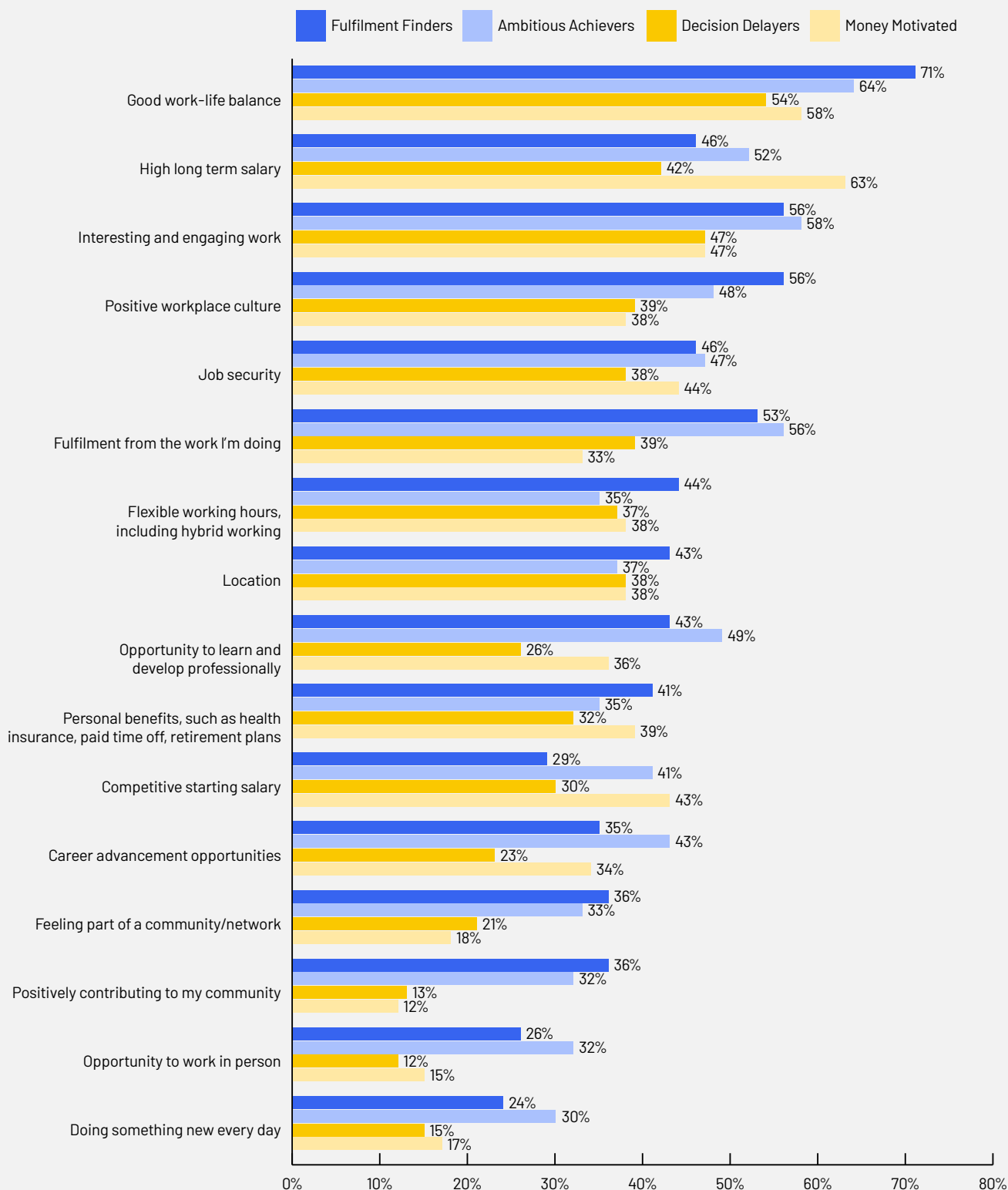
What do our segments think about their future career?

Fulfilment Finders were the most likely group to be interested in pursuing a career in teaching. They were also interested in careers in healthcare and social work, while Money Motivated individuals were more interested in careers in tech and finance.

Fulfilment Finders and Ambitious Achievers tend to prioritise having a good work-life balance (71% and 64% respectively), interesting and engaging work (56% and 58%), and fulfilment from the work they are doing (53% and 56%).

When it comes to finding a job, which of the following aspects are most important to you? Please select all that apply.

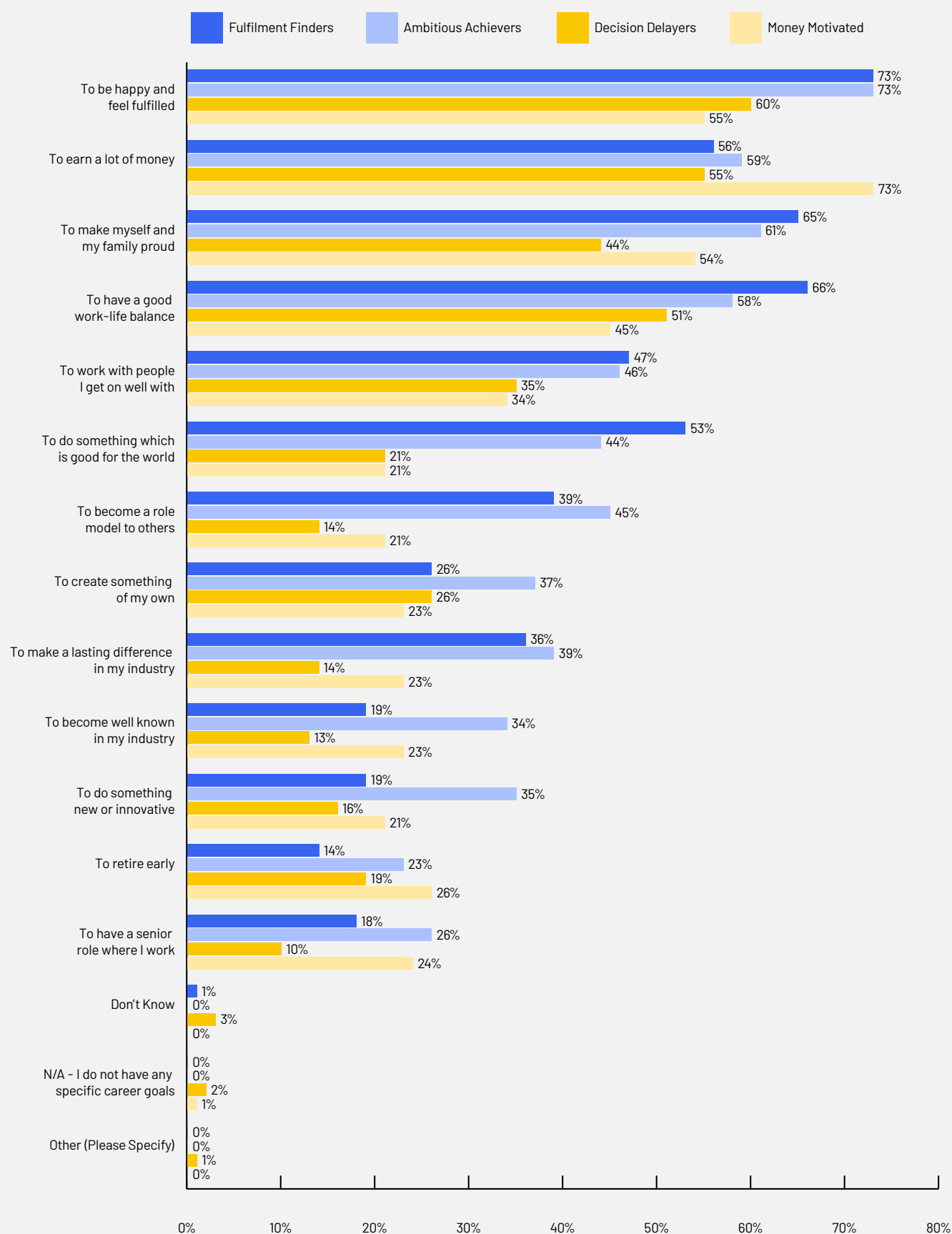
Public First | 16 to 24-year-olds in England | sample size: 3,031 | Fieldwork 21 May - 4 June 2024



These groups differ in their second-tier motivations - Fulfilment Finders were more motivated by benefits such as **flexible working (44%), health insurance and paid time off (41%),** and social positives such as a **positive workplace culture (56%)** and **positively contributing to the community (36%).**

What are your career goals? Please select all that apply.

Public First | 16 to 24-year-olds in England | sample size: 3,031 | Fieldwork 21 May - 4 June 2024

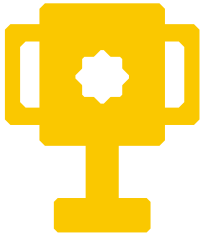


Views from our segments: attitudes towards careers



Fulfilment Finders (18%)

Fulfilment Finders express a willingness to do work that prioritises social good rather than money. 58% said that doing meaningful work is more important than earning a lot of money, and 53% said that one of their overall career goals is to do something good in the world. 73% of them listed happiness and a feeling of fulfilment as an overall career goal, and 71% listed good work-life balance as one of the most important aspects of finding a job, with interesting and engaging work (56%), workplace culture (56%) and fulfilment from work (53%) all coming out above salary (46%).



Ambitious Achievers (17%)

Good work-life balance was their biggest priority when it comes to finding a job, with 64% describing it as such, followed by interesting and engaging work (58%), fulfilment from work (56%) and a high long-term salary (52%); this is perhaps unsurprising given that 28% said that they had been at the top of their class at school. 73% describe being happy and feeling fulfilled as an overall career goal, with 61% selecting making their family proud and 59% aiming to make a lot of money.



Decision Delayers (22%)

Uncertainty characterised our Decision Delayers' attitudes to the world of work. Only 6% knew exactly what they wanted to do for the rest of their lives, with over half (54%) saying they did not know what they wanted to do for the rest of their lives. Decision Delayers most commonly listed happiness and fulfilment as a career goal (60%), with earning a lot of money the next most important factor (55%).



Money Motivated (17%)

Although earning a lot of money is Money Motivated Gen Z's primary career goal (with 73% listing it), feeling happy and fulfilled (55%) and making themselves and their families proud (54%) are also important to them. Compared to 35% of the full sample, a fifth (21%) of the Money Motivated list doing something which is good for the world as a priority. 78% of them see themselves as having been at the top of their class or doing well in school. Almost two-thirds (66%) would expect a pay rise within a year, and 27% expect a promotion within their first year of work.

Chapter 4

What does Gen Z think of teaching as a career?



What does Gen Z think of teaching as a career?

1. GEN Z THINK TEACHING IS STRESSFUL, REWARDING AND DIFFICULT, AND THEY DON'T BELIEVE IN "IF YOU CAN'T DO, TEACH".

"It's a stressful job because every student has their own individual needs. At the same time, you're multitasking and you're working in a fast paced environment within a classroom."

21-year-old female, linguistics student, non-high-tariff university, Manchester

Overall, the word that our Gen Z respondents most associated with teaching was **"stressful" (55%)**, followed by **"rewarding" (48%)** and **"difficult" (45%)**. 31% described the job as "respected". Older respondents were more likely to identify teaching as fun (24% compared to 15% of younger respondents) and simple (17% compared to 4%), while younger respondents were more likely to say teaching is stressful (60% compared to 48% of older respondents).

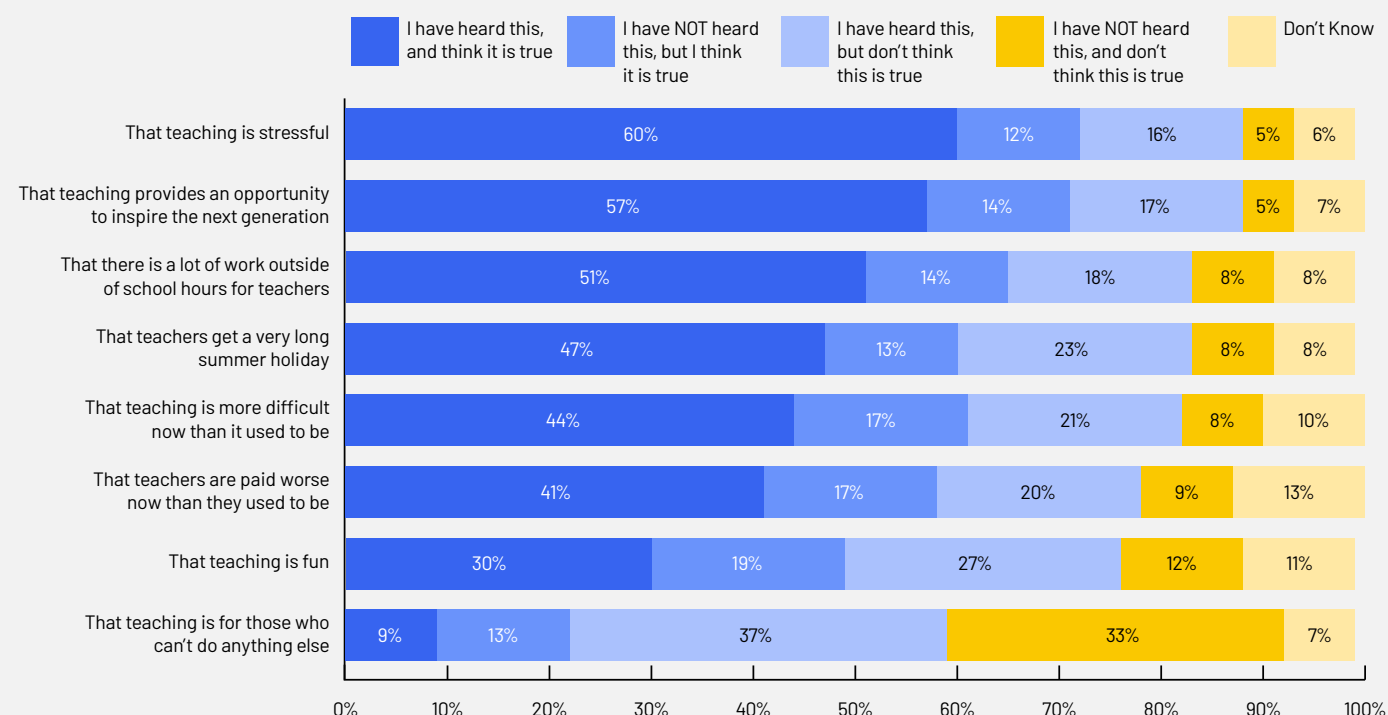
When we asked respondents how they had heard teaching described and whether they agreed with what they heard, more said that they had heard and believed that there is a lot of work outside of school hours for teachers (51%) than had heard and believed that teachers get a very long summer holiday (47%). 60% had heard and believed that teaching is stressful, with **44% having heard and believed that teaching is more difficult now than it used to be.**

Some focus group participants alluded to workload and hours as main generators of stress within the job. More than four times as many had heard and rejected the idea that teaching is for those who can't do anything else than had heard and believed it (37% vs 9%).

44%
have heard and believed that teaching is more difficult now than it used to be.

Which of the following have you heard said about teaching as a career?

Public First | 16 to 24-year-olds in England | sample size: 3,031 | Fieldwork 21 May - 4 June 2024



Within our focus groups however, a more nuanced picture emerged: while some participants attested to the sense that teaching was stressful, several participants argued that teaching is a job in which the stress is either less constant or less intense than in other jobs.

“One of the draws for me personally, is that I don't think it is as stressful as quite a lot of jobs. You have job security, you know the salary you are getting, you don't have to sort out your own pension or taxes or anything - that's all done for you. You know exactly what you are going to be doing every day...I think it actually draws me towards it, because it isn't a stressful job.”

21-year-old male, geography student, high-tariff university, Lewes

“The stress is condensed in periods of time, it's not constant stress...it's definitely worse in primary schools than secondary schools. I've known people that have worked in both.”

23-year-old female, optometry and vision sciences student, high-tariff university, York

2. GEN Z THINK TEACHERS MAKE A SERIOUS DIFFERENCE AND THAT TEACHING IS IMPORTANT TO SOCIETY.

“I think [what] would be a really big appeal to me is having the ability to say to children, no matter your background, no matter your family circumstance, you can achieve whatever you want to achieve.”

20-year-old female, law student, high-tariff university, Burnham

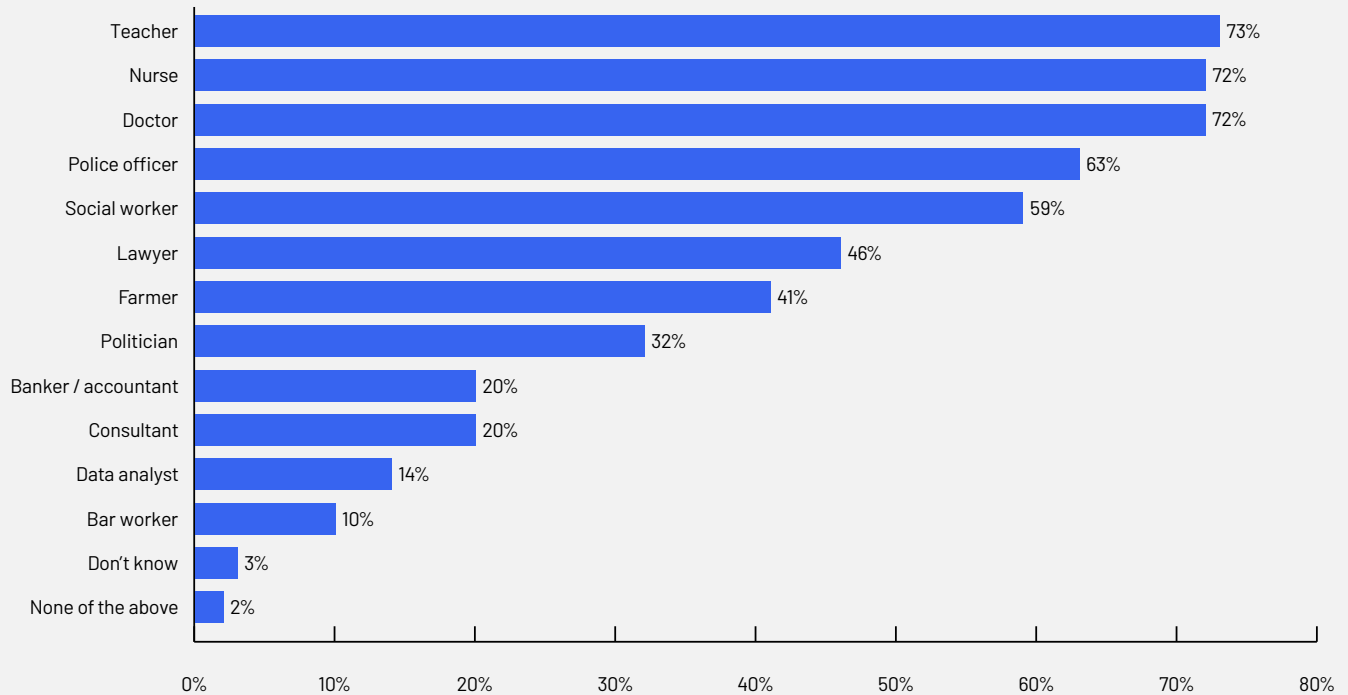
In our poll, 45% of respondents said that teaching being a job that makes a difference was its main benefit. **73% said that teaching was a job that had purpose** - the highest of the options we tested (although within the margin of error in relation to doctors and nurses, both 72%).

73%

said that teaching was a job that had purpose.

Sometimes people talk about jobs having a “purpose” e.g. doing something good for the world or society. Which of the following jobs, if any, would you say have a “purpose” like this? Please select any which apply.

Public First | 16 to 24-year-olds in England | sample size: 3,031 | Fieldwork 21 May – 4 June 2024



The Gen Zs we spoke to in focus groups spoke highly of teaching, and saw the value of the career; in some cases, though, our experts suggested that this might be a period effect (i.e. a product of our times that affects people of all ages) rather than a cohort effect (i.e. a product of respondents’ ages at a particular point in their lives), an observation that chimes with recent NFER work. [14]

“I think you kind of get to see that you're shaping the lives of young people...I remember my teachers being so influential on who I am as a person even, not even my career decisions or my professional sort of avenues, but sort of who I am. It shapes you. They are really influential figures in your life and I think that'd be so rewarding to see how your influence is shaping all these young people into who they're going to be.”

21-year-old female, sociology student, high-tariff university, Exeter

“Jobs with brand purpose are often described as being produced by a cohort effect, that is, something specific to younger generations. But I think it's a period effect - we're all more interested in doing good and the values of organisations we work for. An appeal specifically to younger people on your purpose will work, but it's not because this is unique to Gen Z, it's not because they're much more into that than any other age group.”

Bobby Duffy, Professor of Public Policy and Director of the Policy Institute, KCL

3. HELPING CHILDREN FULFIL THEIR POTENTIAL AND SPENDING TIME TALKING ABOUT AND TEACHING A SUBJECT OF INTEREST WERE SEEN AS POSITIVE ASPECTS OF WORKING AS A TEACHER.

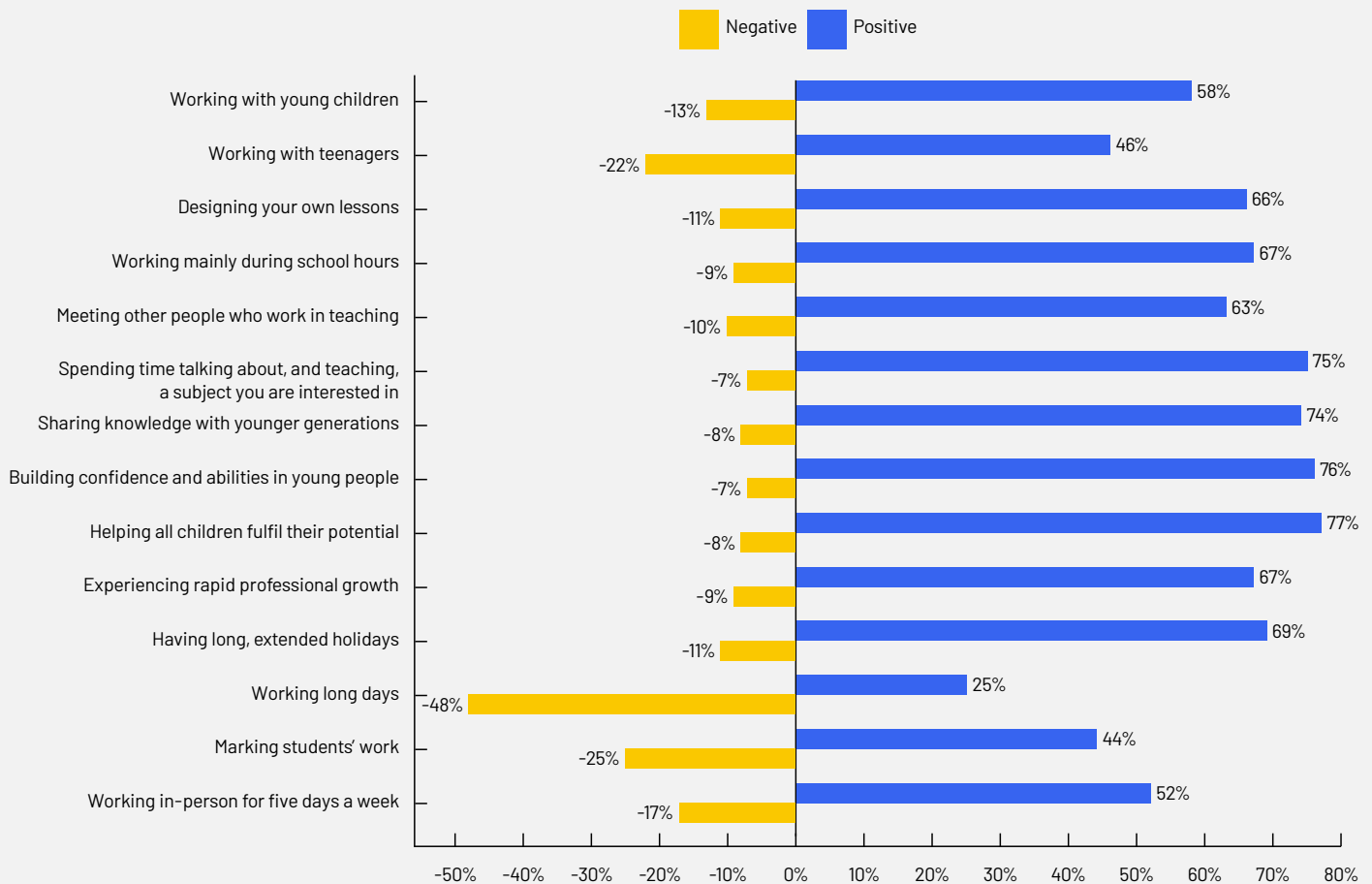
“They are really influential figures in your life and I think that'd be so rewarding to see how your influence is shaping all these young people into who they're going to be.”

21-year-old female, sociology graduate, high-tariff university, Exeter

Overall, **77%** say helping all children fulfil their potential is a positive aspect of working as a teacher, the highest option we polled. Beneath this, building confidence and abilities in young people (76%) and spending time talking about and teaching a subject of interest (75%) were seen as the next-most positive aspects. The most negative aspects of working as a teacher were working long days (48% negative), followed by marking students' work (25%) and working with teenagers (22%).

Would you view the following as positive or negative aspects of working as a teacher?

Public First | 16 to 24-year-olds in England | sample size: 3,031 | Fieldwork 21 May - 4 June 2024



In our focus groups, participants were effusive about helping children fulfil their potential, but were aware of the long hours that teaching can involve.

“I just think breaking down those barriers [for] children, they're just children, they shouldn't really face them...You're making a difference...I think that starts with children.”

20-year-old female, law student, high-tariff university, Burnham

“It's quite satisfying to know that you've helped someone reach that level of understanding. Being able to feel proud about a student, knowing most of the work that they put in was because of you.”

18-year-old female studying philosophy, psychology and Spanish, Ottershaw

“I think you kind of get to see that you're shaping the lives of young people...I remember my teachers being so influential on who I am as a person, not even my career decisions or my professional sort of avenues, but sort of who I am. It shapes you.”

21-year-old female, sociology graduate, high-tariff university, Exeter

“If you're really passionate about subjects, and you want to spread your passion, then it's the best thing to do because you're still young and enthusiastic. And if you've done a career, the enthusiasm may have worn off a bit.”

17-year-old male, studying PE, economics and geography, Watford

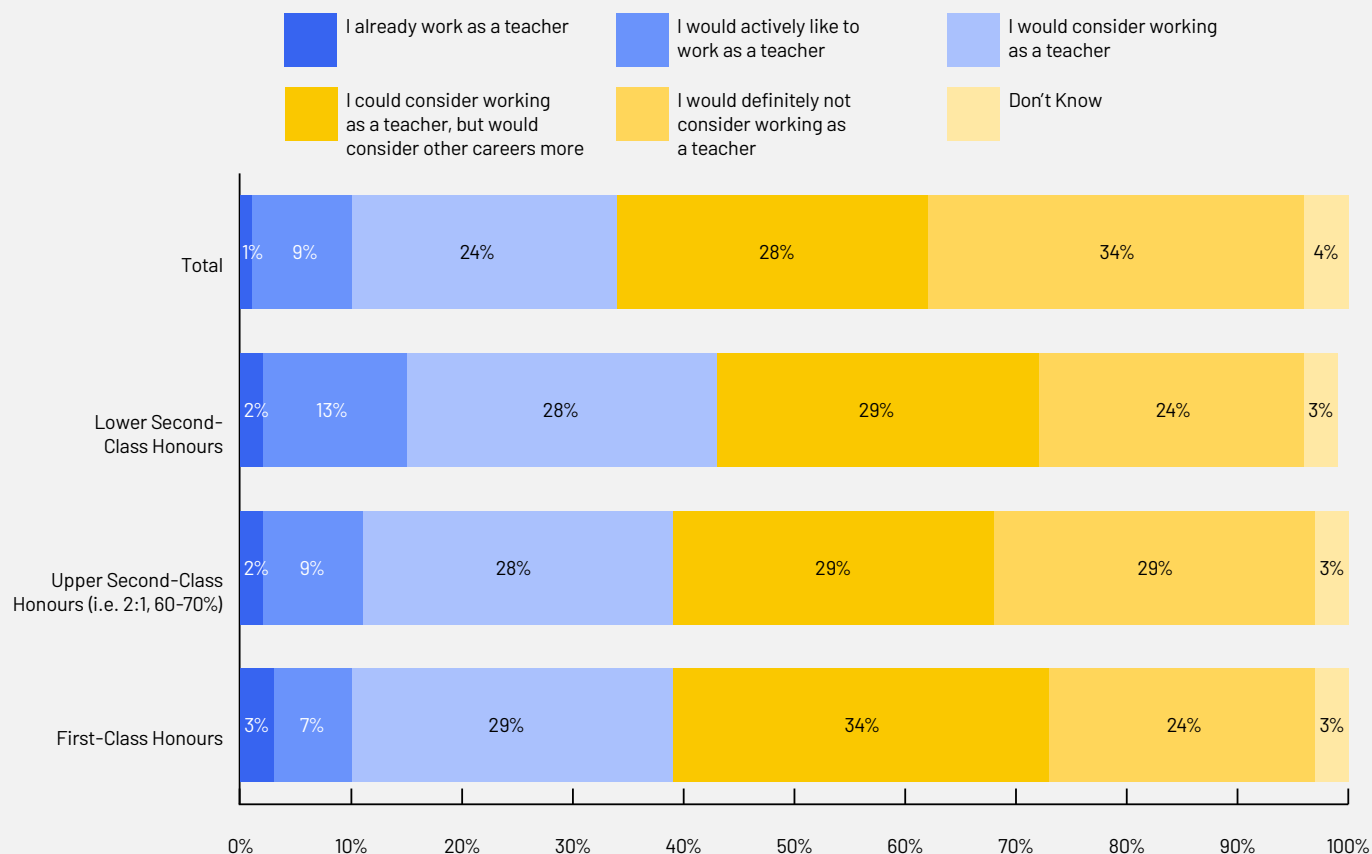
4. THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT POOL OF GEN Z WHO WOULD CONSIDER WORKING AS A TEACHER AND THINK THEY COULD DO THE JOB IF THEY WANTED TO.

Once those who are already teachers have been excluded, over three fifths (61%) of Gen Z would consider working as a teacher. Of these, **9% of respondents said they would actively like to work as a teacher, 24% would consider working as a teacher, and 28% said that they would consider teaching but would consider other careers more.** 35% said they definitely wouldn't work as a teacher.

Almost double the percentage (14%) of those achieving or expecting lower second-class honours degrees said they would actively like to work as a teacher, compared to the percentage of those achieving or expecting first-class honours degrees (8%). This is despite the fact that 52% of those expecting or achieving lower second-class honours feel they could definitely or probably be a teacher if they wanted to be, compared to 76% of those expecting first-class honours.

Which of the following best describes how you feel about teaching as a career?

Public First | 16 to 24-year-olds in England | sample size: 3,031 | Fieldwork 21 May - 4 June 2024



In our focus groups, university students were positive about the teachers they had in school but felt daunted by the patience required to be a teacher themselves. Perceptions of ability to teach were linked to interpersonal skills, with participants expressing whether they could or could not teach in terms of less tangible attributes:

“The fact that teachers have to do it all day...you can't just yell at a whole classroom and explode, you have to just sort of keep going with it...I just think I could not put up with that. Even though the rewards are so great, I just think sometimes you've got to be a very patient individual to actually take what the kids are throwing at you a lot of the time.”

21-year-old female, sociology student, high-tariff university, Exeter

“I am quite an extroverted person, and I enjoy being around people for quite a lot of the day. So I think in terms of energy to provide to a teaching environment, I think I'd be good with that because I am definitely a 'people person' - I quite like being around people. But I'm not sure how well that would translate.”

21-year-old female, geography student, high-tariff university, Reigate

“I just don't think I'd like secondary school. Some of the students can be pretty immature and I think that would really grind my gears. I wouldn't be able to do it.”

18-year-old female, studying philosophy, psychology and Spanish, Ottershaw

5. GEN Z VIEW TEACHING AS HAVING THREE MAIN DOWNSIDES: IT'S STRESSFUL, THE SALARY IS POOR, AND SCHOOLS IN GENERAL LACK FUNDING.

The three most-mentioned downsides to teaching that we tested were that it's **stressful (42%), the salary is poor (36%), and schools in general lack funding (36%)**. The threat of stress was felt keenly by younger respondents, where 47% of them mentioned the stress of the job as a disadvantage (compared to 37% of older respondents), but only 34% of younger respondents mentioned the poor salary as a disadvantage.

By contrast, older respondents mentioned the inability to work from home as a disadvantage compared to the younger respondents (21% vs 15%). Given that the most important aspect of the job search that we polled was a job with a good work-life balance (56%) and 80% of Gen Z want some degree of hybrid work in their jobs, addressing stress and flexibility in the profession is key.

In conversations with our experts, salary was raised as an area in which teaching may be struggling to keep up, which is particularly pertinent in the public sector as Gen Z struggle to get on the property ladder.

“We definitely see the benefit of having a really high salary. With prisons, you get a fixed 39-hour week, and the pension is about 33%, so it's very generous...the public sector is incredibly badly paid as the rest of the job market has increased its pay.”

Natasha Porter OBE, CEO, Unlocked Grads

“The big stories of Gen Z in the UK are tough economic circumstances: incomes have stagnated, wealth has become more important to economic success, with limited capacity to build up wealth in their early lives.”

Bobby Duffy, Professor of Public Policy and Director of the Policy Institute, KCL

The lack of money in the system, both for salaries and for schools in general, came up in focus groups and was related to the stress teachers deal with:

“Teachers are very much underpaid. The education system is also incredibly underpaid, schools are under-supported by the Government...A lot of teachers have to go and buy their own equipment to teach, which is coming out of their salary...but because these teachers want to inspire these kids and they believe that it's something that is worthwhile, it's something that they therefore have to pay for.”

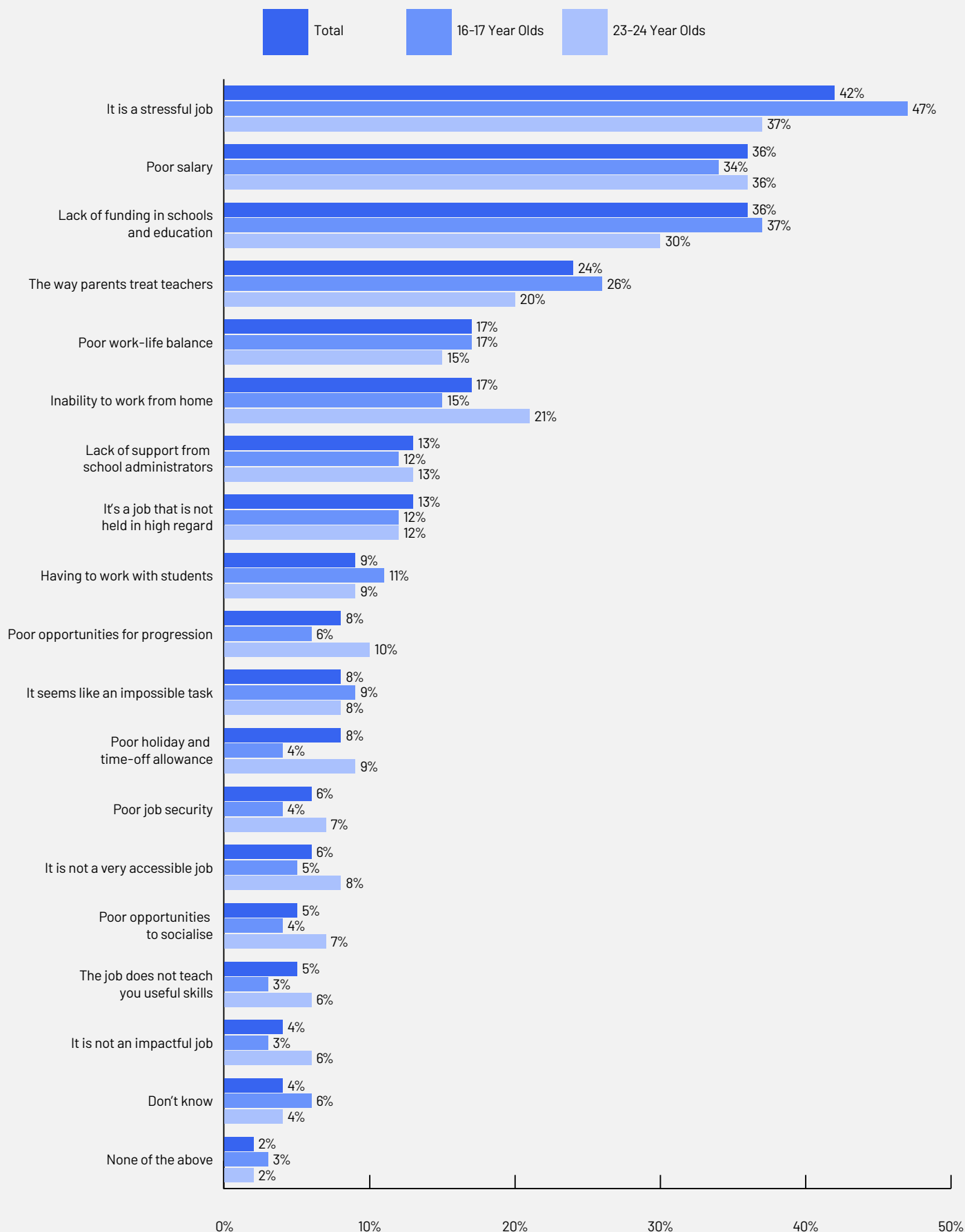
21-year-old male, economics student, high-tariff university, Sheffield

“I think if the pay was a bit higher there'd be a high incentive to do it, because at the end of the day it's a lot of responsibilities if you're a teacher controlling a classroom of about 30 people especially like they're misbehaving. You're doing all of that...why are you not getting paid overly well?”

17-year-old male, studying PE, economics and geography, Watford

In your view, what are the main disadvantages of being a teacher? Select up to three of the following.

Public First | 16 to 24-year-olds in England | sample size: 3,031 | Fieldwork 21 May - 4 June 2024

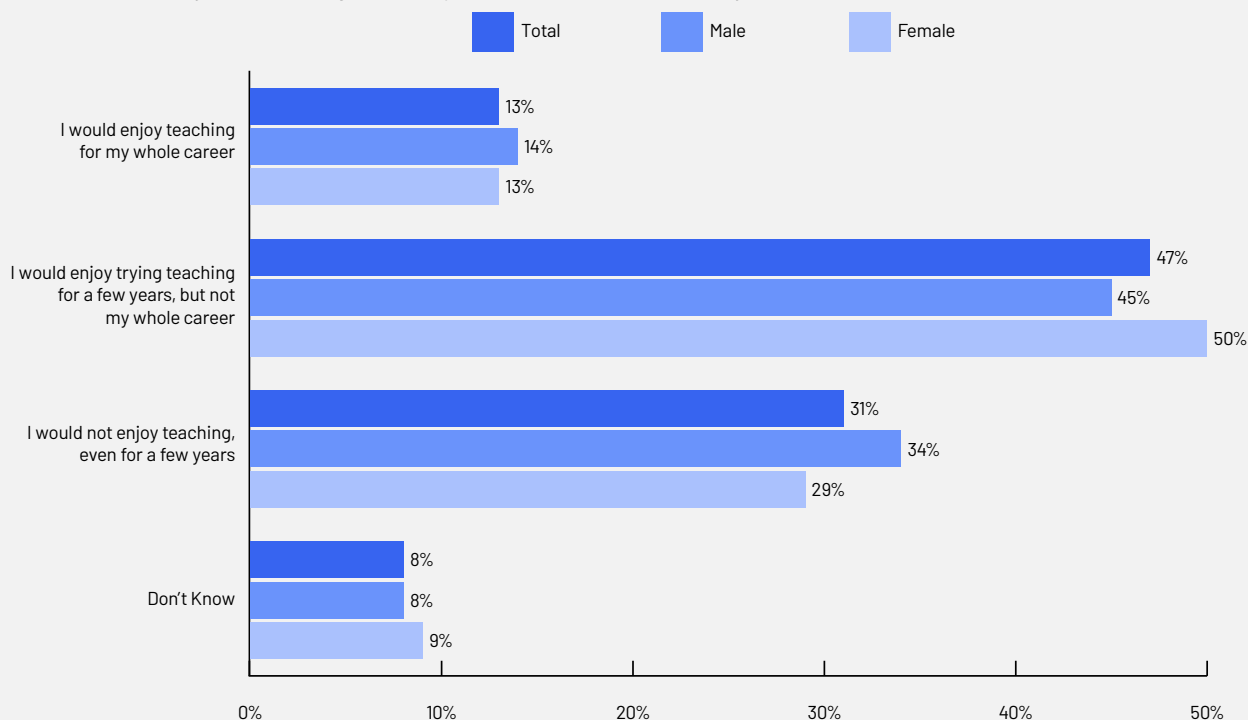


6. NEARLY HALF OF RESPONDENTS SAID THEY THINK THEY WOULD ENJOY TEACHING FOR A FEW YEARS, BUT VERY FEW THINK THEY COULD TEACH FOR THEIR WHOLE CAREER.

In our poll, **13% of respondents** said that they would enjoy teaching for their whole careers. About half (47%) said that they would enjoy teaching for a few years, but not their whole career, and 34% of men said that they would not enjoy teaching even for a few years, compared to 29% of women.

Which of the following comes closest to your view?

Public First | 16 to 24-year-olds in England | sample size: 3,031 | Fieldwork 21 May - 4 June 2024



When discussing whether they would stay in teaching long-term, our focus group participants overwhelmingly said that they would not be satisfied with a long-term career in teaching. This reflects the findings from the literature that Gen Z does not expect to have linear career trajectories within any industry. For our focus group participants, this was partly because of concerns about work patterns and progression:

13%

said that they would enjoy teaching for their whole careers.

“I think it's quite difficult to progress at a speed that I'd be really happy with [in teaching]. I don't know if I could be content sitting at the same level for maybe 10 years until the head of department leaves, or retires, or changes job and then, and only then, does a space free up to progress and maybe get a higher salary and stuff.”

21-year-old female, geography student, high-tariff university, Reigate

“I wouldn't want to teach the same syllabus again, again, again. It'd be fine the first couple years, but I feel as though I would get bored of doing the same thing over and over.”

21-year-old male, geography graduate, high-tariff university, Lewes

7. IN FOCUS GROUPS, THERE WAS A STRONG SENSE THAT TEACHING WAS A CAREER FOR LATER, NOT NOW.

This was not something we tested explicitly in the poll, but was a point raised across all four of our focus groups. Teaching was viewed as something that could be done **“further down the line”** at a later stage of people’s careers, rather than as something which it was desirable to do as a first step after graduation.

Some also alluded that corporate careers not only seem to provide better income and opportunities but can also be a beneficial precursory career for those who might teach later in life.

“If I were to go into teaching, it'd be a lot further down the line, I think once I've got my personal career sorted out and once I've gotten to a stage where I feel I can't progress any further...At the moment, I dread the idea of spending the first 19 years in education to then just immediately go back into it.”

17-year-old male, studying environmental science, geography and geology, Watford

“I would probably say it's a future possibility as well. I probably want to stay within the corporate hierarchy to learn more about my subject...And then maybe when you're a bit more confident with your subjects, being able to then pass that on would be a lot better for yourself and for the kids because you'd be able to appreciate what happens in the real world.”

21-year-old female, geography student, high-tariff university, Reigate

“I pencilled it as maybe a possibility for later in my life. I think, especially as a woman, when you're thinking about having children or starting a family, I think it could be a great option for around that time. But in terms of going into it straightaway, I'm not sure that's what I'd want to do. I think I just have the zest for jumping into [the] corporate world and giving it my best shot while I'm still young, and switching from an academic institution, because I think we've been in them for so long. But yeah, I definitely wouldn't rule it out as a future possibility.”

21-year-old female, geography student, high-tariff university, Manchester

This was not a universal view and was based on only a small qualitative sample. Indeed, within groups there were some who said that they would rather enter the profession now, or who were actively pursuing options to teach post-graduation.

“I'd actually rather do it earlier, rather than later. I do believe that a lot of public sectors are heavily underpaid. I think in terms of the balancing between [the] corporate world and teaching for me, the number one thing would be the money. That's not to say that salary is my biggest motivation in a job. It's just being feasible.”

20-year-old female, law student, high-tariff university, Burnham

However, this finding aligns with previous quantitative findings that Gen Z expects to move between professions throughout their career, and that they would expect to teach for a few years as opposed to for their full career. It is also backed up by our poll: **57% said it would be easier to do something new or innovative in another sector**, and **45% said that it would be easier to develop professional skills in another sector**.

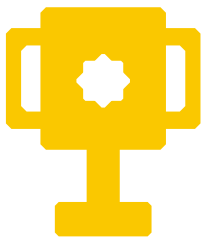
Attitudes to teaching as a career: what does this look like by segment?



Fulfilment Finders

Fulfilment Finders were confident in their ability to be teachers if they wanted to, with 82% saying they could definitely or probably be a teacher should they wish to. They were also very open to the idea of teaching, with almost a third (32%) saying they had thought very seriously about working as a teacher and 18% of non-teachers saying they would actively like to work as a teacher - double the 9% response we got across the whole sample.

Over half (52%) listed the idea that teaching is a stressful job as one of the main disadvantages of teaching, but they were more likely to list lack of funding in schools and education (46%) than salary (43%) as a disadvantage of being a teacher. Almost a quarter (22%) said that they would enjoy teaching for their whole career, and a further 60% said they would enjoy trying teaching for a few years, but not for their whole career.



Ambitious Achievers

Although 73% of Ambitious Achievers said that they could definitely or probably work as a teacher if they wanted to, only 5% of non-teachers said that they would actively like to work as one, with another 18% saying that they would consider it; 42% of Ambitious Achievers said that they would definitely not consider working as a teacher. Only 10% said that they would enjoy teaching for their whole career.

They were more likely than the average respondent to describe teaching as a job with purpose (83% vs 73%), but they were more likely to cite the stress of the job (46% vs 42%) and the poor salary (41% vs 36%) as disadvantages of the profession.



Decision Delayers

Among our Decision Delayers, there was much less confidence that they could become a teacher if they wanted to: only 7% said that they could definitely be a teacher if they wanted to, with 58% saying that they probably or definitely could not be a teacher if they wanted to.

Decision Delayers were the segment most likely to say they would definitely not consider working as a teacher: over half (53%) of non-teachers responded in this manner, with only 3% saying that they would actively like to work as a teacher.

Of the four segments they were most likely to say that working with students was a disadvantage of becoming a teacher (13%). They were the group most likely to associate teaching with the word "difficult" (51%), and the least likely to describe teaching as "respected" (19%).



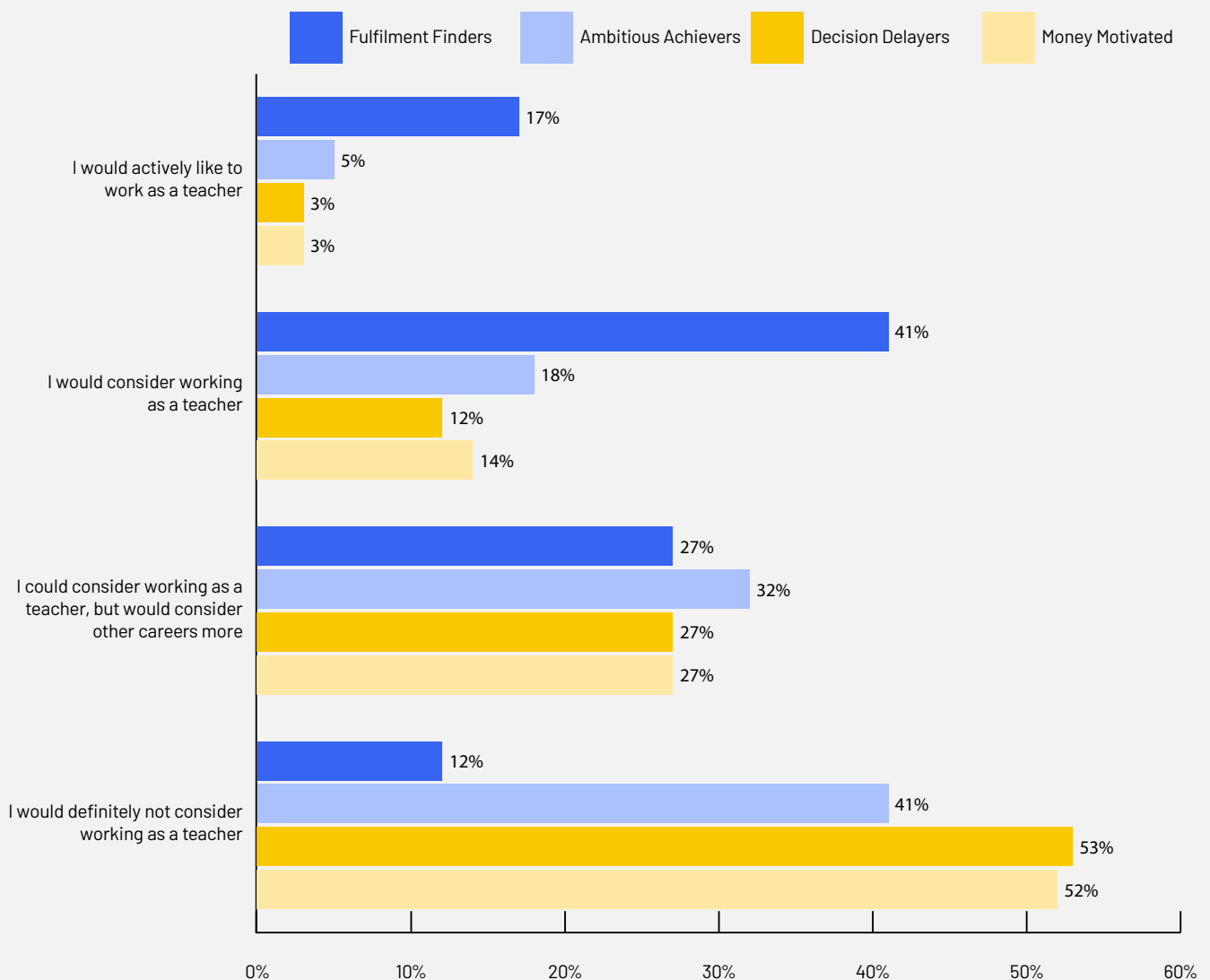
Money Motivated

Our Money Motivated were the most likely (45%) to cite poor salary as a disadvantage of being a teacher, but like all other segments, the disadvantage they listed most frequently was job stress (49%). They were not overwhelmingly confident in their ability to be a teacher if they wanted to, with only 15% saying that they could definitely be a teacher if they wanted to (although 46% said that they probably could teach if they wanted to).

As with Decision Delayers, over half (53%) of non-teachers said that they would definitely not consider it, with only 3% saying they would actively like to work as a teacher. Less than half (43%) agreed that teaching could best be described as “rewarding”.

Which of the following best describes how you feel about teaching as a career?

Public First | 16 to 24-year-olds in England | sample size: 3,031 | Fieldwork 21 May - 4 June 2024



Chapter 5

What could be done to get Gen Z into teaching?



What could be done to get Gen Z into teaching?

1. SALARY IS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT FACTOR IN GEN Z RECRUITMENT.

“[Salary] will be the first thing on your mind because if you can't afford to live in a house, or get out from your parents' house, or you can't even go to the shop and buy a chocolate bar when you want to, that is what life is becoming especially for people our age. Without that salary to match, you've just got no chance.”

23-year-old female, optometry and vision sciences student, high-tariff university, York

There is no getting around the fact that salary was considered the most significant lever that could be pulled to boost the number of Gen Z who would consider going into teaching. Across our research, teachers were seen as having an uncompetitive salary compared to other career routes.

71% of poll respondents said that it would be easier to achieve earning a lot of money in another sector than in teaching; this figure rose to 80% within our 'Money Motivated' segment. All our segments thought teachers were poorly paid, and cited poor salary as one of the main disadvantages of entering the profession.

71%

said it would be easier to achieve earning a lot of money in another sector than in teaching.

In our focus groups, Gen Z said they worried the salary associated with teaching could put them on the back foot at the start of their careers. In all cases, when asked their percentage likelihood to go into teaching and the one thing that could increase that percentage likelihood, pay was the default answer.

“My plan all along was to go into teaching once I have a family, just because it fits in so well...the thing that puts me off going in straight away, if I'm being honest, is the pay is not as good as other career options right now when you're trying to buy a house and start a family.”

21-year-old female, maths student, high-tariff university, Southampton

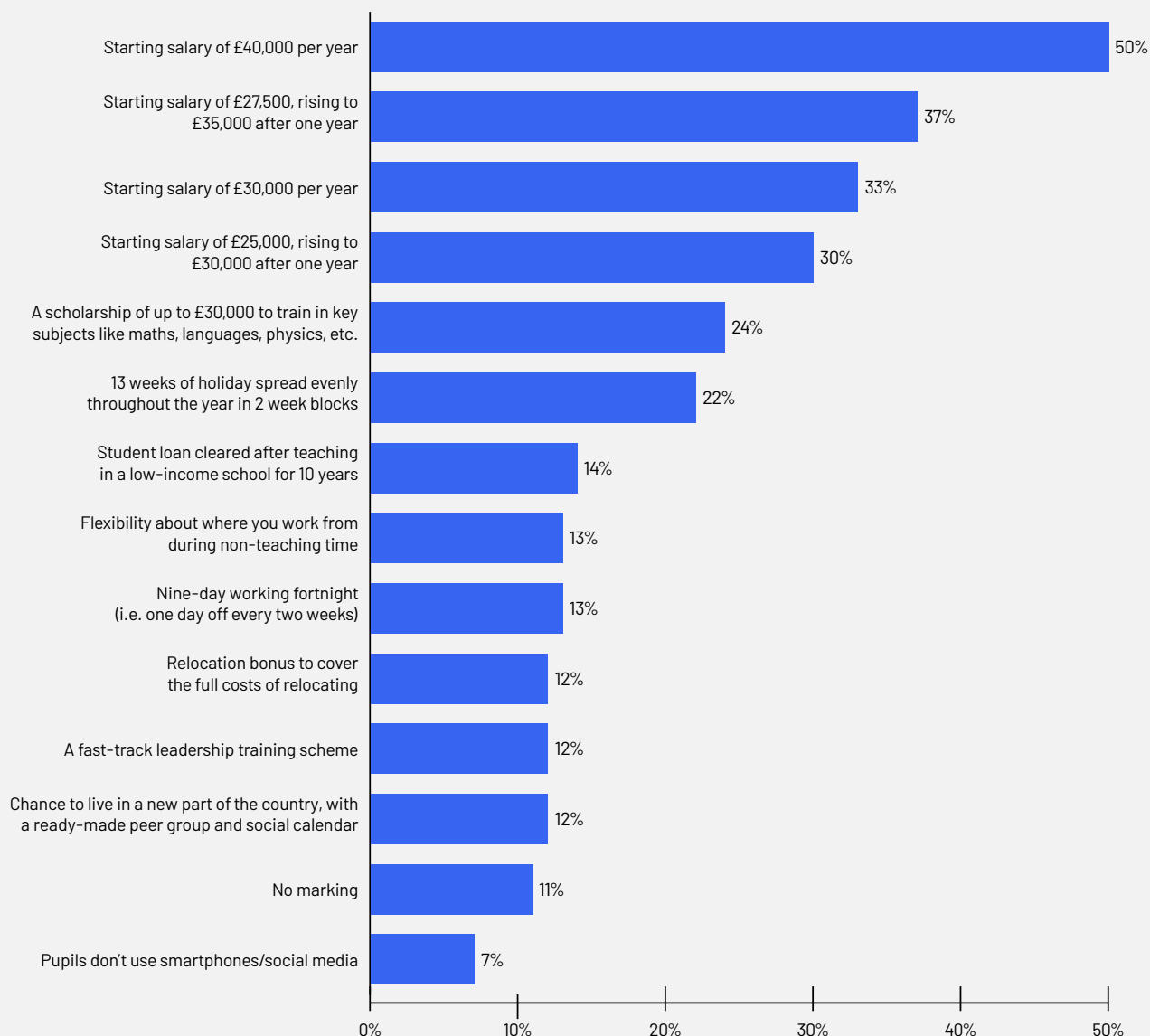
“Things like the cost of living crisis, and house prices and all of that going on right now, I think money is probably needed more than ever, to be honest.”

17-year-old male, studying maths, history and sociology, Muswell Hill

In our choice-based experiment, we tested a range of incentives that could be used to motivate people to choose teaching as a career. The top four responses were all salary-related, with a starting salary of £40,000 a year the most popular positive option (50%). This means that half of those who saw a starting salary of £40,000 said it was the benefit that would make them most likely to consider teaching.

Which of those incentives make you the most likely to consider becoming a teacher?

Public First | 16 to 24-year-olds in England | sample size: 3,031 | Fieldwork 21 May - 4 June 2024



For those who said they might be persuaded into teaching but were not seriously considering it, starting salaries were the defining incentive with starting salaries of £40,000 (50%) and £27,500 rising to £35,000 after one year (37%) the most popular options.

For those who had seriously considered teaching, a scholarship of up to £30,000 was a popular incentive (24%), with a starting salary of £27,500 rising to £35,000 after one year only one percentage point higher and a starting salary of £30,000 only three percentage points higher. 13 weeks of holiday spread evenly throughout the year in two-week blocks also polled well among non-salary options (22%).

This suggests that **among those who are already thinking about teaching, work-life balance and facilitators of professional development make a difference**, but among the marginal group of those who have considered teaching alongside other options (who we know are likely to be higher university attainers than their peers already considering teaching), salaries are the biggest piece of the puzzle.

Increasing the salary for teachers to make it a route competitive with other graduate professions will need to be a significant part of any plan to increase recruitment from Gen Z candidates.

2. MEASURES TO INCREASE WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND REDUCE LONG HOURS WILL HELP PEOPLE TO VIEW TEACHING AS A DESIRABLE, AS WELL AS WELL-RESPECTED, CAREER OPTION.

“I think a work life balance is really important...I think it's really important to be able to have time off and have a lot of holiday and have those experiences outside of work.”

21-year-old female, maths student, high-tariff university, Southampton

The literature and our research findings confirm that teaching is not a job that lacks the respect of Gen Z, or the wider public. **Interest in teaching remains constant across time; it emerged as the most highly respected profession in our poll;** it was not seen as a job for those that “can't do”; and there was widespread admiration for teachers within our focus groups.

Despite great respect, teaching was perceived as a “difficult” and “stressful” job. It is therefore considered at odds with a generation's desire for good work-life balance (the most important factor for Gen Z when it comes to choosing their future career), and an appetite for at least some hybrid or flexible working. **In our poll, 46% said it would be easier to achieve a good work-life balance in another sector.**

The problem with recruitment, therefore, is not a lack of respect for the profession. The problem is that the lack of flexibility, alongside the perceived conditions and comparatively low salary, are not adequately compensated for by societal respect, which prevents respect from being used as a lever for recruitment.

Being viewed as an inflexible career option (both in terms of working hours, and the difficulty in maintaining a good work-life balance) will be a significant detracting factor when it comes to getting Gen Z to consider teaching as a profession.

The conditions debate is not distinct from the salary debate; the latter is seen as a compensation for the former, and improving conditions for teachers will take some of the heat out of salary discussions. Introducing flexibility where possible will make a difference, because 80% of respondents expressed a preference for working in a hybrid environment, but this will take time to get right. The benefits of flexibility can, however, be introduced without sacrificing the admiration that teaching attracts.

Increasing flexibility and taking tangible steps to tackle workload will be important to move teaching from a respectable profession which is “nice for others to do” to one that Gen Z actively pursue.

3. GEN Z WANT VARIETY IN THEIR CAREERS: WIDENING CAREER DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM COULD ATTRACT MORE GEN ZS AND HELP FIND AN APPROPRIATE “MOMENT” TO CONSIDER A CAREER IN TEACHING.

“Because I’m still quite young, I prefer to get the experience now, and then assess my options. Because if I want to change my career after I’ve started teaching, I’m going to face a lot more barriers to do that.”

21-year-old male, geography graduate, high-tariff university, Lewes

“[I] wouldn’t be opposed to moving jobs further down the line. I think working in the same place for a long period of time can get boring.”

21-year-old male, economics graduate, high-tariff university, Sheffield

Gen Z view their career in a non-linear way, and expect to move between professions and different types of career pathways. In our focus groups, there was an openness to the idea that teaching could be a desirable second career following a period in the wider professional world, and an appreciation for the expertise that having a career prior to teaching can bring.

Ensuring career development opportunities are varied, including exposure to different industries through short-term secondments, could help make teaching a more attractive career option for Gen Z graduates.

“The only reason I probably wouldn’t [go into teaching straight away] is I would think I maybe owe it to myself to try other careers and see where I can go before I settle into teaching. I don’t want to regret it if I don’t try something before...It’s like a chance to get more life experience to become a better teacher.”

18-year-old female, studying maths, geography and business, Watford

There was also a sense from some participants that it might be harder to change from teaching into other careers than vice versa. One factor in this was doing something new and innovative: in our poll, 57% said it would be easier to do something new or innovative in another sector, and 45% said that it would be easier to develop professional skills in another sector. **Graduates in our focus groups felt like teaching was something they could return to at a later stage in their career**, but none knew what the potential routes for this were or had thought about how they would be able to achieve this.

A stronger focus on teaching being an option at multiple stages across a career path (including “teaching second” as well as “teaching first”) could help to open up the profession to more early and mid-career workers for whom teaching was not the right immediate option after university.

An “open door” approach to recruitment, and more opportunities for experiencing other professions alongside teaching, will help give Gen Z the flexibility they expect across their career as a whole, as well as within the day to day working week.

4. REFRAMING THE NARRATIVE AROUND TEACHING IS IMPORTANT BUT WILL REQUIRE CHANGES TO MATERIAL CONDITIONS TO MEANINGFULLY BOOST RECRUITMENT.

Talking about teaching as “poorly paid martyrdom” (a job that benefits society at great personal cost to the individual undertaking it) will actively dissuade this generation from teaching. Our experts on Gen Z were clear that although Gen Z share a respect for teaching as a socially valuable job, they are both less economically stable than Baby Boomers and Generation X and heavily divided within themselves based on parental wealth. Importantly, our experts agreed that there was much more individual pragmatism than collective idealism in Gen Z’s labour market behaviours.

“The theme of the last few decades has been the growth of private wealth, but also its concentration within the Boomers, particularly the top third – that is the big story with implications for now and the future. It means there are some within Gen Z who are set to get much more help than others across their lives.

“This makes it quite a fractured generation: there are some who’ve got no familial wealth that they’ll inherit and no prospects of that ‘bank of mum and dad’ type help before that, while others have lots of that support.

“There are a lot of misconceptions around Gen Z overall having a collectivist mindset, which I don’t see as a significant defining feature, which is no surprise given they’re at the end of a long trend towards individualisation.”

Bobby Duffy, Professor of Public Policy and Director of the Policy Institute, KCL

“There’s a sense that the public sector has to be a vocation rather than a career move or a job. That’s a real problem: it can just be a job. I definitely didn’t feel that it was a vocation, I just happened to fall in love with it. Especially at Russell Group unis, people feel they need to do a career that’s expected. Consultancy is still by far the main thing that graduates are applying to do, and you still get people thinking they’ll do law conversion courses.

“There’s a group of ‘acceptable’ jobs, and public sector jobs aren’t one of them...lots of the drivers with Gen Z are pretty similar [to other generations]: there’s a lot more about work-life balance, but they want to make money, they want a good social life at work.”

Natasha Porter OBE, CEO, Unlocked Graduates

Our focus groups also showed us that Gen Z are making pragmatic decisions about salary in relation to working conditions. They consider the stage that they are at within their own life and career trajectory, the conditions of the job that they are being asked to do, and the compensation they are receiving for that job, and make a judgement call.

Overselling the respectability and rewarding nature of teaching may be counterproductive with Gen Z, making it seem like this is being used as a recruiting tool because changes to pay and conditions can’t be achieved.

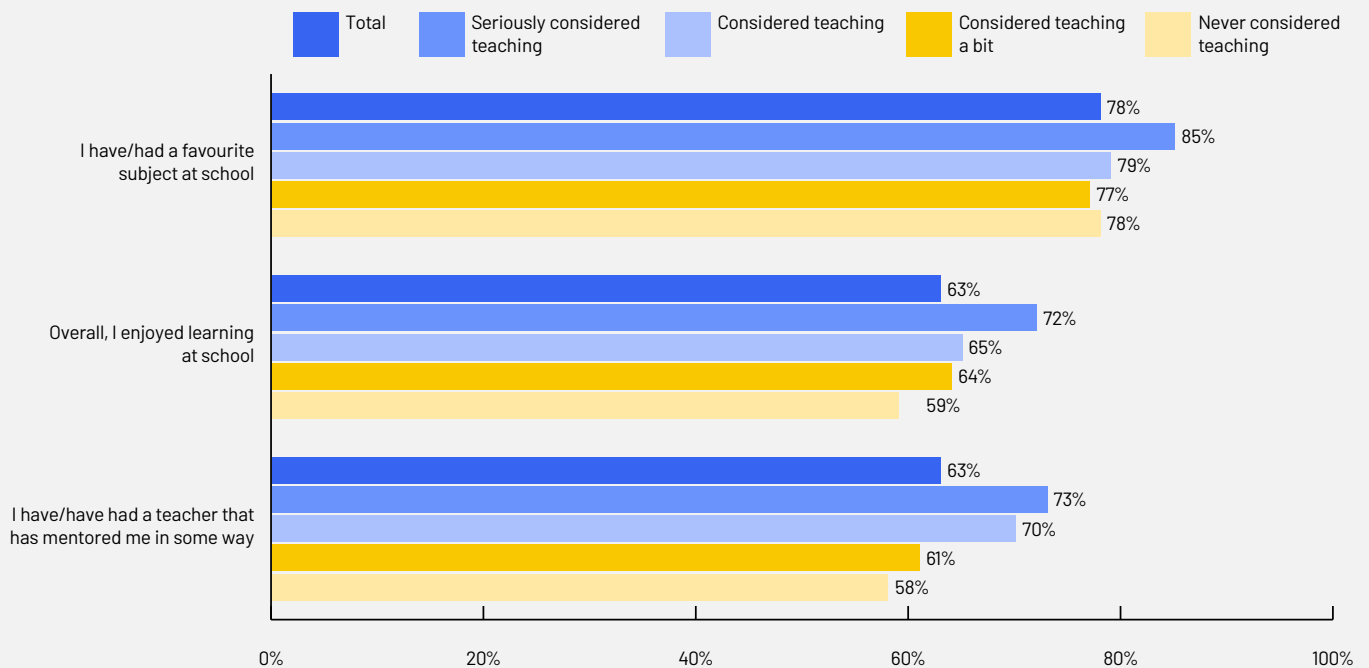
Framing the conversation regarding teacher pay in terms of compensation, and what teachers are being compensated for, may facilitate a more productive discussion around how to support teacher recruitment.

5. CURRICULUM REFORM COULD HAVE AN IMPACT ON WILLINGNESS TO TEACH.

78% of poll participants had a favourite subject at school, a figure that rises to 85% among those who have seriously considered teaching. Even among those who have never considered teaching, the figure remains at 78%, suggesting that people have strong and clear memories of subjects for which they have or had particular passions at school.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (% agree)

Public First | 16 to 24-year-olds in England | sample size: 3,031 | Fieldwork 21 May - 4 June 2024



75% saw discussing and teaching a subject of interest as a positive aspect of teaching, but 58% agree that they don't know enough about the subjects that are taught in schools to do it themselves. In our focus groups, students at high-tariff institutions in particular spoke favourably of the opportunity to discuss their subjects in detail with fellow enthusiasts.

Several focus group participants, particularly those from high-tariff universities, raised the idea that they would prefer to teach at university than in schools, and **some suggested that changes to the curriculum would make them more interested in teaching.**

“If I were to teach history, for example, you learn facts and stats and stuff like that. And I feel like if you’ve done a degree in history, you’d have a lot of knowledge that you could use beyond that sort of stuff. That’s just an example for me. So, yeah, for if I was going to be like a history teacher, that’s what I would want to change from my subject.”

21-year-old male, history student, high-tariff university, Haywards Heath

“Some of the information that is imposed is so outdated...no one’s going to really use [it] in their day-to-day life. I think maybe that would be a driving factor if you knew, as a teacher, that you could have some kind of influence over what you are teaching, as opposed to spoon feeding this curriculum to adhere to exams.”

21-year-old female, geography student, high-tariff university, Reigate

“Better pay, and more freedom on the syllabus...Maybe per school they can decide the way they want to teach...Maybe if you were able to be a bit more flexible with the way we examine students.”

22-year-old female, politics student, high-tariff university, Reigate

“I feel like if they brought in another subject, or just said that global environmental issues would be taught within the curriculum...that would definitely make me want to teach more. I would say currently, 15 to 20% [likely to teach]. But that would make me go up to maybe 60%.”

22-year-old female, environmental geoscience student, high-tariff university, London

The ongoing Curriculum and Assessment Review presents an opportunity to consider how what is taught in schools could motivate some candidates to move into teaching, aligning with a desire to make meaningful and purposeful social change.

Incentivising teaching: what does this look like by segment?

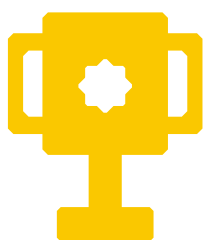


Fulfilment Finders: Need to see teaching as rewarding, not stressful

Fulfilment Finders were more likely to point towards a lack of funding in schools (46%) and the poor treatment of teachers by parents (30%) as major disadvantages to the role.

This group is motivated by doing meaningful work, which is more important than earning a lot of money. 53% say that their overall career goal is to do something which is good for the world, and to see teaching as rewarding.

Managing the factors which would make it difficult for them to maintain a view of teaching as a rewarding rather than a stressful job – particularly student behaviour and workload – is important for this group.



Ambitious Achievers: Need to see routes to progression and senior leadership

Ambitious Achievers are not as passionate about teaching as Fulfilment Finders, but the majority were still likely to consider teaching (55%), even if they would consider other careers more (32%).

This group wants to do high status, meaningful work but worry that it would be difficult to develop professional skills they want to achieve in their careers if they went into teaching.

Emphasising routes to senior management roles via teaching would be a priority for this group.



Decision Delayers: Need flexibility in recruitment options and in working patterns

This group lacks confidence when it comes to career choices. 54% say that they don't know what to do with their lives. They tend to be worried about public speaking, and often prefer to work alone. They are the least likely of all our segments to want to work in person all the time.

Members of this group need flexible routes into teaching at different points in their career, and options to work flexibly while in teaching roles, including more opportunities to work from home. This may look like more purposeful recruitment of experienced professionals later on in their careers.



Money Motivated: Need teaching to be better paid

For 73% of this group, their overall career goal is to earn a lot of money. For 61%, this is more important to them than doing meaningful work. Unsurprisingly therefore, salary is the most important motivator for this group, who want to see themselves high on the overall income distribution post-graduation, and quick routes for progression via salary increase during their career. One way to achieve this might be to replicate the recent move by United Learning to provide a less generous pension offer in exchange for starting salaries boosted to £45,000.[15]

Roadmap for teacher recruitment **Recommendations** for achieving the **6,500 pledge**



Roadmap for teacher recruitment

Teach First works with the schools serving the most deprived communities that find recruitment the hardest. But getting high quality teachers into these communities is crucial if we're serious about closing the attainment gap and ensuring all children can reach their potential.

6,500 new teachers is a welcome but ambitious target, and our research has set out the scale of the challenge facing the Government as it works to achieve this.

In this section, we outline an ambitious set of policy recommendations that we believe will lead to improvements in teacher recruitment.

1. A RECRUITMENT STRATEGY AND NARRATIVE FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

2. IMPROVE FINANCIAL INCENTIVES TO RECRUIT MORE TEACHERS

3. RECRUIT MORE TEACHERS BY IMPROVING CONDITIONS TO IMPROVE THE NARRATIVE

1. A RECRUITMENT STRATEGY AND NARRATIVE FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

A decade-long “open door” recruitment strategy

- Ensure there are a variety of specialised routes into the teaching profession so we can continue to meet the needs of entrants at different career points like Now Teach.
- Target options like the **Teacher Degree Apprenticeships** at career changers with different levels of qualifications and experience, possibly by devising pathways of different durations and intensities.
- Streamline how career changers can enter the classroom, including exploring the use of the **Recruitment Fund** to incentivise career changers in schools serving low-income communities.
- To embrace Gen Z's desire for varied careers, a recruitment strategy needs a **strong returner option**, including working with leading businesses to identify prospective career changers, to encourage recruitment at multiple career stages.
- Learn from the success of Teach First and examples in the USA to deliver **teacher taster programmes**, to bust myths and engage potential teachers from other professions and careers.

RECOMMENDATION SPOTLIGHT

Learning from Teach First's 'Taster Programme'

Daisy Lucas, Teach First trainee maths teacher, Bedford Free School, Bedford



“I joined the Teach First Training Programme after taking part in the charity's teacher taster programme. I really enjoyed meeting lots of new people and was inspired to apply after discovering more about both teaching itself and Teach First's aim for the future of teaching.”

“The Taster Programme reaffirmed why I want to teach – to help young people progress in life, especially in subjects like maths. Maths helps with so much in life and I can't wait to start in school and help my students prepare for the future.”

“Teach First has really opened my eyes to why we need to make education a lot more equitable for everyone. I think I'll always have that in mind when I'm in front of my pupils and hope to take that with me throughout my career.”

1. A RECRUITMENT STRATEGY AND NARRATIVE FOR THE 21ST CENTURY (CONTINUED)

Mutual sharing of expertise

- Pilot short-term “**teacher in residence**” **secondments** into leading sectors to help bring new experiences and insights into the classroom and provide extensive opportunities for professional development.
 - Work with UK business to create a platform of opportunities for teachers to apply to.
 - Secondments could be delivered as whole-week blocks, or as short, half day training segments over an extended period of time either within term time, or the school holidays.
 - Schools should be empowered to identify and implement secondment models depending on what works for them, their staff, and their students.
 - This pilot would cost around £7.5 million to cover start up expenses, classroom cover and programme delivery for 450 high-quality, carefully selected placements across priority sectors.
 - Initially, pilots should be prioritised for schools serving disadvantaged communities where the recruitment need is greatest.

RECOMMENDATION SPOTLIGHT

Enriching careers and learning through secondments

Mat Galvin, Principal, Macclesfield Academy, Macclesfield



“Recently, we supported one of our brilliant physics teachers to participate in an international teacher development residency at The European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN) in Switzerland. The opportunity augmented the teacher’s subject knowledge and provided an invaluable experience she brought back to her pupils and our wider school community.”

“Investing in secondments like this is incredibly worthwhile for teachers and their pupils. They can bring back a wealth of new industry knowledge and experiences that teachers don’t have the opportunity to gain in the classroom. However, accommodating opportunities like this can be challenging for some schools, especially those with tight budgets and serving communities experiencing deprivation, as we do.”

“If schools could offer teachers industry experience, it could transform teacher recruitment and retention. We know new teachers seek flexible working opportunities in exciting and diverse careers. While a career in teaching already offers daily variety, industry-led secondments could do wonders for freshening up ideas, providing our communities with different perspectives, and ensuring teachers can continue making a real difference to their pupils.”

1. A RECRUITMENT STRATEGY AND NARRATIVE FOR THE 21ST CENTURY (CONTINUED)

- Implement a **Career Break Scheme**, to facilitate a teacher's personal and professional development for experienced teachers.
 - A period of unpaid special leave. It may be extended on an annual basis if the total period of the Career Break is no longer than five years at any time.
 - Guarantees their role at the end of the scheme with coaching support to re-enter the classroom and implement their learning.

RECOMMENDATION SPOTLIGHT

Creating a new professional development offer



One of the research's most significant segments, Ambitious Achievers, need to see routes to progression as part of their career offer. This group wants to do high status, meaningful work but worry that it would be difficult to develop professional skills they want to achieve in their careers if they went into teaching. We can change this perception by widening the window of opportunity for the professional development of teachers.

Teach First Summer Projects connect current trainees and ambassadors with non-sector based professional development. It's a unique opportunity to work with a new organisation, build on professional development objectives, and take new skills back to school. Our evaluations have found Summer Projects contributed to:

- Learning new skills and developing expertise to apply in the classroom.
- Gaining fresh perspectives and insights into another sector.
- Building relationships across industries.

Adopting this approach through a central pot of funding, innovative partnerships with businesses, or international education institutions could deliver this at a national scale. Secondments in industries relevant to classroom teacher or leadership roles brings new and varied experiences into the school environment, exposing young people to the broad range of job opportunities pursuing different subjects can achieve.

1. A RECRUITMENT STRATEGY AND NARRATIVE FOR THE 21ST CENTURY (CONTINUED)

New recruitment campaign

- **Set recruitment targets for shortage subjects and recruitment cold spot locations, prioritising schools serving the most deprived communities, to ensure 6,500 newly recruited teachers are placed where they're needed most.**
- **Build towards a new recruitment campaign which focuses on the positive changes made to teacher conditions.** This should include focus on those areas identified as most salient to Gen Z:
 - Opportunities for progression both in terms of salary and seniority.
 - Options for flexibility, including any new flexibility entitlement (as set out below).
 - Variety, including the day to day experiences in the classroom as well as the breadth of routes for professional development.
 - Connection, including opportunities to build communities with students, families, and with colleagues.
 - Fulfilment and purpose, stressing that this does not need to come at the expense of material benefits (including salary), and presenting teaching in such a way that it is not viewed solely as a “stressful but rewarding” job.

Curriculum review

- **Use the Curriculum and Assessment Review to explore what changes to the curriculum could incentivise greater teacher recruitment.**
 - Test Curriculum and Assessment Review recommendations with potential future teachers as part of the review process.



Ensure 6,500 newly recruited teachers are placed where they're needed most.

2. IMPROVING FINANCIAL INCENTIVES TO RECRUIT MORE TEACHERS

Recruitment fund

The Government has allocated a Recruitment Fund of £450 million to reach their target of recruiting 6,500 new teachers. To incentivise teachers to work in schools facing the most significant recruitment challenges, some of the money should focus on:

- **Reforming the Levelling Up Premium** (£150 million) by:
 - Widening eligibility to include MFL, geography and all STEM subjects.
 - Ensuring all trainee teachers working towards QTS are able to access this fund, regardless of the ITT route.
 - Doubling the premium length to four years.
 - Increasing payments to a £3,000 - £7,000 range.
 - Increasing payments to those teaching physics and computing to £8,000.
- **Providing £2,000 of relocation funding to support teachers moving to recruitment geographic cold spots** (equating to a total of £8 million).
 - For those working in rural areas with poorer transport links, this support should be doubled to £4,000.
- **Doubling early career payments for career changers** to incentivise the transition into the classroom (£17 million).
- **Increasing the competitiveness and viability of employment-based routes through covering salary increase** (£40 million).

RECOMMENDATION SPOTLIGHT

Learning from Teach First's relocation grants

With the recruitment crisis more acute in different areas of the country, we need effective incentives and support to ensure we attract teachers who can work in the schools and areas that need them most. Teach First provided practical financial support for trainees to support their relocation. The £2,000 grant resulted in our autumn cohort doubling in 2023 compared to 2022, showing that the cost-of-living crisis is leading some to reject teaching as simply unviable.

Kathryn Blake, Teach First trainee English teacher, Trinity Catholic College, Middlesbrough

“Once accepted onto the Teach First Training Programme, I was approached about returning to teach in the North East, near to where I grew up. While I was open to teaching anywhere that needed me, relocating from Glasgow was a huge risk.”

“Even though Teach First was the most accessible route for me, moving back to the North East wasn't easy. I didn't have the chance to save money while working and completing my degree. Thankfully, I could apply for a relocation grant offered by Teach First to cover moving costs.”

“Receiving the grant was an incredible weight off my shoulders. Changing careers can be really daunting and combining that with moving into a new home adds to the stress. Having access to this kind of financial support really does help.”



2. IMPROVING FINANCIAL INCENTIVES TO RECRUIT MORE TEACHERS (CONTINUED)

Teacher pay

- **Pay levels for trainees on employment based routes should be reinstated to 2010 real-terms levels (a 9% rise in 2024 figures)** to improve the attractiveness and competitiveness of those recruitment routes and ensure those trainees are paid fairly. This would cost c.£40m and could be taken from the Government's recruitment fund.
- **The DfE should continue to accept the School Teachers' Review Body recommendations for pay rises at all levels**, including for trainees, as teaching has lagged behind average UK wages in terms of growth.
- **Establish a route to increase teacher salaries to be in the top third of the graduate salary market by 2030** to better compete in the graduate recruitment market. Should the Government continue to accept an STRB recommended pay rise at 5.5% year-on-year, this would mean that the average teacher salary would be around £40,000 by 2030.

Reforming bursary budget

- **Reform £181m bursary entitlements to target areas and subjects where the need is greatest.**
 - Increase the proportion of early career bursary payments distributed to early career teachers (ECTs) working in more deprived contexts.
 - Widen bursary use for professional development such as Subject Knowledge Enhancement courses (SKE) & National Professional Qualifications (NPQs).



Teacher salaries to be in the top third of the graduate salary market by 2030.

3. RECRUIT MORE TEACHERS BY IMPROVING CONDITIONS TO IMPROVE THE NARRATIVE

Flexible working and work/life balance

- **The Government should set out a flexibility entitlement for every teacher.** This should build on the DfE's flexible working toolkit to establish a flexible working offer for school workforces. The exact way in which this flexibility is offered would be decided ultimately by schools on a case-by-case basis. This could include:
 - Compressed hours
 - Remote INSET days
 - Discretionary single-day holiday entitlement for qualified teachers
 - Increasing flexibility in holiday access
- Promote a “whole-school approach” to flexible working, including **upskilling senior leaders** through integrating flexible working into existing development opportunities.

RECOMMENDATION SPOTLIGHT

Flexible working as a recruitment tool

Katie Metselaar, Head of School, Haverstock School, London



“We began by implementing simple strategies, like giving our Senior Leadership Team (SLT) members half a day a week to work from home. This not only directly benefitted our SLT but also modelled to all staff that you don’t have to work beyond your means to progress in teaching. We finish early on Fridays, benefiting pupils and staff who work tirelessly all week. This enables our staff to do our professional development and department meetings on Friday afternoons.”

“While we can’t offer completely flexible working like in other sectors, we do our best to accommodate the situations and preferences of all our staff. Where possible, colleagues can work from home, and we blend meetings online and in person to avoid extended hours in school.”

“I aim to run Haverstock School as smoothly as possible so it’s a nice place to work and learn. I don’t buy into tokenistic wellbeing practices. The best way to recruit and retain brilliant staff is to install sustainable, straightforward ways to not only help them to do their jobs well and for a long time, but also recognise their individual needs and circumstances.”

3. RECRUIT MORE TEACHERS BY IMPROVING CONDITIONS TO IMPROVE THE NARRATIVE (CONTINUED)

School funding

- Invest in the school system to address systemic challenges, equipping teachers with the tools they need, and stimulating the school environment as an attractive place to work.
 - Schools serving communities with the highest levels of disadvantage have seen their funding advantage drop by 10% between 2010 and 2021. Additional funding should be targeted toward those schools to re-establish this financial advantage.
 - Create a new pupil premium subcategory for primary and secondary schools' 'persistently disadvantaged' pupils who have been eligible for free school meals for 80% or more of their school life. This could be done by increasing the rate of funding that they receive by at least 50% which would cost around £460 million.
 - Use the Opportunity Mission Board to identify how other budgets could be used to support the work of schools. For example, by ensuring the new Skills and Growth Levy supports schools.

RECOMMENDATION SPOTLIGHT

Targeted investment in schools

Alastair Heath-Robinson, CEO of the Orwell Multi Academy Trust



“All of the primary schools within our Multi Academy Trust have a real mix of deprivation, with some facing significant levels. Our pupil premium funding is vital for us and we know how important this support is. The earlier you can address the challenges those children face, the more time you have to make a difference.”

“Creating a new ‘persistently disadvantaged’ Pupil Premium subcategory and increasing the rate they receive would support a more nuanced approach to support for pupils, rather than a one size fits all model.”

Professional development

- Reinstatement support for a broader continued professional development offer.
 - Reinstatement full funding for NPOs using the Government's **£210m fund for CPD**.
 - Explore how the new Growth and Skills levy could be designed to support schools to access professional development for their teaching and support staff.
 - Reinstatement the funding for Subject Knowledge Enhancement courses and widen provision to include shortage subjects for schools serving deprived areas.
 - Use outcomes from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) review of ECF to eliminate duplicative workload and redirect ECT efforts towards phase- and subject-specific training.

3. RECRUIT MORE TEACHERS BY IMPROVING CONDITIONS TO IMPROVE THE NARRATIVE (CONTINUED)

Reduce workload

- **Recommission the Workload Reduction Taskforce** with a clear remit to establish what schools and teachers should stop doing, with final guidance set out on the DfE website. As part of this work, consider:
 - Commissioning the EEF or a similar body to produce a publication of “what doesn’t work” guidance that details inefficient or counterproductive workplace practice.
 - Conducting a survey aimed at establishing discrepancies between teachers’ statutory responsibilities in schools and actual responsibilities undertaken.
- **Outline and execute a rollout plan for improved support services for children and young people, to alleviate pressure on schools from outside demands:**
 - This commitment should include the Government's manifesto pledges to deliver universal primary breakfast clubs and mental health workers in schools.
 - Ensure the Child Poverty Taskforce also considers improving public services for young people - especially CAMHS and SEND support.
- **Explore the potential that developments in AI has to alleviate teacher workload, in particular around lesson planning and marking.** Any investment or rollout of resources must prioritise schools in low-income communities where workload is greater. Also ensure the introduction of EdTech does not further disadvantage these schools that have more limited access to technological resources and broadband connectivity.



Conclusion

**Changing the
conditions to change
the narrative**



Conclusion

The bold and innovative recommendations in this report reflect the scale of the challenge ahead. But where there is a will, there is a way.

We have already seen the 'will' expressed by the Government through their commitments to recruit an additional 6,500 new teachers and break down the barriers to opportunity for every child.

This report provides the 'way'.

As the evidence highlights, the trade-offs from entering the profession are no longer compelling. The new generation - Gen Z - who will form the backbone of the future teaching talent pipeline, want a career that offers them security, progression, professional development and a social purpose.

Teaching can offer all that. But the model of recruitment that has previously been relied on must evolve.

The roadmap of recommendations outlined in this report provides a trajectory of interventions which would modernise the profession and create a renewed appeal for teaching amongst a crowded graduate labour market.

Secondments for teachers, a flexible working entitlement, and improved pay conditions will go a long way to meeting the expectations set by Gen Z. They will be well received by previous generations too.

But change will not take place overnight.

If the Government is to succeed in their Opportunity Mission, recruiting a new generation of 6,500 inspiring teachers is key to this. By making the necessary interventions outlined in this report, they have the power to deliver a new vision for the teaching profession. One which aligns it more closely with modern-day working practices, offers fresh appeal and speaks to the needs of both its potential recruits, and its beneficiaries.

Tomorrow's teachers are waiting. And that wait must end today.

Secondments for teachers, a flexible working entitlement, and improved pay conditions will go a long way to meeting the expectations set by Gen Z.

Appendix



Appendix

Literature review

Key findings

1. The recruitment and retention crisis is a product of issues relating to workload, flexibility and pay.
2. These issues have proved particularly challenging in light of a post-pandemic world characterised by higher wage growth in the private sector than the public sector, a cost of living crisis, and more workplace flexibility across a range of sectors. Despite this, teaching is still respected and admired as a socially valuable profession.
3. Gen Z are well-educated but materially insecure. They want both good pay and flexibility as they look to post-pandemic employment. Since teaching struggles to provide these things, some evidence suggests that those in Gen Z who opt into teaching may be less high-attaining individuals who prioritise job security over pay and intellectual stimulation.

1. Background

Issues with teacher recruitment and retention are longstanding and have proved resistant to intervention. Since 2015/16, the Government has met its target for teacher recruitment only once (in 2020/21, which may have been a product of pandemic-related factors).[16] Since 2010, the overall rate of teachers leaving the profession has hovered at around 10%, although it fell during the pandemic before rising again. We know this is felt most acutely in schools serving poorer areas, where the challenges schools face are more significant, yet the need for brilliant teachers is greater.

First year early career teachers (ECTs) leave the profession in a pattern that roughly mirrors the overall leaving rate, but some two to three percentage points higher than the overall rate.[17] This combination of teachers leaving and failing to be replaced quickly enough has led to a crisis in supply that can be seen in pupil to teacher ratios. In 2010/11, the pupil to teacher ratio within schools stood at 20.8 in primary settings and 15.4 in secondary schools, but by 2022/23, the equivalent figures stood at 21.1 and 17.2 respectively.[18] The DfE has attempted to plug the shortfall with recruitment from overseas, although applications from some areas have fallen precipitously in recent years.[19]

2. Causes

When we examine the causes of poor recruitment and retention outcomes, the three consistent factors are workload, pay and flexibility. Each of these factors is worth considering.

a. Workload

Teachers in England work longer hours than their peers, and this is a cause of anger within the profession. The 2018 TALIS survey found that 53% of primary teachers and 57% of lower-secondary school teachers in England thought that their workload was unmanageable, with the average number of hours worked in both cases well above the OECD average for comparable phases.[20]

The Government has been aware of issues surrounding workload in teaching since at least 2014, when it launched the Workload Challenge.[21] This highlighted both the burden of administrative affairs in schools, notably assessment and data entry, as well as the existence of pinch points within the school year, such as exam periods and Christmas. In response, the Government launched the workload reduction toolkit in 2018, but this received very limited uptake, with only one-ninth of teachers surveyed saying that they found it helpful five years after its inception.[22] In 2022/23, teachers were routinely working six hours per typical

working week more than similar graduates in other occupations, with their working hours also increasing since 2021.[23]

Issues of workload, particularly around pastoral care and behaviour, have been at the centre of the debate following the pandemic. With 44% more teachers saying they intended to leave teaching in 2022/23 than in the previous year, teachers have cited worsening pupil behaviour since the pandemic as a factor in mounting workload.[24]

Furthermore, a large majority (72%) of teachers in state secondaries have said that they are helping students more with non-academic matters than they did five years ago, a figure that rises to 82% in Education Investment Areas (areas of the country with poor educational outcomes that receive extra government funding to drive up standards).[25]

Teachers have expressed a desire to be given better training to discharge their workload efficiently and effectively, a problem that the Government made efforts to address through the introduction of the new Early Career Framework (ECF) in 2018. The ECF has made efforts to broaden and deepen ECTs' professional development and training, with Teach First's efforts to provide phase- and subject-specific training addressing one aspect of ECT feedback.[26]

There are some concerns that the ECF has added to the workload of Early Career Teachers (ECTs), as well as their mentors, who are generally in middle and senior leadership.[27] This is a particular issue because school leaders have been leaving at particularly high rates in recent years,[28] and the erosion of leadership experience contributes to the burdens that then mount on more junior teachers in a vicious cycle. Workload thus remains a key concern in the recruitment and retention debate.

b. Flexibility and pay

As workload concerns have grown in recent years, so too have issues surrounding compensation. In real terms, teacher pay has failed to keep pace with wider wage growth. Real-terms pay growth for experienced teachers since 2010/11 is 15 percentage points lower than for average UK earners. In addition to this, starting salaries are 3% lower in real terms than in 2010/11, compared to a growth of about 4% for average UK earnings.[29] This is despite a 6.5% pay rise for experienced teachers in 2023/24, an outcome brought about in part by industrial action in 2022/23, and a pay rise of 5.5% implemented at all levels of the pay scale for 2024/25.[30]

Graduate recruits and experienced teachers are choosing between the public and private sector at a time when the private sector's wage growth has outpaced the public sector's,[31] and the figure of a £30k starting salary has struggled to keep graduate teaching salaries competitive relative to other graduate options.[32]

Not only this, but the notion of a starting salary in teaching is complicated by the discrepancies between salaried and unsalaried routes into the profession. Trainee teachers on salaried routes into teaching (of which Teach First is one) can start on as little as £21,731 outside London from September 2024,[33] even while teaching full time on reduced timetables and gathering evidence as they work towards qualified teacher status.

In a post-pandemic world, the ability to work flexibly has become a considerable factor in career choices, particularly among new entrants to the workforce. 65% of graduates reported being able to adopt hybrid or entirely remote working patterns in 2022/23, an option that teachers lack.

NFER estimates that compensation for the structural inflexibility of working patterns in teaching amounts to an additional 1.8 percentage points of higher pay over and above existing pay rises.[34] Among workers, flexible working is becoming a highly desirable part of a working environment, with one survey finding that four in five wanted flexibility where they worked.[35]

Work by the Education Endowment Foundation has found that although flexible working practices exist in various forms in schools, and that these could contribute positively to wellbeing, capacity, motivation and career progression, there is very limited evidence on the impact of flexible working, and it may be perceived by some schools (particularly those in more deprived areas) as out of reach and impractical in their circumstances.[36] Consequently, the implementation of flexible working patterns in the teaching profession remains a widespread challenge.

Aware of the discrepancies between the average starting salaries for different degrees and the likelihood of greater recruitment difficulties in subjects such as maths and computer science,[37] successive governments have attempted to attract and retain teachers in certain subjects through bursary and scholarship payments, as well as early career payments in certain subjects and levelling-up payments in high-need schools.[38]

The ongoing challenge in ensuring the effectiveness of these payments, which vary from year to year, was highlighted in the October 2023 initiative to invest £600m in the school sector, of which a large proportion would go towards recruitment and retention in key subjects. [39] Labour have committed to a £2,400 one-off payment for new teachers upon completion of the Early Career Framework, but they have provided no timeframe for this initiative.[40]

In summary, sluggish real-terms wage growth combined with wider inflationary pressures within the economy have contributed to a fall in teaching's place in the income distribution, particularly in certain subjects. In other words, being a teacher is no longer as highly paid a career relative to other options as it was fourteen years ago.[41] To compound this problem, workers are aware of the additional burden imposed by teaching's lack of flexibility and mounting concerns over workload, making the overall compensation offer seem even less satisfactory as a result.

3. Gen Z and the labour market

While much of the existing research has jurisdictional or methodological limitations, it is possible to draw out some initial observations of how Gen Z acts in the labour market. The socioeconomic context within which they exist may have had a significant impact on their attitudes, beliefs and behaviours. They have grown up in a post-2008 Great Recession world and reached the latter stages of secondary and tertiary education shortly before or during the pandemic, and in an English context, they will have spent the majority of their young lives in a period of economic stagnation.[42] It is estimated that Gen Z will make up around 27% of the workforce by 2025.[43]

Gen Z can be described as socially conscious but financially pragmatic when it comes to their careers. They are characterised by (and value deeply) their diversity,[44] and they are better educated than their predecessors, even though this has caused them to accrue debt.[45]

There are varied views of their priorities and values in the workplace. In one survey, pay was found to be the most important factor that companies could control to attract Gen Z, followed by job flexibility.[46] Another survey found that although Gen Z prioritise salary in response to the Great Recession and rising housing and transportation costs (among other factors), they also value work-life balance and other benefits outside salary, as well as the social value of their employer.

This emphasis on work-life balance and a wider, more nuanced perspective on compensation insofar as it contributes to personal stability and wellbeing is also in evidence in a literature review of Gen Z attitudes towards careers, a paper that also suggests we lack clarity over whether they are more team-oriented or focused on individual work.

Despite their instinct for stability, Gen Z can be seen as restless and curious in their attitudes to work: one survey found that up to 72% would consider leaving their career in the next year,[47] and the desire for professional learning, growth and development emerges across the literature.

When it comes to Gen Z attitudes towards teaching careers, some striking findings emerge. One large survey of undergraduates at English universities finds that the students with the best grades

are the least interested in teaching, and those most interested in teaching have lower prior attainment and lower expected degree classifications, which highlights the importance of dedicated routes into teaching for high-performance graduates.[48]

Furthermore, a desire for an intellectually stimulating workplace is a predictor for not wanting to be a teacher, and job security and ease of obtaining a job (rather than pay) are predictors of entering the profession. Despite this, a recent NFER survey found that there was no significant discrepancy between the pro-social motivations of Gen Z and other generations.[49] In other words, they are no less attracted to socially valuable jobs, including teaching, than previous generations (indeed, they may be slightly more pro-social than millennials). Rather, interest in teaching has remained steady, but the relative attractiveness of teaching as a profession has fallen.[50]

Even prior to the arrival of Gen Z into the teaching workforce, discrepancies between how teacher educators, teachers and officials saw the role and characteristics of successful teachers were emerging, so the mixed picture of how Gen Z students relate to the workplace and to teaching in England in particular sits within an existing challenge.

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