

A CAREER IN EDUCATION

Resolving the recruitment and retention crisis throughout the teaching profession

FEBRUARY 2020



Contents

Introduction	1
Executive summary	2
Recommendations	4
Main findings	6
References	13

About NAHT

We represent more than 30,500 school leaders in early years, primary, secondary and special schools, making us the largest association for school leaders in the UK. With school leaders in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, we use our voice at the highest levels of government to influence policy for the benefit of leaders and learners everywhere. Our NAHT Edge membership supports, develops and represents middle leaders in schools.

Decisive action is urgently needed if we are to have sufficient school leaders for the future. A step-change is needed that establishes teaching as a sustainable professional career choice, positioning it alongside other comparable occupations such as law, medicine and accountancy.

Introduction

Teaching's supply crisis: the new normal

In this, our sixth annual report charting school leaders' experiences of the recruitment and retention crisis, we set out the findings of our latest member survey. We see no signs of overall improvement in the supply of teachers and school leaders. The Department for Education (DfE) has missed its target for initial teacher training recruitment in secondary subjects for the seventh consecutive year (DfE, 2019). The primary recruitment target was also missed, falling by seven percentage points in a single year.

None of this is new. Our ground-breaking Leaky Pipeline report provided a comprehensive analysis of the crisis (NAHT, 2017). Since 2010, the government has spent over £1 billion on bursaries with little perceptible impact, but policy-makers have failed to recognise the importance of the unfolding calamity in leadership supply and its close connection to teacher retention.

Our survey evidence shines a light on the scale of the crisis in leadership supply. We identify the key aspects that lead many to view leadership as a deeply unattractive career proposition and set out recommendations that have significance for the supply of leaders and teachers at all stages of their professional careers.

Executive summary

1. Leadership supply: an unaddressed crisis

The school leadership pipeline is broken, and no repairs are planned.

- School leaders have borne the brunt of the challenges of the last decade, delivering an unprecedented change agenda that encompassed every phase and every subject of compulsory education.
- To move the nation's schools from good to great requires experienced, skilled professionals, and leaders. Like law or medicine, a career in teaching should be decades-long, but far too few teachers stay more than a few years, and even fewer are willing to take on leadership roles. Our survey results show that leadership is critically threatened at all levels.

2. Hit or miss accountability: undermining leadership supply

High-stakes accountability has exacerbated the crisis in leadership supply.

- High-stakes inspection drives a compliance-based culture forcing leaders to demonstrate adherence to the inspectorate's constantly changing priorities. This undermines leaders' professional agency, impedes sustainable improvement and drives crushing workload.
- Inconsistent and impressionistic inspection practice means many are unwilling to expose their career to the football manager mentality that has grown unchecked over recent years. The profession cannot afford to lose so many experienced leaders as a result of a two-day snapshot inspection of questionable reliability. It's small wonder that few are prepared to step up to lead schools in challenging circumstances when a hit or miss inspection result can be career-ending.

3. Leadership support: sink or swim

New school leaders are pitched into their roles in a fragmented and competitive environment with little effective mentoring or support to sustain them in the challenging early years of leadership.

- The DfE's data (DfE 2018) shows wastage rates are rising for assistants, deputies and heads within their first three years in the post. All too often those willing and able to step up to leadership are left to sink or swim. This vicariously wasteful approach to leadership must change.
- The available evidence suggests that new entrants and early career teachers are clear-eyed about the pay, progression and professional support they expect. A system that creates unsustainable pressure on new leaders, and allows many to flounder, acts as a powerful disincentive to those considering making a long-term career commitment to the profession.

To move the nation's schools from good to great requires experienced, skilled professionals, and leaders

4. Pay matters: remuneration must reflect responsibility

For the last decade, the pay of school leaders has fallen in real terms every year. The adoption of 'targeted' pay increases in favour of classroom teachers has compounded this, which has, in turn, reduced the differential for leadership responsibility and negatively impacted leadership supply. It's unsurprising, then, that school leaders have become increasingly demoralised.

- If the minimum salary on the leadership pay range had been uprated against retail price index (RPI) inflation since 2010, a school leader on the lowest leadership point in 2018 would have earned £49,371 rather than £39,965 (the minimum leadership pay range salary in 2018). This represents tens of thousands of pounds of lost income over the period. Those individual losses increase to potentially hundreds of thousands of pounds if pension accruals are taken into account over time.
- The differential between the minimum salary for the leadership pay range and the maximum salary for the main pay range (excluding London) has fallen from 18.7% per cent in 2014 to 14.2% in 2018. In cash terms, this equates to a fall in the differential for the lowest school leadership role (from £6,028 to £4,957 in cash terms) in just four years. The proposal to increase starting salaries, but 'flatten' pay structures will simply serve to further erode the pay differential for leadership.

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Recommendations

Action is urgently needed to retain existing leaders and to create an attractive career proposition for the leaders of tomorrow.

Professionals expect agency and independence, career flexibility and a healthy work-life balance. To deliver this, it is necessary to end high-stakes inspection which does more harm than good: it limits ambition, does little to raise standards and drives excessive workload that undermines retention. In addition, the profession must be underpinned by competitive pay, career-supporting pay progression and appropriate differentials that reward responsibility.

NAHT believes the following steps represent the minimum starting point.

Reform inspection

- Refocus inspection to support struggling schools through the delivery of expert diagnostic support, in line with the recommendations of NAHT's Accountability Commission (NAHT, 2018). Establish light-touch inspection for all other schools.
- Deliver a managed transition to a lateral accountability system, drawing inspiration from high-performing international comparators, underpinned by a rigorous and publicly trusted approach to peer review.

Support leaders

- Extend the principles of the early career framework model to provide funded support and mentoring for new leaders, beginning with head teachers.
- Introduce safeguards to protect leaders and teachers from verbal, physical and online attacks, bullying and aggression.

Make teaching careers sustainable

- Increase investment to tackle workload by protecting leadership time, reduce teachers' contact time and fund the removal of barriers to the delivery of flexible working patterns in education.
- Co-design with the profession a range of intersecting leadership and non-leadership pathways, allowing individuals to determine and shape their career in accordance with changing life circumstances.
- Create new opportunities for late-career leaders and teachers to harness and retain their experience within the profession.
- Establish and embed regular funded opportunities for experienced teachers and leaders to update their knowledge and skills; and engage in funded collaboration, job shadowing, temporary work placements and sabbaticals.

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Pay and reward

Immediate steps:

- Restore the real-terms losses to salaries since 2010 to reverse a decade of real-terms pay cuts.
- Restore the losses to leadership pay caused by the targeted pay rises of 2017/18 and 2018/19 to reinstate the differentials for leadership responsibility.
- Reintroduce national pay scales¹

In the short to medium term, reform the pay and conditions of leaders and teachers to:

- include and codify the responsibilities and pay ranges for CEOs, executive head teachers and heads of school (or similar), creating a predictable, progressive and transparent pay model for the profession.
- align school business leader roles to the leadership pay range and a revised school teachers' pay and conditions document (STPCD).
- identify and specify a range of key worker benefits to offset barriers to the profession such as high accommodation and travel costs to reflect regional and local pressures.
- restore 'pay portability' to remove barriers to mobility and promotion and replace the discredited approach to performance-related pay progression.

Professionals expect agency and independence, career flexibility and a healthy work-life balance

¹ Unions have recalculated pay scales annually since their formal abolition. They are used by the majority of schools to inform their pay policies

Main findings

The leadership supply pipeline

NAHT's research shows that the leadership pipeline is fractured at all stages.

We conducted a small-scale survey² of a group of career-changing teacher trainees. At this point in their fledgling careers, the findings are encouraging - almost two-thirds (62%) indicated that they aspired to headship or another system leadership role.

However, the reality of life working within the teaching profession quickly tarnishes these aspirations. About Time, NAHT's recently-published report on the views of our middle leader members revealed that less than half (49%) of middle leaders surveyed said they aspired to headship or system leadership (NAHT, 2019). Of those not wishing to step-up, almost one in seven (13%) reported this was because leadership pay is insufficient.

While a complex range of factors informs serving teachers' and leaders' career decisions, it would be foolish to discount pay as a factor. Although middle leaders responding to our survey particularly cite the lack of work-life balance (79%) and the impact of accountability pressures (69%) as factors that put them off pursuing headship as a career goal, it is clear that narrowing salary differentials have reduced the incentive for teachers to consider progression into leadership roles of all types - we explore this further below.

Our evidence shows that aspiration to headship continues to decline as teachers become senior leaders. NAHT's 2016 Balancing Act reported on the experience of deputy and assistant heads, and vice principals and found that only about a third (36%) of these postholders aspired to headship, while a larger proportion (40%) said they definitely did not (NAHT, 2016, p.6 & p.16).

Clearly, there is a risk that those not seeking further career development are likely to look beyond the profession for new challenges and career advancement, joining the 38% of teachers overall that leave the profession within ten years of qualification (DfE, 2019, table 8).

In this year's survey, we asked school leaders a number of longitudinal questions (allowing us to track and compare their responses against previous reports³), alongside a number of new questions designed to provide further evidence for this remit.

Once again, the survey paints a depressingly familiar picture, with established trends continuing to worsen. This year almost three-quarters (73%) of the 1,238 respondents told us they were aware of at least one member of staff leaving the profession for reasons other than retirement - a substantial increase on the two-thirds of respondents who told us this in 2018 (67%) and 2017 (66%). It's worth noting that 59% of respondents reported receiving no induction training in their first role as a senior leader, underlining the pressing need to provide funded **support and mentoring for new leaders**.

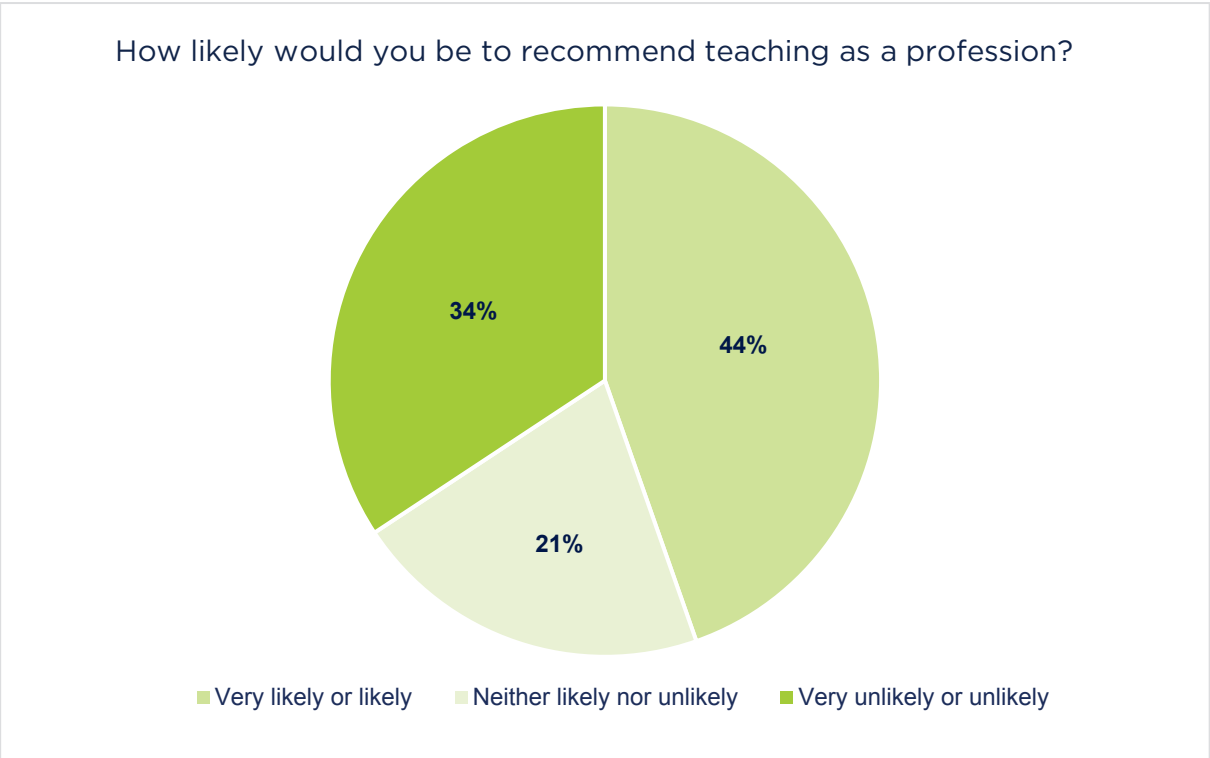
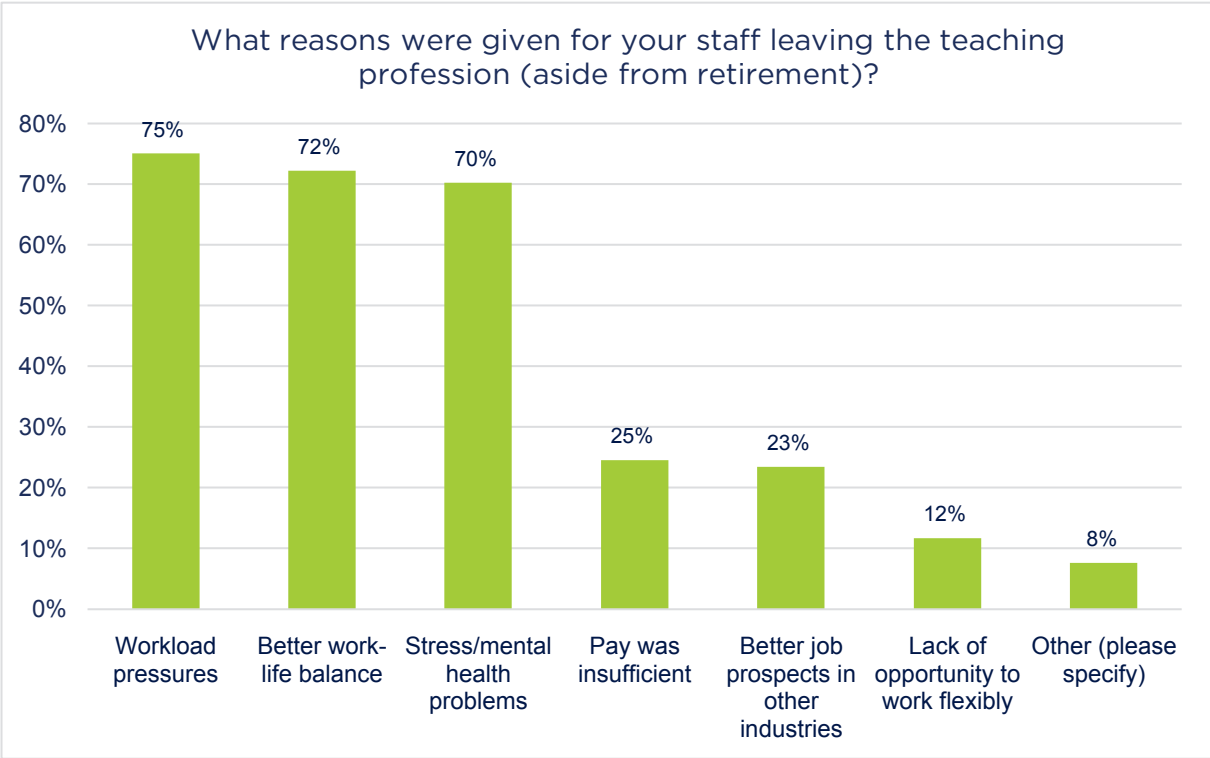
The **key drivers** cited by respondents remain consistent with previous findings: three-quarters (75%) identified workload pressures; with similar proportions pointing to the need for a better work-life balance (72%) and a reduction in stress (70%). Insufficiency of pay also remains a key issue cited by an average of a quarter of respondents over the last three years.⁴

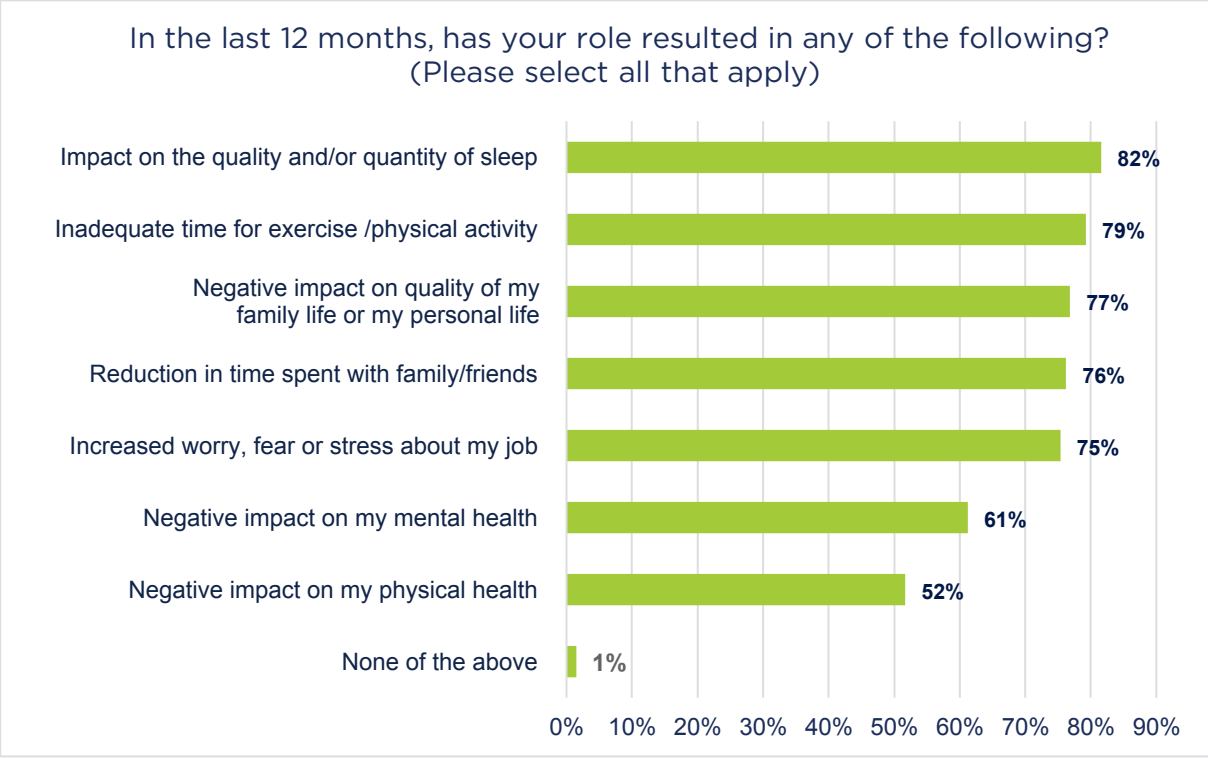
For the first time, we asked school leaders how likely they would be to **recommend teaching as a profession**. Shockingly, over a third (34%) of the professionals that lead our schools said they would be unlikely or very unlikely to recommend teaching, and over one in five (21%) were equivocal, neither likely or unlikely to make a recommendation.

² NAHT surveyed 40 trainees following a range of courses through CESET.

³ Recruitment and Retention Report 2018; The Leaky Pipeline - recruitment and retention 2017; NAHT recruitment survey 2016; The NAHT school recruitment survey 2015; NAHT teacher recruitment survey September 2014.

⁴ 25% in 2019, 28% in 2018 and 21% in 2017





School leaders must cope with multiple pressures and work longer hours than their overburdened staff. Yet there is no focus at a departmental level on **reducing leaders' workload or addressing their well-being**. Our findings provide a wake-up call for policy-makers seeking to construct a positive proposition for teaching as a career.

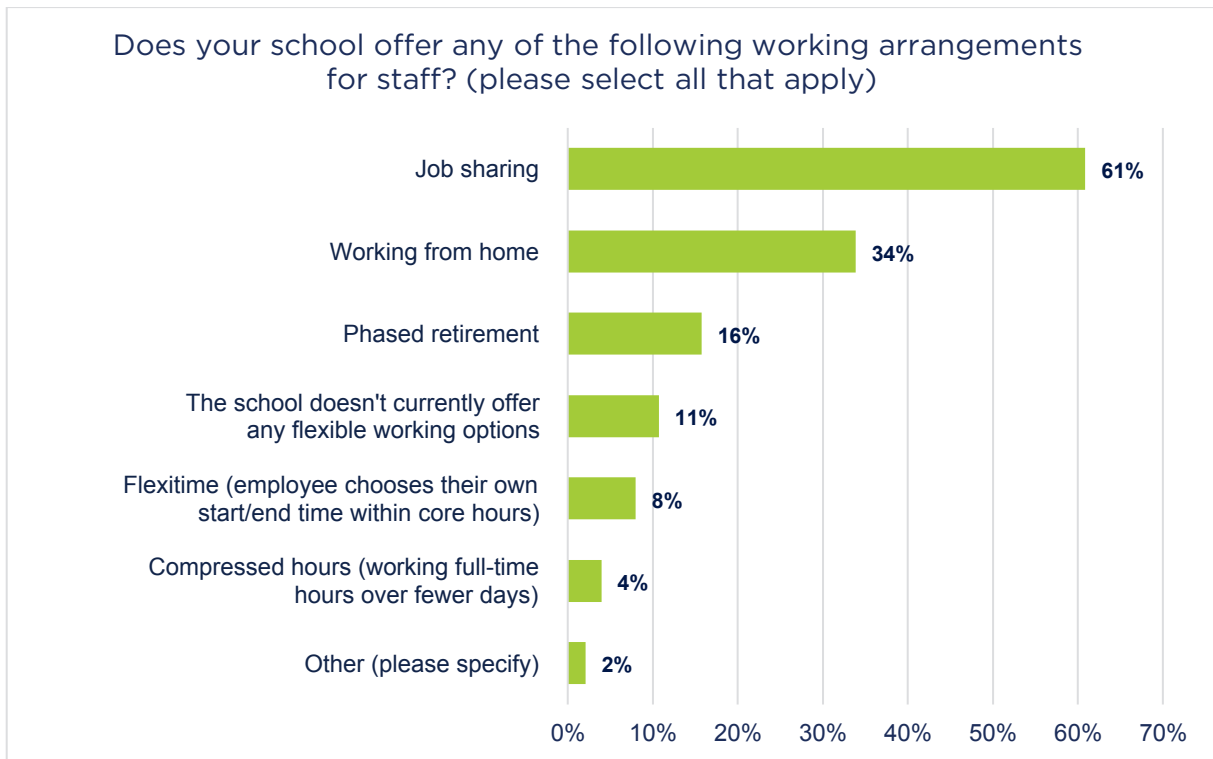
Over four-fifths (82%) of respondents reported that in the last twelve months their role has impacted negatively on the quality or quantity of their sleep, while 79% said their role meant they had inadequate time for exercise. Over three-quarters of respondents told us that in the last year their role had: a negative impact on their family or personal life yet (77%); reduced time spent with family or friends (75%); or led to an increase in work-related worry, fear or stress (75%).

Approaching two-thirds (61%) of respondents stated that their role had a negative impact on their mental health and over half (52%) said that their physical health had been affected.

System change is required if teaching is to be positioned as an **attractive, decades-long professional career choice**.

Respondents report that part-time working and job sharing are commonplace for school staff, with 78% and 61% respectively saying their school operates these arrangements. A third (34%) of respondents said that their school had arrangements in place for working at home, although flexi-time (8%) and compressed hours (4%) remain harder to deliver. Just 10% of members said that their school had no flexible working arrangements.

There is no focus at a departmental level on reducing leaders' workload or addressing their well-being



However, leaders reported a range of **barriers to flexibility** in arrangements for themselves, including the pressure of accountability (61%) and leadership capacity (46%) which perhaps explains the conclusion by 42% of leaders that flexible working is incompatible with a school leadership role.

We also asked members to record their own experiences of recruiting teachers and school leaders. Previous surveys have recorded members' concerns about the **quality of applicants**, and the ability to assemble a quality field from which to recruit, over successive submissions. Our 2018 recruitment and retention survey reported that approaching two-thirds (61%) of members' most commonly reported reason for struggling or failing to recruit to a teaching role was related to the quality of the available candidates in their area - a rise from 16% on 2014 (45%).

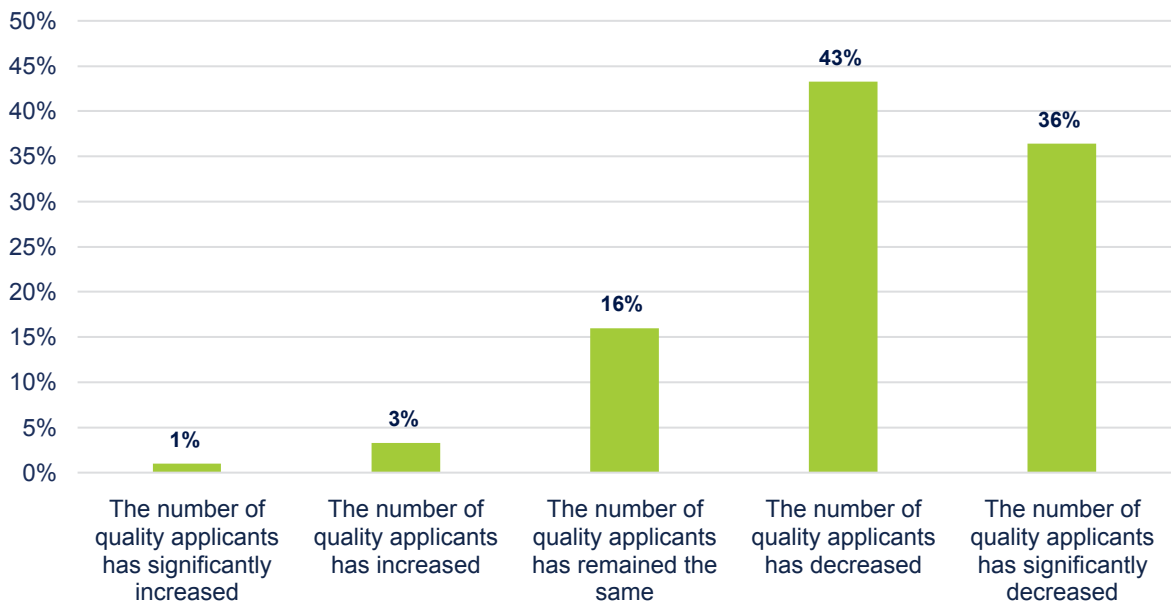
This year we asked to what extent, if any, there has been a change in the number of quality

Leaders reported a range of barriers to flexibility in working arrangements, including pressure of accountability and leadership capacity

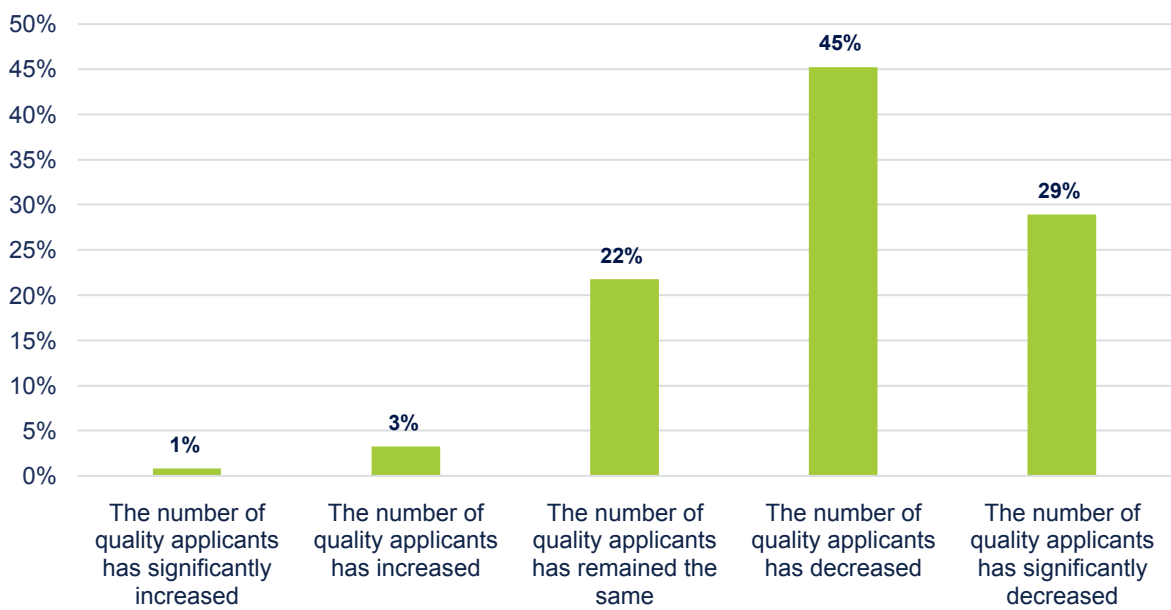
applicants for classroom teaching roles over the last three years - 80% of respondents stated that the number of quality applicants had decreased or significantly decreased over this period.

We also asked about changes in the number of quality applicants for leadership roles over the last three years. Nearly three quarters (74%) of respondents stated that the number of quality applicants had decreased or significantly decreased over the last few years.

To what extent, if any, has there been a change in the number of quality applicants applying for **classroom teaching roles** in the last three years?



To what extent, if any, has there been a change in the number of quality applicants applying for **leadership roles** in the last three years?

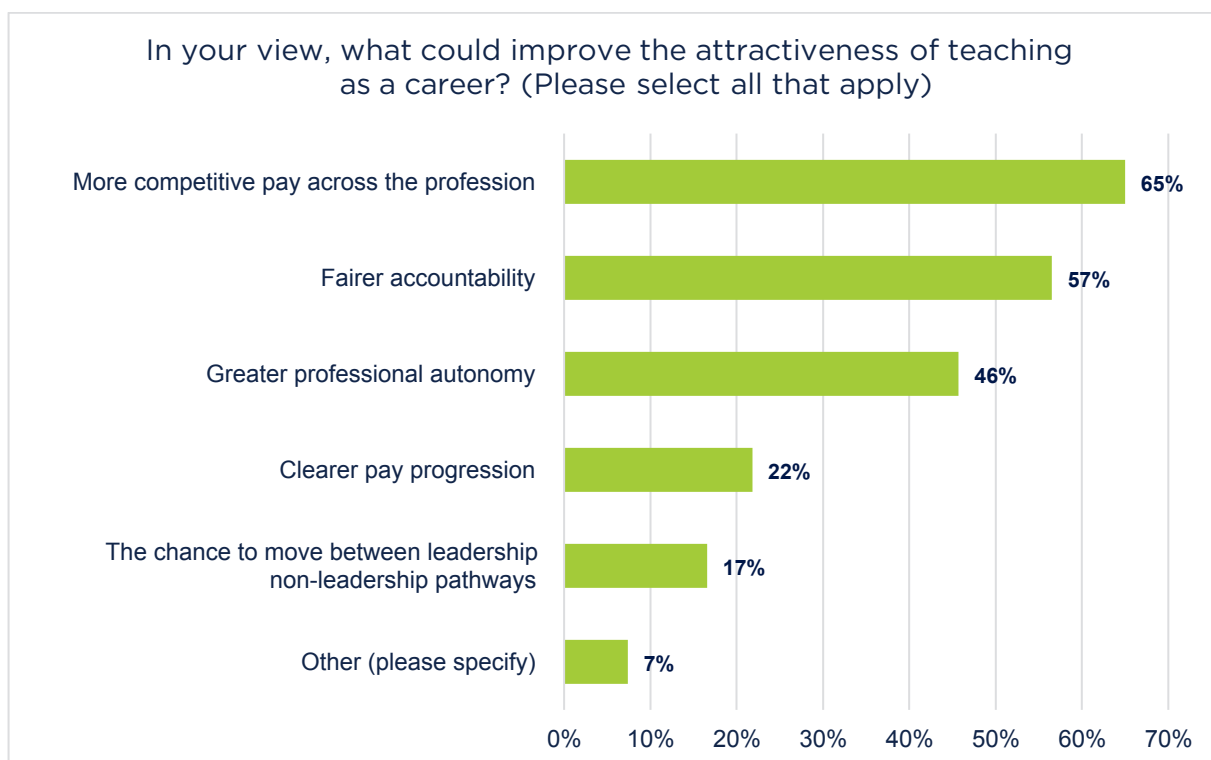


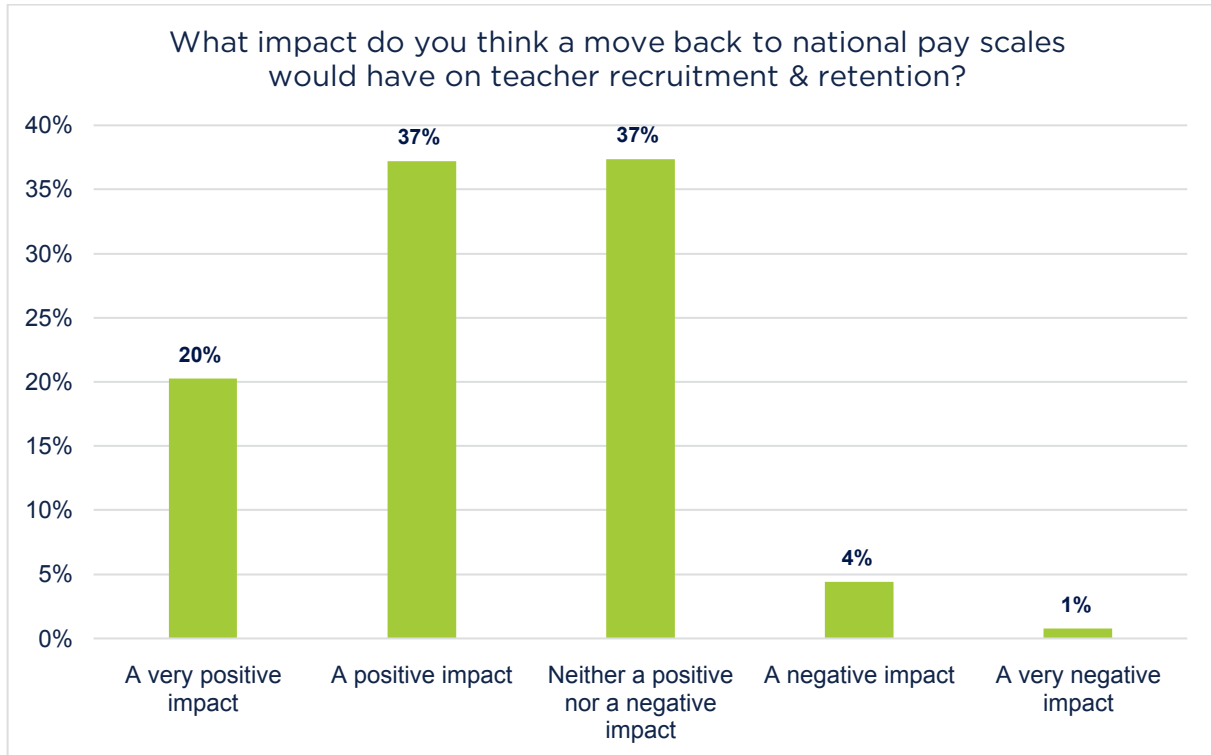
When asked what could be done to improve the attractiveness of teaching as a profession, almost two-thirds (65%) of respondents chose **'more competitive pay across the profession'**, the second most popular response behind the closely related option of 'better professional recognition' (69%).

This speaks powerfully to the need to establish teaching as a professional occupation and to develop pay and progression routes that are commensurate with an individual's investment in a decades-long career as an education professional. To retain teachers and school leaders it is essential to deliver agency and independence, underpinned by a systematic, transparent approach to remuneration and reward in order that new entrants and existing staff can effectively plan their future careers.

Such a structure must contribute to a compelling and sustainable proposition for teaching as an attractive career choice, that is underpinned by clear, transparent national pay scales and a range of incentives to offset high living costs.

When asked what could be done to improve the attractiveness of teaching, almost two-thirds of respondents chose 'more competitive pay across the profession'





Our survey shows strong support among school leaders for a **return to national pay scales**, with more than half (57%) of respondents indicating that they believe this would have a positive or very positive impact on recruitment and retention. The very small minority (5%) who felt that such a move would have a negative impact implies that the so-called ‘pay freedoms’ introduced in 2013 have failed to deliver the promised gains.

“Our survey shows strong support among school leaders for a return to national pay scales”

Our evidence indicates that the **impact of pay on recruitment and retention** is increasing. The number of respondents identifying pay as a reason that staff give for leaving the teaching profession has risen from about one in five (21%) in our 2017 Recruitment and Retention Survey to an average of one in four respondents over the last three years.

Once again, one of the most popular choices when asked what would make the greatest contribution to easing the recruitment and retention crisis remains **a real-terms improvement in pay and conditions**. This underlines NAHT’s contention that the DfE’s prevalent, but rarely articulated, assumption that a career in teaching can be sustained mainly by an appeal to the vocational and moral purpose of teachers and leaders in lieu of the adoption of a proper pay structure, is a catastrophic miscalculation.

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