

# 1st Annual Merrimack College Teacher Survey: 2022 Results



**A**s teachers grapple with the fallout of a worldwide pandemic and renewed attention to the culture wars in schools, their satisfaction rates appear to have hit an all-time low, according to the first annual Merrimack College Teacher Survey commissioned by the [Winston School of Education and Social Policy](#) at Merrimack College and conducted by the nonprofit, nonpartisan EdWeek Research Center.

The survey results suggest a deep disillusionment of many teachers who feel overworked, underpaid, and under-appreciated, with potential implications for a once-in-a-generation shift in the teaching profession. For example, just twelve percent of teachers, the survey found, are very satisfied with their jobs, with more than four in ten teachers saying they were very or fairly likely to leave the profession in the next two years.

This yearly survey fills the gap left by MetLife's former *Survey of the American Teacher*, which asked similar questions to gauge the state of the teaching profession and highlight teacher voices and perspectives. The Merrimack College Teacher Survey was of 1,324 of the nation's teachers and conducted between January 9th and February 23rd, 2022, and has a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points with a 95 percent confidence level.

The last two years have been fraught for teachers as their profession has consistently attracted public attention—much of it hostile—due to political and cultural battles over pandemic-related policies on masking and vaccines and new laws curtailing instruction related to race, racism, and gender. A factor that almost certainly contributes to their rising dissatisfaction is teachers' growing perception that the general public does not understand or appreciate their work. Less than half of 2022 survey respondents say the general public respects them and views them as professionals, down from 77 percent of 2011 respondents to the MetLife survey. Most teachers also perceive that five of seven timely topics included on the survey receive insufficient attention from the news media. However, like other Americans, they are divided along partisan lines, especially when it comes to issues of racism and race: While 54 percent of teachers who traditionally vote for the Democratic party say that teaching about racism and race should get more attention from the news media, just 15 percent of self-identified Republicans agree.

Salaries may be another reason so many teachers are dissatisfied. Twenty-six percent of teachers say they are paid fairly for the work they do, down from 35 percent on MetLife's 2011 survey. Teachers with three

to nine years in the classroom and females are more likely to say their salaries are unfair, as are teachers who are dissatisfied with their jobs and those who are likely to leave the profession in the next two years.

Autonomy is another indicator of satisfaction. While most teachers say they have control over key aspects of their jobs—including their teaching/pedagogy, their curriculum, their students' classroom behavior, the way that they assess their students, and the resources and supplies they need for instruction—just 37 percent say they have a lot of influence over another critical area: scheduling. The typical teacher works 54 hours per week, 25 hours of which is spent teaching students. Although the amount of time spent teaching is relatively consistent across categories such as grade level and years of experience, Black teachers and teachers in majority-Black schools report working longer hours and spending less of them on instruction.

Overall, most teachers say they'd like to spend more time on activities directly related to teaching (planning, instruction) and less time on more ancillary tasks (administrative work, non-teaching student interactions such as hall duty, mentoring, and counseling). This sense—that too much time is spent on this more peripheral work, combined with the reality that most teachers say they lack control over their time and nearly half perceive they lack control over the curriculum they teach—raises concerns that teaching is becoming a deprofessionalized job, one where educators are treated more and more like hourly employees with limited autonomy.

The challenges and frustrations that teachers face could take a toll on the profession's ability to sustain itself in the future. Forty-four percent of teachers say they are very or fairly likely to leave the profession in the next two years, up from 29 percent in the 2011 MetLife survey. Women, Black teachers, teachers working in Southern states, and teachers with three to nine years of experience are significantly more likely to say they plan to leave education. It's important to note that based on current research, it is unclear whether such intentions will translate into higher actual attrition rates in this and coming school years.

Given the challenges they face, would teachers advise their younger selves to do it all again? On this, educators are split, with less than half (45 percent) saying they would and the remainder saying they would not. This sentiment, coupled with the finding that increasing numbers of teachers are at least contemplating leaving the profession, raises questions about the future of the nation's ability to sustain its critical K-12 teaching force.



## Introduction

**T**he last two years have been some of the toughest times teachers have faced in the past century. Forced to pivot from one day to the next from in-person to remote instruction while they dealt with fallout from the worldwide coronavirus pandemic, K-12 educators found themselves stretched to the limit in an environment in which severe staffing shortages have been coupled with intense political and social polarization that ignited or re-ignited fractious debates about educational policies and practices. In a sense, these challenges have brought K-12 education to an inflection point in which its very foundations and forms are potentially in flux.

For these reasons, it seemed like the ideal moment to take the pulse of the teaching profession. For more than a quarter century, the *MetLife Survey of the American Teacher* gave voice to the views and experiences of teachers. The results were widely disseminated in an effort to help the public better understand

teachers' experiences and voices. MetLife discontinued the survey in 2012, and it is into this gap that the Winston School of Education and Social Policy at Merrimack College launched the first annual Merrimack College Teacher Survey. Conducted by the nonpartisan, nonprofit EdWeek Research Center, the survey was designed and updated with feedback from over a dozen educational experts and practitioners.

The 26-question survey was fielded online between January 9th and February 23rd, 2022. A total of 1,324 public school teachers responded to the nationally-representative poll, including 497 elementary school teachers, 245 middle school teachers, 495 high school teachers, and 87 who teach other grade configurations. The margin of error for the survey is plus or minus 3 percentage points with a confidence level of 95 percent.

The results were shocking, yet given the challenges of the past two years, not entirely unexpected.

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# Teacher Satisfaction

It is no secret that teachers have faced severe challenges during the worldwide coronavirus pandemic. Results of previous surveys suggest that [teacher morale has declined](#) precipitously during the pandemic, while [stress rates](#) have skyrocketed.

Still, at first glance, results of the Merrimack College Teacher Survey don't necessarily appear to be alarming. The majority of teachers (56 percent) say they are (somewhat or very) satisfied with their jobs. (Figure 1)

However, these results represent a major downturn. Over time, the *MetLife Survey of the American Teacher* tracked the share of educators who were very satisfied with their jobs, finding that job satisfaction was declining over time. The most recent results, collected in 2012, were released in accompaniment with [dire warnings](#) that teacher job satisfaction had hit a 25-year low after peaking in 2008 at 62 percent. At that time, 39 percent of teachers were very satisfied with their jobs.

This year's share of "very satisfied" teachers? Twelve percent. (Figure 2)

Figure 1

All in all, how satisfied are you with your job?

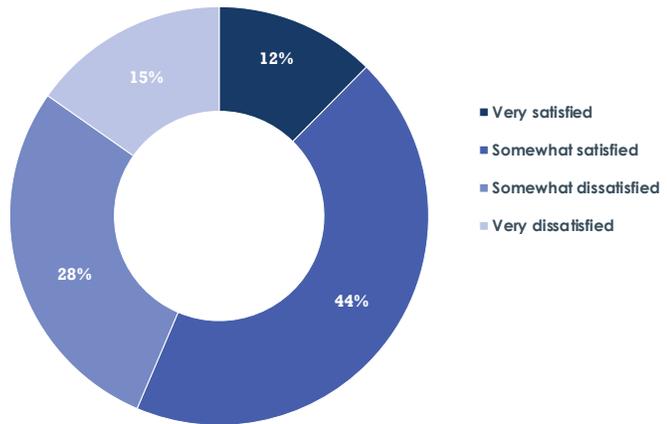
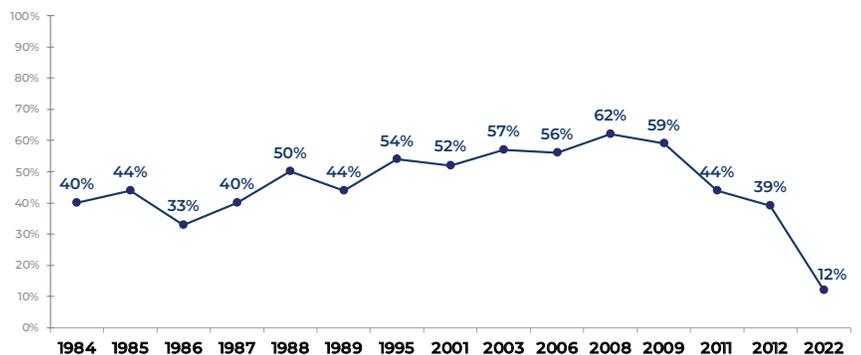


Figure 2

Percentage of K-12 teachers who say they are 'very satisfied' with their jobs



\*The 2022 results are from the Merrimack College Teacher Survey. The 1984-2012 results are from the *MetLife Survey of the American Teacher*.

# Profiles of Teacher Satisfaction

The demographic profile of the least satisfied teachers differs from that of their most satisfied peers. Statistically, very satisfied teachers are more likely to be males, Baby Boomers, and elementary school educators with more than 20 years of experience. The profile of the least satisfied teacher is a female Millennial middle school teacher with three to nine years of experience. (Figure 3)

Unsurprisingly, highly dissatisfied teachers have very different perceptions of their jobs than do their highly satisfied peers. They perceive lower levels of autonomy, professional support, and respect. They work longer hours and are more likely to say their salaries are unfair for the amount of work they do. More than half say they're very likely to leave the profession in the next two years as compared to 11 percent of their very satisfied counterparts.

A very dissatisfied Colorado Millennial teacher summed it up like this in response to an open-ended question asking respondents to share a story or perspective about one of the topics on the survey:

"I do not know any teacher who is happy with their work this year. Many say they used to be happy to come to work and since the pandemic we have been at the tipping point. We need more money for our salaries and for the school. New furniture for the kids and more staff to help support the kids at every level. We are tired, we are underpaid and are worried about the valuable staff we need, such as paraprofessionals, who are paid even worse. We cannot continue in this way.... we are tired."

Figure 3

	Profile of teachers who are very satisfied with their jobs	Profile of teachers who are very dissatisfied with their jobs
<b>AGE</b>		
Generation Z	6%	0%
Millennials	15%	40%
Generation X	45%	45%
Baby Boomers	34%	15%
<b>YEARS OF EXPERIENCE</b>		
Less than 3 years	9%	6%
3 To 9 years	16%	39%
10 To 20 years	42%	40%
More than 20 years	33%	16%
<b>GENDER</b>		
Female	66%	81%
Male	34%	19%
<b>GRADE LEVEL TAUGHT</b>		
Elementary	47%	33%
Middle	12%	19%
High school	31%	35%
Multiple grade levels	10%	12%
<b>MEDIAN HOURS PER WEEK WORKED</b>	51	55
<b>SALARY</b>		
Says salary is fair for the work he/she does	57%	11%
<b>RETENTION</b>		
Very likely to leave teaching profession in the next two years	7%	55%
<b>FEELS RESPECTED/SEEN AS A PROFESSIONAL BY</b>		
The general public	82%	30%
Students' parents	97%	51%
Within his/her own school	100%	63%
<b>SAYS HE/SHE HAS A LOT OF CONTROL/INFLUENCE OVER</b>		
School policies	65%	13%
Schedule (e.g., classes taught, non-academic duties)	76%	13%
Students' classroom behavior	95%	53%
Student assessment	92%	66%
Teaching pedagogy	99%	74%
<b>FOR PROFESSIONAL MENTORSHIP/SUPPORT, TURNS TO</b>		
Nobody	14%	31%
District leaders	69%	21%
School leaders	87%	45%

## Respect

A consistent finding in the research is that teacher job satisfaction is linked to their sense of being respected. In the 2011 MetLife survey, for example, 77 percent of teachers perceived that their communities treated them as professionals and 59% were very satisfied with their jobs.

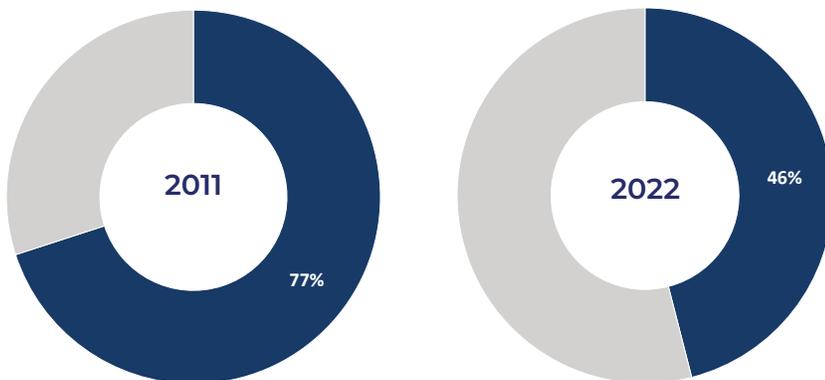
It is therefore worrying that the Merrimack College Teacher Survey found just 46 percent of teachers feeling that the general public respected them and saw them as professionals. (Figure 4)

“A lot of times the feeling I get as a teacher is disrespect,” an Oregon elementary teacher wrote in response to an open-ended survey question. “I feel that media, parents, and even some students feel that they can speak [to] our situation without even having a true sense of what massive amounts of work we do. Sure, the lightbulb moments and the relationships with kids are what keep us going, but people have to know that teachers are struggling despite putting everything they have into their profession and craft every day. Pay is low, student learning discrepancies are higher than ever after online learning, and it feels like not a lot is being done to remedy this. It probably sounds like a broken record when I say I feel over worked and underpaid and it feels like a pattern of disrespect.”

Although their job satisfaction rates are lower than those of white teachers (49 percent versus 57 percent are satisfied), Black teachers are much more likely to feel a sense of respect: 71 percent perceive that the general public respects them and treats them as professionals as compared to 43 percent of white teachers and 40 percent of Hispanic teachers.

Figure 4

### Percentage of teachers who say the community treats them as professionals



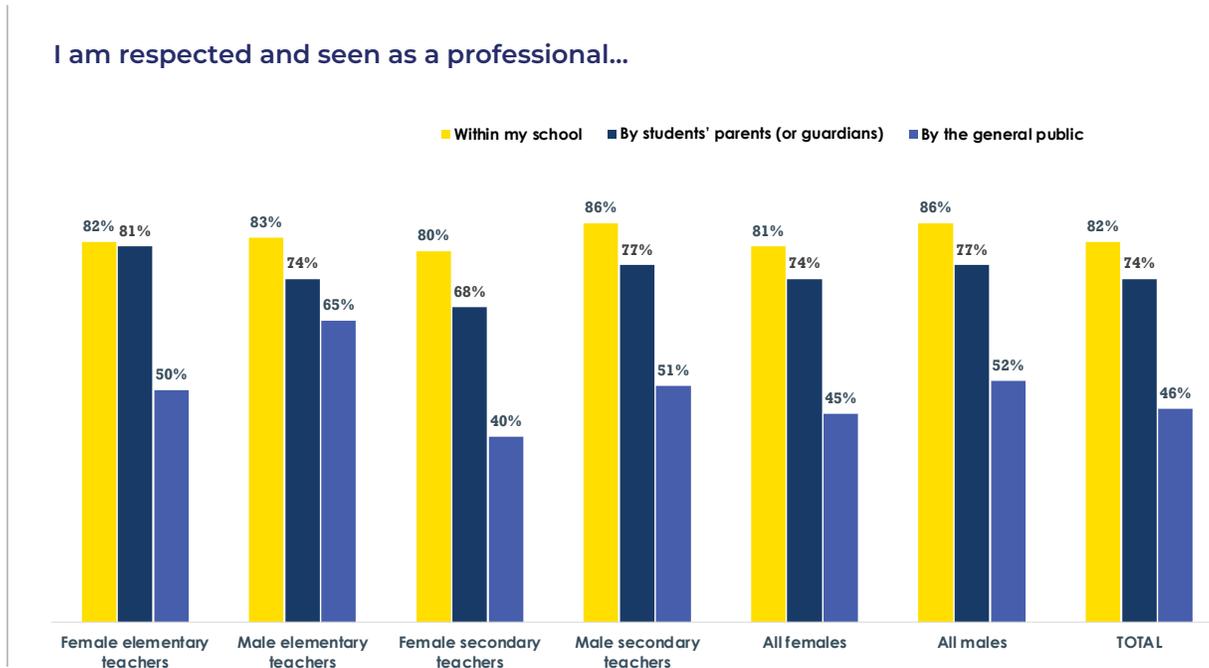
\*The 2022 results are from the Merrimack College Teacher Survey. Prior results are from the *MetLife Survey of the American Teacher*. In 2022, teachers were asked if they strongly or slightly agreed or disagreed that they were respected and seen as a professional by the general public. In 2011, teachers were asked to select yes or no in response to the question: Are you treated as a professional by the community?

Females, on the other hand, perceive lower levels of respect not only from the general public but from parents and even within their own schools.

“Teaching is a female-dominated profession,” a female elementary school teacher in New York wrote in response to an open-ended survey question. “As such, it’s a battle for resources, respect, and a fair salary for the hours put in. If I could go back, I would choose a different career field. I never imagined the constant battle and fast track to burnout.”

Although female teachers, in general, perceive lower levels of respect than do male teachers, an exception is the perception of parental respect at the elementary school level, [where just 11 percent of teachers are male](#). Eighty-one percent of female elementary teachers—but just 65 percent of males—say their students’ parents and guardians respect them. The reverse is true at the secondary level, [where 36 percent of teachers are male](#). Seventy-seven percent of male secondary teachers say their students’ parents respect them as compared to 68 percent of females. (Figure 5)

Figure 5



## Shelter From the Storm: Where Teachers Turn for Support

Given the low levels of respect most teachers say they get from the general public and some teachers say they also encounter at school, where do educators turn for support?

Considering that so many feel that they—and their profession—are under siege, it is perhaps unsurprising that teachers are most likely to seek support from one another. They are relatively less likely to seek support from administrators.

“I am currently feeling very supported by my colleagues,” a California high school teacher wrote in response to an open-ended survey question. “They are there for me in a very positive way. Where I am not feeling supported is the top-down implementation of policy from individuals who have been out of the classroom too long, and do not take advice or input from those of us who are actually in the field!”

(Figure 6)

Novice teachers in the first two years of their careers are also very likely to turn to mentors (92 percent).

Figure 6



## Education in the Public Eye

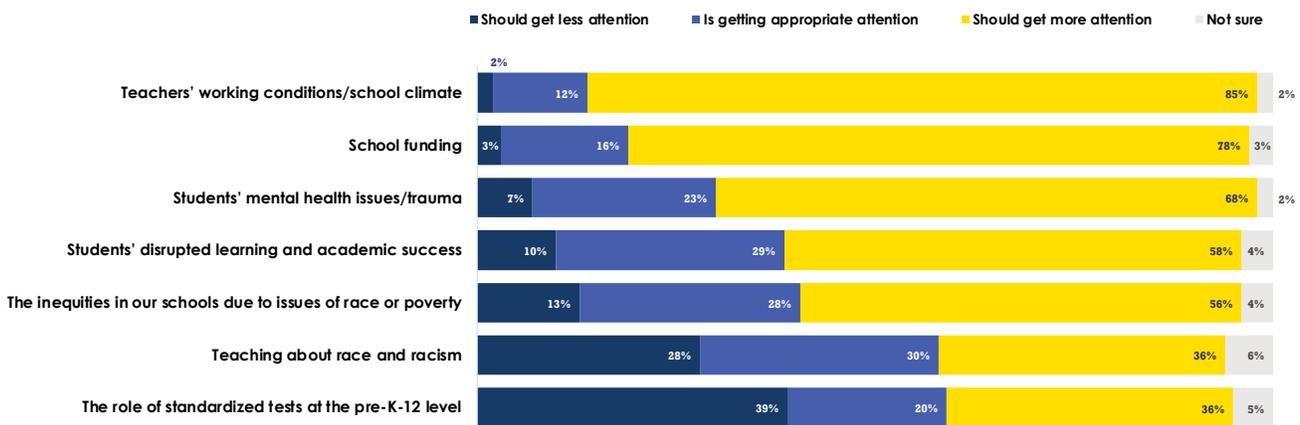
General perceptions of teachers are shaped by the portrayal of the profession in the news media and other venues for public discourse. During the pandemic in particular, schools have received more attention than usual due to challenges related to closures designed to stop the spread of COVID, widespread staffing shortages exacerbated by quarantines and illness, and debates over policies governing vaccines and masks. In addition, culture wars over curricula have reignited in the past year, [with more than 40 states](#) taking steps to place limits on instruction about racism, gender, and/or race. [Book banning is on the rise](#), school board members are [reporting threats to their lives](#), and school sports have become [ground zero](#) for battles over transgender rights. It is noteworthy that a joint statement about [“The Freedom to Teach”](#) was recently

released by four professional teacher organizations (the National Council for the Social Studies, National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, National Council of Teachers of English, National Science Teaching Association), and the National Coalition Against Censorship.

For the survey, teachers were asked whether they thought that seven timely topics are getting too much, too little, or just the right amount of news media attention. Overall, the majority of teachers say five of the seven topics deserve more attention (teachers’ working conditions, school funding, student mental health, students’ disrupted learning, and educational inequities related to poverty and race). They are split when it comes to the amount of attention paid to teaching about race/racism and standardized testing. (Figure 7)

Figure 7

Some educational issues always seem to be in the news. Other educational issues never seem to be in the news, but should be. Which of these issues deserve less or more attention?



\*Totals may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Like other Americans, teachers are politically divided when it comes to their perceptions of the amount of attention the news media should pay to different topics.

Although Republicans and Democrats disagree on all seven topics included on the survey, the two topics with the biggest political divides are teaching about race and racism and educational inequities related to poverty and race. Fifty-four percent of Democrats but just 10 percent of Republicans say the news media should pay more attention to teaching about race and racism. Similarly, 77 percent of Democrats and 29 percent of Republicans say the media should attend more to the inequities in our schools due to issues of race or poverty. (Figure 8)

Figure 8

Percentage of teachers who say these topics should get more media attention

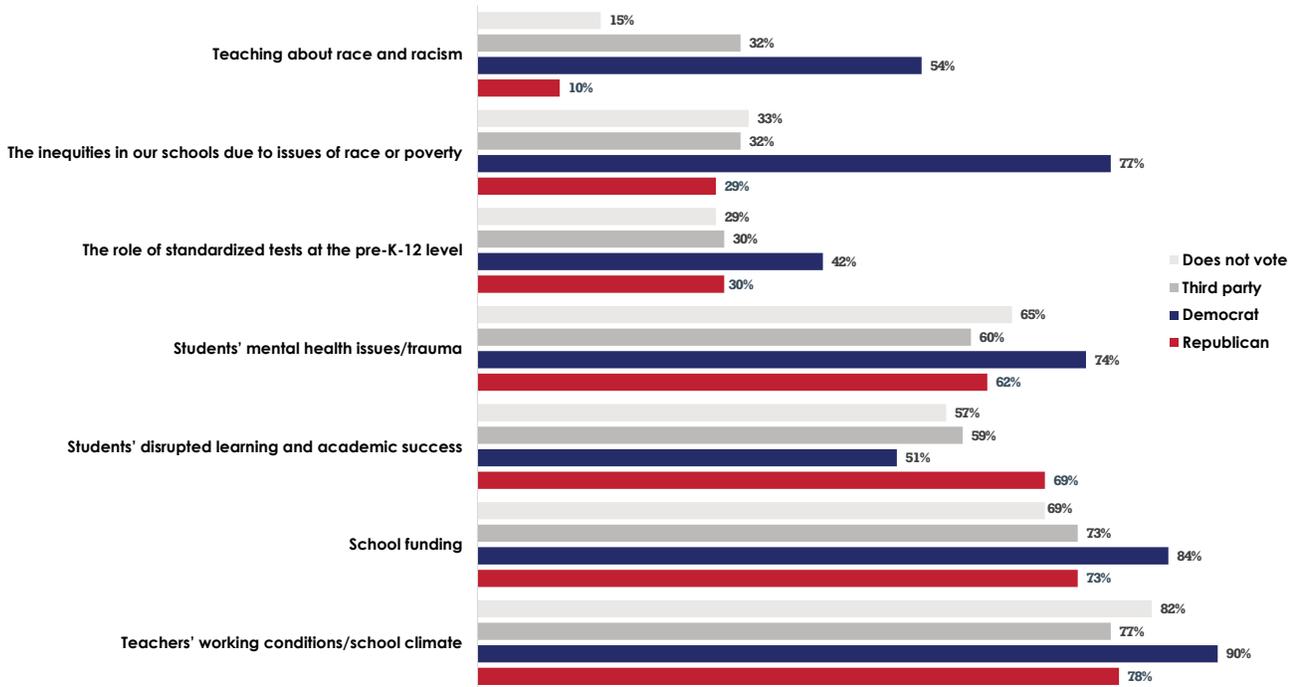
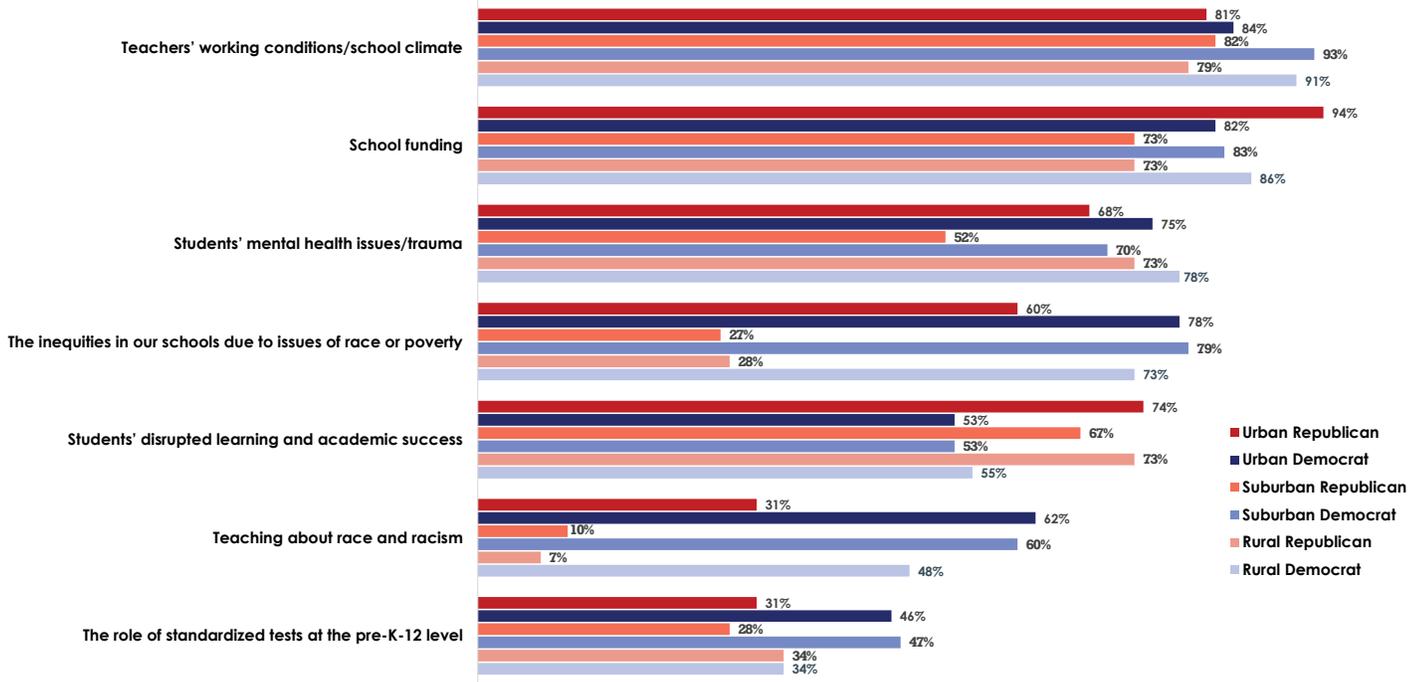


Figure 9

Percentage of teachers who say these topics deserve more news media attention

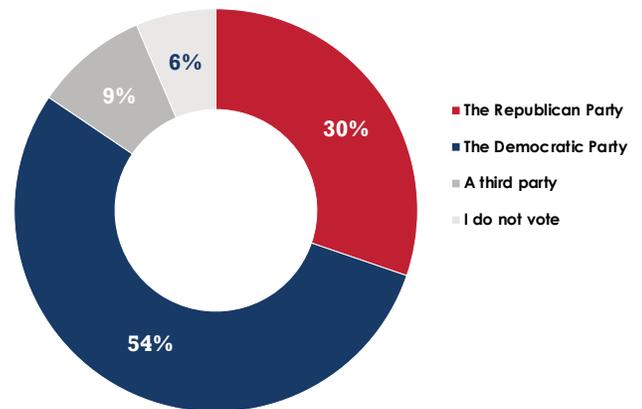


Like other Americans, teachers also demonstrate an urban-suburban-rural divide. Although dwarfed by partisan divides, this locale based divide is evident when it comes to certain issues. For example, urban Republicans are roughly three times as likely as suburban or rural Republicans to say that the news media should pay more attention to teaching about racism and race. And suburban Republicans are significantly less likely than their rural or urban Republican counterparts to call for the media to pay more attention to student mental health and trauma. (Figure 9)

Overall, 54 percent of teachers told us they typically voted for the Democratic Party. Thirty percent said they typically voted Republican. Nine percent said they voted for a third party and 6 percent said they did not vote. This is in line with the profile of the typical teacher (a white, college-educated female): A 2018-19 [Pew Research Center analysis](#) of registered voters found that 62 percent of white college females are Democrats and 34 percent are Republicans. (Figure 10)

Figure 10

In general, which political party do you traditionally vote for?



# Salaries

Teacher salaries are among the most high-profile of education issues and are the focus of often-politicized debates.

In 2011-12, the average teacher salary was \$56,062. That year, 35 percent of *MetLife Survey of the American Teacher* respondents said their pay was fair for the work they did.

The most recent data available is from 2020-21. That year, the average teacher salary was \$65,090, the equivalent of a .88 percent increase in constant dollars over the prior ten years. In the meantime, the share of teachers who say their salary is fair has declined by 9 percentage points, or 26 percent. Currently, 26 percent of teachers strongly or slightly agree that their salaries are fair for the work they do, according to the Merrimack College Teacher Survey. (Figure 11)

Like salaries themselves, salary satisfaction rates vary by region. They are highest among teachers in the Western United States (35 percent), which is dominated by California, home to the second-highest teacher salary in the nation (\$82,746). They are nearly the same in the Northeast (32 percent), home to New York, which has the nation's highest average teacher salary (\$85,479).

Salary satisfaction rates are lowest in the Southern and Midwestern United States, where 21 percent of teachers say their pay is fair for the work they do. The South and Midwest are home to the states that have the nation's three lowest average teacher salaries: Mississippi (\$45,105), West Virginia (47,681), and South Dakota (\$48,204).

As is the case with most professions, men earn more than women in teaching. One reason may be that men are concentrated at the secondary level, where pay is sometimes higher and there are more opportunities to earn stipends for additional work such as coaching. However, while female secondary teachers are more likely than female elementary teachers to say their pay is fair, they are less likely than male secondary teachers to say they're earning what they deserve for the work they do. (Figure 12)

Figure 11

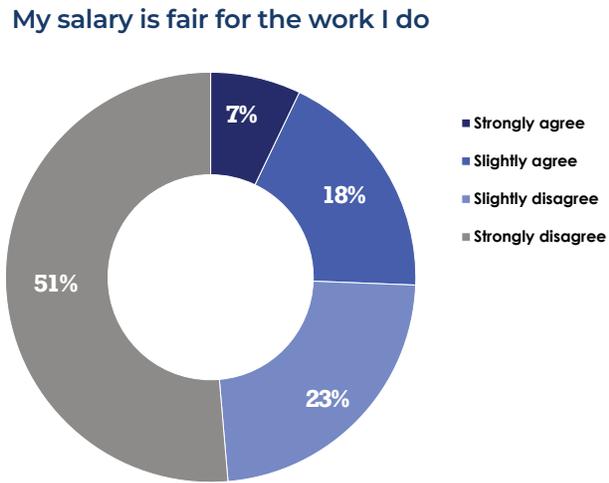
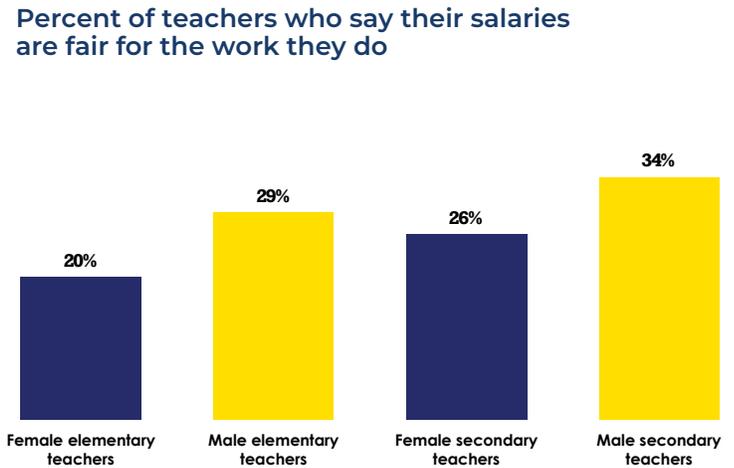


Figure 12

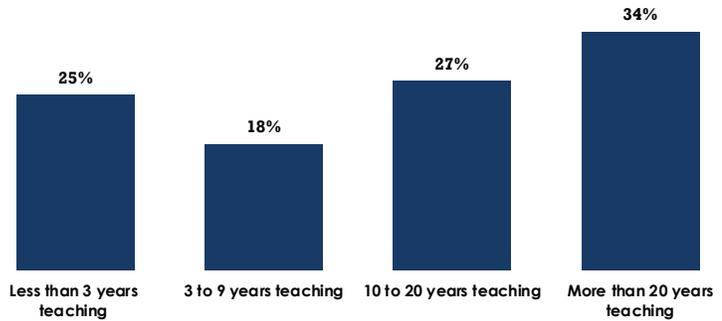


In most schools, teachers receive salary increases based on seniority. Accordingly, salary satisfaction rates are highest among the most experienced teachers with more than 20 years of experience (34 percent). (Figure 13)

Between 1994 and 2015, the [gap between the average weekly salaries](#) of public school teachers and other similar (college-educated) employees grew from 1.8 percent lower to 17 percent lower. Perhaps because they remember these relatively positive times, Baby Boomers are significantly more likely to say their salaries are fair (34 percent) than are members of Generation X (25 percent); Millennials (23 percent); or members of Generation Z (26 percent).

Figure 13

### Percent of teachers who say their salaries are fair for the work they do



# Autonomy

Autonomy is a [key indicator](#) of job satisfaction, with employees experiencing higher levels of morale and lower turnover rates when they have more control over their work environments. By several measures, teachers express fairly strong rates of autonomy, with the majority of survey respondents reporting that they have a lot of control and influence over their teaching/pedagogy, their students' classroom behavior, the way that they assess their students, and the resources and supplies they need for instruction. (Figure 14)

The majority of teachers (57 percent) also say they have a lot of control over the curriculum that they teach. However, high school teachers are significantly more likely to say this is the case (69 percent) than their middle school (48 percent) or elementary school (44 percent) peers. While this is undoubtedly appealing to many high school teachers, in a response to an open-ended survey question, a Missouri high school teacher four years into her career described it as overwhelming:

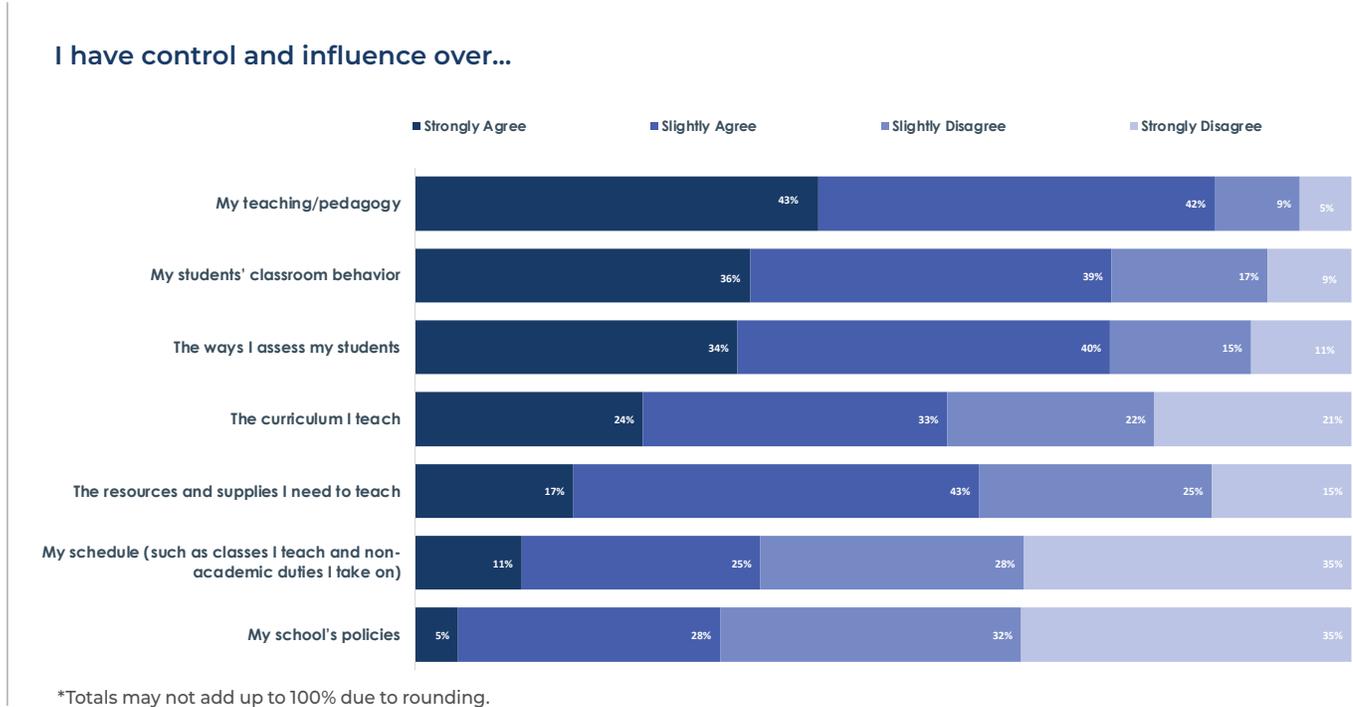
“Personally, I have had to write curriculum from scratch as a new

teacher alone every single year,” she wrote. “Class assignments come out with about two week’s notice of the start of school, which frustrates and confuses me. I have so far written curriculum from scratch, without a textbook, alone, in the first weeks of August for Physics, Honors Physics, Standards Based Chemistry, Standards Based Physics, Standards Based Honors Physics, Pre AP German 3, Pre AP German 4, post-COVID German 2, all within my first four years of teaching.”

Strong curricular control is also significantly more common among teachers in the West (65 percent) and the Northeast (63 percent) than in the Midwest (56 percent) or the South (51 percent). It’s less common in schools where most of the students are from low-income families: Fifty-one percent of teachers at schools where three-quarters or more of students come from low-income families say they have a lot of curricular control as compared to 71 percent where less than a quarter of students come from low-income families.

“As a teacher I have no control over the curriculum or how to teach

Figure 14



it,” said a survey respondent in Ohio, who works at an elementary school where more than three-quarters of the students qualify for free or reduced-price meals. “We are so focused on teaching to the test that differentiation is not happening.”

Educators are even less likely to say they have a lot of control over scheduling issues than to say they have a lot of control over curriculum. Thirty-seven percent say they strongly influence factors such as the classes they teach, or the non-academic duties they take on.

“I have not had more than 15 minutes for lunch all year and must supervise my students during lunch making it tough to interact with other professionals, come up with innovative ideas and consult about students,” wrote a Virginia high school teacher in response to an open-ended survey question.

Said a New Jersey elementary school teacher: “Since we returned after quarantine, I now do 1.5 extra hours a day of DUTY. This infringes on my time to prepare for my classes effectively.”

Next to general administrative tasks, non-teaching student interactions like hall or lunch duty are the aspect of their jobs teachers would most like to spend less time on.

Teachers are even less likely to say they influence their school’s policies than to say they influence scheduling. Just 1 in 3 say they have a lot of influence over this aspect of their work.

“I wish that I had more control of the policies that take place in my classroom,” a Washington high school teacher wrote in response to an open-ended survey question. “For example, I am forced to bicker at students daily about being on their phones even if they’ve completed all their assignments. This leads to a disruption of rapport occasionally and frustration among my students.”



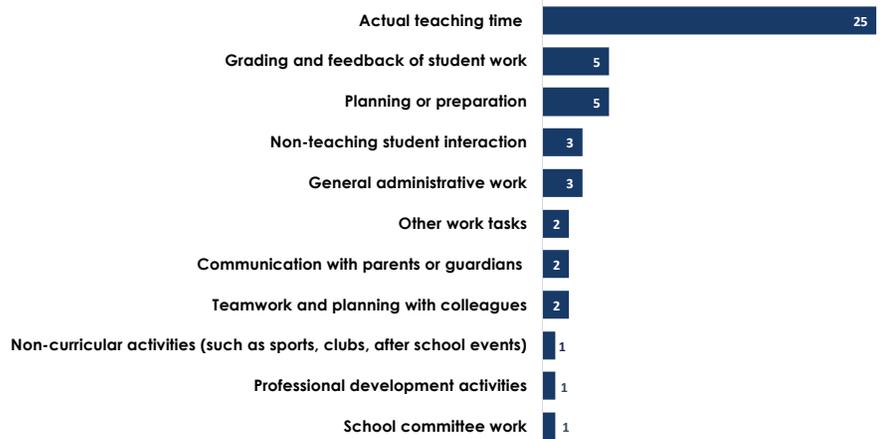
# How Teachers Spend Their Time

With limited control over their schedule, the typical teacher in the Merrimack College Teacher Survey works 54 hour a week.<sup>1</sup> Just under half of that time (25 hours) is spent directly teaching students. (Figure 15)

Overall, most teachers wish they could spend more time on activities directly related to teaching (preparation and instruction) and less time on more peripheral activities (administrative work and non-teaching student interaction such as supervision, mentoring, counseling, career guidance, and hall/lunch/dismissal duty).

Figure 15

## Median hours per week teachers spend on in- and out-of-school work



\*Total hours per week are calculated by adding up all tasks and taking the median. All categories are shown as medians. Totals of medians of categories may not add up to the median of the total hours per week worked.

<sup>1</sup>Throughout this report, estimates of teachers' total work week are calculated by adding up the amount of time teachers reported spending on each of 11 different types of tasks: actual teaching time, planning or preparation, teamwork and planning with colleagues, grading and feedback on student work, general administrative work, non-teaching student interaction, school committee work, professional development activities, communication with parents or guardians, non-curricular activities (such as sports, clubs, after school events), and other work tasks. The median of the sum of these tasks is then reported. The estimates of time-per-task-type are also reported as medians. Because the total is reported as a median, and the tasks themselves are reported as medians, the tasks may or may not add up to the total time spent for any given analysis because all are based on medians and not on averages.

# Is Teaching Being Deprofessionalized?

The sense that too much time is spent on work that is peripheral to instruction, combined with the reality that most teachers say they lack control over their time and nearly half (43 percent) say they lack control over the curriculum they teach, raises concerns among some respondents that teaching is being deprofessionalized, i.e. converted to a job like cashier or warehouse worker, where employees have limited control over their work.

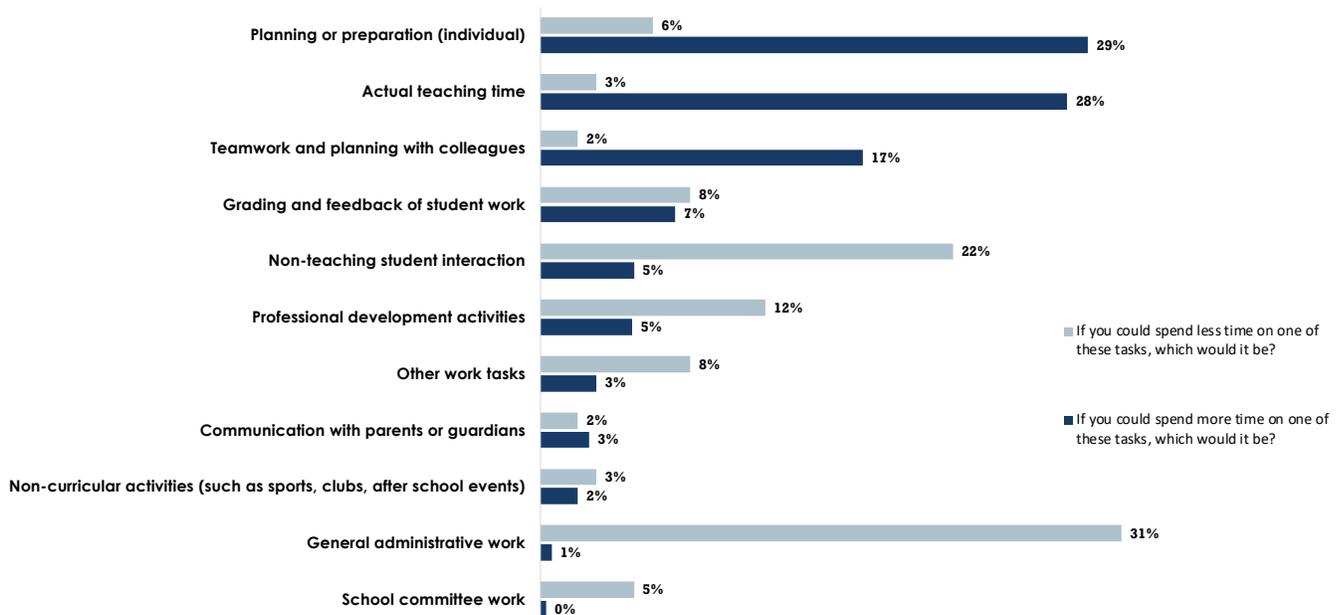
“Having been a successful teacher for three-plus decades now, this year has been the worst, hands down,” a Connecticut middle school teacher wrote in response to an open-ended survey question. “My district incorporated a robotic curriculum for my subject, and all teachers must be on the same page doing the same assessments. It’s horrible. In my entire career, my students have always shown growth on standardized tests based on my training, education, strategies, and lessons. This is the FIRST year my

student scores decreased. I entirely blame it on this change of curriculum that has handcuffed me from doing what I know is best. Creativity has been killed in the classroom....Sadly, it feels like [the] good times are gone with people [who rarely set foot in a classroom] making crucial decisions that directly affect teachers and students. ...The mass exodus from the teaching profession is just beginning. This country and its children will be the casualties of these flawed policies and lack of respect for professional educators who simply want to teach and inspire their students.”

Wrote another veteran educator, an elementary school teacher in Oklahoma with more than 30 years in the profession: “My role as a teacher should be to teach the students. I have taught many years and feel each year I get less real time to teach my students and more things piled on my plate to do for documentation or administration duties. I just want to teach my students.” (Figure 16)

Figure 16

## Activities teachers would most like to focus on



## Teaching Time Versus Other Activities

The amount of time teachers spend teaching is relatively consistent across most demographic categories. What varies is the share of time teachers spend doing other work-related activities. For example, the most experienced teachers with more than 20 years in the profession work more hours per week (56) than those with less than three years' experience (55); three to nine years (54); or 10 to 20 years (52 hours). But all spend a median of 25 hours a week on actual instruction. Compared to novice teachers with less than three years' experience, veterans with more than 20 years' experience spend more hours per week on grading and school committee work and less time on professional development and planning.

Planning is an activity that novice teachers most keenly feel the need to devote more time to. Forty-three percent of teachers with less than three years' experience say they wish they could devote more hours to planning and preparing for classes as compared to 26 percent of veterans with 20 years or more in the classroom and 29 percent of their counterparts with 10 to 20 years in the profession.

"I spend so much time on duties, teaching, and clubs that I'm exhausted when it comes to collaboration and preparation," a first-year

teacher at a South Carolina elementary school wrote in response to an open-ended survey question.

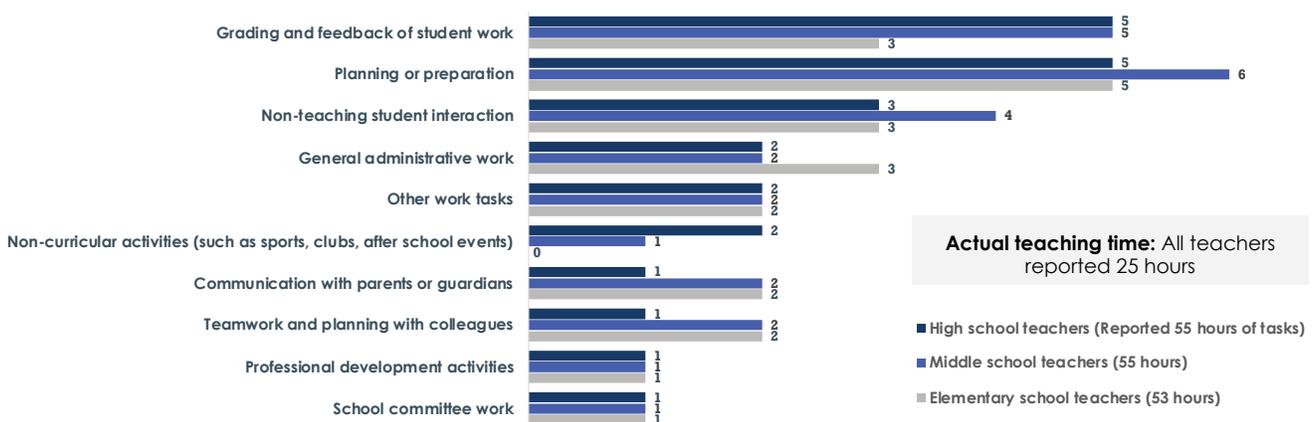
The median amount of weekly teaching time is consistent not only for novice and veteran teachers but for elementary, middle, and high school instructors (25 hours). But elementary teachers report working a median amount of 53 hours weekly while secondary instructors say they work 55 hours. Compared to their elementary peers, secondary teachers spend more time on grading and student extracurricular activities and less time on general administrative work. Middle school teachers spend more time than their elementary or high school peers on planning and non-teaching student interaction. Finally, middle and elementary teachers spend more time than high school teachers on teamwork with colleagues and on parent communication. (Figure 17)

Although it entails working longer hours, one secondary teacher at a California high school responded to an open-ended survey question by writing of his appreciation for the time he spends on extracurricular activities:

"I coach cross country and track, advise on clubs, mentor students and teach AP classes. I have a very good teaching life."

Figure 17

### Median hours per week teachers spend on in- and out-of-school work-related tasks



\*Total hours per week are calculated by adding up all tasks and taking the median. All categories are shown as medians. Totals of medians of categories may not add up to the median of the total hours per week worked.

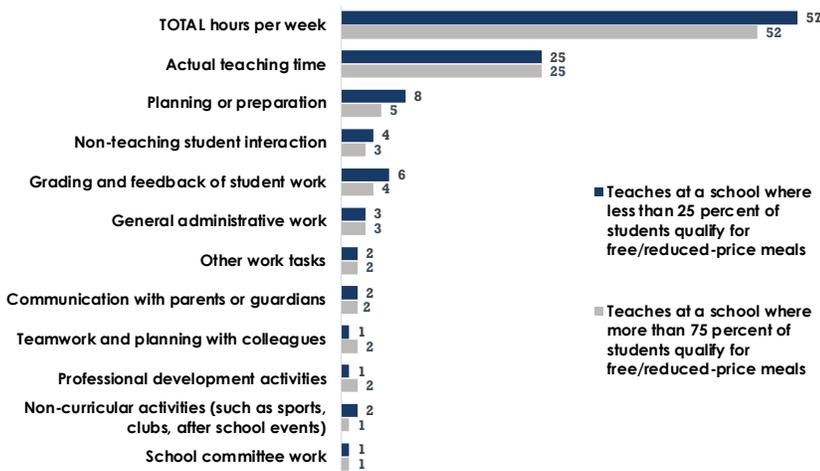
Although they spend the same amount of time on instruction, teachers at higher-poverty schools where three-quarters or more of the students qualify for free or reduced-priced meals report working fewer hours per week (52) than those at lower-poverty schools where less than a quarter of the students qualify for free or reduced-price meals (57). Compared to their counterparts at higher-poverty schools, teachers at lower-poverty schools spend roughly three hours more per week on planning and preparation and two hours more per week on grading. They also spend more time on non-teaching student interaction, and on extracurricular activities. (Figure 18)

In a response to an open-ended survey question, an Illinois teacher described the time demands he faced outside of class in his low-poverty high school:

“I teach in a wealthy suburban school district, and the level of parental involvement (not in a good way) has increased exponentially in the past 5-8 years. Also, I spend WAY too much time with digital communications with students, both in and out of school. There does not seem to be a space for both teachers and students can just ‘turn off’ school. I attribute a good deal of this to the unquestioning embrace of technology (we probably interact with over 20 platforms). Even just 10-12 years ago, I spent minimal time on email and updating a web presence. Now it is never-ending.”

Figure 18

### Median hours per week teachers spend on in- and out-of-school work-related tasks



\*Total hours per week are calculated by adding up all tasks and taking the median. All categories are shown as medians. Totals of medians of categories may not add up to the median of the total hours per week worked.

## Time Use Among Black Teachers and Teachers at Majority-Black Schools

Black teachers report spending more time working (65 hours per week as compared to 53 for white teachers and 48 for Hispanic teachers) and less time teaching (20 hours a week) than either white or Hispanic teachers (25 hours a week). The reason is that Black teachers spend more time than either Hispanic or white teachers on planning, non-teaching student interaction, administrative work, parent communication, and teamwork with colleagues.

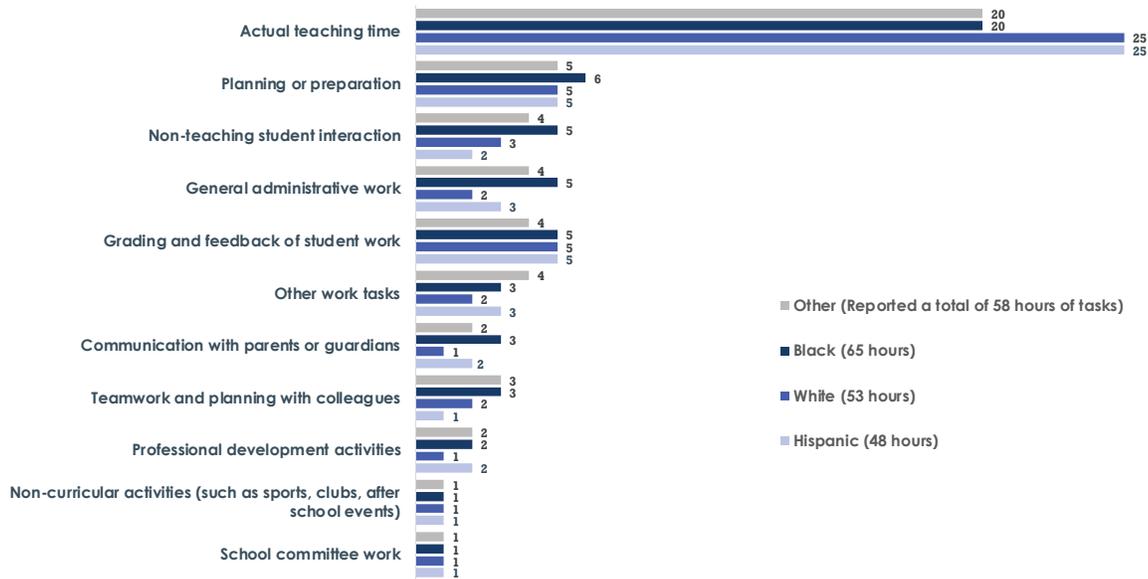
All of this can take its toll—and may help explain why Black teachers are [more likely](#) than their white counterparts to leave their schools—or the profession. Perhaps because they teach less but work more, Black teachers

are more than twice as likely as white teachers to say that instruction is the work-related activity they’d most like to spend more time on: 56 percent of Black survey respondents say teaching is the activity they are most interested in spending more time on as compared to 26 percent of white teachers. (Figure 19)

“As an elementary teacher, I spend countless hours preparing lesson plans, attending grade level meetings, attending professional development meetings, talking to parents, grading papers, and attending weekly school events,” a Black teacher in Georgia wrote in response to an open-ended survey question. “There is no work-life balance when you are a teacher.”

Figure 19

### Median hours per week teachers spend on in- and out-of-school work-related tasks



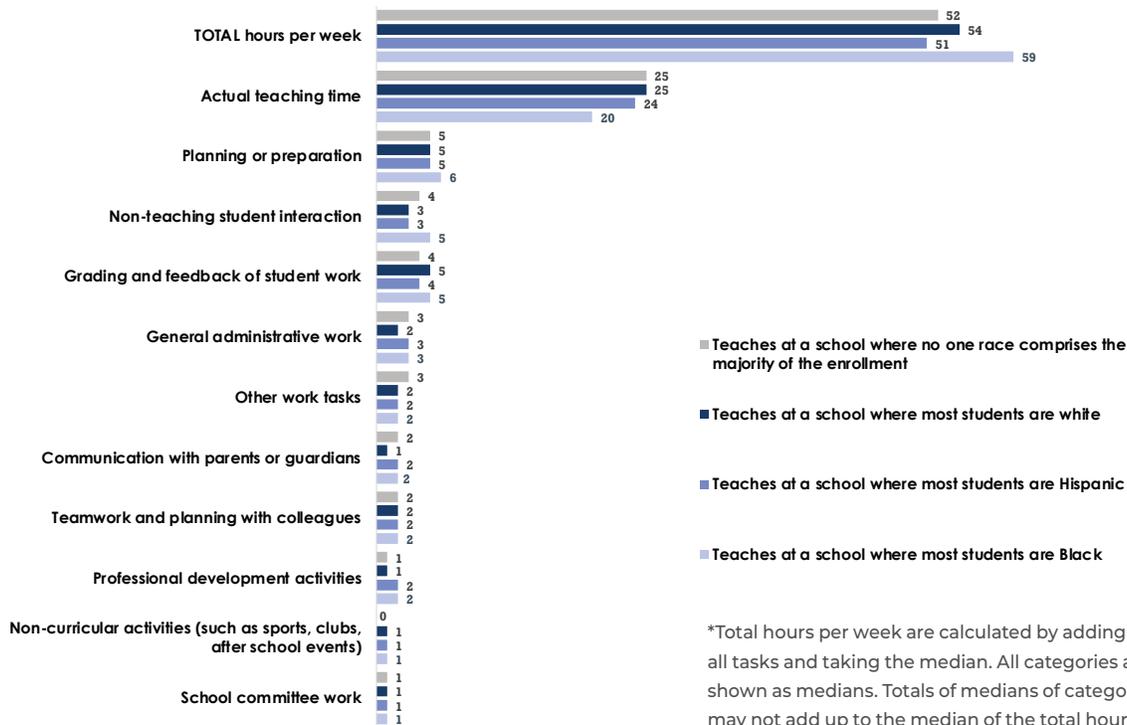
\*Total hours per week are calculated by adding up all tasks and taking the median. All categories are shown as medians. Totals of medians of categories may not add up to the median of the total hours per week worked.

Teachers at majority-Black schools also report working more hours per week (59) than teachers at majority-white schools (54); majority-Hispanic schools (51) or at racially diverse schools in which no one race comprises the majority of the enrollment (52). Yet they spend fewer hours per week (20) on instruction than do teachers at majority-Hispanic schools (24) or at majority-white or racially diverse schools (25). Compared to their peers at schools where the majority of the students are not Black, teachers at majority-Black schools spend more time on planning and preparation and on non-teaching student interaction. (Figure 20)

“Teachers are far too overloaded with extra duties, irrelevant extra work required by the state department,” a teacher at a majority-Black South Carolina school wrote in response to an open-ended survey question. “There is little to no appreciation and/or support from administration.”

Figure 20

### Median hours per week teachers spend on in- and out-of-school work-related tasks



\*Total hours per week are calculated by adding up all tasks and taking the median. All categories are shown as medians. Totals of medians of categories may not add up to the median of the total hours per week worked.

## Looking to the Future: Retention

Teachers clearly expressed concerns about multiple aspects of their jobs, from their salaries to the respect they perceive for the profession to the way they use their time.

But will they remain?

Increasingly, the answer appears to be “no.”

In 2011, 29 percent of teachers who participated in the *MetLife Survey of the American Teacher* said they were very or fairly likely to leave the profession to pursue a different occupation.

In this current survey, that share had nearly doubled to 44 percent of teachers. (Figure 21)

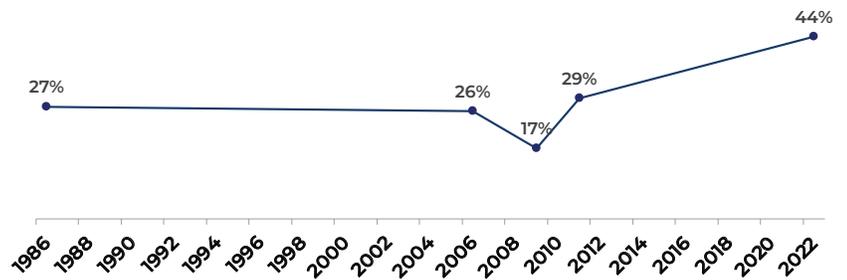
Overall, in 2022, 20 percent of teachers say they are very likely to leave the profession while nearly the same share (21 percent) say they are not at all likely to do so. (Figure 22)

An important caveat is that even when teachers respond to surveys by saying they are likely to leave their jobs, they do not necessarily do so due to financial constraints and other considerations. Prior to the pandemic, [about 8 percent of teachers](#) left the profession annually. Although there’s no comprehensive, national data available on attrition rates during the pandemic, [state and district-level estimates](#) suggest turnover increased by a very small amount, if at all in 2020 and 2021.

That said, in a tight labor market like this one, even a small increase in attrition could lead to gaps, especially in perpetual shortage areas such as special education, in regions such as the Southeast United States with historical higher turnover, and in schools that serve larger shares of lower-income students and students of color, where [teacher turnover rates](#) were up to 70 percent higher overall even prior to the pandemic.

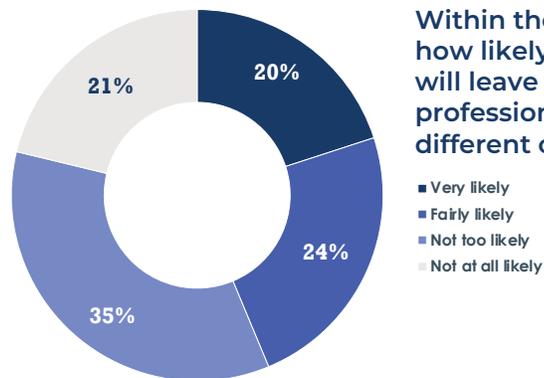
Figure 21

Percentage of teachers fairly or very likely to leave the profession to pursue a different occupation



\*The 2022 results are from the Merrimack College Teacher Survey. Prior results are from the *MetLife Survey of the American Teacher*.

Figure 22



Within the next two years, how likely is it that you will leave the teaching profession to go a different occupation?

- Very likely
- Fairly likely
- Not too likely
- Not at all likely

# Profiles of Teacher Retention and Attrition

The teachers who say they are very likely to leave the profession differ from those who are very likely to stay. Women, Black teachers, teachers in the Southern United States, and teachers with three to nine years of experience are significantly more likely to say they plan to leave education. Members of Generation X, teachers in the Northeastern and Western United States, and males are significantly more likely to say they

are very likely to remain. (Figure 23)

Unsurprisingly, likely leavers express high rates of job dissatisfaction. Just 5 percent of teachers who say they are very likely to leave the profession are very satisfied with their jobs as compared to 33 percent of their counterparts who say they are very likely to remain. Likely leavers report lower levels of autonomy, support, and respect, suggesting that all

Figure 23

	Profile of teachers who are very unlikely to leave the profession in the next two years	Profile of teachers who are very likely to leave the profession in the next two years		Profile of teachers who are very unlikely to leave the profession in the next two years	Profile of teachers who are very likely to leave the profession in the next two years
<b>AGE</b>			<b>MEDIAN HOURS PER WEEK WORKED</b>	52	57
Generation Z	5%	4%	<b>SALARY</b>		
Millennials	22%	28%	Says salary is fair for the work he/she does	42%	12%
Generation X	52%	36%	<b>JOB SATISFACTION</b>		
Baby Boomers	22%	32%	Very satisfied	33%	5%
<b>YEARS OF EXPERIENCE</b>			Somewhat satisfied	55%	18%
Less than 3 years	10%	6%	Somewhat dissatisfied	10%	36%
3 to 9 years	19%	28%	Very dissatisfied	2%	41%
10 to 20 years	42%	42%	<b>FEELS RESPECTED/SEEN AS A PROFESSIONAL BY</b>		
More than 20 years	29%	25%	By the general public	65%	43%
<b>GENDER</b>			Students' parents	84%	58%
Female	70%	83%	Within his/her own school	90%	72%
Male	31%	17%	<b>SAYS HE/SHE HAS A LOT OF CONTROL/INFLUENCE OVER</b>		
<b>GRADE LEVEL TAUGHT</b>			School policies	45%	26%
Elementary	44%	39%	Schedule (e.g., classes taught, non-academic duties)	57%	21%
Middle	16%	19%	Students' classroom behavior	87%	66%
High School	33%	36%	Student assessment	81%	69%
Multiple grade levels	7%	6%	Teaching approach/pedagogy	93%	76%
<b>RACE</b>			Curriculum	69%	47%
Black	5%	9%	<b>FOR PROFESSIONAL MENTORSHIP/SUPPORT, TURNS TO</b>		
Hispanic	7%	7%	Nobody	15%	31%
Other race/ethnicity	7%	4%	District leaders	46%	24%
White	82%	81%	School leaders	77%	46%
<b>REGION</b>			Mentors	74%	62%
Northeast	17%	12%			
Midwest	16%	15%			
South	39%	62%			
West	27%	11%			

of these factors might be contributing to their desire to exit education.

Money also makes a difference. Likely leavers work about five hours more per week than those most likely to stay and just 12 percent say their salaries are fair for the work they do. By contrast, 42 percent of the teachers who say they are very likely to stay in the profession agree.

“I will be leaving teaching and pursuing another career,” a Wisconsin middle school teacher with two years of experience wrote in response to an open-ended survey question. “The low salary, long hours, unreasonable expectations, and hostile attitude toward teachers is something I never expected.”

Asked if, given a chance, they would advise their younger selves to pursue teaching, teachers were split. Just under half of teachers (45 percent) say they’d be very or fairly likely to recommend a teaching career. The remainder say they’d be not at all likely or not too likely to do so. (Figure 24)

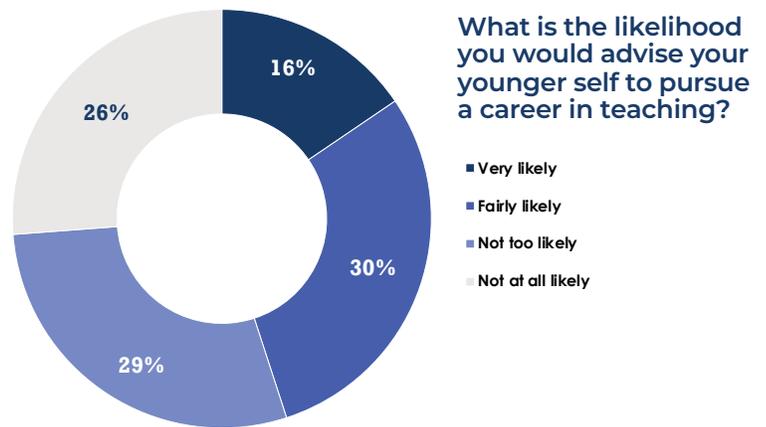
“This job is so hard right now,” wrote a Maryland elementary school teacher. “I am discouraged and sad and feeling very lost. I love my students, but they are the only good part of the job. Job satisfaction should not rest solely on the performance of 10-year-olds on any given day; it is not fair to put that pressure on them, nor is it fair to me to have so little else to enjoy about this job.”

After three years in the classroom, she said she’d be “not too likely” to recommend the profession to her younger self.

Thirty years into her career, an Oklahoma high school teacher who said she’d be very likely to recommend the profession to her younger self expressed a similar level of ambivalence.

“The workload of teaching has always been high in my small school,” she wrote in her open-ended survey response. “We don’t have enough staff so we are always asked to do more with less. I do not have the best work/life balance consequently. I love teaching and enjoy it, but sometimes it becomes all encompassing, leaving little or no time for other things. When I am then not treated as a professional either by the administration or the community, then I begin to wonder why I spend all this time and energy. Yet, I still enjoy working with students and see them succeed.”

Figure 24





## Conclusion

If any questions remain that teachers have struggled during the pandemic, the results of the first-ever Merrimack College Teacher Survey should remove all doubt.

Compared to their predecessors, teachers today are much less likely to perceive that the public respects their profession and more likely to say their salaries are unfair. Although it is unclear whether they will actually do so, they are also much more likely to say they will leave the profession behind altogether in the next two years. Asked if, given the opportunity, they'd advise their younger selves to choose teaching, the majority said they would not.

It is thus not surprising that [fewer and fewer](#) students see teaching as a viable career. The Merrimack College Teacher Survey suggests that this may only get worse.

All in all, it is not an encouraging picture. Yet in heartfelt responses asking them to comment on a survey topic of their choice, teacher after teacher expressed ambivalent to positive feelings about their complicated, exhilarating, exhausting, infuriating and essential profession. Many singled out the pandemic for the complications and stress they currently face. What remains to be seen is whether or not the challenges reflected in these survey results will dissipate—at least a little—after COVID recedes into the rearview mirror or continue to balloon to the point that the profession itself is in danger.

A Pennsylvania high school teacher in the 24th year of his career offered these words of wisdom about how he keeps going during these trying times:

“A positive, growth mindset keeps me going. I do my best while in contact with my students. They respond positively which drives me more. I keep that cycle going... I focus on the humanity.”

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