PANDEMIC RESEARCH REPORT

Teacher Mental Health Check-in Survey

CTF/FCE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE CURRENT MENTAL HEALTH CONTEXT 1

An Ongoing Pandemic 1

Continuing research on teacher mental health 2

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 3

Main Findings 3

Recommendations 4

CHECKING-IN: CURRENT MOOD AND OCCUPATIONAL STRESS 5

Frustration, emotional well-being, exhaustion, coping, support 8

Teachers' physical health 14

Concerns about personal mental health and well-being 16

BUILDING A SOLID FOUNDATION OF SUPPORT 20

Recognizing Influential Pillars 20

APPENDICES 22

Demographic Information 23

Teachers Responding to Coronavirus (COVID-19) — Pandemic Research Study, June 2020 Comparison 34

THE CURRENT MENTAL HEALTH CONTEXT

An ongoing pandemic

Recent Canadian media reports have highlighted the issue of teacher mental health and well-being in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. In Ottawa, the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) surveyed teachers and students about teaching and learning in the pandemic, with teachers providing disparaging responses of feeling burnt out, exhausted, and the volume of work they are asked to do as "unsustainable."[1] Further west, The Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) recently published Survey results from the second of a series of pulse surveys at the beginning of September (Sept. 10-14), which found that "95 percent of respondents reported stress, 94 percent reported fatigue and 81 percent reported anxiety."[2,3] Teachers across Canada are sharing similar concerns of being overwhelmed, stressed, and exhausted, uncertain if they can sustain the pace and complexity of teaching in the current pandemic environment.[4,5] These feelings have led many teachers to question how long they are able to continue, despite their love for education, and desire to support young people in publicly funded public education.[6,7]

Teachers are not alone in their feelings of stress, depression, and anxiety related to the COVID-19 pandemic, as the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) Survey reported increases in reports of anxiety and depression amongst Canadians ages 18 and older.[8] Yet, the burdens of shouldering continuously shifting and complex working conditions, along with additional health and safety protocols, have been difficult for educators. More complex still are large variations in school-level, board, and government planning and procedures, which, along with regular professional tasks and responsibilities, create an environment of instability for teachers and students.

As reported by Laura Sokal and colleagues, these imbalances are fuel for employment-related stress, and precursors to burnout.[9] A review of evidence as reported by researchers in Scotland also finds high levels of

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1 Pringle, Josh. 'Ottawa public school teachers burnt out, some students report declining mental health since school began: Survey.' *CTV News* (October 28, 2020). https://ottawa.ctvnews.ca/ottawa-public-schoolteachers-burnt-out-some-students-report-declining-mental-health-since-school-began-survey-1.5164734.

2 Janzen, Jen. 'Stressed out.' *ATA News*. https://mydigimag.rrd.com/publication/?i=676355&article_id=3783127&view=articleBrowser&ver=html5.

3 Alberta Teachers Association. *Reporting on COVID-19 Prevention, Infection and Control in Alberta Schools: ATA Pandemic Research Study*, (Fall 2020). https://mydigimag.rrd.com/publication/?i=676355&article_id=3783127&view=articleBrowser&ver=html5.

4 Wong, Jessica. 'Teachers say return to school this fall has left them with overwhelming stress and neverending workload.' *CBC*, (October 28, 2020).

5 Antle, Rob. "Schools still COVID-free, but concerns linger for some teachers in N.L. classrooms." *CBC*. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/nl-teachers-covid-questionnaire-1.5778823.

6 Jedwab, Jack. "Canadian high school teachers: Their concerns at the front line addressing COVID-19," *Association for Canadian Studies* (October 2, 2020). https://acs-aec.ca/wpcontent/uploads/2020/10/Survey-of-Canadian-high-school-teachers-around-Covid-19-and-classroomchallenges.pdf.

7 Alhmidi, Maan. "Teachers worried about their health, quality of education as they deal with COVID-19. *The Canadian Press* (October 2, 2020). https://www.timescolonist.com/teachers-worried-about-their-healthquality-of-education-as-they-deal-with-covid-19-1.24214087.

8 CAMH. "COVID-19 National Survey Dashboard." https://www.camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-health-and-covid-19/covid-19-national-survey.

9 Sokal, "Job-demands resource model."

work-related stress were linked to physical and mental health issues, where mental health and well-being influenced the relationship teachers had to their work, and the relationship to their students.[10]

As the pandemic continues, there is a need to document the realities of teaching, and the longitudinal effects on front-line workers in the care economy. Such information will be vital to advocate for supports to mitigate long-lasting effects on teachers' and, in turn, students' mental health.[11,12] Similarly, UNESCO has also advocated for studying the psychological effects of COVID-19, to apply this knowledge for future periods of the pandemic.[13] This call is echoed by the Mental Health Commission of Canada, which stresses that long-term, multi-layered effects are inevitable, which adds to the importance of understanding the impacts to support our teachers now, and in the future.[14]

Continuing research on teacher mental health

In October 2020, the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF/FCE) released the *CTF/FCE Canadian Teachers Responding to Coronavirus (COVID-19) – Pandemic Research Study Mental Health Report*. This document is an important baseline for understanding the impacts of teaching during a pandemic, and supports needed for teacher mental health as the COVID-19 pandemic unfolds. The CTF/FCE Pandemic Study Phase One Survey was conducted June 1-18, 2020, and had over 15,000 completed teacher responses. From the results of this initial Survey, CTF/FCE reported on the mental health of students and teachers, and documented concerning mental health trends, as educators navigated emergency remote teaching in June 2020.[15] This report revealed that the mental health of teachers was "severely endangered" by stressors such as: excessive workload, lack of clear directions and planning, increased screen time, and social isolation. The results also demonstrated that teachers were struggling to maintain work-life balance, and did not have the time to properly attend to their personal physical well-being.

This *CTF/FCE Mental Health Check-in Report* analyzes the follow-up "pulse" style CTF/FCE Survey on the mental health and well-being of teachers in the 2020-2021 school year, documenting the continued detrimental effects of the prolonged pandemic on teachers' mental health and well-being. Based on the results, it is clear that there is a need for timely, wide-reaching, and continued support to alleviate the reported deteriorating mental health of Canadian public school educators. It is both a wake-up call, and a platform for advocacy.

10 White, Jane. *Supporting teachers' mental health and wellbeing: Evidence Review.* (Edinburgh, NHS Scotland), 2020.

11 White, *Supporting Teachers*.

12 Sokal, Laura, Lesley G. Eblie Trudel, JeffC. Babb. "Supporting teachers in times of change: The job demandsresources model and teacher burnout during the COVID-19 pandemic." *International Journal of Contemporary Education 3* no. 2 (2020). 67-74.

13 Holmes, Emily, Rory O'Connor, Hugh Perr, Irene Tracey, Simon Wessley, Louise Arseneault et al. "Multidisciplinary research priorities for the COVID-19 pandemic: a call for action for mental health sciences," *Lancet Psychiatry 7* (2020): 547-560.

14 COVID-19 and Mental Health: Policy Responses and Emerging Issues [Environmental Scan]' (Ottawa, Canada: Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2020).

15 CTF/FCE. Canadian Teachers Responding to Coronavirus (COVID-19) – Pandemic Research Study Mental Health Report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The CTF/FCE Mental Health Check-in Survey was conducted in both official languages from October 16-25, 2020, with a total of 13,770 completed responses. The CTF/FCE Survey was voluntary, and applied to educators who were currently teaching in the 2020-2021 school year. Response frequency for the Survey was very high, averaging almost 570 responses per day over a ten-day period (568 responses/day). Comparatively, the Pandemic Research Study in June, 2020 garnered an average of 216 responses per day and a total of 15,119 responses over a two-week period. This shows the current Mental Health Check-in garnered almost double the frequency of responses even over a shorter Survey timeframe, signaling the importance of mental health as a topic.

The Survey was distributed through CTF/FCE Member Organization networks and through snow-ball recruitment using social media platforms, Twitter and Facebook. Respondents were free to skip questions, in whole or in part, except for initial Member Organization and identifying questions, which were required. Consequently, the number of completed responses varies by question.

The CTF/FCE Mental Health Check-in Survey comprised of ten closed-ended questions on mental health and well-being, and included baseline questions on teachers' current mental state and stress levels, Likert scales on emotional and physical well-being, and comparative longitudinal questions. These questions, replicated from the June 2020 CTF/FCE Phase One study, offer longitudinal data on teachers' baseline feelings of well-being, the state of their physical health, and their top concerns for their mental health and well-being. A comparative discussion of these longitudinal results appears in this report.

In this report we provide a detailed analysis of the ten close-ended questions on mental health and well-being from the CTF/FCE Mental Health Check-in Survey. Results from demographic questions appear in the Appendices of this report. Analyses are displayed in graphs, heat maps, and frequency charts depending on the question. Each question is then broken down and discussed using key results, and comparative longitudinal markers from the June 2020 Survey.

Main findings

- Teachers want to be heard, and want their experiences documented: 17% (n= 2,292) of respondents requested a follow-up interview.
- Teachers are incredibly stressed, struggling to cope, and increasingly feeling unhappy: 46% are concerned about their own mental health and well-being.
- Increased workloads in a pandemic are detrimental to teachers' physical health and well-being. Teachers are infrequently able to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

- Upholding basic levels of daily physical health are becoming progressively more difficult for teachers.
- There is a need for multiple layers of support, at the school, board, and Ministry level, to first listen and recognize the issues and to, secondly, make the required changes to lessen the effects of increased workload and job demands on teachers.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made in the *CTF/FCE Canadian Teachers Responding to Coronavirus (COVID-19) – Pandemic Research Study Mental Health Report*:

- Offer immediate and ongoing emotional and mental health support to teachers, education workers, and students;
- Increase funding for teacher and student mental health services;
- Develop new mental health resources to address impacts of the pandemic, including trauma informed resources;
- Adjust workload expectations;
- Provide clear directions with proper communication from administration, boards, and Ministries.

Based on the Mental Health Check-in Survey results, and our analyses herein, we continue to advocate for the above, and add the following:

- Make mental health and well-being a priority: shift expectations around working extensively outside of contract hours;
- Increase visibility and ease of access for teacher mental health resources;
- Balance demands and resources in current teaching contexts. For example, while there is need in many contexts for additional student supervision and time spent on non-teaching tasks, prioritize time for teacher preparation and assessment by adding people power;
- Maintain the same health and safety guidelines that are utilized outside of schools, in schools and classrooms, e.g. masks and proper physical distancing;
- Increase funding for decreased classroom sizes that adhere to health and safety protocols;
- Create long-term policy and procedures to support teachers' mental health and well-being at school, board, and ministry levels, especially for pandemic or crisis teaching environments;
- Listen to teachers' experiences, and recognize the long-term, cumulative effects of being a front-line education worker in the care economy.

CHECKING-IN ON: CURRENT MOOD AND OCCUPATIONAL STRESS

In the CTF/FCE Mental Health Check-in Survey, teachers were asked ten closed-ended questions related to their personal mental health and well-being. The first two questions gauged participants' overall state of well-being: the first was a "current mood" check-in, the second asked teachers to indicate their level of occupational stress using a slider bar.

The first question, "How are you feeling today?", set the baseline, with 36% of teachers reporting that they were "neither happy or unhappy," and with 30% stating they were "somewhat unhappy" at the time they participated in the Survey. Only 15% of teachers reported feeling "somewhat happy" and 3% indicated they were "very happy."

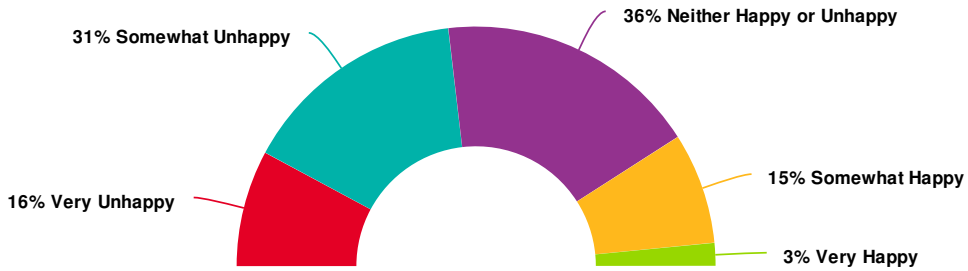
This question was also asked in the June 2020 *CTF/FCE Canadian Teachers Responding to Coronavirus (COVID-19) – Pandemic Research Study*, and provides important insights into the reporting of teacher wellness at the end of the 2019-2020 school year in comparison to the first months of 2020-2021.

The percentage of teachers reporting feeling "somewhat unhappy," for instance, has risen by 14%, with teachers who indicated they were "happy" decreasing over 20% between mid-June and mid-October. Further, the percentage of teachers who reported feeling "very happy" has reduced by half (7% to 3%) and the percentage of teachers who reported feeling "very unhappy" has tripled (5% to 16%). These comparative results show a significant, and negative change in teachers' feelings of well-being.

The second question asked teachers to gauge "How stressful is your job right now?" on a sliding scale where 0% indicates not stressful at all, and 100% indicating severe stress. These results show a vast majority of teachers (72%) in the "somewhat stressed," "very stressed," and "severely stressed" ranges. The average response from teachers indicated their jobs were currently "very stressful" with a value of 77% out of 100%.

The highest percentage of teachers (24%) indicated they were "severely stressed," sliding the scale to 91-100%. That is over 3,500 teachers who indicated (n= 3,503) that their job was severely stressful at the time of the Survey. This number is 4.5 times higher than the percentage of teachers who said they were "somewhat stressed" in the 41-50% marker (5%), and ten percentage points higher than teachers who indicated they were "very stressed" at the 71-80% (14%). Further, almost 90% of teachers responded their job was within the 51-100% range (89%), with 68% indicating their stress levels to be in the 71-100% range. Occupational stress, therefore, is a significant marker of the state of teacher mental health and well-being, indicated at the time of the check-in Survey.

How are you feeling today?

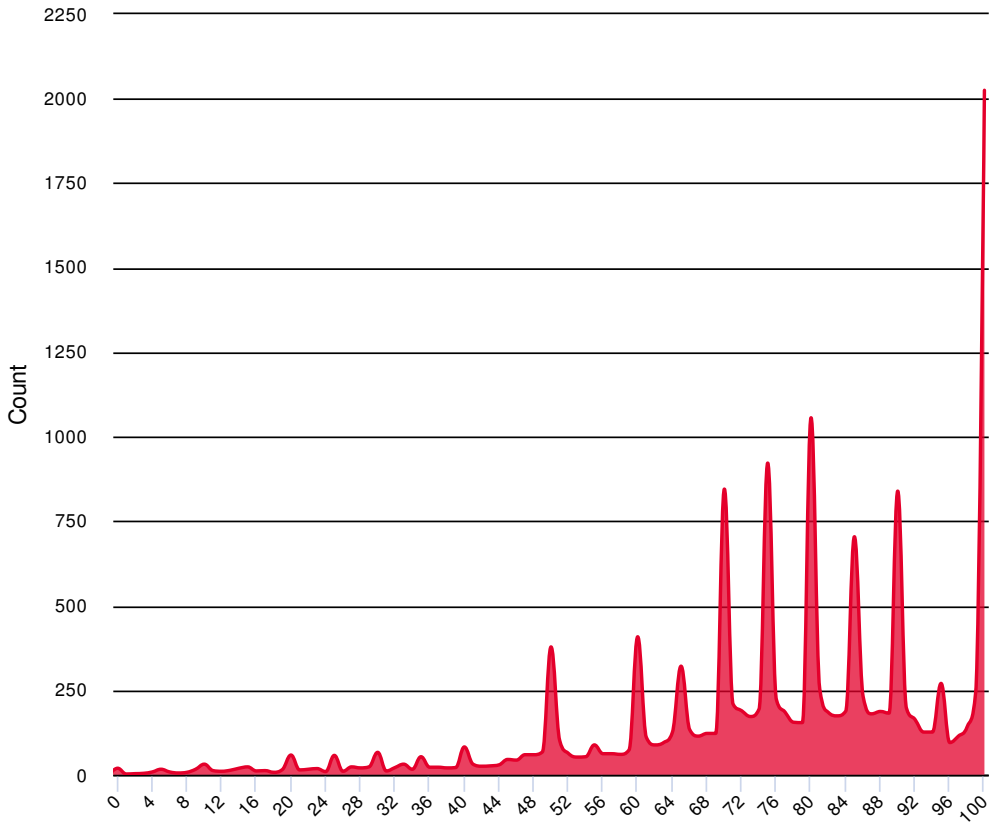


Value	Percent	Responses
Very Unhappy	15.7%	2,372
Somewhat Unhappy	30.6%	4,616
Neither Happy or Unhappy	35.6%	5,359
Somewhat Happy	15.0%	2,257
Very Happy	3.1%	466

Totals: 15,070

How stressful is your job right now?

Indicate using the slider scale



Statistics

Min	0
Max	100
Average	76.5

Frustration, emotional well-being, exhaustion, coping, support

The Check-in Survey asked teachers to self-report on their levels of frustration, emotional well-being, exhaustion, coping, and support using various Likert scales. In this section, teachers were also prompted to indicate to what extent they felt supported by different groups.

Teachers indicated they were quite frustrated with many aspects of their professional practice and work environment at the time of the Survey. Teachers reported that negative public perceptions of their job was the most frustrating overall, with 37% finding it "severely frustrating," 31% finding it to be "very frustrating," and 19% "somewhat frustrating."

School reopening and safety plans were also significant sources of frustration for teachers, as continual shifts in the work environment and maintaining safety protocols were "very frustrating" for over a third of teachers who responded. In relation to these frustrations, attempts to uphold personal professional standards was reported to be "very frustrating" by 32% of teachers.

These sources of frustration show links to teachers' emotional health. Attempting to uphold their own professional standards, for example, was not only frustrating, but 34% of participants also noted that this "greatly affected" their emotional health. Aspects of their professional lives such as maintaining a positive and energetic attitude while teaching, managing student behaviour and juggling multiple responsibilities, as well as providing emotional support for students were indicated to "greatly affect" over 30% of teachers' emotional health.

The state of teachers' emotional health was indicated by answering questions on their current work environment, followed by rating working conditions that were exhausting or draining. Managing student behaviour and juggling multiple responsibilities not only greatly affected teachers' emotional health, but was also the aspect they reported to be the most draining with 35% of teachers noting this to be "severely draining," and 37% found managing student behaviour and juggling responsibilities "very draining."

Time spent on computers and digital devices was equally reported to be "very draining" to "severely draining," both at 30%, while 38% noted that adjusting to new pedagogical practices was "very draining." Interestingly, covering classes for absent colleagues was "not at all" exhausting for 26% of teachers, but was equally noted to be "somewhat draining" and "very draining" for 22% of participants, respectively, which could be accounted for by large variations in how frequently teachers need to cover their colleagues' classes.

More cumulatively, teachers overwhelmingly indicated they were struggling to cope with the daily stresses of teaching. Over 11,000 teachers (n= 11,144) responded that their ability to cope was in question with 33% reporting they were "barely coping" and 46% "somewhat coping." Just over 4% (n= 621) of teachers noted they were "not coping at all." Only a small portion of teachers reported some level of coping with the current stresses of teaching right now (16% coping well, and 1% coping extremely well). These disparaging self-reports reveal the damage of stress, frustration, and exhaustion, and the unsustainability of the current contexts for teachers' mental health and well-being.

In this section, teachers were also asked to rate the level of support they felt they received from various groups (students' parents/guardians, administrators, colleagues, family/friends, school boards, Ministries of Education, and professional association/union). Teachers reported various levels of support from these groups.

There was evidence of stronger support by close contacts for teachers than board and government-level institutions. They reported feeling "very supported" by personal level networks of colleagues (48%) and family/friends (44%). The majority of teachers reported feeling less support from mid-level contacts like students' parents/guardians (56% "somewhat supported") and administrators (30% "very supported"; 35% "somewhat supported"). Four in ten teachers felt "somewhat supported" by their union/professional association and not well supported by their respective school boards (30% "not supported," 30% "barely supported," and 30% "somewhat supported"). By contrast, the vast majority of teachers felt "not supported" by their Ministries of Education (60%). These figures reveal the importance of close networks in providing respite and support for teachers as well as areas to improve support from other external sources, such as boards and Ministries.

To what extent do you find the following frustrating in your teaching practice?

	Not frustrating	Mildly frustrating	Somewhat frustrating	Very frustrating	Severely frustrating	Responses
Maintaining safety protocols Count Row %	941 6.4%	1,892 12.9%	4,347 29.7%	5,248 35.9%	2,192 15.0%	14,620
Learning and adjusting to new technologies Count Row %	1,473 10.1%	2,791 19.1%	4,745 32.5%	3,674 25.1%	1,939 13.3%	14,622
Upholding my own professional standards Count Row %	1,608 11.0%	1,990 13.6%	3,922 26.9%	4,720 32.3%	2,365 16.2%	14,605
Continual shifts in my work environment Count Row %	580 4.0%	1,300 8.9%	3,043 20.8%	5,025 34.4%	4,651 31.9%	14,599

Public perceptions of my current job Count Row %	813 5.6%	1,168 8.0%	2,795 19.1%	4,462 30.6%	5,365 36.7%	14,603
Totals Total Responses						14622

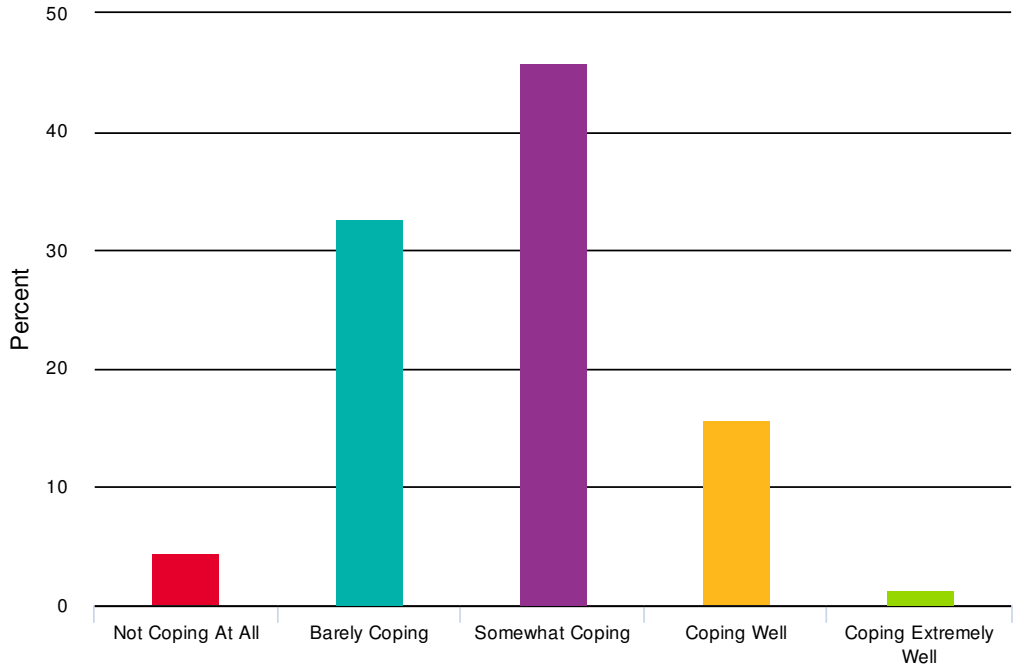
To what extent do the following work scenarios affect my emotional health?

	Does not affect me	Mildly affects me	Somewhat affects me	Greatly affects me	Severely affects me	Responses
Providing emotional support for students Count Row %	752 5.2%	1,885 13.1%	4,718 32.8%	5,392 37.5%	1,641 11.4%	14,388
Maintaining positive and energetic attitude while teaching Count Row %	749 5.2%	1,353 9.4%	3,348 23.3%	5,968 41.4%	2,982 20.7%	14,400
Managing student behaviour and juggling multiple responsibilities Count Row %	447 3.1%	1,170 8.1%	2,729 19.0%	5,535 38.5%	4,508 31.3%	14,389
Learning and using new technologies Count Row %	1,356 9.4%	2,865 19.9%	4,515 31.4%	3,534 24.6%	2,121 14.7%	14,391
Upholding my own professional standards Count Row %	1,211 8.4%	1,866 13.0%	3,965 27.6%	4,920 34.3%	2,393 16.7%	14,355
Totals Total Responses						14,400

To what extent do you find the following scenarios exhausting or draining?

	Not at all draining	Mildly draining	Somewhat draining	Very draining	Severely draining	Responses
Managing student behaviour and juggling multiple responsibilities Count Row %	292 2.1%	1,110 7.8%	2,526 17.8%	5,250 37.0%	5,007 35.3%	14,185
Covering classes for absent colleagues Count Row %	3,575 26.3%	2,098 15.5%	2,978 21.9%	2,923 21.5%	2,000 14.7%	13,574
Adjusting to new pedagogical practices Count Row %	559 3.9%	1,735 12.3%	4,035 28.5%	5,204 36.8%	2,622 18.5%	14,155
Time spent on computer or digital devices Count Row %	771 5.5%	1,672 11.8%	3,251 23.0%	4,263 30.1%	4,187 29.6%	14,144
Meeting personal and professional expectations Count Row %	314 2.2%	1,020 7.2%	2,574 18.1%	5,483 38.6%	4,801 33.8%	14,192
Totals Total Responses						14,192

How well are you coping with the daily stresses of teaching right now?



Value	Percent	Responses
Not Coping At All	4.4%	621
Barely Coping	32.7%	4,644
Somewhat Coping	45.8%	6,499
Coping Well	15.7%	2,224
Coping Extremely Well	1.4%	201

Totals: 14,189

To what extent do you feel supported by the following groups?

	Not Supported	Barely Supported	Somewhat Supported	Very Supported	Extremely Supported	Responses
Students' Parents/Guardians	716	2,274	7,654	3,029	309	13,982
Count	5.1%	16.3%	54.7%	21.7%	2.2%	
Row %						
Administrators						
Count	1,218	2,204	4,902	4,177	1,556	14,057
Row %	8.7%	15.7%	34.9%	29.7%	11.1%	
Colleagues						
Count	160	691	3,608	6,689	2,911	14,059
Row %	1.1%	4.9%	25.7%	47.6%	20.7%	
School Board						
Count	4,128	4,260	4,321	1,130	170	14,009
Row %	29.5%	30.4%	30.8%	8.1%	1.2%	
Ministry of Education	8,332	3,359	1,903	379	51	14,024
Count	59.4%	24.0%	13.6%	2.7%	0.4%	
Row %						
Professional Association/Union	1,191	2,910	5,757	3,462	711	14,031
Count	8.5%	20.7%	41.0%	24.7%	5.1%	
Row %						
Family/Friends						
Count	126	714	4,048	6,214	2,956	14,058
Row %	0.9%	5.1%	28.8%	44.2%	21.0%	
Totals						
Total Responses						14,059

Teachers' physical health

The Mental Health Check-in Survey asked teachers to indicate how often they were able to achieve markers of physical health and well-being on a daily basis. These include sleep, nutrition, hydration, movement, and the ability to prioritize and keep up with tasks during their work days.

Teachers' self-reporting indicated that most are struggling to support their own needs for personal health and sustenance. Teachers answered that they were "infrequently" getting sufficient sleep every night (36%), "infrequently" drinking water while working and staying hydrated (38%), and "infrequently" finding time throughout the day to be physically active (38%). Almost half of the teachers who responded to this section indicated they were "sometimes" able to prioritize and keep up with tasks and electronic communications in their daily schedules (46%).

In comparison to the June 2020 *CTF/FCE Canadian Teachers Responding to Coronavirus (COVID-19) – Pandemic Research Study* (see Appendix), there is a startling trend of teachers struggling to maintain their physical well-being. There was a negative change in reporting for all categories. The reported frequency "never" and "infrequently" rose significantly with the inverse occurring in terms of positive frequencies "frequently" and "always." This shows an overall trend of teachers failing to maintain or sustain their physical health and well-being between mid-June and mid-October 2020.

Specifically, the percentage of teachers who indicated they "infrequently" were able to achieve the markers of health has increased in each category: nutrition increased from 19% to 23%, hydration increased from 15% to 38%, and prioritization of tasks increased from 10% to 24%. The proportion of teachers who reported "never" achieving sufficient sleep on a daily basis has risen ten percentage points since the June Survey, from 3% to 13%. These statistics not only point to a startling negative trend in personal health and wellness measures, but in comparison to June 2020, show that physical health cannot be ignored as a pivotal component of teacher mental health and overall well-being.

How often are you able to achieve the following within your daily schedule?

	Never	Infrequently	Sometimes	Frequently	Always	Responses
Sleep. I am getting sufficient sleep (quality and quantity) every night. Count Row %	1,880 13.3%	5,083 36.0%	4,580 32.4%	2,230 15.8%	366 2.6%	14,139
Nutrition. I am eating regularly to improve concentration and performance. Count Row %	540 3.8%	3,242 22.9%	4,790 33.9%	4,295 30.4%	1,263 8.9%	14,130
Hydration. I am drinking water while working and staying hydrated throughout the day. Count Row %	1,940 13.7%	5,359 37.9%	3,586 25.4%	2,363 16.7%	886 6.3%	14,134
Movement. I am setting aside time throughout my day - at regular intervals - to be physically active. Count Row %	2,506 17.7%	5,321 37.7%	3,590 25.4%	1,911 13.5%	797 5.6%	14,125
Prioritization. I am able to keep up with my tasks/electronic communication and can determine which tasks are most pressing. Count Row %	741 5.2%	3,442 24.4%	6,471 45.8%	3,049 21.6%	425 3.0%	14,128
Totals Total Responses						14,139

Concerns about personal mental health and well-being

Teachers were asked if they had concerns with their mental health in the June 2020 *CTF/FCE Canadian Teachers Responding to Coronavirus (COVID-19) – Pandemic Research Study* (see Appendix), to which 44% of respondents answered "yes." Those who answered "yes" to this question were then prompted to provide feedback on their mental health concerns in an open-ended question. The data from this qualitative response was coded, and grouped into categories in the *CTF/FCE Canadian Teachers Responding to Coronavirus (COVID-19) – Pandemic Research Study* (pp. 11-13). The top concerns for personal mental health in June 2020 were as follows:

1. Lack of Ministry planning, directions, and fear of returning – 99%
2. Stress, anxiety, and depression – 68%
3. Sleep, nutrition, physical health – 65%
4. Work-life balance, and workload – 50%
5. Family dynamic and responsibilities – 43%
6. Isolation and loneliness – 29%
7. Teaching limitations, screen time and access – 27%
8. Missing classroom teaching, worrying about students – 15%
9. Economic pressures and job security – 5%

Using a similar question format, teachers in the CTF/FCE Mental Health Check-in Survey were asked if they had any concerns with their mental health, and were prompted to rank a list of concerns which were taken from the coded results of the June 2020 *CTF/FCE Canadian Teachers Responding to Coronavirus (COVID-19) – Pandemic Research Study*.

In CTF/FCE Mental Health Check-in Survey, 69% of teachers had concerns about their mental health and/or well-being. This number has significantly increased from the previous Survey in June which showed only 44% of teachers had concerns or questions about their mental health and/or well-being, a percentage change of +25 points.

When ranking the top nine of the coded concerns from the June 2020 study, teachers in October 2020 ranked their concerns as follows:

1. Stress, anxiety, depression
2. Workload, work-life balance
3. Mental and emotional health
4. Physical health and safety
5. Lack of Ministry or board planning and directions
6. Family responsibilities
7. Worrying about students
8. Digital exhaustion, screen time
9. Loneliness

These results show important continuities and changes. Stress, anxiety, and depression continue to be a prominent concern for teachers. In the current Survey, this was marked as the clear top concern (as seen in the chart below in terms of rank distribution) and the second highest concern from the previous June Survey. Further, work-life balance and workload also continue to be strong concerns for teachers, ranking second in both surveys.

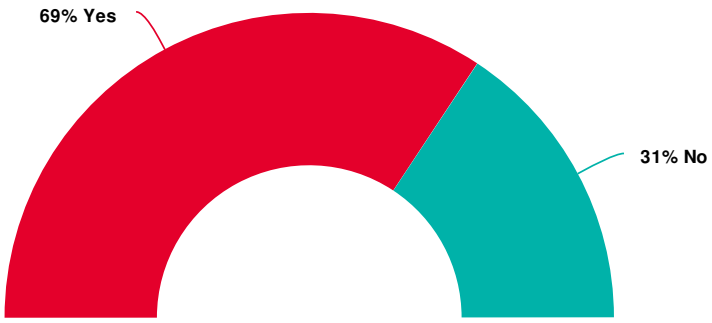
Yet, distinctions between the two surveys point to the strong personal toll on mental and physical health working in the pandemic has wrought on teachers. In the CTF/FCE Mental Health Check-in Survey, teachers ranked mental and emotional exhaustion as their third concern. Together with stress, anxiety, and depression, workload, and work-life balance, these issues reveal teachers are in dire need of supports and systemic change to maintain their lives as professionals in a pandemic.

Also distinct between the Survey in June and the current Mental Health Check-in is the importance of the Ministry or board planning and directions as a concern for teachers. In the June Survey, this was rated overwhelmingly as a concern for 99% of teachers. In the Mental Health Check-in, this concern has been eclipsed by the concerns of stress, anxiety, depression, since teachers were already back in school buildings at the time they participated in the Survey.

Loneliness, however, has dwindled as a current concern for teachers as they ranked this aspect as their lowest concern in the nine provided options in the Mental Health Check-in. By contrast, loneliness was the sixth highest concern for teachers in June 2020. Both of these changes can be linked to the fact that the pandemic research study Survey in June was done before teachers had returned to school buildings, and may be in part reactive to the uncertainties of re-entry plans and contexts. These distinctions can also be linked to the pandemic contexts of closures and distancing measures occurring in the surveying time frames (June and October, respectively).

In the current Mental Health Check-in, most teachers had already been teaching in the classroom, online, or a combination of both for at least one month, and uncertainties of re-entry plans and directions from Ministries or boards had (to some degree) been incorporated by teachers who needed to work with their current context. Teachers continued to have concerns about Ministry or board planning and directions, however, ranking this concern after stressors like workload and work-life balance and physical and emotional exhaustion, but before family responsibilities, worries about students, digital and screen time fatigue, and loneliness.

Do you have any concerns or questions about your mental health and/or well-being in relation to the return to teaching in 2020-2021?



Value	Percent	Responses
Yes	68.6%	9,612
No	31.4%	4,406

Totals: 14,018

What are your top concerns about your mental health and well-being at the start of the 2020-2021 school year?

Item	Overall Rank	Rank Distribution	No. of Rankings
Stress, Anxiety, Depression	1		8,906
Workload, Work-Life Balance	2		8,927
Mental and Emotional Exhaustion	3		8,787
Physical Health and Safety	4		8,063
Lack of Ministry or Board Planning and Directions	5		8,087
Family Responsibilities	6		7,719
Worrying about Students	7		7,855
Digital Exhaustion, Screen Time	8		7,655
Loneliness	9		6,890

BUILDING A SOLID FOUNDATION OF SUPPORT

Recognizing Influential Pillars

From the Mental Health Check-in Survey responses and analyses, we have determined several key factors that can be described as immediate, institutional, and societal layers affecting teacher mental health and well-being. The chart below outlines the three layers, with factors listed beside each category.

Societal Level

- Perceptions of the teaching profession
- Pressure to sustain social stability for families
- Pressure to keep the economy open
- Social determinants of health (race, gender, ability, economic inequality
- Pandemic stress and uncertainty

Institutional Level

- School, board, and Ministry leadership
- Planning, directives, and clarity of communication
- Health and safety policies and protocols
- Professional expectations

Immediate Level

- Personal coping skills
- Collegal support
- Physical health and wellness
- Classroom size and composition
- Preparation time
- Teaching method (online, in-person, hybrid)

The above factors operate as three separate layers of the education system, yet, all of the layers are interconnected and interdependent. The immediate layer describes close, daily, networks of people and resources such as personal feelings of meeting and maintaining professional standards, coping mechanisms, interactions with colleagues, students, and family/friends. The institutional layer consists of people and resources such as school-level guidelines and protocols, administrators, and boards of education, and students'

families/guardians. The societal layer is defined by societal expectations and pressures on the education system, broader issues such as racism, economic inequality, and implicated structures. Together, these layers form pillars of influence that affect teachers' mental health and well-being.

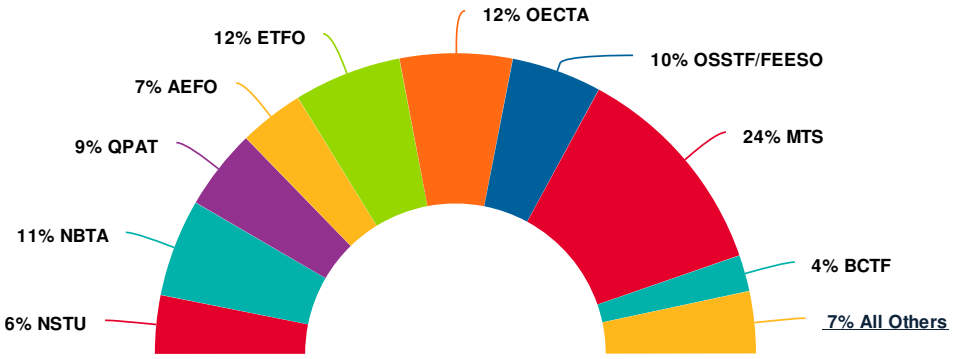
The interconnectedness of these layers as pillars of influence means positive support and changes must operate and work together. In other words, support in one layer cannot sustain positive mental health for teachers if other pillars are increasingly obstructive to teachers' mental health and well-being. For example, the Mental Health Check-in Survey showed teachers felt positively supported in the immediate layer, citing strong support from colleagues, and family and friends. Yet, teachers felt increasingly less supported in the institutional layer from their administrators and school boards, and less supported still through Ministries of Education. The effect of this is that the immediate pillar takes on added strain. Teachers' articulated this strain through reported feelings of frustration and exhaustion with their current job contexts, and through concerns with their personal ability to cope and maintain their own daily physical well-being.

The recommendations at the beginning of this report are built from understanding the many factors which influence teachers' current job contexts. Collectively, we need to strengthen the foundation of support teachers desperately need for their mental health and well-being, to ensure that the external weight caused by all three layers does not overload teachers alone. Brick by brick, connection by connection we can build up, and advocate for teachers' mental health and well-being, not only in response to the particular contexts of the global COVID-19 pandemic, but for the future sustainability of the teaching profession.

APPENDICES

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

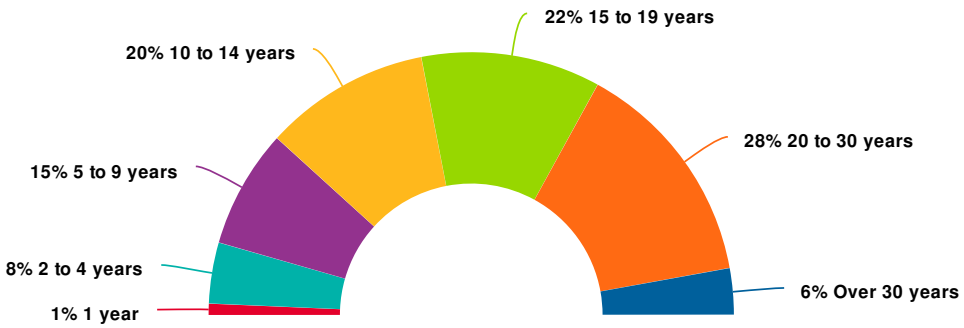
Please indicate the teacher organization of which you are a member



Value	Percent	Responses
NLTA	1.7%	253
PEITF	2.7%	416
NSTU	6.3%	958
NBTA	10.5%	1,592
QPAT	8.7%	1,323
AEFO	7.0%	1,059
ETFO	11.6%	1,766
OECTA	12.1%	1,829
OSSTF/FEESO	9.7%	1,467
MTS	23.6%	3,585
STF	0.3%	48
ATA	0.4%	58
BCTF	3.9%	586
YTA	0.1%	11
NWTTA	1.2%	188
NTA	0.3%	38

Totals: 15,177

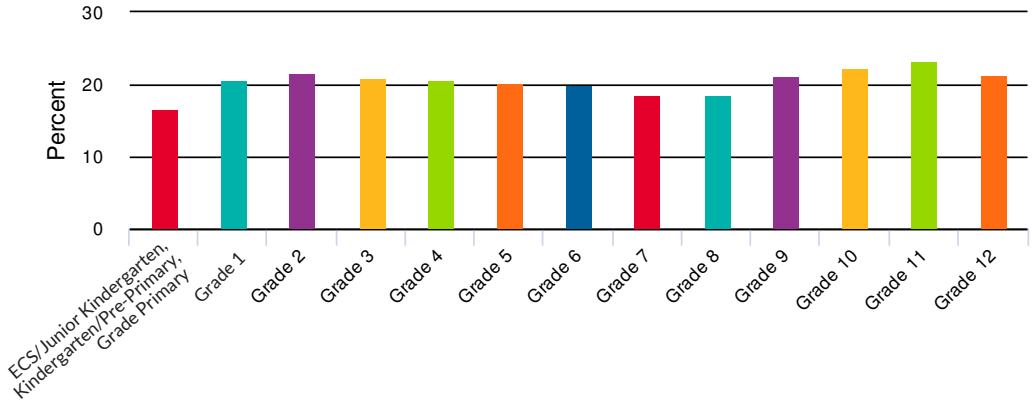
Your teaching experience, including current year



Value	Percent	Responses
1 year	1.4%	198
2 to 4 years	7.5%	1,039
5 to 9 years	14.6%	2,029
10 to 14 years	20.4%	2,827
15 to 19 years	22.1%	3,067
20 to 30 years	28.3%	3,921
Over 30 years	5.7%	785

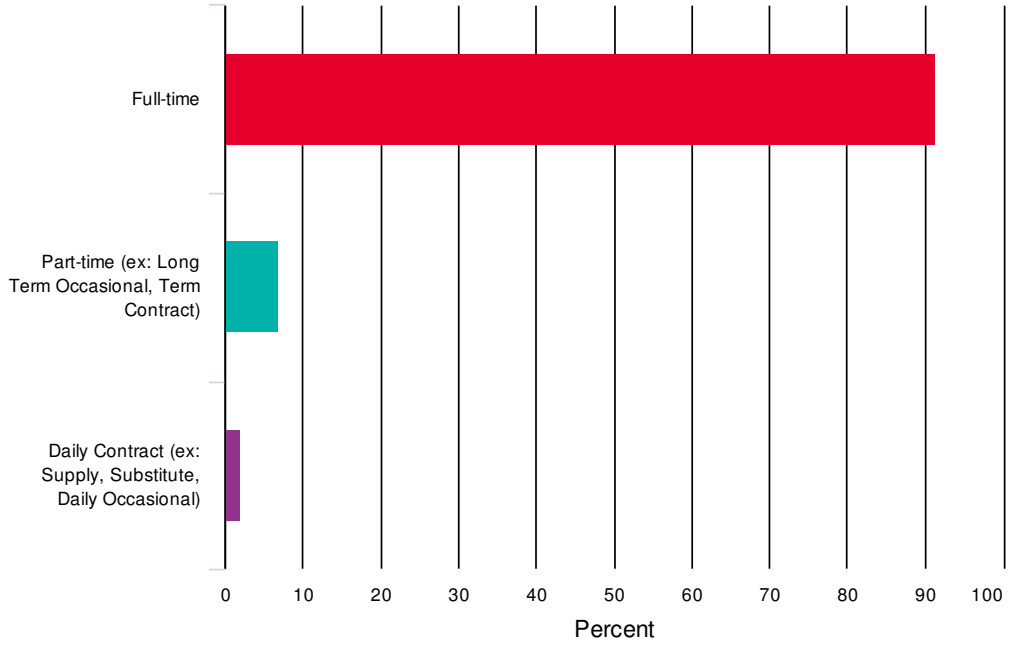
Totals: 13,866

Your current assignment is related exclusively or mainly to students in (check all that apply)



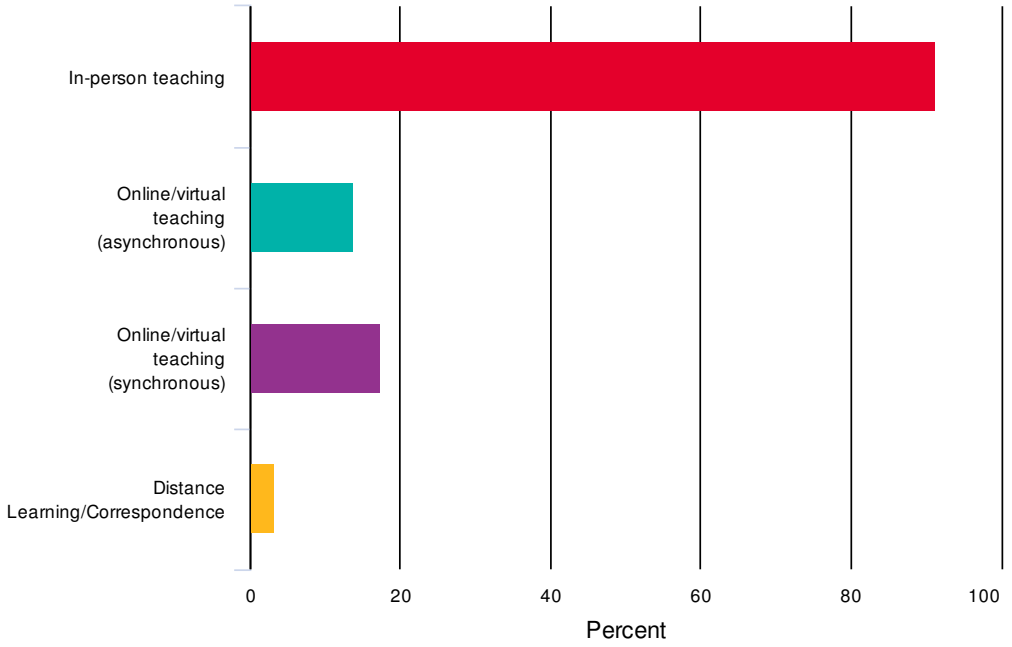
Value	Percent	Responses
ECS/Junior Kindergarten, Kindergarten/Pre-Primary, Grade Primary	16.6%	2,309
Grade 1	20.6%	2,861
Grade 2	21.6%	2,998
Grade 3	21.0%	2,916
Grade 4	20.7%	2,868
Grade 5	20.3%	2,815
Grade 6	20.0%	2,772
Grade 7	18.6%	2,581
Grade 8	18.5%	2,571
Grade 9	21.2%	2,939
Grade 10	22.4%	3,102
Grade 11	23.4%	3,246
Grade 12	21.5%	2,987

You are employed



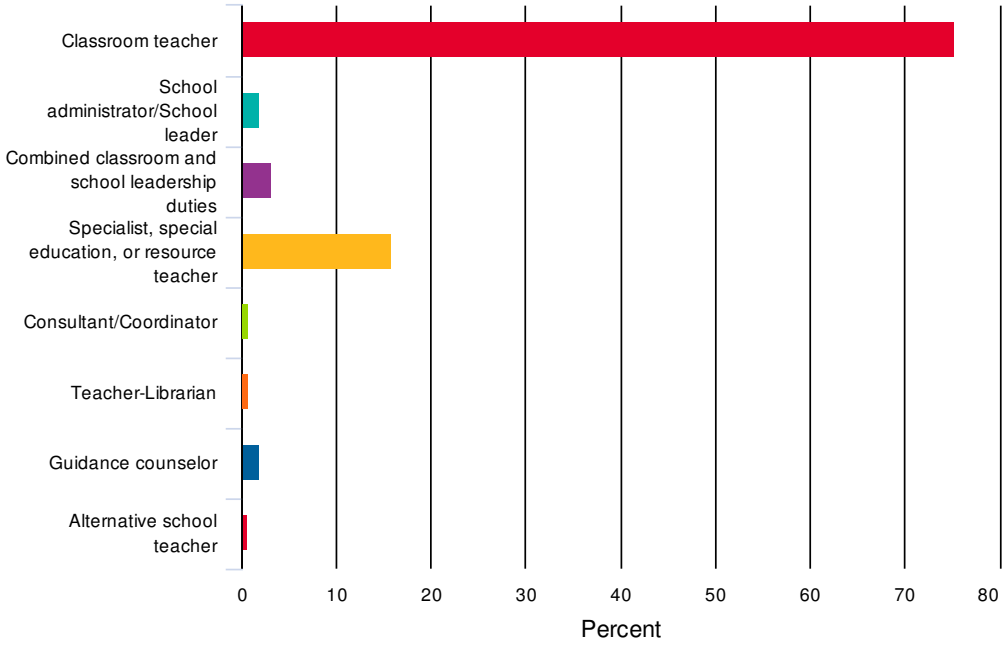
Value	Percent	Responses
Full-time	91.3%	12,615
Part-time (ex: Long Term Occasional, Term Contract)	6.8%	933
Daily Contract (ex: Supply, Substitute, Daily Occasional)	1.9%	263
		Totals: 13,811

Which of the following best describes your current teaching assignment? Check all that apply.



Value	Percent	Responses
In-person teaching	91.2%	13,816
Online/virtual teaching (asynchronous)	13.8%	2,092
Online/virtual teaching (synchronous)	17.5%	2,651
Distance Learning/Correspondence	3.3%	506

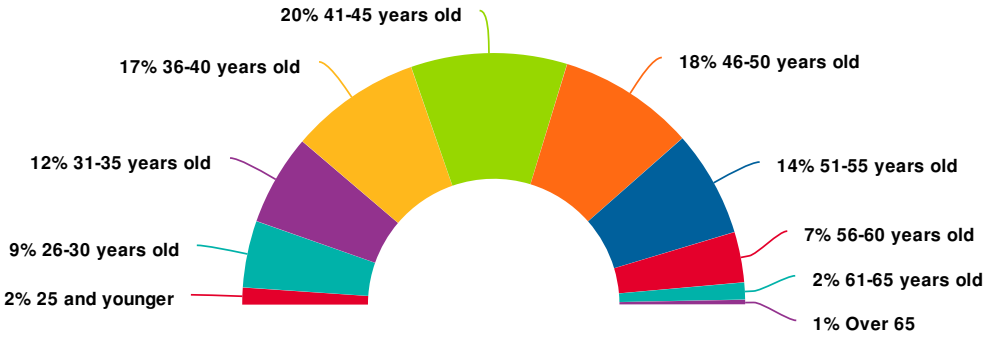
Which of the following best describes your current position?



Value	Percent	Responses
Classroom teacher	75.3%	10,397
School administrator/School leader	1.8%	249
Combined classroom and school leadership duties	3.1%	434
Specialist, special education, or resource teacher	15.8%	2,184
Consultant/Coordinator	0.7%	97
Teacher-Librarian	0.7%	91
Guidance counselor	1.9%	263
Alternative school teacher	0.6%	85

Totals: 13,800

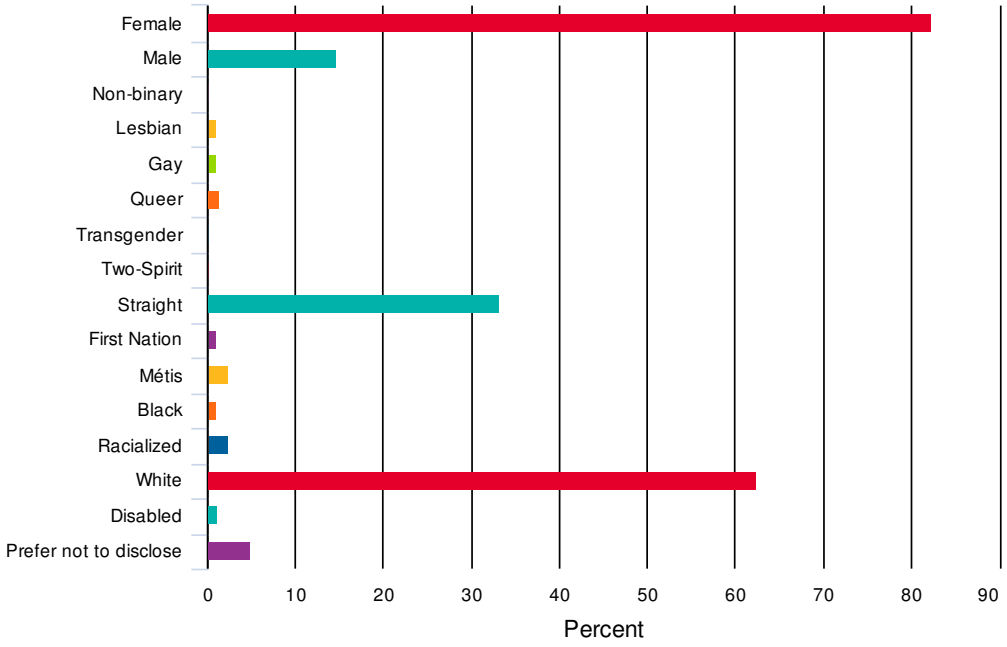
Your age



Value	Percent	Responses
25 and younger	2.2%	297
26-30 years old	8.6%	1,179
31-35 years old	11.7%	1,617
36-40 years old	16.9%	2,323
41-45 years old	20.1%	2,768
46-50 years old	17.6%	2,430
51-55 years old	13.7%	1,882
56-60 years old	6.5%	897
61-65 years old	2.2%	309
Over 65	0.6%	84

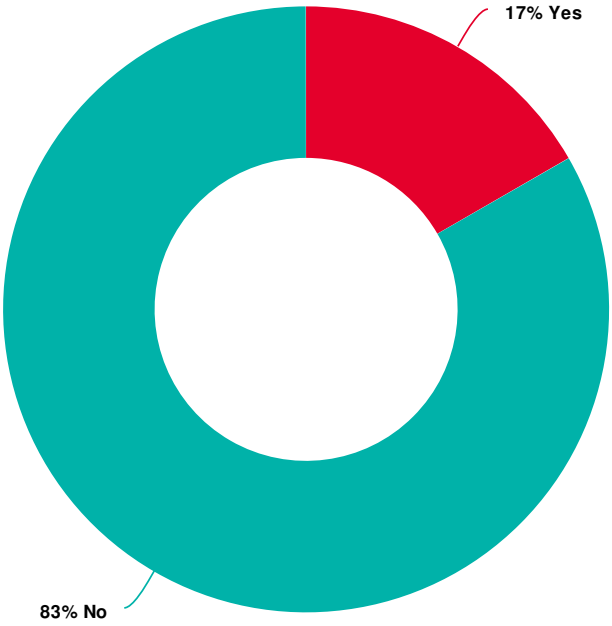
Totals: 13,786

Which of the following currently reflect your personal identity? Check all that apply to you:



Value	Percent	Responses
Female	82.4%	11,314
Male	14.7%	2,024
Non-binary	0.2%	28
Lesbian	0.9%	123
Gay	0.9%	117
Queer	1.4%	187
Transgender	0.1%	9
Two-Spirit	0.1%	15
Straight	33.2%	4,560
First Nation	0.9%	122
Métis	2.3%	319
Inuit	0.0%	4
Black	0.9%	122
Racialized	2.4%	332
White	62.5%	8,577
Disabled	1.1%	152
Prefer not to disclose	4.8%	660

Are you interested in participating in a 20 minute follow-up interview?

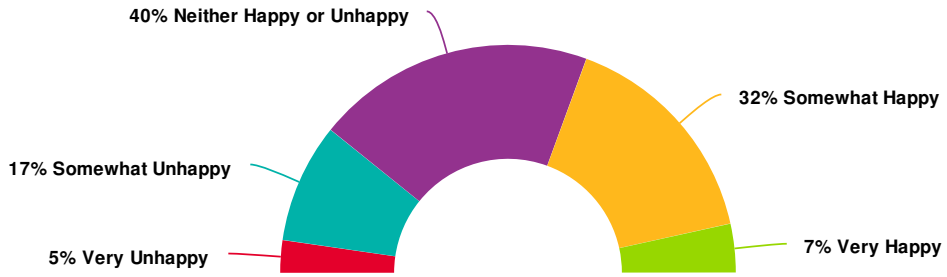


Value	Percent	Responses
Yes	16.7%	2,292
No	83.3%	11,458

Totals: 13,750

TEACHERS RESPONDING TO CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) — PANDEMIC RESEARCH STUDY, JUNE 2020 COMPARISON

How are you feeling today?



Value	Percent	Responses
Very Unhappy	4.6%	621
Somewhat Unhappy	17.0%	2,317
Neither Happy or Unhappy	39.6%	5,392
Somewhat Happy	31.9%	4,341
Very Happy	6.9%	945

Totals: 13,616

How often are you able to achieve the following within your daily schedule?

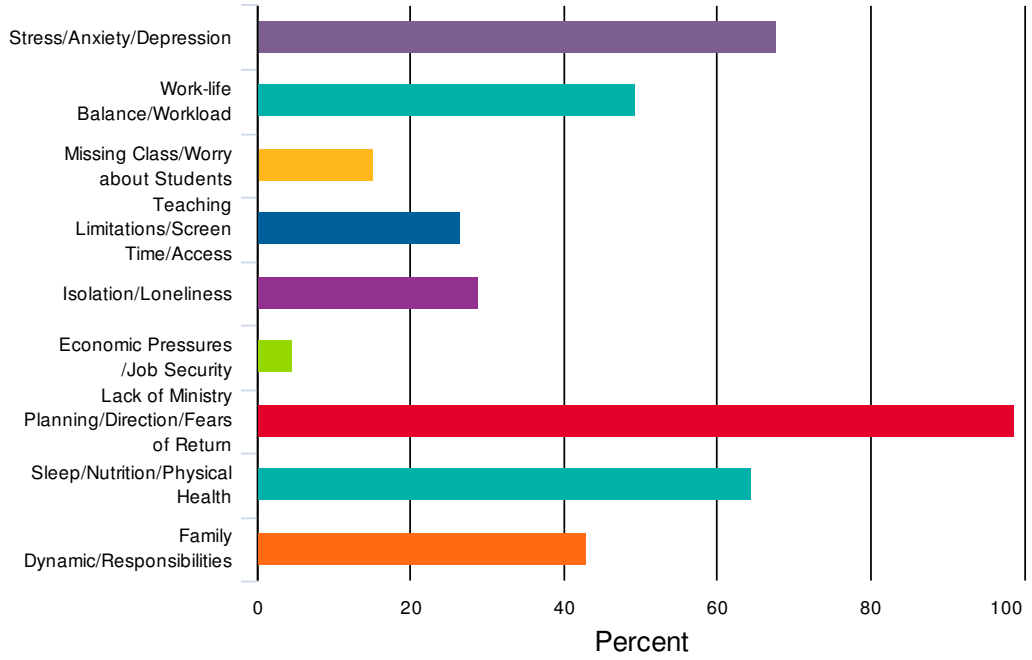
	Never	Infrequently	Sometimes	Frequently	Always	Responses
Sleep. I am getting sufficient sleep (quality and quantity) every night. Count Row %	613 3.5%	3,607 20.7%	6,264 36.0%	5,584 32.1%	1,337 7.7%	17,405
Nutrition. I am eating regularly to improve concentration and performance. Count Row %	148 0.9%	1,797 10.3%	4,711 27.1%	7,554 43.4%	3,176 18.3%	17,386
Hydration. I am drinking water while working and staying hydrated throughout the day. Count Row %	303 1.7%	2,683 15.4%	5,067 29.1%	6,178 35.5%	3,154 18.1%	17,385
Movement. I am setting aside time throughout my day - at regular intervals - to be physically active. Count Row %	985 5.7%	4,620 26.6%	5,432 31.3%	4,191 24.1%	2,149 12.4%	17,377

Prioritization. I am able to keep up with my tasks/electronic communication and can determine which tasks are most pressing. Count Row %	303 1.7%	1,741 10.0%	5,858 33.7%	7,179 41.3%	2,303 13.2%	17,384
Totals Total Responses						17,405

Do you have any concerns or questions about your mental health and/or well-being in relation to the current coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic?

Value	Percent	Responses
Yes	43.8%	6,588
No	56.2%	8,470
		Totals: 15,058

What are your top two concerns or questions about your mental health and well-being in relation to the current coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic? – Text Analysis



Value	Percent	Responses
Stress/Anxiety/Depression	67.7%	369
Work-life Balance/Workload	49.5%	270
Missing Class/Worry about Students	15.2%	83
Teaching Limitations/Screen Time/Access	26.6%	145
Isolation/Loneliness	28.8%	157
Economic Pressures /Job Security	4.6%	25
Lack of Ministry Planning/Direction/Fears of Return	98.9%	539
Sleep/Nutrition/Physical Health	64.6%	352
Family Dynamic/Responsibilities	43.1%	235

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