

THE BIG QUESTION



An opinion survey of teachers and headteachers

Introduction

The Big Question 2018, carried out in February and March 2018, is the eighth annual national survey of teachers and headteachers carried out by the NASUWT.

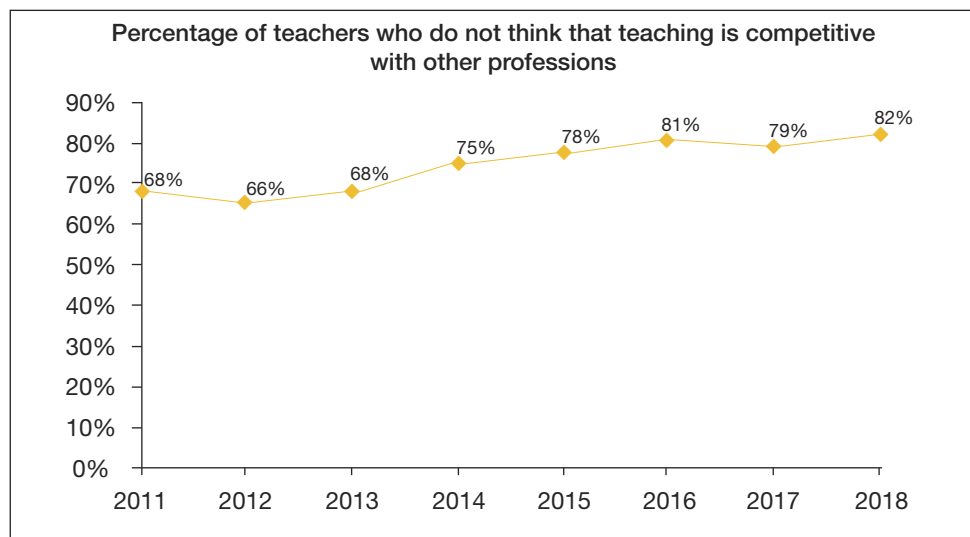
Over 7,000 teachers in England responded to the survey.

The Big Question 2018 highlights the views of teachers and school leaders on a range of subjects including pay, pupil behaviour, empowerment and professionalism, work/life balance, and mental and physical wellbeing.

The Big Question time-series offers the only nationally available data set to track trends in teachers' and school leaders' opinions over time, demonstrating the developing views of teachers and school leaders and the issues impacting on their work.

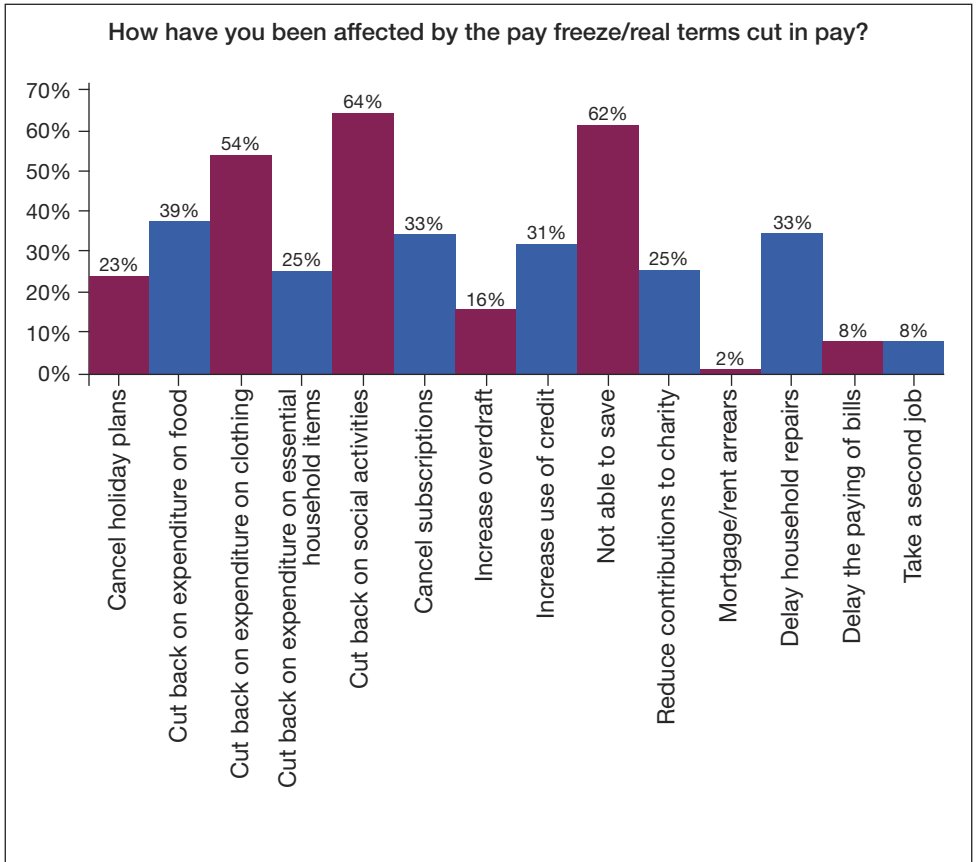
Pay and Cost of Living

Over four fifths (82%) of teachers do not believe that teachers' salaries are competitive when compared to those of other professions, an increase of 14% since 2011. Almost three quarters (72%) believe that people are put off teaching because of levels of pay.



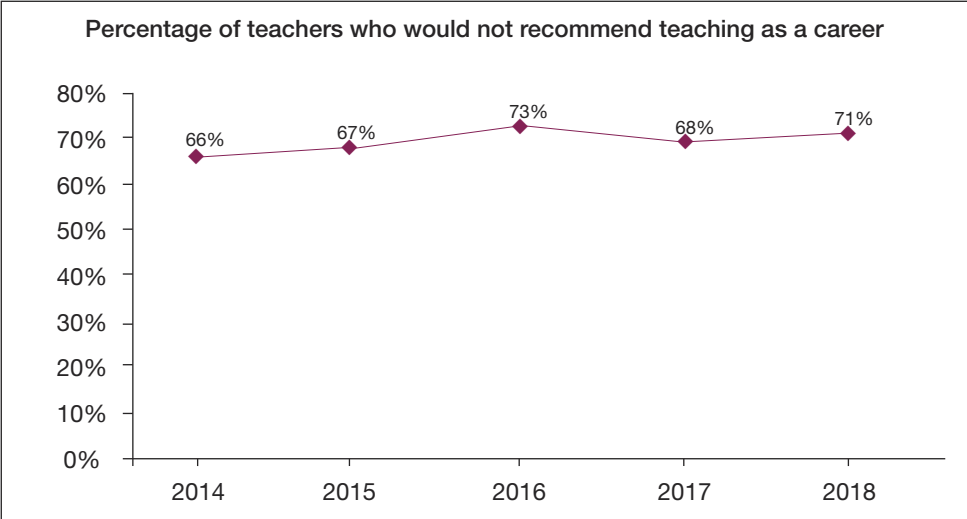
When asked about the impact of the cost of living crisis on their spending in the last year, the survey revealed that:

- over half (54%) of teachers had to cut back on spending on clothing;
- almost two fifths (39%) had to cut back on expenditure on food;
- a quarter (25%) had to cut back on essential household items;
- almost a third (31%) had to increase the use of credit;
- almost a fifth (16%) had to extend their overdrafts; and
- 8% had to delay the paying of bills.



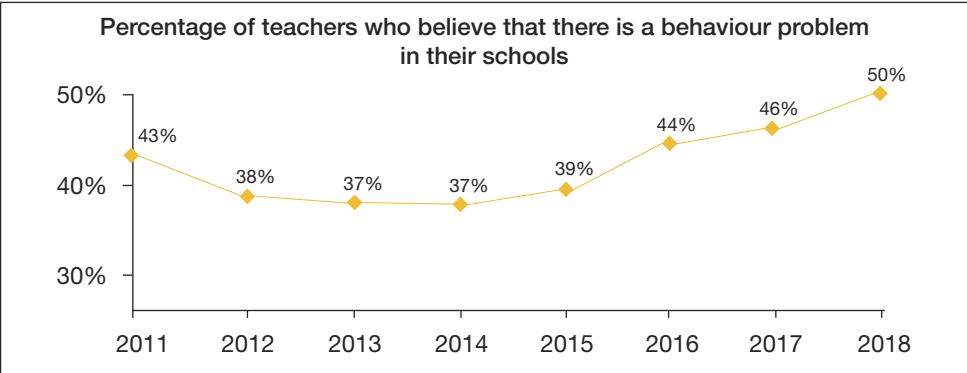
Almost three fifths (58%) of teachers have not received the pay progression to which they are entitled and less than half (46%) of teachers are paid for the full range of responsibilities they undertake.

Almost three quarters (71%) of teachers would not recommend teaching as a career.



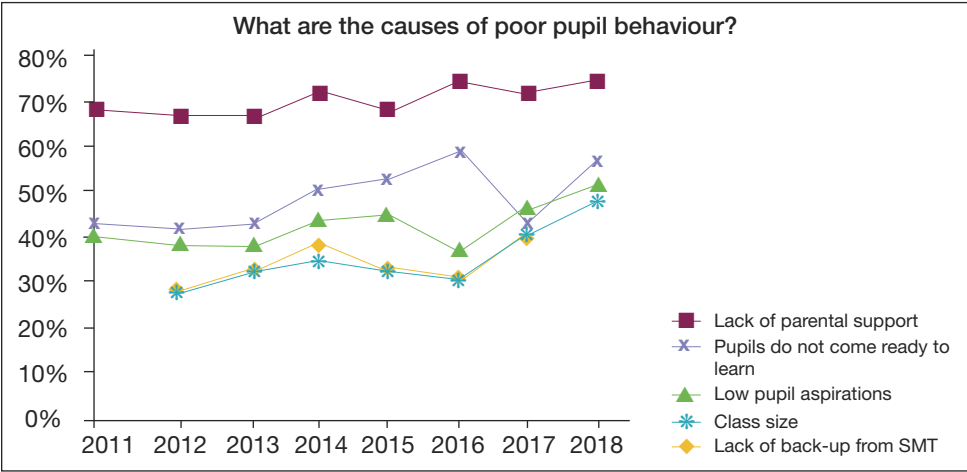
Pupil Behaviour

Over three quarters (77%) of teachers said that they think there is a widespread behaviour problem in schools today and half of teachers (50%) stated that they believe there is a behaviour problem in *their* schools.



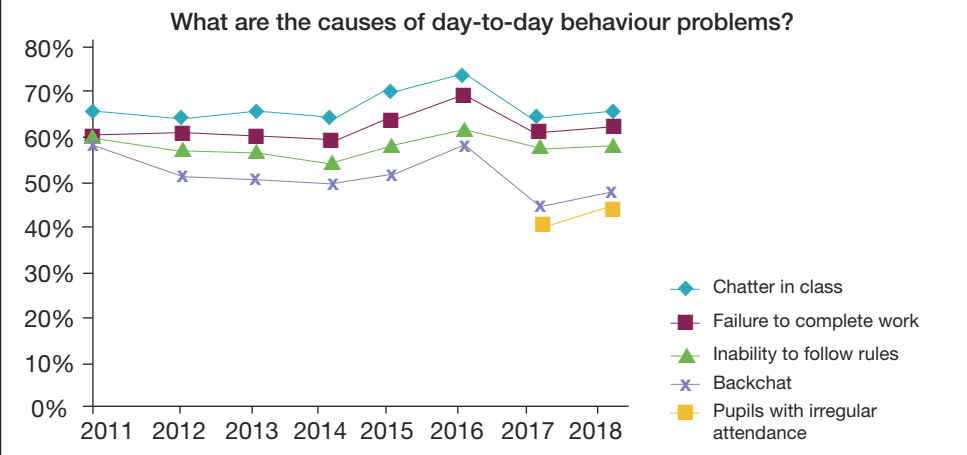
More than four fifths (84%) of teachers believe there is an issue of low-level disruption amongst the pupils they teach.

When examining the causes of poor pupil behaviour, the top five causes that teachers identified were lack of parental support (74%), pupil readiness to learn (56%), low aspirations (52%), class size (47%) and lack of back-up from the senior management team (48%). All have been features of the Big Question survey since 2012.



Over a third (37%) of teachers said that they were not given the appropriate training to deal with poor pupil behaviour, a third (33%) said that they were not given the appropriate advice and information to deal with poor pupil behaviour, and almost a third (29%) said that they needed additional powers. Two fifths (40%) of teachers stated that curriculum and assessment policies in their school have contributed to poor behaviour.

The top five causes of day-to-day behaviour problems that were cited by teachers were chatter in class (67%), failure to complete work (63%), inability to follow rules (58%), backchat (48%), and pupils with irregular attendance (46%). With the exception of pupils with irregular attendance patterns, the other causes have appeared regularly in the top five since the first Big Question in 2011.



When asked to identify the types of low-level disruption experienced, the top three issues for teachers were pupils:

- talking or chatting out of turn (90%);
- not following instructions (79%); and
- being slow to start work (78%).

Teachers were asked to indicate whether they were subject to various forms of abuse and bullying behaviour by pupils and parents in the last year. Over half (51%) of all teachers stated that they were subject in the last year to verbal abuse by pupils and 14% were subject to threats of physical assault by pupils. 3% of teachers said that they were threatened and abused on social networks by pupils and 11% said that they were physically assaulted by pupils.

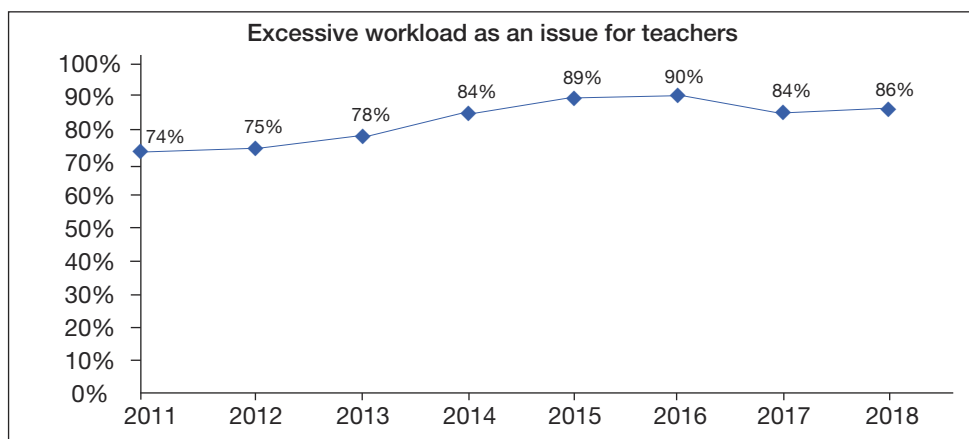
Almost a quarter (24%) of all teachers stated that they were subject in the last year to verbal abuse by parents and 2% were subject to threats of physical assault by parents. 3% of teachers said that they were threatened and abused on social networks by parents.

Almost two fifths (39%) of teachers said they do not feel supported by senior management teams when dealing with issues of pupil indiscipline.

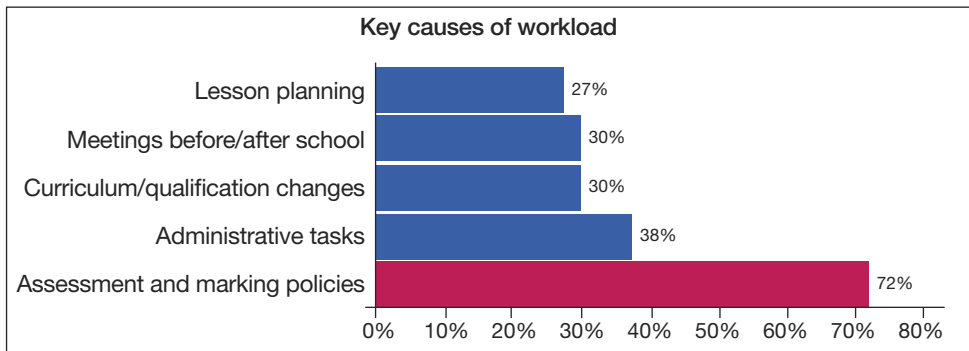
Workload and Bureaucracy

Teacher assessment systems and the processes associated with recording pupil data are now a massive workload burden, with inspection also continuing to be a workload burden.

When asked about the key concerns about their job, more than four fifths (86%) of teachers cited workload as their number-one issue. This has been an issue for the vast majority of teachers since 2011.



In order to determine the drivers of workload, teachers were asked about the causes of workload in schools. The top five causes cited were assessment and marking policies (72%), administration tasks (38%), curriculum and qualification changes (30%), lesson planning (27%) and meetings before and after school (30%).

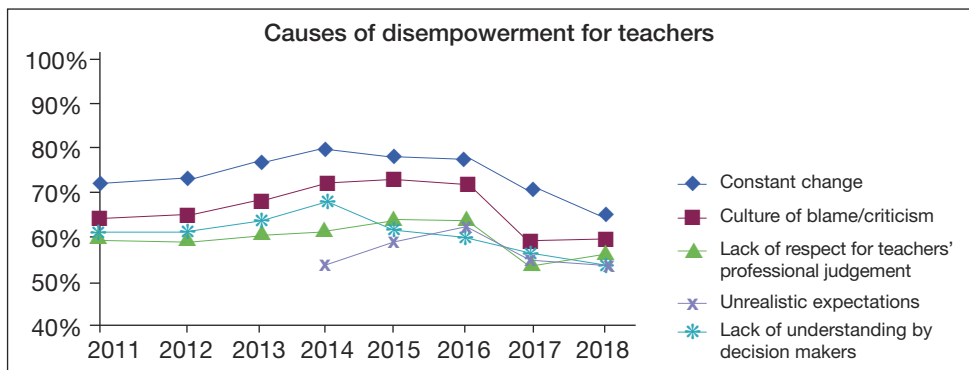


Empowerment and Professionalism

Teachers continue to feel disempowered, with concern being expressed about a lack of respect for teachers and unreasonable expectations being placed upon them.

Over half (56%) of teachers stated that they believe they are not empowered as a teacher.

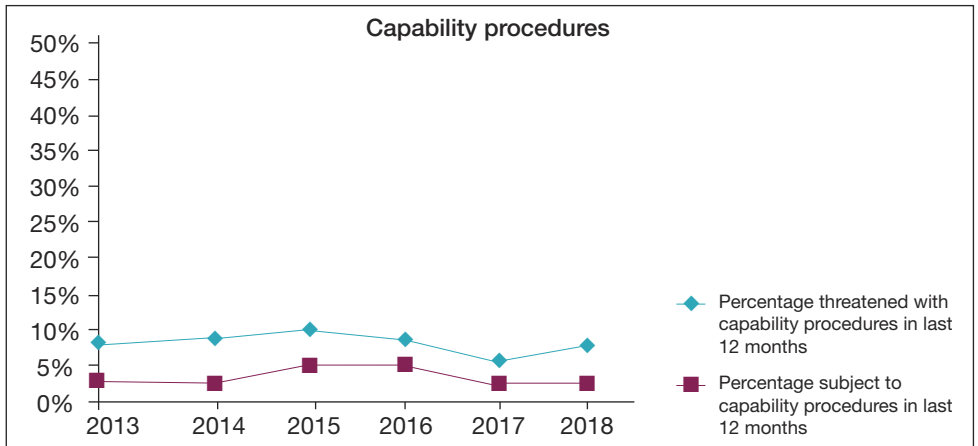
When asked to identify the factors that lead to disempowerment, the top five factors identified were constant change (69%), a culture of blame or criticism (60%), a lack of respect for teachers' professional judgement (59%), unreasonable or unrealistic expectations (57%), and a lack of understanding of the nature of their job from decision makers (57%). The top three reasons have been cited by teachers since 2011.



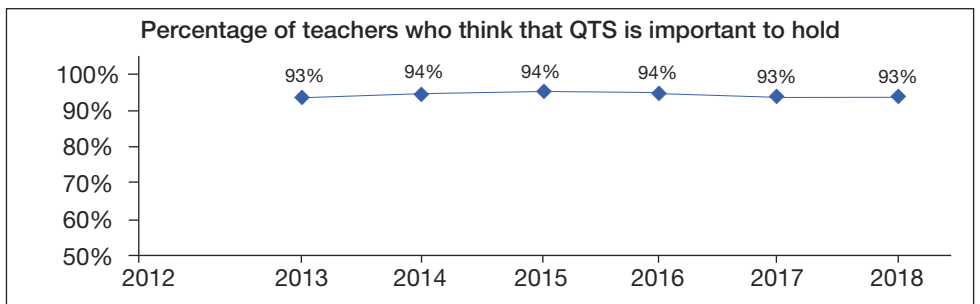
When asked a series of questions about their perceptions of their role, concerns were expressed about the nature of the work that they are being asked to undertake and how it impacts on their sense of self, professionally. Almost half (46%) of teachers said that they did not feel they had control over their work, almost two fifths (38%) said they did not feel trusted to do the job and the same percentage (38%) felt they were not given the freedom to teach.

Furthermore, over three quarters (78%) of teachers felt constantly evaluated and judged, and over two thirds (70%) felt they were held responsible for problems that they had no control over. It is unsurprising, therefore, that over half of teachers (53%) said they do not look forward to going to work.

9% of teachers have been threatened with capability procedures in the last year and 3% have been subject to capability procedures. 10% of teachers have either been offered or have been put on support programmes.



There is overwhelming support for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). More than nine out of ten teachers (93%) stated that they believed QTS was important for all teachers to hold.

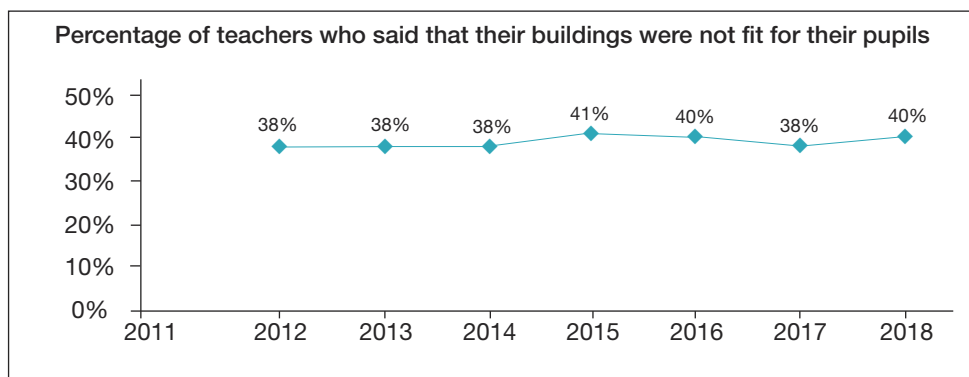


Over two thirds (36%) of teachers said that they have not accessed continuing professional development (CPD) in the last 12 months. More than nine out of ten teachers (91%) believe that all teachers should have a contractual entitlement to CPD in working time.

Buildings and Resources

Teachers remain concerned about the nature and quality of the resources that they have available to them.

Over a third (34%) of teachers stated that their buildings were not fit to teach in and two fifths (40%) said that their buildings were not fit for their pupils.



Almost half (49%) of teachers said that they are not provided with the resources to allow them to teach, and three fifths (60%) of the teachers surveyed said that they did not have high-quality ICT provision to allow for appropriate use of the technology.

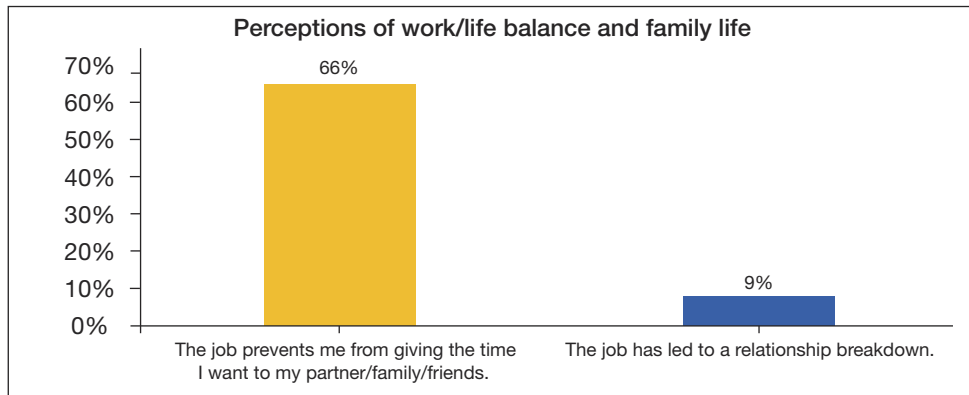
Work/Life Balance/Support

The Big Question survey asked a series of questions about teachers' perceptions about their work/life balance and the impact of workload on family lives.

The vast majority of teachers (83%) stated that they frequently worried about work problems when not at work, and only 12% stated that they were able to relax at home.

Over four fifths (81%) of teachers said that they felt too tired to enjoy doing the things they like to do and only 9% said that they had enough time and energy for hobbies.

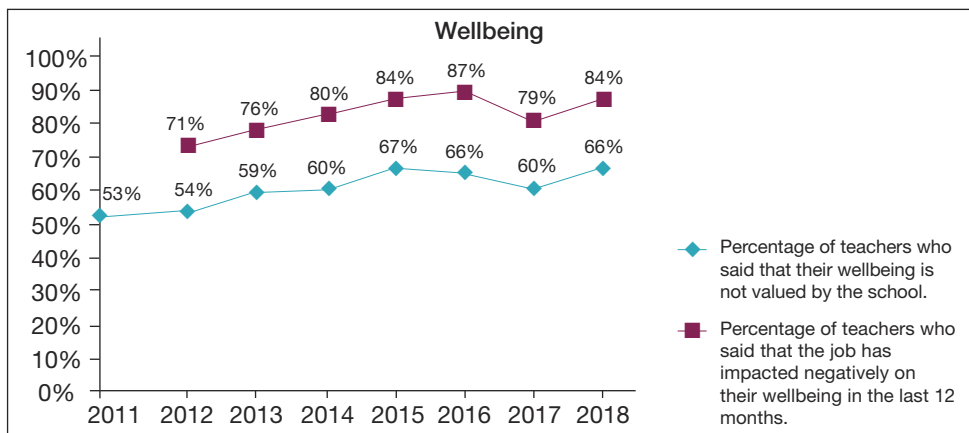
Additionally, the job had an impact on their families, as two thirds (66%) of teachers said that their job prevents them from giving the time they want to their partner, family or friends. 9% of teachers said that the impact of their job had led to a relationship breakdown.



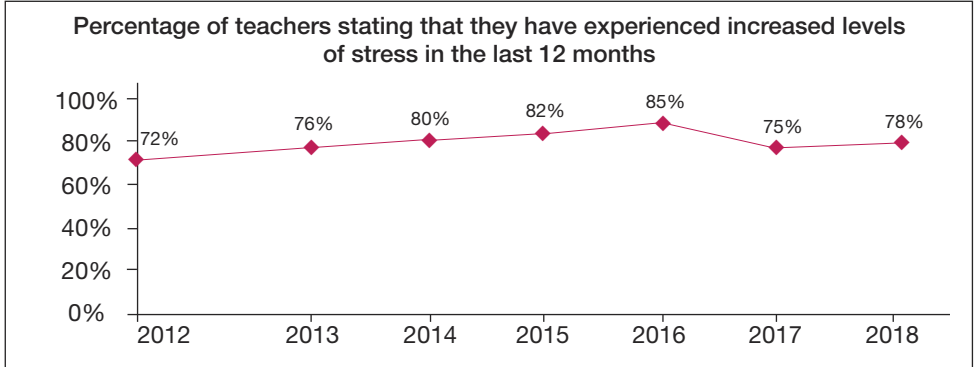
Teachers expressed concern that work/life balance was impeding the quality of their work as more than half (53%) said that they are often too worn down to give the job their best effort. This has in turn led to serious dissatisfaction with the recognition that they receive for the time that they give, as over four fifths of teachers (86%) said that they work too hard for too little reward.

Health and Wellbeing

When teachers were asked about how their school views their wellbeing, two thirds (66%) of teachers reported that their wellbeing is not considered important by the school, and over four fifths (84%) said that their job has impacted negatively on their wellbeing.



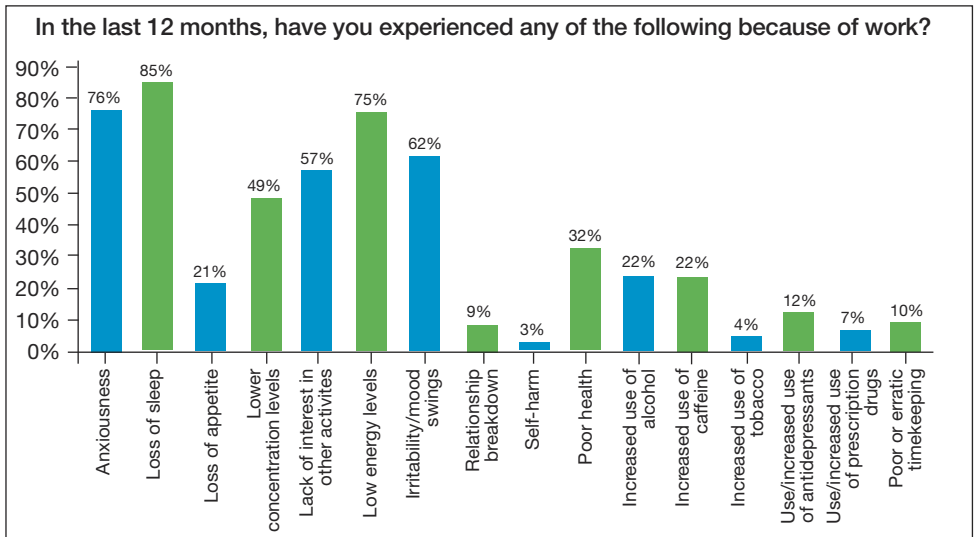
Over three quarters (78%) of teachers stated that they have experienced more workplace stress in the last 12 months.



Almost two thirds (64%) of teachers stated that the job had adversely affected their mental health in the last 12 months, and over half (53%) said that the job had adversely affected their physical health.

Furthermore, teachers reported a range of negative mental/physical problems as a result of work, including: loss of sleep (85%), anxiousness (76%), low energy levels (75%) and irritability/mood swings (62%). More than one in ten teachers (12%) stated that they had started using antidepressants in the past 12 months.

3% of teachers said that they had self-harmed in the past year. This is an increase from 2% in 2017.

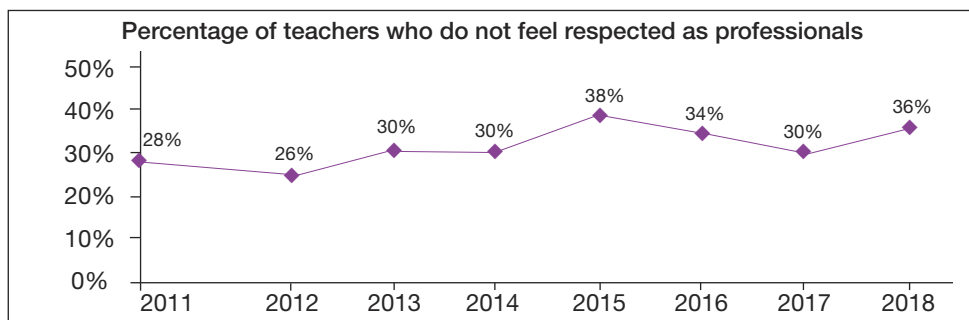


Consequently, where the job had affected their physical and mental health in the last 12 months, more than two fifths (41%) had seen a doctor and almost a third (30%) had been forced to take medication. More than one in ten (15%) had undergone counselling and 4% had been admitted to hospital.

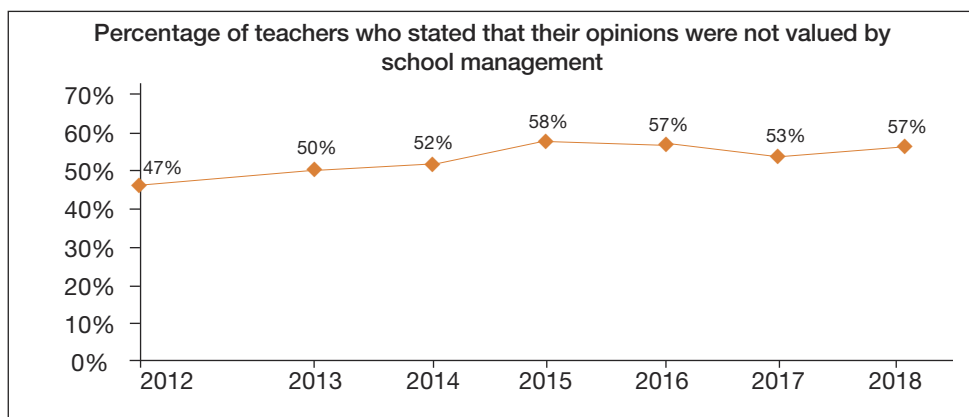
Respect and Job Satisfaction

Teachers feel that they are not respected by their school management and over half of teachers do not feel valued.

Over a third (36%) of teachers said that they do not feel respected as professionals and the same percentage (36%) said that they do not believe that their classroom expertise is valued.



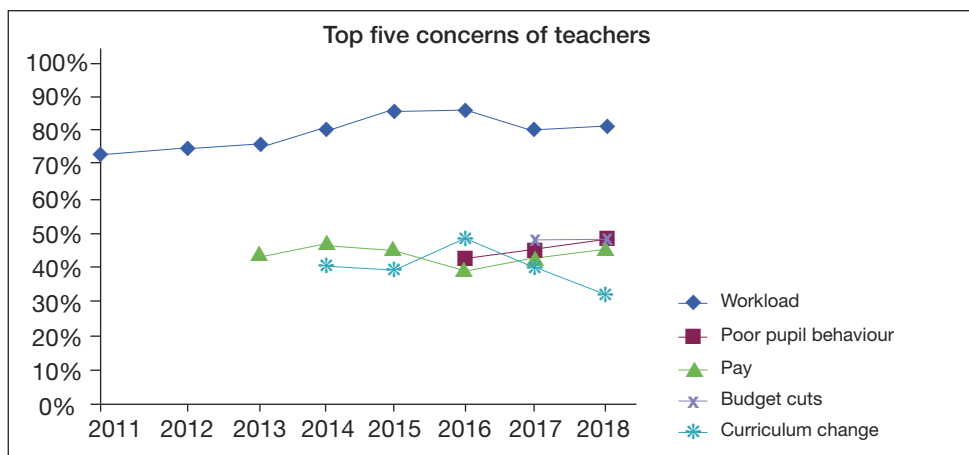
Almost three fifths (57%) of teachers stated that they believe their opinions are not valued by school management. Almost a third (30%) of teachers said their work is not valued by parents and more than two fifths (44%) said they believe their work is not valued by school management.



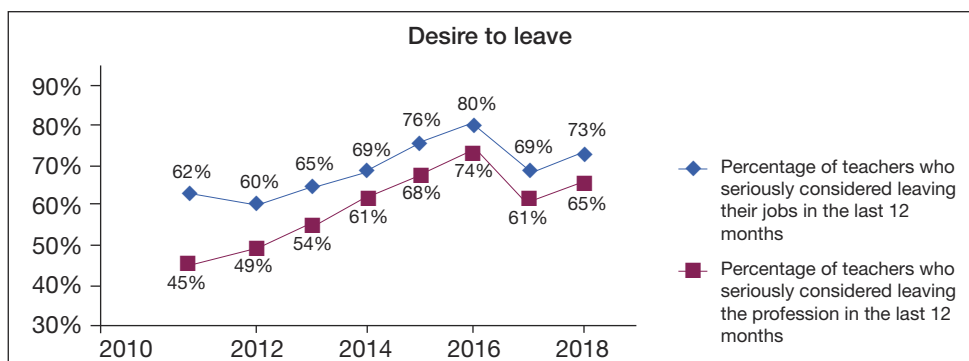
Teachers were asked what they like most about their jobs. The responses are similar to those identified since the beginning of the survey – namely,

interacting with pupils (90%), seeing young children progress (85%), teaching (82%), making a positive difference (76%) and support from colleagues (38%). Over two fifths (43%) of teachers stated that they are currently dissatisfied with their job and over half (56%) said that their job satisfaction has declined in the last 12 months.

When asked what their key concerns were, teachers identified that workload was once more the key concern; this was highlighted by 86%, 12% higher than in 2011. The other concerns identified in the top five were curriculum and qualifications changes (32%), poor pupil behaviour (49%), pay (46%) and budget cuts (49%). The picture in comparison to 2011 has worsened, although the issues remain the same.



Almost three quarters (73%) of teachers seriously considered leaving their current job and over three fifths of teachers (65%) seriously considered quitting the profession altogether.



Further Research and Surveys

The NASUWT is committed to undertaking a Big Question survey annually. This complements other members' surveys.

NASUWT-commissioned research and survey reports are available for download at www.nasuwt.org.uk.

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