

'Disrespected' and 'Dissatisfied': 7 Takeaways From a New Survey of Teachers



By [Madeline Will](#) — April 15, 2022 ⌚ 5 min read



— Gina Tomko/Education Week and Getty



Clarification: An earlier version of the first chart that appears in this article has been updated to more clearly and accurately reflect a 10-year gap in data on rates of teacher satisfaction between 2012 and 2022.

It's not an easy time to be a teacher. In fact, teachers' job satisfaction levels are at an all-time low, they're working long hours for what they consider to be inadequate pay, and nearly half of the workforce is considering quitting.

Those are some of the stark new findings from the Merrimack College Teacher Survey, a nationally representative poll of more than 1,300 teachers that was conducted by the EdWeek Research Center and commissioned by the Winston School of Education and Social Policy at Merrimack College. The survey, which was conducted between Jan. 9 and Feb. 23, was designed to replace the MetLife Survey of the American Teacher, which ran for more than 25 years and ended in 2012.

The results paint a picture of a disillusioned, exhausted workforce. Teachers say they're under pressure with little support and increasingly high expectations. Students have greater academic and social-emotional needs than ever before, and teachers are drained from two-plus years of pandemic teaching. Also, teachers are at the center of divisive political and cultural debates.

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Here are seven key takeaways from the new results.

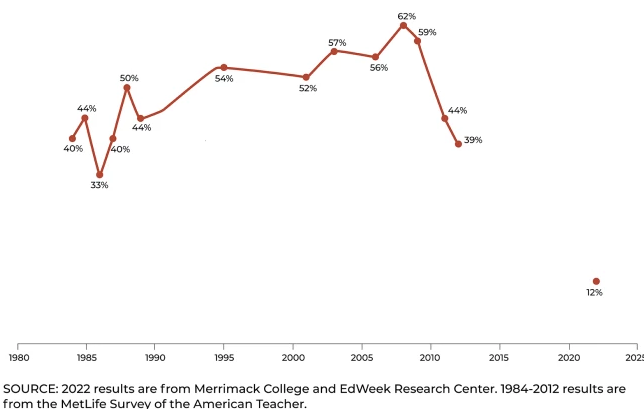
1. Teachers are much less satisfied with their jobs than they

used to be.

The survey found that 56 percent of teachers are satisfied with their jobs. But only 12 percent say they are “very satisfied,” down from 39 percent in 2012.

This appears to be an all-time low. During the 25-plus years the MetLife survey ran, the share of very satisfied teachers never dropped below 33 percent, and that was in 1986.

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

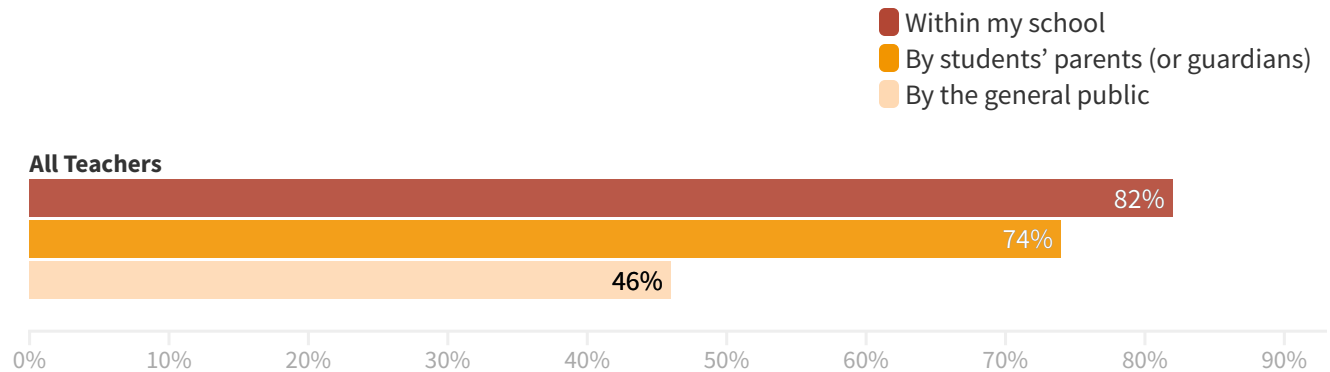


The survey found that satisfaction rates are significantly lower among Millennials, who were born between 1981 and 1996, than any other generation. And 45 percent of female teachers are dissatisfied with their jobs, compared to 37 percent of male teachers.

2. More than half of teachers don't feel respected by the general public.

Most teachers feel respected as professionals within their school communities and by their students' parents or guardians. But only 46 percent of teachers say they feel like the general public respects them as professionals. In 2011, 77 percent of teachers felt respected by the public.

‘I am respected and seen as a professional’



SOURCE: Merrimack College and EdWeek Research Center

 A Flourish chart

Teachers in the South are more likely to feel respected by the general public than teachers in the Northeast, Midwest, or West, the survey found.

3. Teachers don't think their salaries are fair for the work they do.

Teachers make less than other comparable college-educated workers, which has been a source of much frustration and policy discussions. Only 26 percent of teachers think their salaries are fair. The rest disagree—and 51 percent of teachers “strongly disagree”—that they’re fairly paid.

The national average teacher salary for the 2020-21 school year was \$65,090, according to the National Education Association’s research. However, salaries vary widely by state. According to the NEA, New York teachers are the highest paid in the nation, with an estimated average salary of \$87,738. Mississippi teachers are the lowest paid, earning an average of \$47,655.

The Merrimack College Teacher Survey found that teachers in the Midwest and South are the most likely to think their salaries are not fair—79 percent of teachers in both regions say so, compared with 68 percent of teachers in the Northeast and 65 percent of teachers in the West.

4. The typical teacher works 54 hours a week, but would

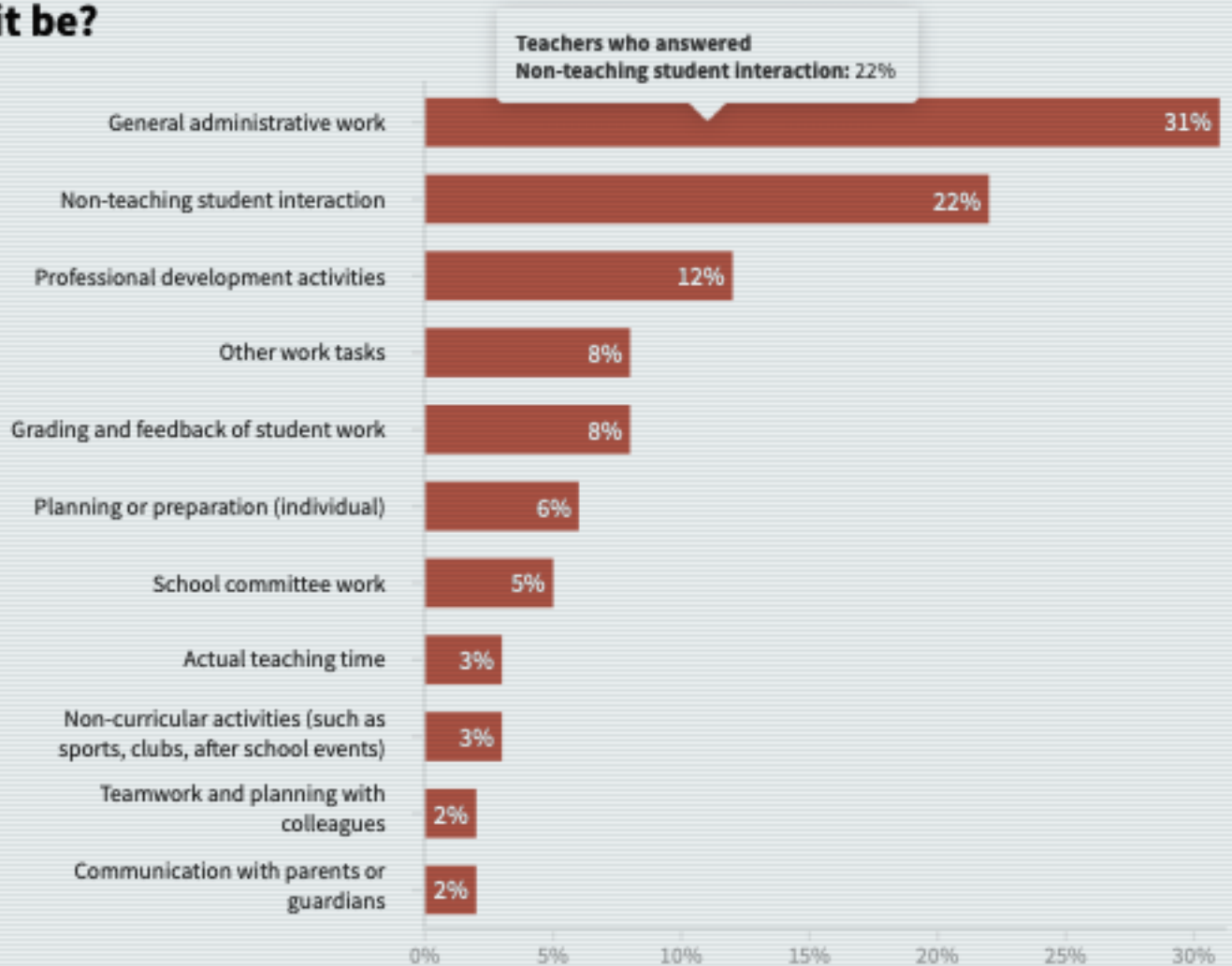
rather spend more of their week teaching.

The typical teacher spends 25 hours a week teaching, five hours planning on their own, five hours grading, three hours interacting with students outside of instructional time, three hours doing administrative work, two hours planning with colleagues, and two hours communicating with parents. They also spend an hour doing school committee work, an hour doing professional development work, and an hour doing non-curricular activities, like sports or clubs. Two additional hours are spent doing miscellaneous tasks.

Twenty-nine percent of teachers say they wish they could spend more time planning by themselves, and 28 percent of teachers wish they had more actual teaching time. Nearly a fifth of teachers want more teamwork and planning time with colleagues.

On the flip side, about a third of teachers want to spend less time doing administrative tasks.

If you could spend less time on one of these tasks, which would it be?



● A Flourish chart

5. Teachers turn to their fellow teachers for support more than anyone else.

The Merrimack College Teacher Survey asked teachers who they turn to for professional mentorship and support. The vast majority—93 percent—say they rely on their fellow teachers or colleagues in their school. The second-highest answer was fellow teachers in different schools, with 77 percent of teachers saying they turned to those colleagues.

Teachers said they have been in the trenches with each other throughout all of the twists and turns of the past couple years.

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Nearly three-quarters of teachers say they receive support from their friends and family, and 67 percent say they rely on their mentors for professional support.

Administrators are less frequently named as sources of support. Sixty-four percent of teachers say they turn to their school leaders for professional mentorship, and just a third say they rely on district leaders, which could include curriculum leaders or superintendents.

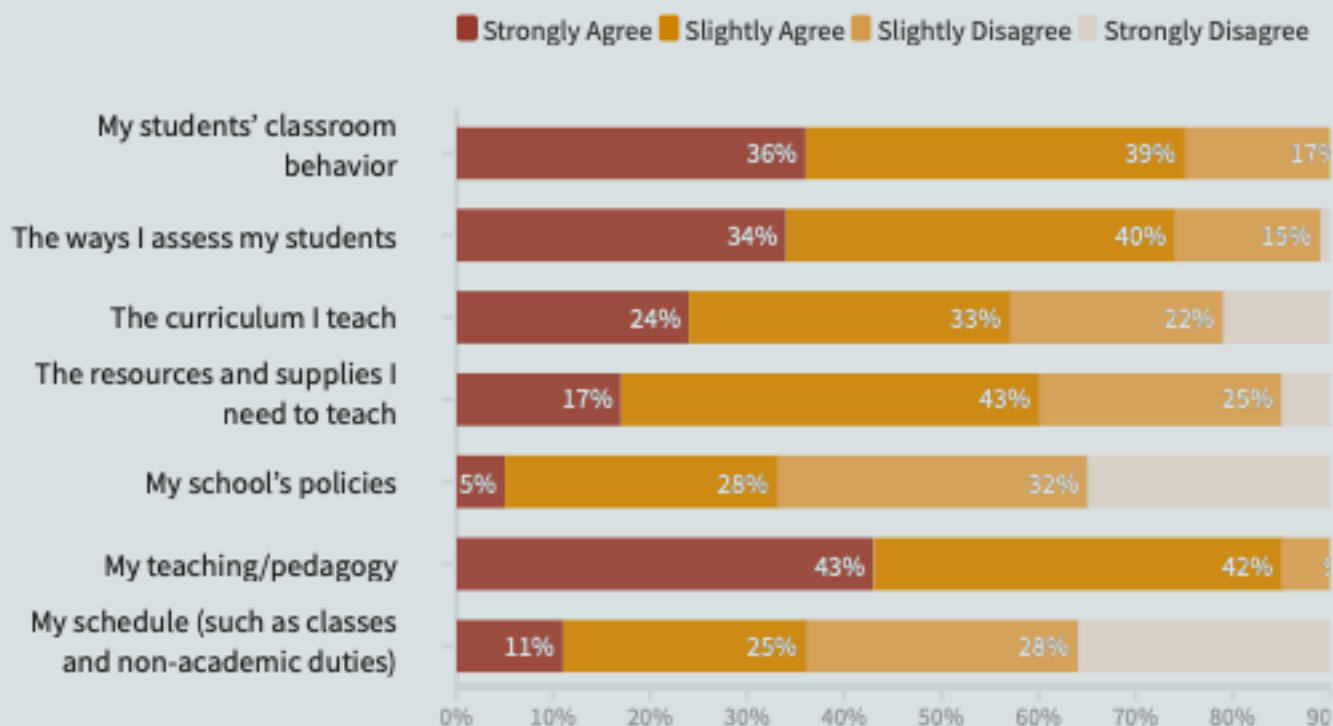
Twenty-two percent say they don't turn to anyone for mentorship or support related to their profession.

5. Teachers don't feel like they have much control or influence over certain aspects of their jobs.

Teachers say they often feel micromanaged and left out of decisionmaking rooms. Just a third

of teachers say they have a lot of control over their school's policies, for instance. Teachers feel they have the most control over their own teaching and pedagogy.

I have control and influence over ...



NOTE: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

SOURCE: Merrimack College and EdWeek Research Center

● A Flourish chart

6. Nearly half of teachers say they may quit within two years.

Twenty percent of teachers say they're "very likely" to leave the teaching profession within the next two years, and 24 percent report they're "fairly likely" to do so.

This is a higher number than it's been in the past. In 2011, just 29 percent said they were likely to quit within two years, and in 2009, around the time of the Great Recession, only 17 percent of teachers were planning to leave. This year, however, workers are in high demand, and teachers may have more options.

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Even so, experts say that many of the people who indicate plans to quit won't actually do so, given logistical and financial realities.

7. Teachers think the media should pay more attention to their working conditions.

The Merrimack College Teacher Survey asked teachers which educational issues should get more attention and which ones should get less attention. Teachers' working conditions or school climate top the list, with 85 percent of teachers saying it should get more attention.

Here are some of the issues teachers believe should get more attention:

- 78 percent, school funding,
- 68 percent, students' mental health issues and trauma,
- 58 percent, students' disrupted learning and academic success, and

- 56 percent, inequities in schools due to issues of race and poverty

Thirty-six percent of teachers said teaching about race and racism should get more attention, but 28 percent said it should get less.