Teacher preferences and job satisfaction in South Africa

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Executive summary

The working conditions of teachers in different types of schools in South Africa differ substantially across the country. As a result, the upcoming wave of teacher retirements will not affect all schools equally. This report presents the findings of an online teacher survey, completed by roughly 1,500 respondents, and follow-up telephonic interviews with 80 teachers, conducted to investigate job satisfaction and the preferences of teachers. This was done with the view to informing policy aimed at improving the working conditions of teachers as well as attracting teachers to hard-to-staff schools. This section presents a summary of the main results.

Teacher attrition

Results from the online survey reveal that **half of in-service teachers want to leave the profession in the next 10 years**. While it is unlikely that so many teachers will leave the profession, given job market constraints (among other factors), this finding does point to high levels of dissatisfaction among teachers in South Africa. Being overworked was listed as the main reason for wanting to leave the profession, pointing to the high work load (including a high administrative burden) experienced by teachers.

50% of in-service teachers want to leave the profession in the next 10 years

Teacher job satisfaction

We find only small differences in the levels of job satisfaction reported by teachers across different types of schools. This is surprising, as one would expect teachers working in poorly resourced schools to report lower levels of job satisfaction, considering the resource constraints

and challenges such as learner poverty that they face. The follow-up interviews revealed that part of the reason for this may be that **teachers in poorly resourced schools experience job satisfaction through the positive role that they play in the lives of disadvantaged children**, which may help to offset frustrations caused by limited resources.

Teacher stress

Interestingly, teachers in mid-fee and high-fee schools reported feeling more stressed than those in no-fee and low-fee schools. The follow-up interviews revealed that part of the reason for this could be that teachers in better-resourced schools experience more pressure from their principals and parents to deliver excellent results**. The main contributing factor to teacher stress was having too much administrative work**, with 70% of surveyed teachers reporting that this was the largest source of stress.

70%
of surveyed teachers reported administrative work as their main source of stress

Geographic preferences

Surveyed teachers showed a clear preference for working in the Western Cape and, to a lesser extent, Gauteng. This suggests that these two provinces will not struggle to recruit teachers from other provinces, and so are unlikely to experience teacher shortages in the coming years. Survey responses also reveal that teachers have a clear preference for working in urban areas, with **40% of teachers indicating that nothing would convince them to work in a rural area.** This is worrying since it suggests that rural schools are likely to experience worse teacher shortages than those in urban areas.

40%
of teachers indicating that nothing would convince them to work in a rural area
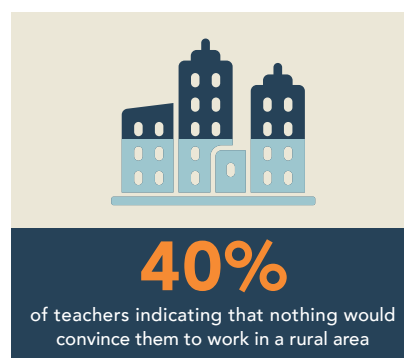
Teacher preparedness

Although teachers generally reported that their studies prepared them well for the teaching profession, interesting differences in teachers' sense of preparedness emerged across teachers working in different types of schools. **Teachers in mid-fee and high-fee schools reported feeling less prepared for the profession than teachers in no-fee and low-fee schools**. Again, this could point to higher expectations in better-resourced schools, which may be particularly difficult for novice teachers to adapt to.

The most common reason for feeling underprepared was **not feeling prepared for teaching learners who are unable to keep up with the curriculum**. Low reading ability, even in higher grades, was often mentioned in the interviews. This shows how the low literacy levels in the country affect teachers' ability to cover the curriculum in the classroom. Compulsory grade progression, large class sizes, and not knowing how to implement differentiated assessment and teaching were mentioned as barriers to addressing learning shortfalls.

Bursary recipients

Engagements with provincial education officials revealed the perception among many officials that teachers who had received bursaries to study education were less motivated, perhaps due to the perception that these teachers had studied teaching only to receive bursaries. **The survey results provide no evidence to support this perception**, with the same proportions of bursary recipients versus non-recipients reporting that teaching was their first-choice career and that they intended to remain in teaching.

Predicting the probability that teachers want to leave the profession

Given the large proportion of teachers who indicated a desire to leave the profession, we investigated the factors that were associated with this desire using OLS regression analysis. Results show that **both teacher job satisfaction and stress emerge as significant predictors of the probability that a respondent indicated wanting to leave the profession**. Controlling for a number of covariates, there were no differences between teachers in no-fee versus mid-fee and high-fee schools in the probability that they indicated wanting to leave the profession.

Additional insights from teacher interviews

In addition to low overall achievement levels and learning backlogs, teachers mentioned **learner poverty and socio-emotional and behavioural problems** as significant challenges that affected both their levels of stress and their ability to deliver the curriculum effectively. Many interviewed teachers working in no-fee and low-fee schools cited the reality of the home conditions of many learners as having a significant impact on their mental health, often leading to a sense of overwhelm. Interviewed teachers also reported having to take on the role of **social workers and counsellors** for learners who faced significant challenges at home. Furthermore, ill-discipline, especially among older learners, was often mentioned as a significant factor that detracted from teaching time.

Policy implications

The findings presented in this report have a number of implications for policy. These are outlined below.

1. Consider incentives to move to rural schools.

71% of teachers rated rural areas as their least preferred type of area, suggesting that incentives may have to be introduced if we are to ensure that rural schools are able to fill their teaching posts. While financial incentives were rated as the top incentive that would draw teachers to rural areas, this is unlikely to be reintroduced as a policy option given that financial incentives for rural teachers have recently been discontinued. Results from the survey reveal that other incentives that would draw teachers to rural areas include subsidised accommodation, teaching assistants,

school fee subsidies for their children, and community orientation programmes. There is much scope for government to consider some of these incentives as options for attracting teachers to rural schools.

2. Lessen the administrative burden faced by teachers.

Results from both the survey and interviews reveal that administrative duties form a large part of teachers' workload and contributes to their sense of overwhelm. From a policy perspective, there is a clear need to review the administrative responsibilities of teachers with the view to reducing these to only those that are crucial for effective school management. Expanding the national teaching assistant programme may also be an effective policy solution for lessening teachers' administrative burden, as teaching assistants could take on some of the administrative tasks currently completed by teachers.

3. Provide mental health support for both teachers and learners.

Evidence of teachers having to extend beyond their role as educators and acting as caregivers, social workers and counsellors suggests that there is a great need for these professionals among learners, especially those from socio-economically disadvantaged homes. Providing this type of support to teachers is also crucial, given the demands placed on them by the profession.

4. Train teachers in practical remedial teaching strategies.

Addressing learning backlogs that accumulate as learners move through school without mastering the curriculum emerged as a challenge faced by many teachers. Low reading ability was often mentioned as a particular challenge. In addition to improving the teaching of reading in the Foundation Phase, there is therefore a clear need to equip teachers with strategies for supporting learners with major learning backlogs.

5. Include classroom management strategies in ITE programmes.

It is clear from the interviews that dealing with behavioural problems in the classroom significantly detracts from teaching time. This is especially the case in large classes. A possible response to this would be to include training in classroom management in ITE programmes.

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1. Introduction

The South African education system is characterised by marked inequalities in the conditions of schools. While the wealthiest 15 percent of schools (Quintile 5 schools) are well-equipped and generally have strong leadership and management practices, no-fee schools (Quintile 1-3 schools) generally have poor infrastructure, inadequate learning and teaching support materials (LTSM), and lack effective leadership and management (Van der Berg et al, 2016). Quintile 1-3 schools are expected to experience the most severe teacher shortages, given the challenges in attracting teachers to these schools. In addition, spatial inequality means that certain provinces are likely to be more attractive to teachers than others. For example, provinces such as the Western Cape and Gauteng are unlikely to face teacher shortages, since the higher levels of economic development in these provinces mean it will not be difficult to attract both newly qualified and in-service teachers to these provinces. More rural provinces such as Limpopo and the Eastern Cape, by contrast, are expected to experience more pronounced teacher shortages, as it is difficult to attract graduates to rural areas.

Given this scenario, it is important to investigate the experiences of teachers working in different types of schools and geographic areas in South Africa, with a view to understanding what makes certain schools and areas more desirable to teach in. To do so, we conducted an exploratory mixed-methods study of South African teachers' preferences and job satisfaction. In the quantitative part of the study, a nationwide survey of 1,513 teachers was conducted with the goal of gaining a broad understanding of patterns in teacher motivation and job satisfaction across all nine provinces. Particular attention is paid to how these patterns differ across schools charging different fees[1] and schools in urban versus rural areas. We also consider whether demographic characteristics of teachers (chiefly gender and age) are predictive of patterns in teacher preferences and job satisfaction. To further interrogate these results, follow-up telephonic interviews were conducted with 80 teachers.

This report presents the results of the teacher survey and interviews. This work is a follow-up of a report by Kruger, Hompashe and Swelindawo (2024), also produced as part of the Teacher Demographic Dividend (TDD) project, that investigates teacher motivation and working conditions. We investigate the extent to which their findings, based on interviews with 27 teachers and nine principals in three provinces (Eastern Cape, Gauteng and Limpopo), reflect South African teachers' experiences in other provinces. In addition, whereas Kruger et al. interviewed only primary school teachers, we include survey responses and interviews from teachers in primary, combined and high schools. We also include the voices of teachers across schools charging very different levels of fees, whereas Kruger et al. focused only on no-fee and low-fee schools. This allows us to make useful comparisons in terms of teacher motivation and job satisfaction across different types of schools - one of the main goals of this report.

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1   While school quintiles are typically used to classify schools into wealth categories, we use school fees instead as there is evidence that the quintile designations are not always avvurate (Zoch, 2017), and teachers are expected to have better knowledge of the fees charged by their schools than the quintile designation of the school.

Ethical clearance to conduct the study was granted by Stellenbosch University's Research Ethics Council (REC). Permission to conduct the research was granted by the national Department of Basic Education (DBE) as well as by each of the nine provincial education department.

1.1. The need to understand teacher preferences and job satisfaction

It is important to understand teachers' preferences for working in different types of schools and geographic areas from a teacher supply perspective as well as an education quality perspective. In terms of teacher supply, planning for upcoming teacher shortages should take into account where and in which types of schools teachers are more likely to accept posts so that incentives can be designed to ensure that all schools are able to meet their staffing requirements. Matching teachers to schools according to their preferences is also important for retaining teachers in the profession. While pre-retirement teacher attrition in South Africa is considered low by international standards (Van der Berg, Gustafsson and Burger, 2020), teachers who leave the profession prematurely will exacerbate upcoming teacher shortages resulting from retirements. It is therefore important to investigate in-service teachers' preferences with the view to designing policy that will minimise pre-retirement teacher attrition. In terms of education quality, teachers who end up in schools that do not align with their preferences are expected to perform worse, thus impacting negatively on the quality of instruction delivered by teachers (Herzberg, 1959). Studying teacher job satisfaction is important for similar reasons. Dissatisfied teachers are more likely to leave the profession prematurely, and even if they stay, their job performance is likely to be impacted negatively.

Efforts have been made to understand teacher job satisfaction at a national level through South Africa's participation in the OECD's Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), conducted in 2018. Perhaps surprisingly, results from TALIS show that South African teachers experience relatively high job satisfaction, with 78% of teachers reporting that all in all, they are satisfied with their job, though this was lower than the OECD average of 90%. Our survey aimed to build on these findings by including questionnaire items from the TALIS survey to investigate the extent to which patterns of teacher job satisfaction have changed since 2018.

1.2. Sampling methodology

Schools were randomly selected for participation from the DBE's national list of schools. In each province, 300 public schools were randomly sampled to be provincially representative according to school quintile, school type (primary school/high school/combined) and district in that province. The online survey was sent to the principals of sampled schools via email by the Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) office in each province, with the request to distribute the survey to all teachers in their school. The EMIS office was selected since EMIS officials often communicate with schools electronically. Following distribution of the survey by email, schools were contacted by telephone by the research team to confirm that the principal had received the survey and sent it to their teachers. In cases where principals had not received the survey, the research team sent the survey to the principal via email. Survey participation was entirely voluntary, with a financial incentive of entering a lottery to win a R500 shopping voucher

for survey respondents and R1,000 voucher for interview respondents. It is thus to be expected that the teacher survey would not be representative of all teachers in public schools.

1.3. Sample

Characteristics of the sample of 1,513 survey respondents are summarised in Table 1. The majority (73%) of respondents are female, similar to the national picture where 70% of teachers are female (Wills & Böhmer, 2023). The age distribution of respondents also matches the national picture (Gustafsson, 2023). 63% of respondents are primary school teachers, 32% are high school teachers, and the remaining 5% teach in combined schools. It should be noted that teachers teaching in no-fee schools are underrepresented in the survey sample (44% of the sample versus 60% nationally). In terms of the type of areas respondents work in, the sample is spread relatively evenly across metropolitan areas, non-metro cities, small towns and villages. Respondents are also spread relatively evenly across provinces, with the exception of Mpumalanga and North West, where only 89 and 74 teachers responded.

Figure 1 shows how respondents are distributed across area types within provinces. It is important to note that the majority of respondents from the Eastern Cape work in metropolitan areas (54%) and only 8% work in rural areas. In this sense, respondents from the Eastern Cape are not representative of teachers in the Eastern Cape, since the majority of schools in this province are located in rural areas. Limpopo's respondents are much more spatially representative of schools in this province, with 87% of respondents working in rural schools. As expected, the majority of respondents from Gauteng (70%) work in metro areas. Respondents in the remaining provinces are distributed relatively evenly across metro areas, non-metro cities, small towns and rural areas/villages.

Table 1: Sample characteristics

Gender	Observations	Percentage
Female	1082	73%
Male	400	27%

Age	Observations	Percentage
20-29 years	267	18%
30-39 years	445	30%
40-49 years	237	16%
50-59 years	445	30%
60-69 years	89	6%

School type	Observations	Percentage
Primary school	934	63%
High school	474	32%
Combined school	74	5%

School fee status	Observations	Percentage
No-fee	652	44%
Low-fee (<R3000 p.a.)	237	16%
Mid-fee (R3000-R20 000 p.a.)	341	23%
High-fee (>R20 000 p.a.)	252	17%

Area type	Observations	Percentage
Metro area	445	30%
Non-metro city/large town	267	18%
Small town	400	27%
Village or rural area	371	25%

Province	Observations	Percentage
Eastern Cape	207	14%
Free State	193	13%
Gauteng	207	14%
KwaZulu-Natal	207	14%
Limpopo	148	10%
Mpumalanga	89	6%
North West	74	5%
Northern Cape	119	8%
Western Cape	237	16%

Notes: Sample size: 1,513

Figure 1: Distribution of respondents across area types within provinces

	Eastern Cape	Free State	Gauteng	KwaZulu-Natal	Limpopo	Mpumalanga	North West	Northern Cape	Western Cape	Total
Metro area	54%	23%	70%	26%	1%	1%	3%	0%	41%	31%
Non-metro city/large town	10%	24%	20%	20%	4%	20%	14%	21%	27%	18%
Small town	29%	47%	8%	19%	8%	36%	34%	53%	24%	27%
Village or rural area	8%	5%	3%	36%	87%	43%	49%	26%	8%	25%
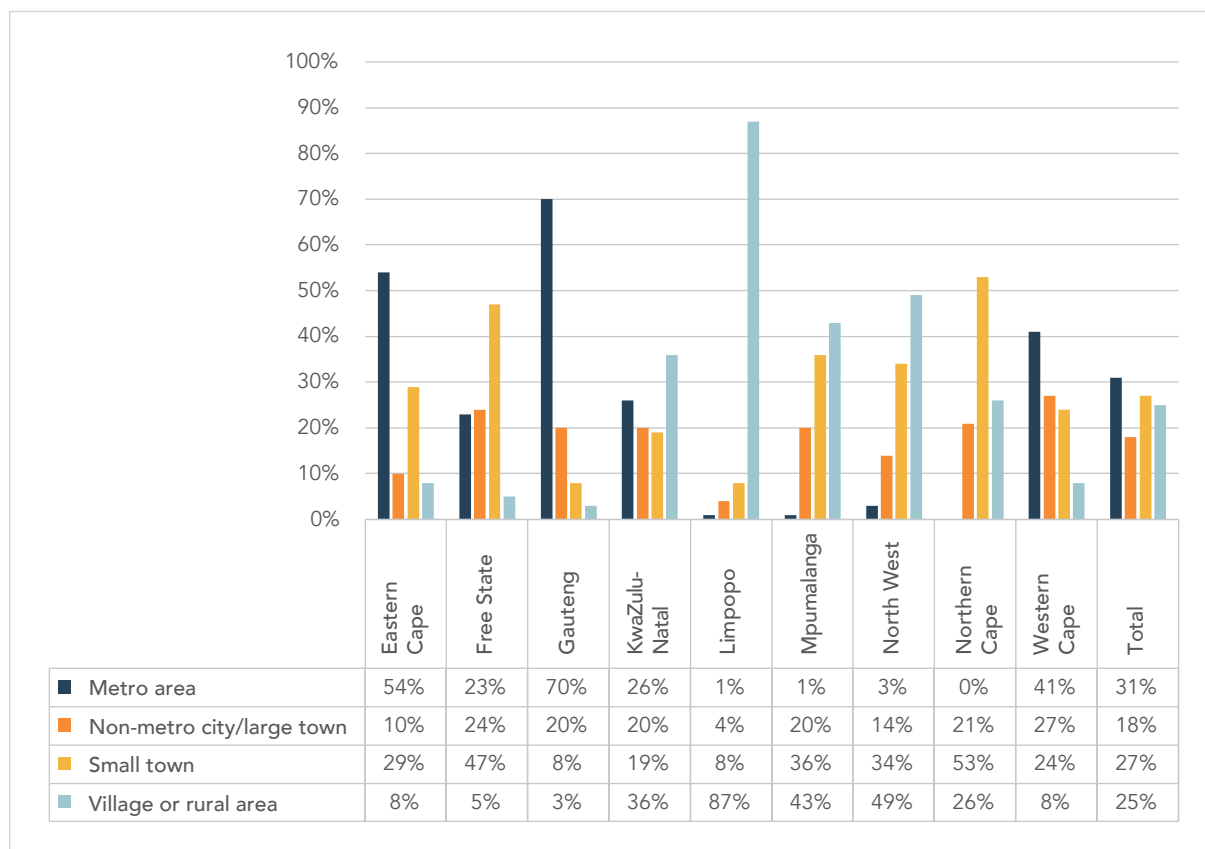
Notes: Sample size: 1,513

Figure 2 shows that respondents working in no-fee schools make up the largest category in all provinces except the Free State and Gauteng. The proportions in no-fee schools are particularly large in Limpopo, Mpumalanga and North West[2], with 90% of respondents from Limpopo working in no-fee schools.

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2   It should be kept in mind, however, that the number of respondents from Mpumalanga and North West are small.

Figure 2: Distribution of respondents across school fee status within provinces

	Eastern Cape	Free State	Gauteng	KwaZulu-Natal	Limpopo	Mpumalanga	North West	Northern Cape	Western Cape	Total
■ No-fee	38%	30%	15%	45%	90%	66%	81%	45%	36%	44%
■ Low-fee (<R3 000 p.a.)	15%	15%	18%	14%	9%	12%	14%	36%	13%	16%
■ Mid-fee (<R3 000–R20 000 p.a.)	27%	48%	33%	15%	0%	13%	5%	18%	24%	23%
■ High-fee (>R20 000 p.a.)	20%	7%	34%	25%	1%	8%	0%	0%	27%	17%
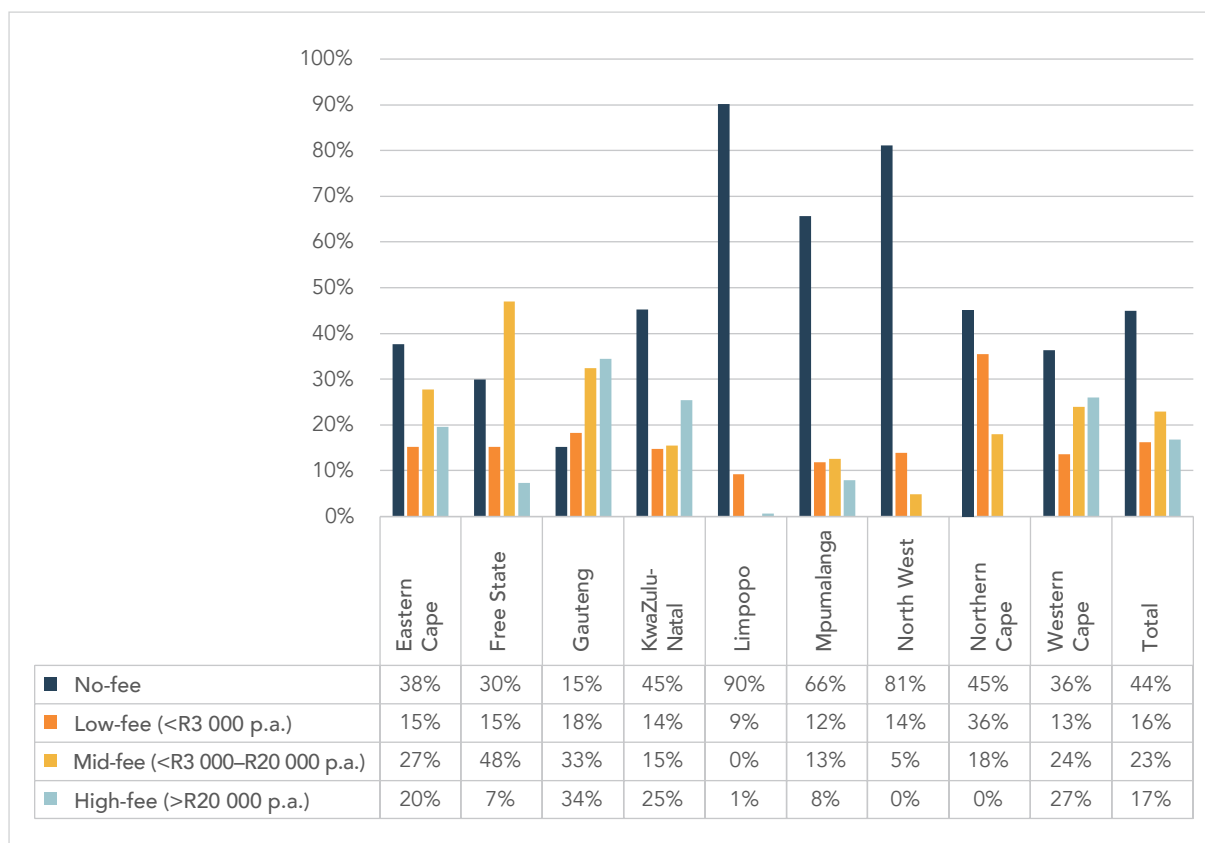
Notes: Sample size: 1,513

1.4. A note on overlap between school type and area type

Differences in teachers' job satisfaction and preferences across different types of geographic areas and different types of schools (chiefly schools charging different fees) are a major focus of this report, thus many of the results are presented by area type and school type. When interpreting these results, it is important to keep in mind that area type and school type often overlap, as can be seen in Table 2, with 93% of respondents teaching in rural areas also teaching in no-fee schools. Therefore, when considering schools in rural areas, one is largely referring to no-fee schools. Conversely, none of the surveyed respondents working in rural areas were teaching in high-fee schools (charging more than R20,000 per annum), while roughly a third (35%) of respondents in metro areas are teaching in high-fee schools. Similar results are observable for mid-fee schools (schools charging more than R3,000 but less than R20 000 per annum). Because of this overlap, similar patterns across type of geographic area and school type are observed throughout this report.

Table 2: Respondents' school type by type of geographic area

	Metro area	Non-metro city/large town	Small town	Village or rural area	Total
No-fee	21%	21%	42%	93%	44%
Low-fee	16%	15%	24%	7%	16%
Mid-fee	28%	37%	28%	1%	23%
High-fee	35%	26%	6%	0%	17%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Notes: Sample: Metro 457; Large town 271; Small town 396; Village or rural area 366; Total 1490. No-fee schools: R0 p.a.; Low-fee: R1-R3,000 p.a.; Mid-fee: R3,000-R20,000 p.a.; High-fee: >R20,000 p.a.

1.5. A note on response rates

It should be noted that not all respondents answered all the survey questions. To avoid the data loss that would result from dropping respondents who did not answer all questions, a decision was made to include all survey respondents teaching in public schools in the analysis. We report the number of responses to each question in the notes below tables and figures. There were also some survey items that were only asked based on respondents' answers to the previous question. This is indicated wherever these results are discussed, and careful attention should be paid to the number of responses in these cases, since they are often much smaller than the total sample.

2. Teacher attrition

An important finding from previous analysis conducted as part of the TDD project (Böhmer & Gustafsson, 2023) is that many teachers leave the profession prematurely, which will exacerbate the predicted teacher shortages resulting from retirements. In addition, Gustafsson (2016) shows that there is a fair amount of teachers moving between schools, with many teachers only staying in schools for a short period of time. This creates a lack of stability in schools and may point to low job satisfaction among teachers. The first issue we therefore sought to investigate in the teacher survey is the extent of teachers' intentions to leave their current school or leave the profession entirely. This section considers this question, paying particular attention to different perspectives across different types of schools and geographic areas.

Nationally, as can be seen in Table 3, roughly half (49%) of teachers indicated a desire to leave the profession at some point in the next 10 years. This is a very high proportion and is unlikely to actually eventuate, given other constraints and options available to teachers. That is, this does not necessarily mean these teachers will leave the profession. However, a desire to leave the profession is likely to be indicative of generally low levels of job satisfaction (something considered in more detail in Section 3). Table 3 further shows that teachers in small towns and rural areas were more likely to indicate a desire to leave the profession, with only 48% and 43%, respectively, indicating

a desire to remain in the profession, compared with 55% in metro areas and 56% in large towns. Table 4 presents this information by school type and points to similar patterns, as expected due to the overlap between type of geographic area and school type mentioned above. Teachers in no-fee schools were the most likely to indicate a desire to leave teaching within the next 10 years, at 57%, compared to 45% in low-fee , 44% in mid-fee and 41% in high-fee schools.

Table 3: Proportion of teachers wanting to leave the profession, by area type

	Metro area	Non-metro city/large town	Small town	Village or rural area	Total
I want to leave teaching within the next year	7%	6%	7%	10%	8%
2-5 years	20%	20%	24%	23%	22%
6-10 years	18%	18%	20%	23%	20%
I want to remain in teaching for the foreseeable future	55%	56%	48%	43%	51%

Notes: Sample: Metro 457; Large town 271; Small town 396; Village or rural area 366; Total 1490

Table 4: Proportion of teachers wanting to leave the profession, by school type

	No-fee	Low-fee	Mid-fee	High-fee	Total
I want to leave teaching within the next year	8%	6%	7%	8%	8%
2-5 years	25%	24%	18%	17%	22%
6-10 years	23%	15%	19%	16%	20%
I want to remain in teaching for the foreseeable future	43%	55%	56%	59%	51%

Notes: No-fee 604; low-fee 215, mid-fee 313, high-fee 143; total 1375. No-fee schools: R0 p.a.; Low-fee: R1-R3,000 p.a.; Mid-fee: R3,000-R20,000 p.a.; High-fee: >R20,000 p.a.

We next consider the reasons teachers cited for wanting to leave the profession. Results are shown by area type in Table 5. The main reason cited for wanting to leave the profession was being overworked (35%), followed by not earning enough (34%). Interestingly, teachers in metro areas were much more likely to cite being overworked as a reason for wanting to leave the profession compared to teachers in rural areas (43% versus 23%). Teachers in metro areas were also more likely to feel that they do not earn enough (44%) compared to teachers in rural areas (22%). It is noteworthy that very small numbers of teachers cited not enjoying working with children as a reason for wanting to leave the profession (2% overall).

Table 5: Reasons for wanting to leave teaching, by area type

	Metro area	Non-metro city/large town	Small town	Village or rural area	Total
I'm overworked	43%	42%	36%	23%	35%
I don't earn enough	44%	37%	33%	22%	34%
There is too much marking/paperwork	39%	34%	37%	22%	33%
I want to study further	18%	21%	23%	19%	20%
My family responsibilities are not compatible with teaching	13%	12%	10%	6%	10%
I am in ill health	5%	3%	3%	4%	4%
I don't enjoy working with children/ teenagers	2%	3%	6%	0%	2%
None of the above	29%	30%	33%	42%	34%

Notes: Sample size: 684 (192 metro, 113 non-metro city/large town, 188 small town, 191 village or rural.) Percentages are expressed as a total of the area type, e.g. 43% of teachers in urban areas who answered this question said they were overworked.

Table 6 presents the same information, this time by school type. Notable differences are observed in the reasons cited for wanting to leave teaching across teachers working in schools charging different fees. Teachers in mid-fee and high-fee schools were much more likely to cite being overworked as a reason for wanting to leave the profession, at 49% and 53%, respectively, compared to 33% in low-fee schools and 25% in no-fee schools. Teachers in high-fee schools were also much more likely to cite not earning enough as a reason for wanting to leave the profession (47%) compared with teachers in rural areas (28%).

Table 6: Reasons for wanting to leave teaching, by school type

	No-fee	Low-fee	Mid-fee	High-fee	Total
I'm overworked	25%	33%	49%	53%	35%
I don't earn enough	28%	31%	41%	47%	34%
There is too much marking/paperwork	27%	35%	41%	39%	33%
I want to study further	21%	23%	18%	18%	20%
My family responsibilities are not compatible with teaching	7%	9%	16%	15%	10%
I am in ill health	4%	3%	4%	3%	4%
I don't enjoy working with children/teenagers	2%	3%	3%	3%	2%
None of the above	38%	32%	30%	28%	34%

Notes: Sample size: 681 (346 no-fee, 96 low-fee, 138 mid-fee, 101 high-fee). Percentages are expressed as a total of the school type, e.g. 25% of teachers in no-fee schools who answered this question said they were overworked.

3. What are teachers' levels of job satisfaction?

We next consider teachers' overall levels of job satisfaction, and how this differs amongst teachers in various categories. Teachers were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a four-point Likert scale with nine statements relating to their job satisfaction, such as whether they found their work meaningful and would recommend their school as a good place to work. A job satisfaction index was constructed by calculating total scores across all nine items. Respondents were classified as "very satisfied" if they selected "strongly agree" on all nine questionnaire items (i.e. an overall score of 36), "somewhat satisfied" if they scored 27 out of 36 (i.e. equivalent to selecting "agree" on all items, but could include a mix of "strongly agree", "agree", "disagree" and "strongly disagree") and "not satisfied" if they scored less than 27 out of 36.

Figure 3 shows that roughly a quarter of surveyed teachers (23%) were very satisfied with their jobs, 43% somewhat satisfied, and roughly a third (34%) not satisfied. The figure also shows no clear gender differences in job satisfaction - while a slightly higher proportion of male teachers were not satisfied (37% compared to 32%), these differences were not statistically significant.

Figure 3: Teacher job satisfaction by gender
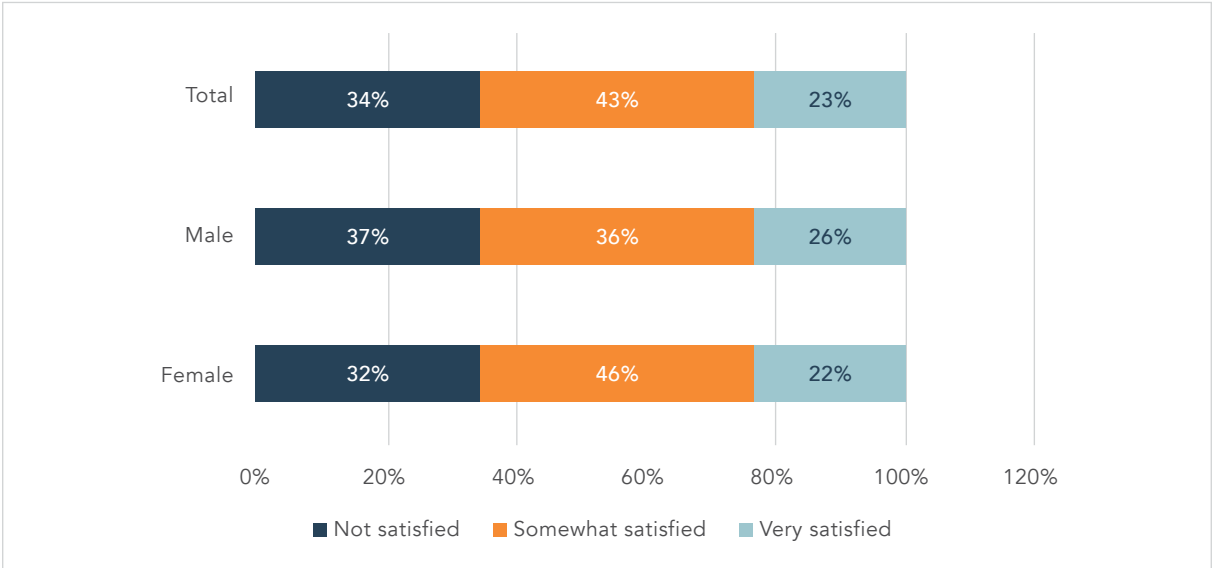
Notes: Sample size: 1,082 Female, 400 Male, 1,482 total

Figure 4 shows teacher job satisfaction by age. Interestingly, younger teachers (30 years and younger) reported higher levels of job satisfaction than older teachers, with 27% of young teachers reporting being unsatisfied (compared to 33% of older teachers) and 29% reporting being very satisfied (compared to 27% of older teachers). These differences are statistically significant at the 90% level (p-value=0.08).

Figure 4: Teacher job satisfaction by age
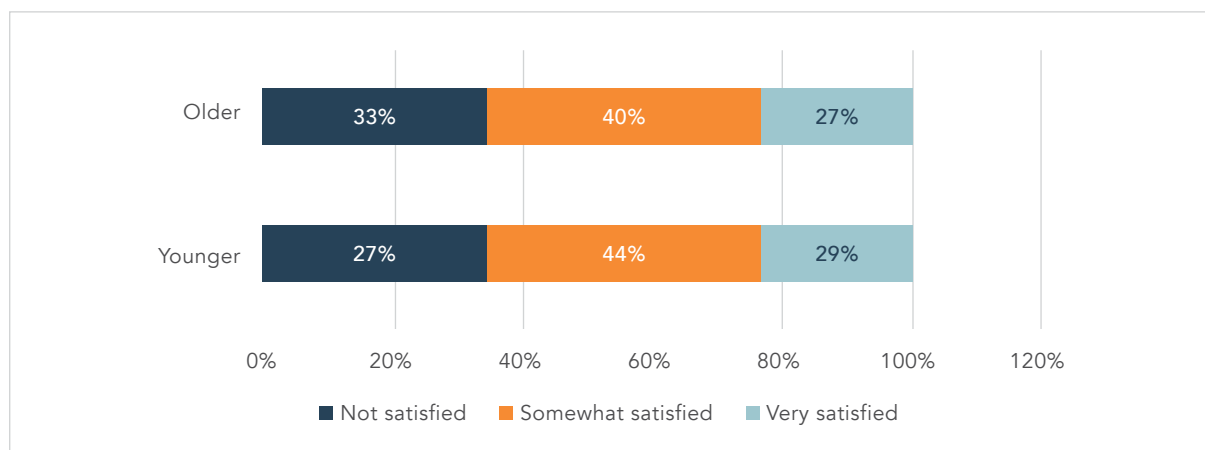
Notes: Sample size: 1,179 older; 304 younger; total 1,483. Younger teachers are defined as those 30 years old or younger.

Next we investigate whether teacher job satisfaction differs by school fee group. To do so, we plot total scores on the job satisfaction scale by school fee group (shown in Figure 5). It is interesting that job satisfaction scores are relatively similar across school fee groups. While there is a difference in the total job satisfaction scores of teachers in no-fee schools compared to those in high-fee schools (a difference that is statistically significant at the 95% level), this difference is relatively small in magnitude. This is unexpected, since one would expect teachers in schools with fewer resources to experience lower job satisfaction than those in schools with better resources. A potential reason for this, indicated by many interview respondents, is that teachers in more disadvantaged schools experience a sense of job satisfaction from knowing that they are making a difference in the lives of vulnerable children. Interviewed teachers often stated that they saw their role as extending beyond teaching to providing a source of support in children's lives who often lacked that support at home, which contributed to their job satisfaction. One teacher expressed the following sentiment:

Interviewer: So what keeps you going? The fact that you see successful results? Teacher: The fact that I know I'm making a difference in the children's lives, and the fact that they look forward to coming to school, so that they can escape their circumstances for a bit; I can make it fun for them at school. So the children, they make it worth it and they keep me going.

Figure 5: Job satisfaction scale scores by school fee group
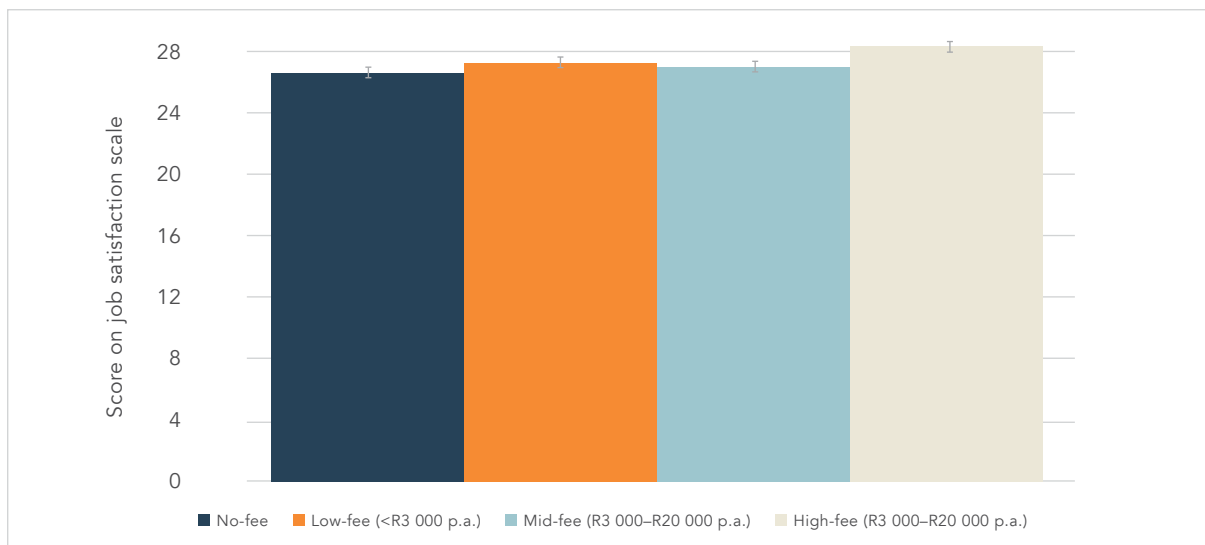
Notes: Sample size: 255 high-fee; 340 mid-fee; 236 low-fee; 660 no-fee. Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals.

Figure 6 shows levels of teacher job satisfaction by area type. Again it is striking that levels of job satisfaction are similar across different types of areas, with no statistically significant differences observed across area type. This is interesting given anecdotal evidence that teachers in rural areas are more dissatisfied at work than those in urban areas, and could again point to the result from the qualitative interviews that teachers in these areas find meaning in their work that may offset potential negative effects of living in rural areas. Despite similar levels of job satisfaction across area types, many teachers expressed a clear preference for urban areas (discussed in more detail in Section 5). It could therefore be factors other than job satisfaction that influence teachers' geographic preferences (also discussed in Section 5).

Figure 6: Job satisfaction scale scores by area type
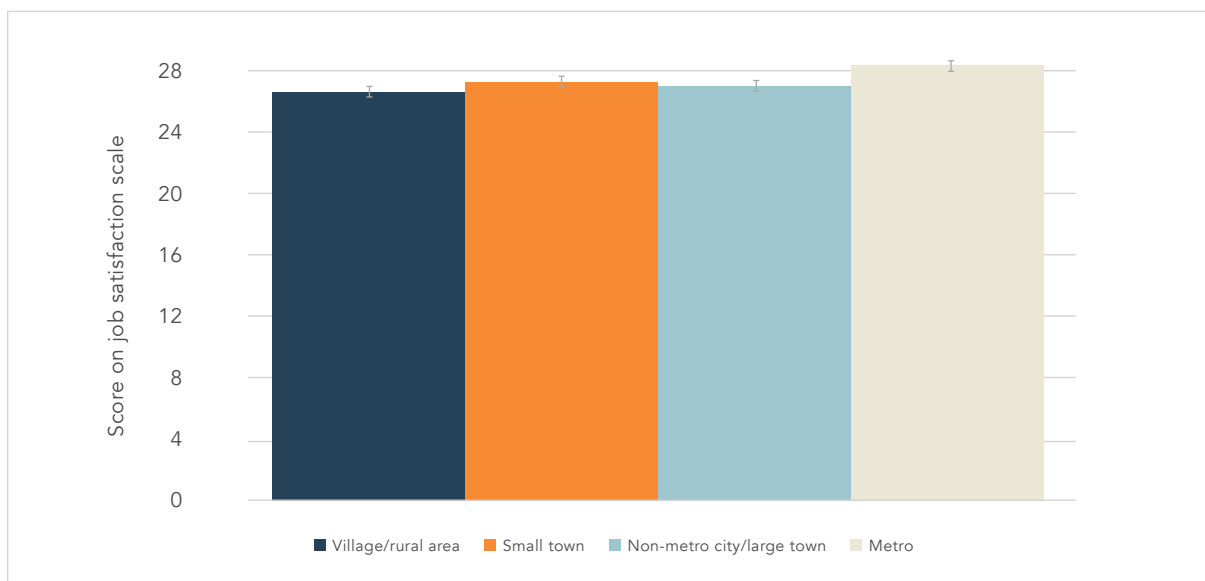
Notes: Sample size: 368 village or rural area; 398 small town; 274 non-metro city/large town; 457 metro area. Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals.

4. Teacher stress

The international literature suggests that a major factor driving teachers' decision to leave the profession is experiencing high levels of stress on the job (Farmer, 2020). Without adequate support to curb stress-inducing factors, teachers risk experiencing burnout and becoming dissatisfied in their current schools or with the profession more generally, which could lead to movement between schools or teachers leaving the profession entirely. We therefore sought to determine the extent to which high levels of teacher stress potentially contribute to teacher attrition. We also asked respondents about the factors influencing their overall levels of stress to determine which policy levers might be available to reduce the amount of stress that teachers experience on the job.

4.1. What are teachers' levels of stress?

Results from the survey (presented in Figure 7) indicate that 60% of respondents experienced some stress, two-thirds (68%) indicated that teaching does not allow them to have a work-life balance, a third (32%) indicated that their job negatively impacts their mental health, and a quarter (24%) indicated that their job negatively impacts their physical health. Considering differences across school-fee groups (also Figure 7), it is interesting to note the high proportions of teachers in mid-fee and high-fee schools who indicated that their job does not allow them to have a work-life balance (75% and 79%, respectively, compared to 60% and 65% in no-fee and low-fee schools respectively). This is an interesting result, since one might expect teachers working in poorly resourced schools to experience more stress due to resource constraints and facing larger class sizes on average. One explanation could be that teachers in mid-fee and high-fee schools experience higher expectations from both principals and parents, and that this contributes to their higher levels of stress. Results from responses relating to teachers' sense of preparedness across school types (presented in Section 7) point to similar patterns.

Figure 7: Teacher stress and stress-induced health complications by fee categories

	No-fee	Low-fee	Mid-fee	High-fee	Total
I experience stress in my work	52%	57%	69%	68%	60%
My job does not allow a work-life balance	60%	65%	75%	79%	68%
My job negatively impacts my mental health	31%	30%	34%	30%	32%
My job negatively impacts my physical health	25%	21%	23%	21%	24%
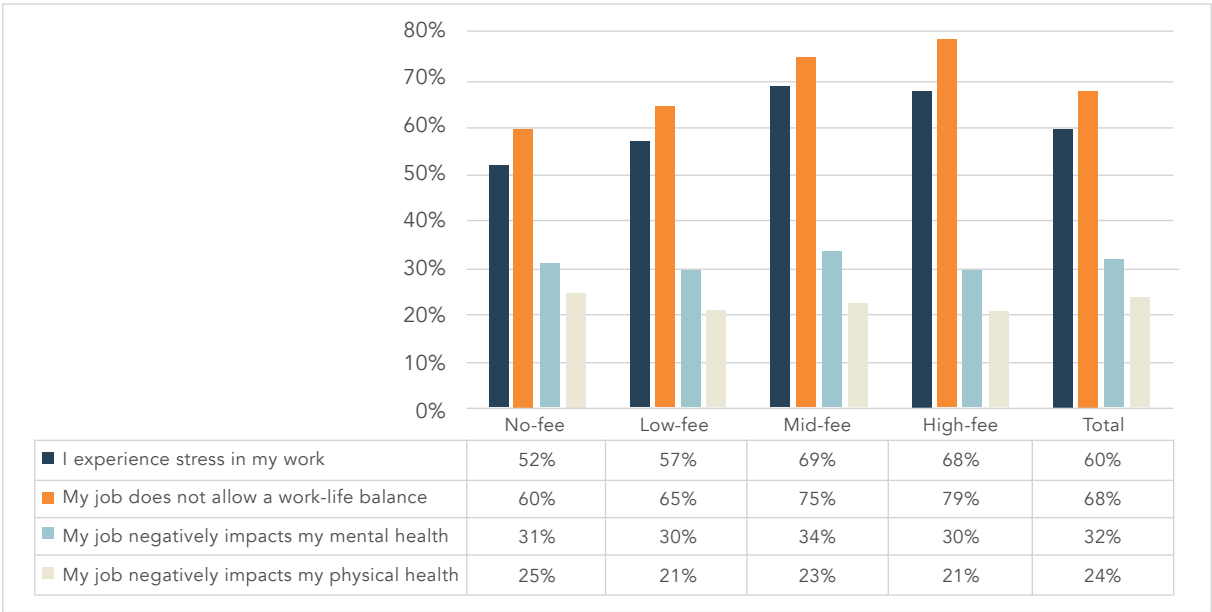
Notes: Sample size: 1288. No fee (555); Low-fee (203); Mid-fee (300); High-fee (230)

Table 7 shows the results disaggregated by gender. Higher and statistically significant proportions of female teachers reported struggling with maintaining a work-life balance and suffering mental health setbacks due to stress, relative to their male counterparts. Splitting the data by younger and older teachers shows no statistical difference between age groups in teachers' experience of stress. However, older teachers struggle more with maintaining a work-life balance, as well as mental and physical health complications induced by stress, and these results are statistically highly significant.

Table 7: Teacher stress and stress-induced health complications by gender and age group

	Female	Male	Younger	Older	Total
I experience stress in my work	62%	53%	59%	60%	60%
No work-life balance	70%**	63%	59%	70%***	68%
Job negatively impacts my mental health	33%**	27%	28%	32%*	32%
Job negatively impacts my physical health	24%	22%	17%	25%***	24%

Notes: Sample size: Female (948); Male (344); Younger (218); Older (1055). Younger teachers are 30 years old or younger, older teachers are older than 30 years. Asterisks indicate statistically significant differences such that *p<0.1, **p<0.05 and ***p<0.01.

4.2. Sources of stress

Table 8 shows the results for leading factors inducing stress in teachers across different types of geographic areas. What readily becomes apparent is the high proportion of teachers - 70% - who reported administration loads as a leading stress-inducing factor. This is not surprising, as the administrative responsibilities placed on teachers often compete with learner contact time and thus jeopardize the quality of education teachers can provide. Where administrative duties cannot be completed during school hours, teachers are left to take them home, which links to the stress induced by the lack of a balance between work and teachers' personal lives.

In the interviews, teachers raised numerous concerns about administration. These concerns ranged from the sheer amount of administration to the repetitive nature of the tasks to the perception that numerous documents need to be prepared that are seldom looked at by managers or district officials. This created frustration since many teachers felt they were completing administrative tasks that served no function. 53% of teachers reported an inability to keep up with changing requirements by education authorities, a concern also raised in the interviews.

Table 8 further points to some differences in the sources of teacher stress across area types, with a much higher proportion of teachers in metro areas, large towns and small towns (75%) reporting having too much administrative work as a source of stress compared to teachers in rural areas (56%). Teachers in non-rural areas were also more likely to indicate that keeping up with changing requirements from the department/province was a source of stress.

Table 8: Factors inducing stress among teachers by area type

Stress-inducing factors	Metro	Large town	Small Town	Rural area	Total
Having too much lesson preparation	24%	21%	24%	32%	25%
Having too many lessons to teach	19%	19%	15%	31%	21%
Having too much marking	41%	32%	40%	34%	37%
Having too much administrative work	75%	75%	75%	56%	70%
Having extra duties due to absent teachers	29%	36%	31%	21%	29%
Keeping up with changing requirements	57%	54%	56%	42%	53%
My colleagues	17%	12%	16%	13%	15%
My principal	11%	10%	12%	5%	10%
Intimidation or verbal abuse by learners	20%	13%	19%	16%	18%

Notes: Sample size: 1309. Metro (405); Large town (247); Small Town (346); Rural area (311)

Table 9 considers differences across school types in the sources of teacher stress. It is interesting to note that the proportion of teachers citing having too much administrative work as a source of stress increases as school fees increase, at 60% among teachers in no-fee schools, 71% in low-fee schools, and 82% in mid-fee schools. A possible explanation emerging from the interviews is that teachers in schools charging higher fees are expected to rely less on departmental or provincial resources, instead creating new resources themselves. One interviewee described the increase in workload she experienced when moving from a school in a low-income community to a wealthy, high-achieving school. At her new school, she was expected to set original papers for every assessment, while at her previous school, DBE question papers were used for all formal assessments. Another teacher at a mid-fee school mentioned creating her own materials since she felt the textbooks procured by the department were not of a high enough standard to be used in her classroom. In addition to creating original classroom resources, higher-fee schools are more likely to comply with departmental requirements for management documents (Department of Basic Education, 2019b), suggesting that managers in these schools expect more from their teachers in terms of completing departmental documents such as academic improvement plans.

Table 9: Factors inducing stress among teachers by school fee group

	No-fee	Low-fee	Mid-fee	High-fee	Total
Having too much lesson preparation	32%	24%	19%	18%	25%
Having too many lessons to teach	25%	15%	18%	16%	20%
Having too much marking	39%	41%	39%	29%	37%
Having too much administrative work	60%	71%	82%	79%	70%
Having extra duties due to absent teachers	24%	31%	33%	34%	29%
Keeping up with changing requirements from the authorities	45%	54%	64%	54%	53%
My colleagues	14%	15%	15%	15%	15%
My principal	8%	6%	14%	10%	9%
Being intimidated or verbally abused by learners	21%	17%	16%	13%	18%

Notes: Sample size: 1309. No-fee schools: R0 p.a.; Low-fee: R1-R3,000 p.a.; Mid-fee: R3,000-R20,000 p.a.; High-fee: >R20,000 p.a.

5. Teacher preferences

5.1. Location preferences

Analysis of teachers moving between provinces, conducted as part of the broader TDD project, suggests that certain provinces are more desirable for teachers to work in (Böhmer & Gustafsson, 2023). This means that provinces will not experience the upcoming teacher shortages equally. From a planning perspective, it is therefore important to investigate which provinces teachers prefer to work in and whether these preferences are informed by factors that can be targeted by policy.

We first consider the possibility that teachers prefer to work in the provinces that they had grown up in. Many respondents stated that they had explicitly searched for work in their home provinces. Teachers who had relocated to different provinces overwhelmingly indicated that their decision was informed by their spouses working in that province. Interestingly, in the interviews we did not find instances of teachers staying in the provinces where they had studied. The interviews therefore suggest that the main factors informing teachers' location decision are family-related, with teachers preferring to work in the provinces where they grew up or where their spouses were employed.

We turned to the survey results to determine the extent to which this was the case among the larger sample of survey respondents. First, we calculated the proportions of teachers working in each province who had completed high school in that province (shown in the highlighted diagonal line in Table 10). It is clear from the table that most respondents work in the provinces they had grown up in, with particularly high proportions of teachers in Limpopo (90%) and KwaZulu-

Natal (87%) having grown up in those provinces. Table 10 also points to more movement into Gauteng, Mpumalanga, North West and Northern Cape from other provinces, with roughly a third of teachers employed in these provinces having grown up in other provinces. The survey also shows that teachers are more likely to move to neighbouring provinces than others, with for example 15% of teachers employed in Mpumalanga having grown up in KwaZulu-Natal and 11% of teachers employed in North West having grown up in Gauteng. This echoes results from Böhmer and Gustafsson (2023), obtained from analysis of PERSAL data.

Table 10: Province of employment versus province of high school completion

		Province: Teaching								
		EC	FS	GT	KZN	LP	MP	NW	NC	WC
Province: High school	EC	78%	2%	1%	1%	0%	0%	2%	1%	5%
	FS	3%	77%	5%	4%	0%	2%	9%	6%	3%
	GT	7%	8%	68%	7%	4%	9%	11%	1%	3%
	KZN	4%	1%	5%	87%	1%	15%	2%	2%	3%
	LP	2%	0%	5%	0%	90%	8%	4%	0%	1%
	MP	1%	2%	7%	0%	2%	63%	2%	1%	2%
	NW	1%	4%	6%	1%	0%	3%	63%	9%	2%
	NC	1%	5%	1%	1%	1%	0%	4%	69%	2%
	WC	3%	2%	2%	0%	1%	0%	2%	10%	78%
	Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Notes: Observations: 1,513.

Figure 8: Proportion of teachers employed in the province they had grown up in
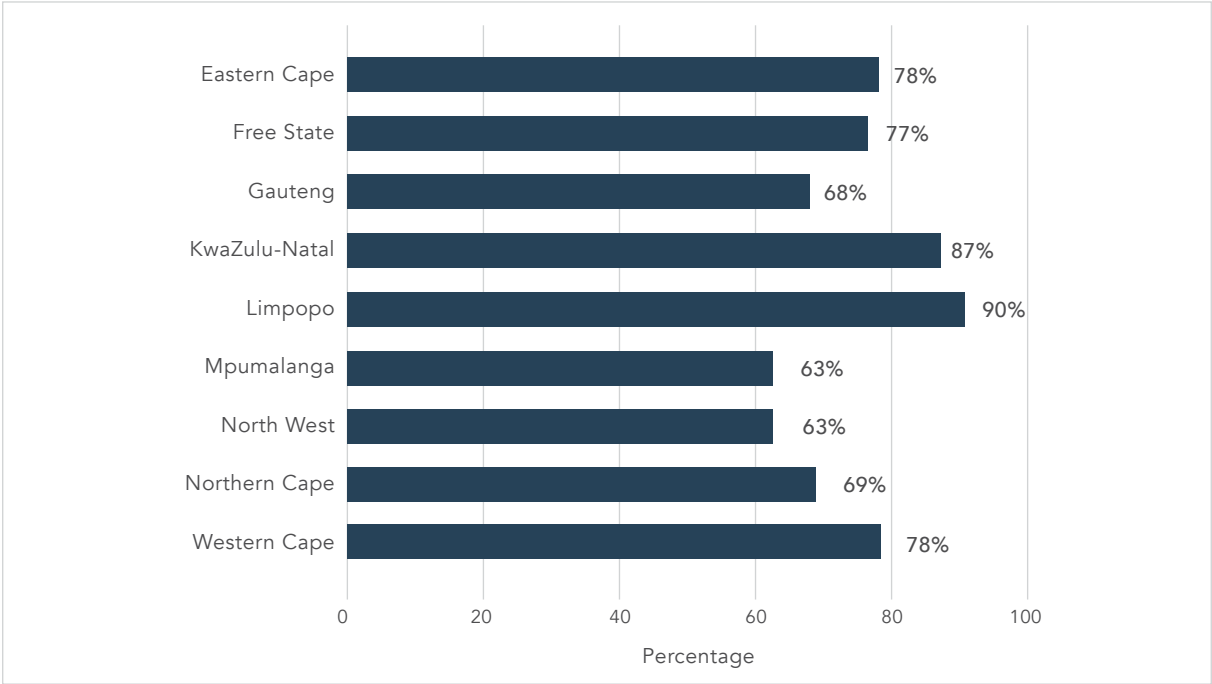
Notes: Observations: 1,513.

We next consider survey respondents' answers regarding their reason for accepting their job in a particular area. Results, by area type, are shown in Table 11. Echoing interview responses, the main reason cited for accepting a job in a particular area among survey respondents was that respondents had grown up in that area (37%), followed by their family or partner living in that area (35%). Interestingly, a larger proportion of teachers in metro areas indicated that they had accepted their job due to family-related reasons (45%) compared to teachers in rural areas (21%). This pattern is reversed for the response option "This was the only town/area where I could find a job", with 34% of teachers in rural areas indicating this response option versus 17% of teachers in metro areas. These results point to the phenomenon of a "rural compromise", raised by Swelindawo (forthcoming), whereby many individuals prefer to live in urban areas but end up in rural areas out of necessity. This issue is explored further in Table 12 and Table 13.

Table 11: Reasons for working in specific areas by area type

	Metro area	Non-metro city/large town	Small town	Village or rural area	Total
This is the town/area I grew up in	38%	39%	38%	33%	37%
This is the town/area where I completed my tertiary studies	25%	11%	8%	5%	13%
It was the only town/area where I could find a job	17%	18%	23%	34%	23%
This is the town/area where my family or partner lives	45%	35%	37%	21%	35%
I had to accept this position because of my bursary/ scholarship	3%	5%	5%	7%	5%

Notes: Sample size: 1,394.

We next consider respondents' willingness to work in different provinces by age group, shown in Figure 9. It is clear from the figure that younger teachers are more willing to relocate to a different province in all cases. This points to a general willingness to relocate among younger teachers, which the interviews revealed was mostly due to younger teachers not having family obligations tying them to certain areas. Older teachers, by contrast, indicated low levels of willingness to relocate. Figure 9 further shows that the Western Cape was by far the province that teachers were most willing to relocate to, with roughly half the sample (49%) indicating a willingness to move to that province. The second-most preferred province was Gauteng, with roughly a quarter (27%) of the sample indicating a willingness to relocate to that province. The interviews revealed some reasons for teachers' preferences for the Western Cape and Gauteng. Apart from a general preference for urban areas, stronger departmental support was often mentioned as a reason for wanting to relocate to those provinces.

Figure 9: Proportion of respondents willing to work in different provinces, by age group

	EC	FS	GT	KZN	LP	MP	NW	NC	WC
■ Younger	23%	22%	35%	14%	16%	18%	16%	17%	59%
■ Older	17%	16%	25%	17%	12%	11%	9%	11%	46%
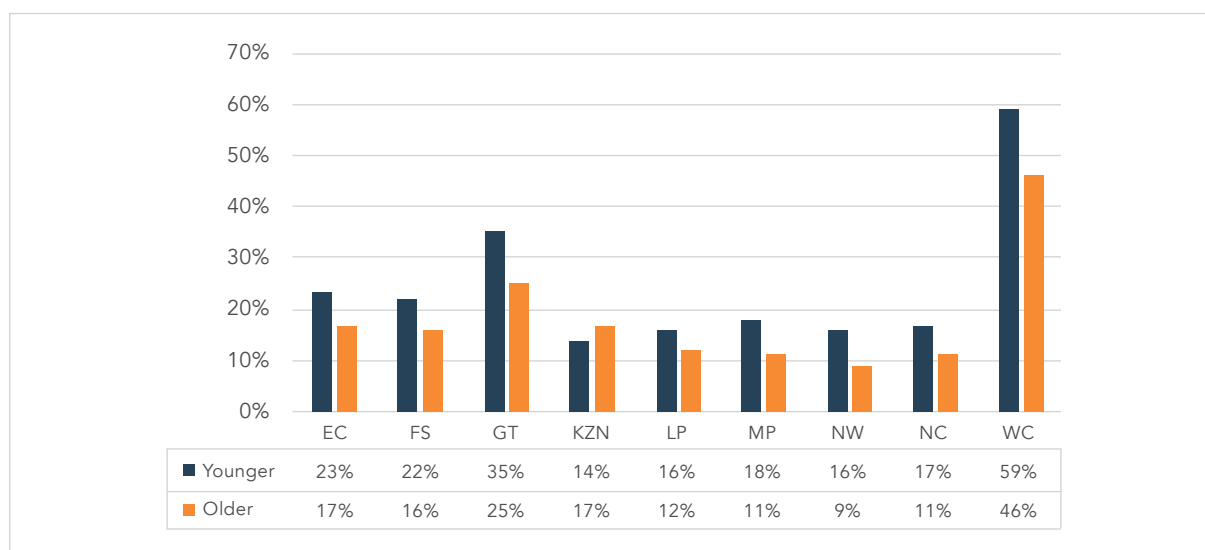
Notes: Younger teachers: 30 years and younger; Older teachers: Older than 30 years. Sample size: Younger: 244; Older: 1,157. Differences are statistically significant at least at the 90% level in all provinces except KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo.

The issue of rural compromise is explored further in Table 12 and Table 13, which show the proportion of respondents ranking different areas as their most preferred and least preferred, respectively, by the type of area they currently work in. The highlighted diagonal lines indicate the proportions of teachers currently working in a specific type of area that rated that area as their most (Table 12) and least (Table 13) preferred. This information is shown graphically in Figure 10 and Figure 11. Figure 10 clearly points to an urban preference, with 41% of the total sample indicating that metro areas are their most preferred type of area. This proportion was highest among teachers currently working in metro areas (64%), followed by teachers currently working in rural areas/villages (40%). Interestingly, only roughly a quarter of teachers in large towns and small towns indicated that metro areas are their most preferred, suggesting that these teachers are relatively happy with the area they work in. Further support of a rural compromise is evidenced by the fact that only 19% of teachers working in rural areas indicated that this was their most preferred area (Table 12), while almost half (48%) of teachers working in rural areas indicated that this was their least preferred area to work in (Table 13). This contrasts sharply with the proportions of teachers in metro areas, large towns and small towns that rated those areas as their least preferred, at 6% or less (Table 13). It is further clear from Figure 10 that respondents in metro areas and large towns seemed happiest with their current area of employment, with the majority of teachers in these areas indicating that their current area is their most preferred area. In terms of least preferred areas, Figure 11 shows that the majority of the sample (71%) rated rural areas/ villages as their least preferred type of area.

Table 12: Proportion of respondents ranking different areas as most preferred, by current area of employment

		Ranked area: Most preferred			
		Metro area	City or large town (non-metro)	Small town	Village or rural area
Current area	Metro area	64%	23%	10%	4%
	Non-metro city/ large town	25%	53%	20%	2%
	Small town	26%	29%	43%	3%
	Village or rural area	40%	27%	14%	19%
	Total	**41%**	**31%**	**21%**	**7%**

Notes: Sample size: Metro 425; Non-metro city/large town 257; Small town 364; village or rural area 341; Total 1,387.

Table 13: Proportion of respondents ranking different areas as least preferred, by current area of employment

		Ranked area: Least preferred			
		Metro area	City or large town (non-metro)	Small town	Village or rural area
Current area	Metro area	5%	5%	4%	86%
	Non-metro city/ large town	13%	3%	5%	80%
	Small town	17%	9%	6%	67%
	Village or rural area	19%	13%	20%	48%
	Total	**13%**	**8%**	**8%**	**71%**

Notes: Sample size: Metro 425; Non-metro city/large town 257; Small town 364; village or rural area 341; Total 1,387.

Figure 10: Proportion of respondents ranking different areas as most preferred, by current area of employment

	Total	Village or rural area	Small town	Non-metro city/large	Metro area
■ Metro	41%	40%	26%	25%	64%
■ Large town	31%	27%	29%	53%	23%
■ Small town	21%	14%	43%	20%	10%
■ Rural area/village	7%	19%	3%	2%	4%

Notes: Sample size: Metro 425; Non-metro city/large town 257; Small town 364; village or rural area 341; Total 1,387.

Figure 11: Proportion of respondents ranking different areas as least preferred, by current area of employment

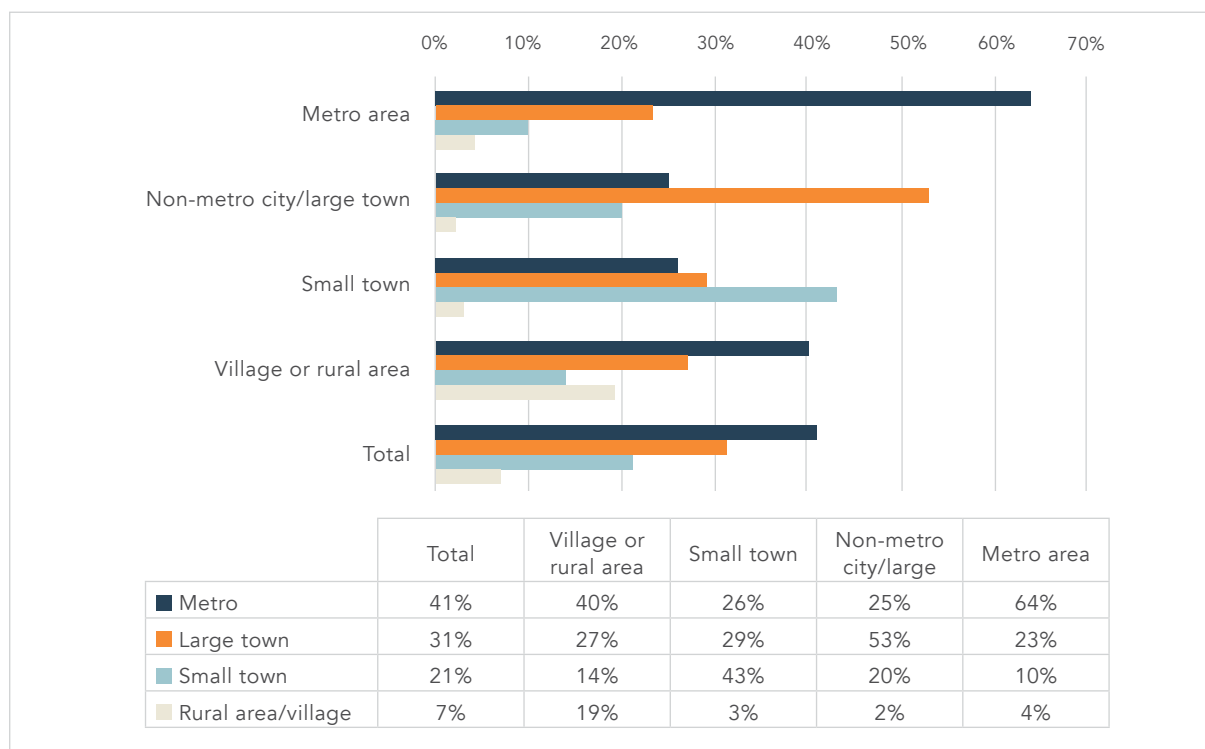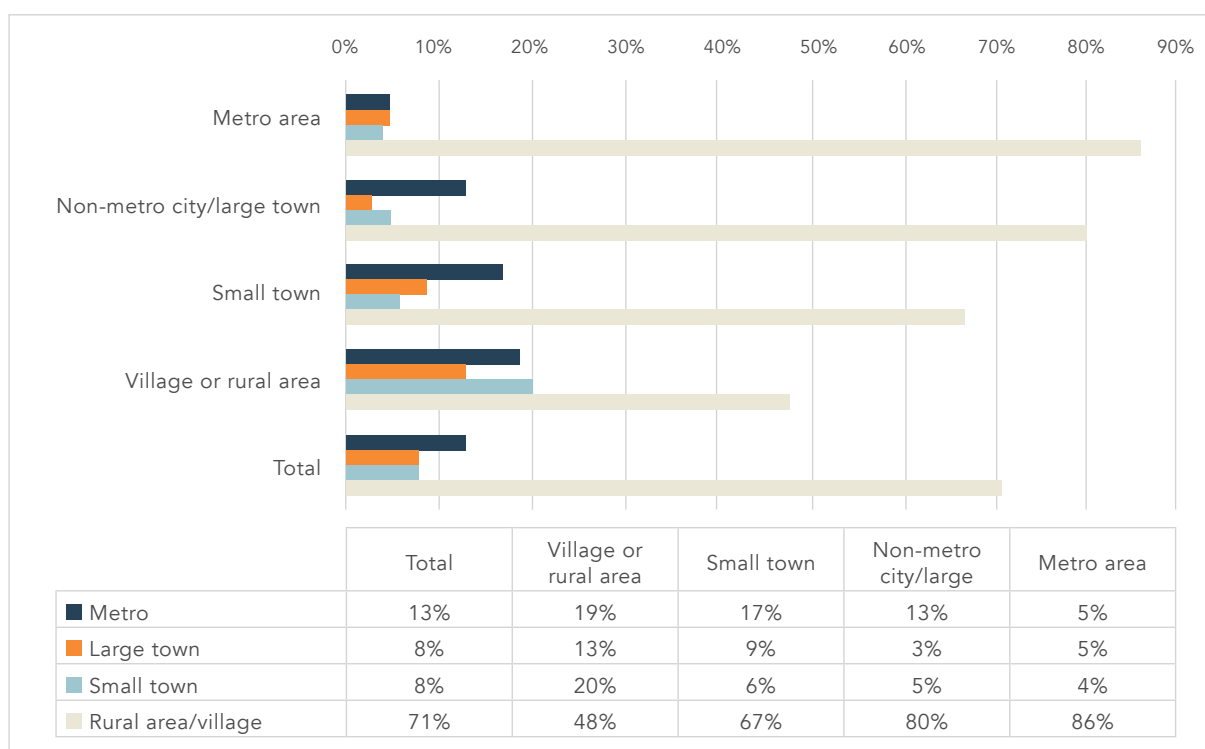|	Total	Village or rural area	Small town	Non-metro city/large	Metro area
■ Metro	13%	19%	17%	13%	5%
■ Large town	8%	13%	9%	3%	5%
■ Small town	8%	20%	6%	5%	4%
■ Rural area/village	71%	48%	67%	80%	86%

Notes: Sample size: Metro 425; Non-metro city/large town 257; Small town 364; village or rural area 341; Total 1,387.

Interviews with teachers revealed some of the reasons why so many did not want to work in rural areas. Poorly resourced schools in rural areas emerged as one of the reasons, with teachers citing instances of having to pay for stationery out of their own pockets, due to the school not providing learners with stationery and parents in rural areas not being able to afford stationery. Poor infrastructure and lack of internet connectivity in rural schools were also mentioned as deterrents. Teachers also expressed the view that they would not easily become accustomed to life in a rural area, mentioning factors like the lack of services (such as the provision of water and electricity, as well as things like medical services) provided in these areas as major challenges. Tribalism in rural areas was also mentioned as a deterrent.

It is important to note that while the majority of teachers stated that they would not like to work in a rural area, a small proportion of the sample (7%) did indicate that rural areas/villages was their most preferred type of area. This proportion was highest among teachers who were currently working in rural areas (19%), indicating that deterrents such as adjusting to the rural lifestyle did not apply to them. The interviews revealed that one of the main reasons for preferring to work in rural areas was the opportunity it provided to contribute to the upliftment of rural communities. Many teachers who preferred rural areas said that they had become teachers specifically to make a difference in their rural communities, and that they had never considered working in a different type of area for this reason.

Some rural respondents also mentioned that they preferred rural schools because their colleagues were motivated by the same altruistic reasons, and there was a strong sense of community in rural schools. Smaller class sizes in rural schools was also mentioned as a reason for wanting to work in these schools. Of course, there is much variability in the class sizes of rural schools, depending inter alia on the population size of the area they serve. It is not the case that rural schools have smaller classes in general. There was also a perception among these respondents that learners in rural schools were more respectful of teachers and that they are more eager to learn, and that behavioural problems such as ill-discipline and violence were more rife in urban schools. Respondents also expressed concerns about crime in cities, which was a big factor that informed their decision to work in rural areas. The view was often expressed that there is a stronger sense of community in rural areas, with neighbours treating each other "like family".

5.2. Rural incentives

Given that rural areas are the least preferred by teachers, it is important to consider which incentives might attract teachers to these areas. The results from the survey question "Which of these incentives might convince you to accept a job at a school in a village or rural area?" are presented in Figure 12. Again, responses reveal a clear urban bias, with 39% of teachers indicating that nothing would convince them to move to a rural area. Among those who selected at least one incentive, by far the most popular incentive was a financial incentive on top of their regular salary, with 45% of respondents choosing this incentive. In-kind financial incentives, specifically free or highly-subsidised accommodation, were also quite popular (selected by 27% of respondents). This is informative, but somewhat unfortunate, since the DBE's decision to end the rural allowance scheme in 2022 suggests that a financial incentive scheme may not be a feasible policy option (Nkosi, 2022). It should also be noted that the question about rural incentives did not include details about monetary amounts, thus there is a high degree of subjectivity to the responses to this question that we are unable to investigate further with the available data.

Interviews with teachers shed additional light on the attractiveness of financial incentives. Living in a rural area was seen by many urban teachers as a hardship due to factors like the lack of services and amenities in rural communities mentioned above. Some interviewees mentioned that a financial incentive would compensate for this hardship. Other interviewees mentioned that life in rural areas could be more expensive than life in towns, identifying the higher cost of everyday products and the cost of driving long distances to get to school. The deterrent of these added costs could perhaps be offset by a financial incentive.

A desire for better classroom support and lower learner-educator ratios was apparent in the fact that 21% of respondents would consider moving to a village or rural school if they were guaranteed a full-time teaching assistant in their classroom. The other professional incentive – funding and time off for professional development – was less popular, being selected by only 13% of respondents. Incentives relating to respondents' family and personal life were also less popular: school fees paid for their children at a good school (17%), a community orientation programme (16%), assistance finding their spouse or partner a job in the same area (13%), and longer parental leave (5%).

Figure 12: Responses to potential financial incentives for accepting a job in a rural area
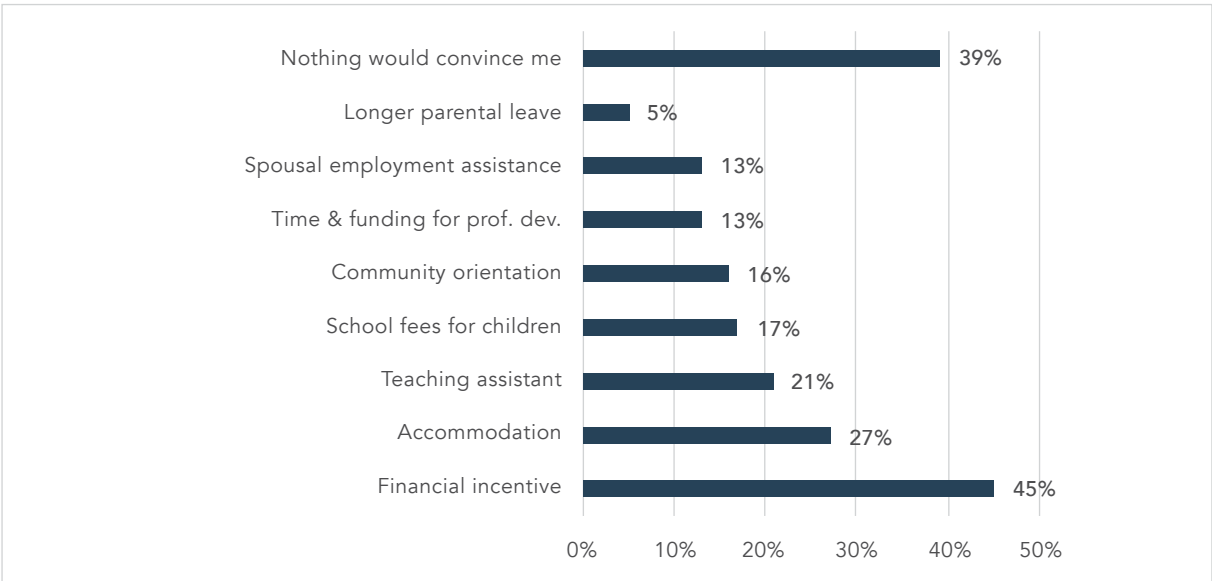
Notes: Sample size 1,097. Proportions do not add up to 100% as respondents could select multiple options.

Figure 13 shows how responses to different rural incentives differ by age. The figure shows that younger teachers (under 30 years of age) are noticeably more responsive to every proposed incentive than older teachers. Young teachers are correspondingly less likely to say that nothing would convince them to work in a village or rural area. This is consistent with Burke and Buchanan's (2022) suggestion that younger teachers are more mobile.

Figure 13: Responsiveness to rural incentives by age category
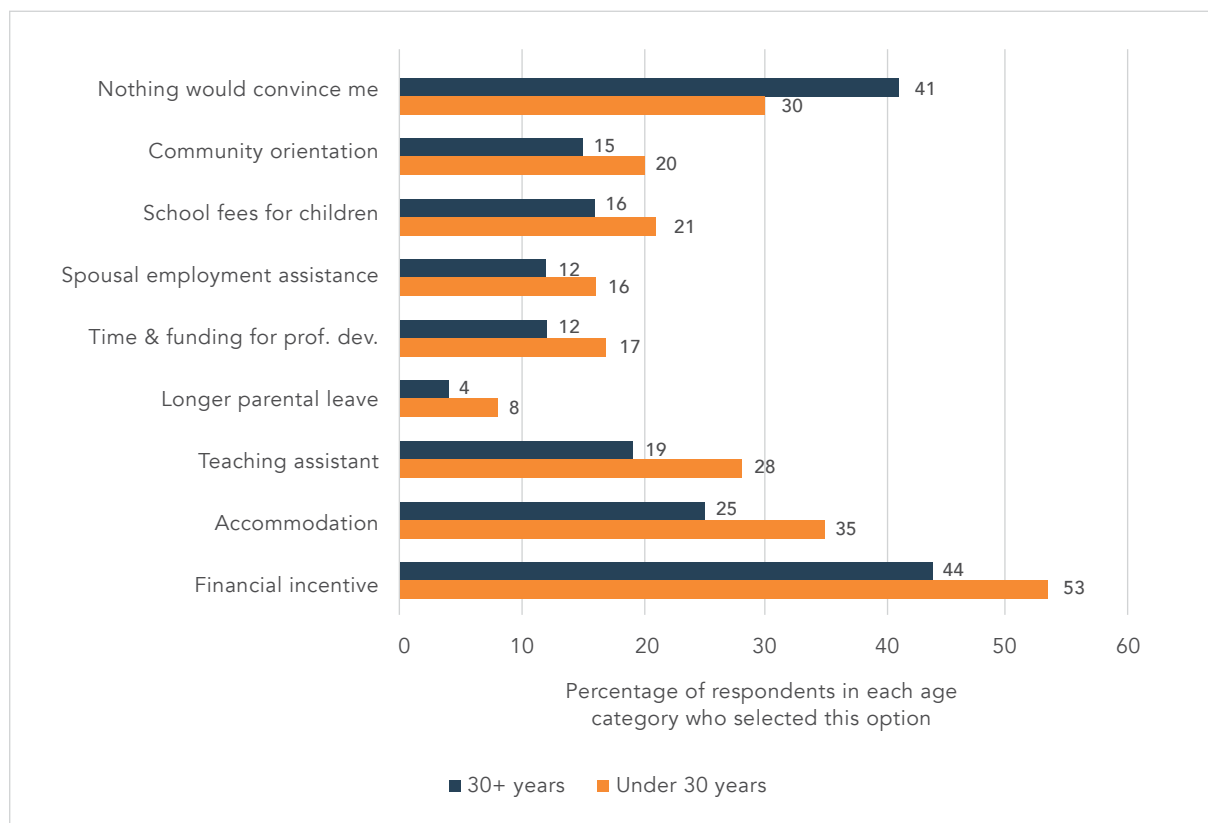
Notes: Sample size: 1,097. Proportions do not add up to 100% as respondents could select multiple options.

The area and fee status of the school at which respondents currently work are closely related to their willingness to take up incentives for rural work. This can be seen in Figure 14, which shows responses to different rural incentives by the school fee status of the schools teachers currently work in. As school fees increase, teachers become increasingly more likely to say that nothing would convince them to accept a job in a rural area and they become less responsive to financial and (to a lesser extent) subsidised accommodation incentives.

Figure 14: Responsiveness to rural incentives by fee status of current school

	Financial incentive on top of regular salary	Free or highly subsidised accommodation	Nothing would convince me to accept a job at a school in a village/rural area
■ No-fee	54%	29%	23%
■ Low-fee (<R3 000 p.a.)	44%	29%	36%
■ Mid-fee (R3 000-R20 000 p.a.)	41%	25%	46%
■ High-fee (>R20 000p.a.)	42%	24%	52%
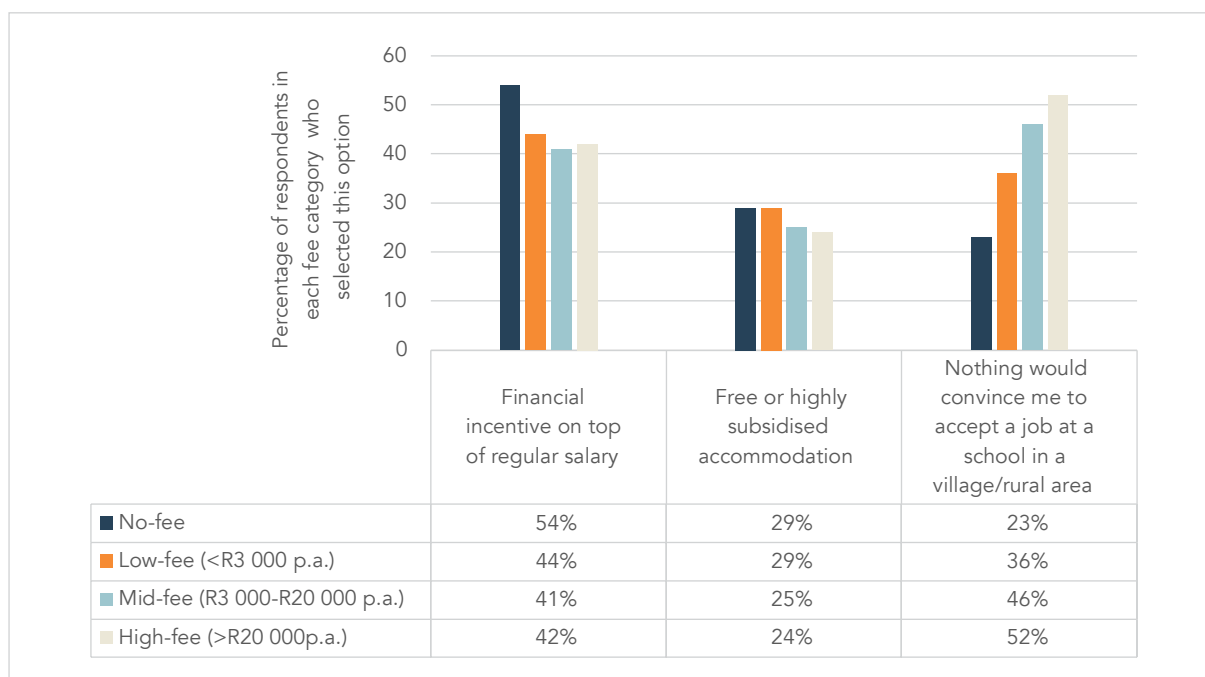
Notes: Sample size 1,093. Proportions do not add up to 100% as respondents could select multiple options.

Similarly, as shown in Figure 15, respondents in metro areas and large towns are substantially more likely to say that nothing would convince them to take a job in a rural area than teachers in small towns. Teachers in small towns are more likely to say that a financial incentive might convince them to work in a village or rural area. However, it is interesting to note that the reactions to most other proposed incentives are very similar (see for example the subsidised accommodation issue in Figure 15).

Figure 15: Responsiveness to rural incentives, by current area of employment
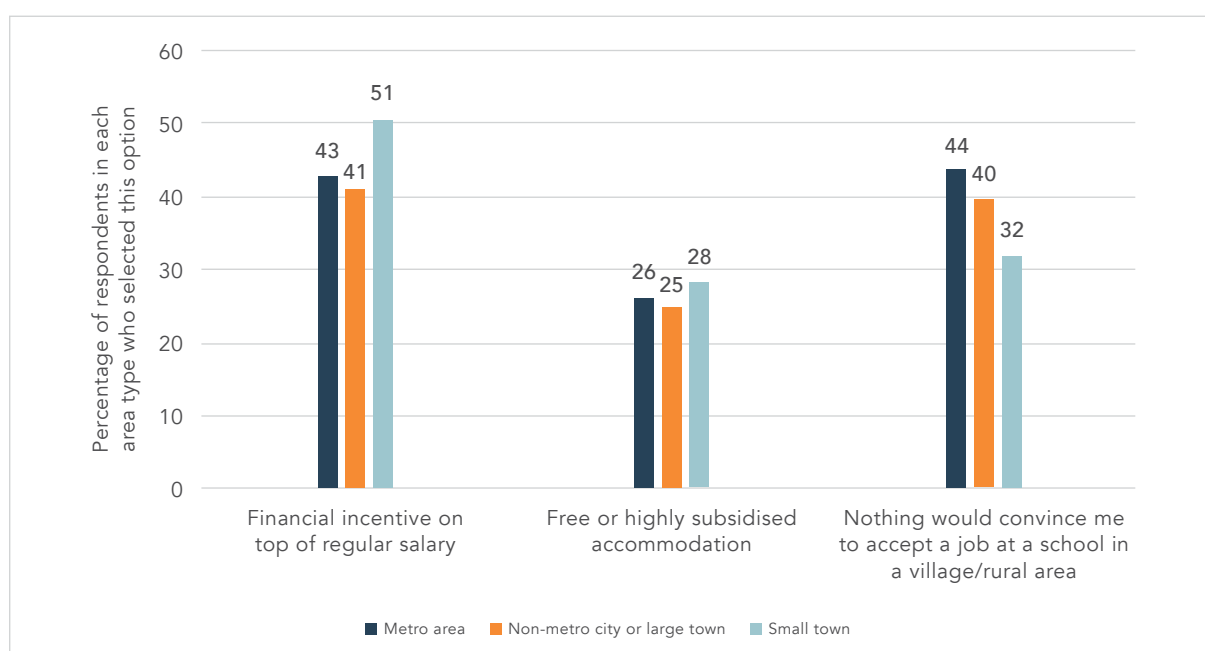
5.3. School preferences

We next consider which factors influenced teachers' decision to accept posts in their particular schools. Table 14 shows this information by school fee group, and Table 15 shows this information by area type. Table 14 points to important differences in the factors informing teachers' choice of school by school fee group, with teachers in no-fee schools being much less likely (32%) than those in high-fee schools (64%) to indicate that their school offered them a position in the right subject or phase. Teachers in no-fee schools were also much more likely (39%) than those in high-fee schools (13%) to indicate that working in their particular school allowed them to make a difference in their communities. This echoes the finding from the interviews that many teachers working in rural areas and/or no-fee schools had become teachers specifically so that they could make a difference in the communities served by their schools, and often these teachers had grown up in those communities. This points to many teachers in no-fee schools being motivated by altruistic reasons. Table 14 also shows that about a quarter of teachers in no-fee schools indicated they had accepted their position because it was the only available job. This proportion decreases as school fees increase, with only 10% of teachers in high-fee schools indicating that this was the reason they accepted their post. This suggests that teachers in schools charging higher fees have more choice in selecting their schools. Table 15 points to similar patterns in differences for the factors influencing teachers' choice of school by area type. This is partly driven by the overlap in school-fee status and area type.

Table 14: Reasons for selecting school, by school fee group

	No-fee	Low-fee	Mid-fee	High-fee	Total
This school offered me a job in the right subject/phase	32%	47%	54%	64%	45%
There is good discipline in this school	15%	25%	35%	48%	27%
The school was conveniently located for me	28%	42%	45%	46%	37%
The school provides a safe working environment	21%	45%	58%	63%	40%
The school is well-resourced	11%	38%	50%	67%	34%
The school has good management	23%	45%	53%	56%	39%
I wanted to make a difference in this community	39%	28%	18%	13%	28%
I had to accept this position because of my bursary/scholarship	5%	6%	5%	6%	5%
I did my teaching practical or internship here	12%	20%	24%	18%	17%
It was the only available job	24%	22%	15%	10%	19%
None of the above	4%	1%	4%	2%	3%

Notes: Sample size: 1,402. Proportions do not add up to 100% as respondents could select multiple options.

Table 15: Reasons for selecting school, by area type

	Metro area	Non-metro city/large town	Small town	Village or rural area	Total
This school offered me a job in the right subject/phase	53%	49%	43%	33%	45%
There is good discipline in this school	34%	34%	22%	17%	27%
The school was conveniently located for me	42%	40%	41%	26%	37%
The school provides a safe working environment	51%	51%	41%	18%	41%
The school is well-resourced	46%	49%	32%	11%	34%
The school has good management	49%	45%	41%	20%	39%
I wanted to make a difference in this community	22%	20%	26%	43%	28%
I had to accept this position because of my bursary/scholarship	6%	7%	4%	4%	5%
I did my teaching practical or internship here	16%	23%	20%	9%	17%
It was the only available job	18%	13%	21%	24%	19%
None of the above	3%	3%	4%	3%	3%

Notes: Sample size: 1,402. Proportions do not add up to 100% as respondents could select multiple options.

6. Why do individuals become teachers?

A possible factor influencing teachers' preferences and job satisfaction is their reason for becoming a teacher. Evidence from the international literature shows that teacher motivation and job satisfaction may not be influenced by the same factors as those identified in traditional employee motivation theories, with teachers often being less motivated by salaries and more motivated by altruism (Evans & Yuan, 2018). We therefore sought to investigate the reasons behind teachers' decision to enter the profession, and examined whether these reasons differed among teachers for whom teaching was a first choice career compared to those for whom it was not.

Respondents were provided with a number of response options to indicate their reason(s) for becoming a teacher. The results in Table 1 point to some notable differences across gender and age. Female teachers were more likely to indicate that they entered teaching because they enjoy working with children and that they have always wanted to teach, and less likely to indicate that teaching allowed them to make a contribution to society, that teaching was a secure job, that teachers were highly respected in their communities, and that teaching can easily lead to other careers or promotion posts within education. Younger teachers were more likely to indicate that

they enjoyed working with children, that they have always wanted to become a teacher and that they have a passion for the subject that they teach. They were less likely to indicate that they entered teaching because bursaries or scholarships were available to study teaching and that teachers were highly respected in their communities. Together, these results suggest that there are important gender and age differences in the reasons why individuals pursue teaching as a career.

Table 16: Reasons for becoming a teacher, by gender and age

	Female	Male	Younger	Older	Total
I enjoy working with children/young people.	67%***	58%	70%**	63%	65%
Teaching allowed me to provide a contribution to society.	49%***	61%	54%	52%	52%
I have a passion for the subject that I teach.	43%	42%	55%***	40%	43%
I have always wanted to teach.	42%***	29%	48%***	37%	39%
Teaching was a secure job.	33%***	43%	38%	35%	36%*
The teaching schedule fit with responsibilities in my personal life	26%	24%	29%	24%	25%
Bursaries/scholarships were available to study teaching.	22%	24%	15%**	24%	25%
Teachers were highly respected in my community.	14%***	26%	11%**	18%	17%
Teaching can easily lead me to other careers or promotion postswithin education	13%***	23%	14%	16%	15%
My family wanted me to become a teacher.	7%	8%	8%	7%	7%
Teachers earn a relatively good salary.	4%	5%	5%	4%	4%

Notes: Proportions do not add up to 100% since respondents could select multiple options. Asterisks indicate statistically significant differences such that *p<0.1, **p<0.05 and ***p<0.01. Younger teachers are 30 years old or younger, older teachers are older than 30 years. Sample size: Female: 1,104, Male: 409; Younger: 304; Older: 1,179.

We next consider whether the reasons for becoming a teacher differ for teachers for whom teaching was a first choice career (49% of the sample) and those for whom it was not (51% of the sample). Table 17 shows that teachers for whom teaching was a first-choice career were more likely to indicate that they enjoyed working with young people, that teaching allowed them to make a contribution to society, and that teachers were well-respected in their communities. Despite these differences, there were many similarities in the reasons for becoming a teacher between teachers for whom teaching had been a first-choice career and those for whom it had not. Similar proportions of these two groups reported that they have a passion for the subject that they teach, that teaching was a secure job, that the teaching schedule fit with responsibilities in their personal life, that bursaries or scholarships were available to study teaching, that teaching can easily lead to other careers within education, that their family wanted them to become a teacher, and that teachers earn a relatively good salary (although it should be noted that the proportions citing the last three reasons were low).

Table 17: Reasons for becoming a teacher, by whether teaching was a first-choice career

	Yes (49%)	No (51%)
I enjoy working with children/young people	75%***	61%
I have always wanted to teach	63%***	18%
Teaching allowed me to provide a contribution to society	57%***	50%
I have a passion for the subject that I teach	48%	42%
Teaching was a secure job	31%	42%
The teaching schedulefit with responsibilities in my personal life	27%	28%
Bursaries/scholarships were available to study teaching	23%	22%
Teachers were highly respected in my community	17%**	15%
Teaching can easily lead me to other careers or to promotion posts within education	14%	15%
My family wanted me to become a teacher	6%	10%
Teachers earn a relatively good salary	4%	5%

Notes: Observations: 1,433. Asterisks indicate statistically significant differences such that ***$p<0.01$, **$p<0.05$ and *$p<0.1$.

The interviews with teachers confirmed the result from the survey that the majority of teachers entered the profession because they enjoyed working with children. This was often mentioned as the main reason for wanting to stay in the profession. As one teacher explained:

> *The children are the best part. It doesn't matter if your colleagues are difficult, or the work is stressful; if you are tired that day and you walk into that classroom and the children are excited to see you, and they're making jokes, it's as if you feed off that energy they have. I do it for the kids, I love teaching; sometimes they make me tired or they make me mad, but I wouldn't swap it for anything.*

7. Teacher preparedness

7.1. How well prepared did respondents feel for their first year of teaching?

A question of major interest is whether initial teacher training (ITE) programmes prepare teachers sufficiently for the rigours of working life. We therefore asked respondents how well their university or college training prepared them for their first teaching post. Results are shown in Figure 16. Overall, the large majority of respondents reported that their training prepared them "quite well"

(49%) or "very well" (35%) for their first teaching post – 84% in total. Only 12% reported that they were prepared "quite poorly", and only 4% reported that they were prepared "very poorly" (see Figure 4.1). No significant differences between primary and high school teachers were observed in teachers' sense of preparedness.

Figure 16: How well prepared respondents felt for their first year of teaching, by school type
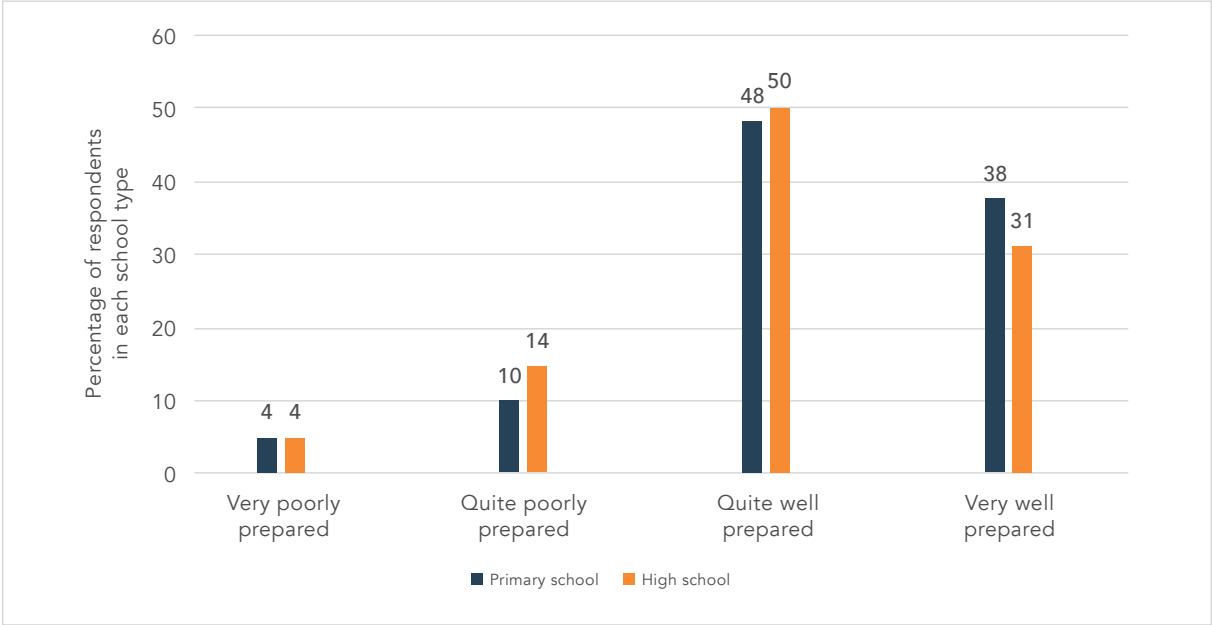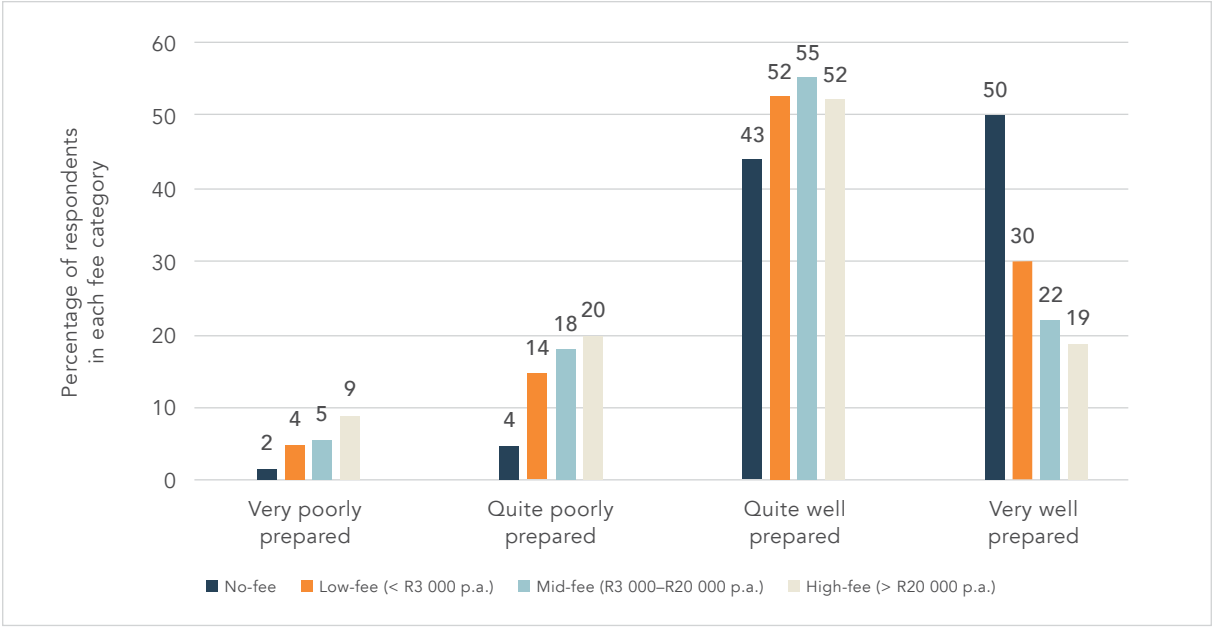

Note: Sample size 1,358

Interesting differences begin to emerge when we break down the results by school fee status. Even allowing for caution in interpreting the subcategories with smaller numbers of responses, there seems to be a clear pattern (shown in Figure 17). It appears that teachers working in higher-fee schools felt less well prepared for their first year of teaching than teachers working in lower-fee schools: the number of respondents who felt "very well" prepared decreased from 50% in no-fee schools to 19% in high-fee schools. Correspondingly, the number of respondents who felt "very poorly" or "quite poorly" prepared rises with fee level: from a total of 6% (no-fee), through 18% (low-fee) and 22% (mid-fee), to 29% (high-fee).

It is interesting that teachers at lower-fee schools report feeling better prepared for teaching. It seems unlikely that they are objectively any better prepared than teachers at higher-fee schools, since at least in recent decades they would have attended similar or the same training institutions, and higher-fee schools tend to attract teachers with better academic results, suggesting – if anything – a higher degree of teacher preparation and competence. The reasons for this trend in responses about preparedness are therefore unclear. One possibility is that teachers in different school types understood the question differently. Another possibility, echoing the result presented in Section 4 that teachers in schools charging higher fees experience more stress, is that teachers at high-fee schools work in an environment with higher expectations: perhaps the management and school governing bodies at such schools expect a higher level of academic expertise from their teachers, and a higher level of academic performance from their learners. This might serve

to highlight any shortcomings in the abilities of the beginner teacher. In addition, the evidence presented in Section 4 that teachers in higher fee schools face a larger administrative load could be particularly difficult for new teachers to adjust to. The administrative burden of the job was mentioned by several young interviewees as something they felt their studies did not prepare them well for.

Figure 17: How well prepared respondents felt for their first year of teaching, by school fee status

Notes: Sample size: 1,428

When the results are broken down by area (shown in Figure 18), a similar pattern emerges, with respondents in metro areas, large towns and small towns being more likely to report being "very poorly" or "quite poorly" prepared (a total of 22% in metro areas, 20% in large towns, and 15% in small towns) than respondents in rural areas (only 6% in total). As noted previously, virtually all rural schools in our sample are no-fee schools, so it is not surprising that we see similar answer patterns.

Figure 18: How well prepared respondents felt for their first year of teaching, by school area
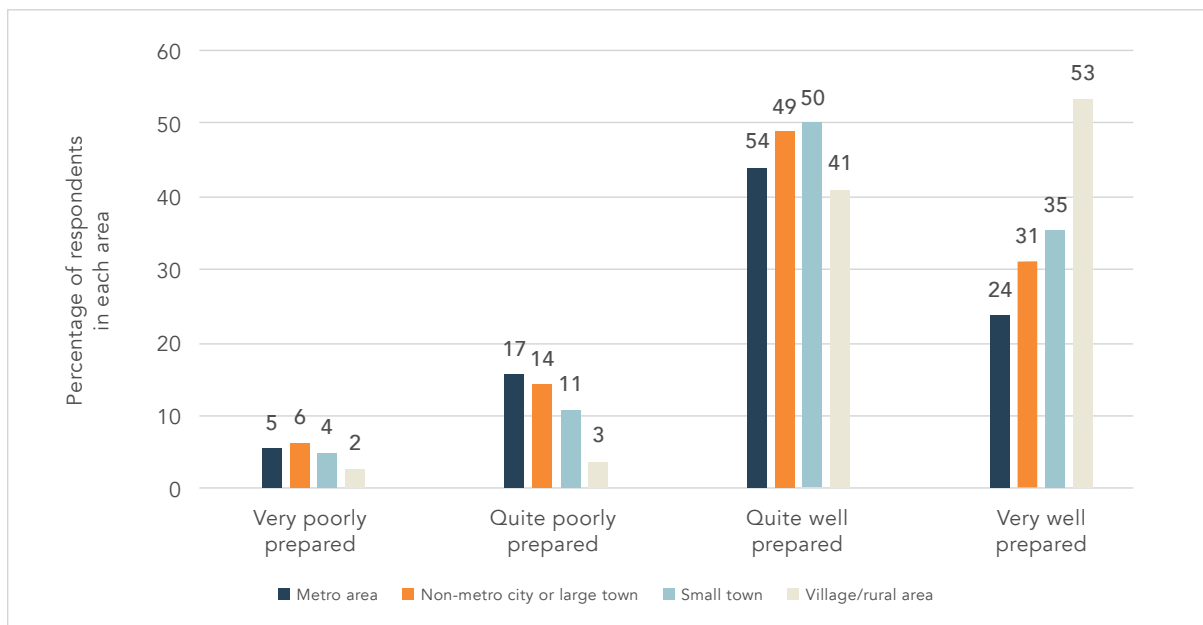
Notes: Sample size: 1,434

The level of reported preparedness also varies with age (see Figure 19). Teachers under the age of 30 were much more likely to report being "very poorly" or "quite poorly" prepared than older respondents, with 25% selecting one of these two lower categories compared to 14% of respondents aged 30 or older. Conversely, young teachers are much less likely to report feeling "very well" prepared: only 22% of young respondents, against 38% of older respondents.
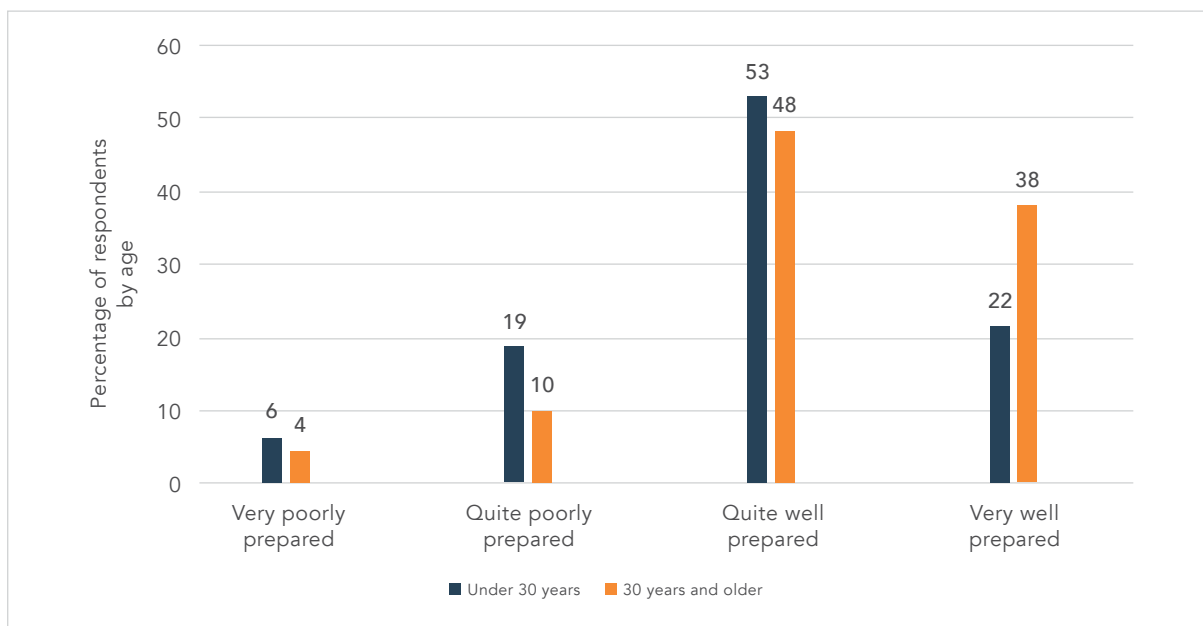
Figure 19: How well prepared respondents felt for their first year of teaching, by age

Notes: Sample size: 1,435

One possible explanation is that teachers who qualified longer ago really were better prepared than teachers who qualified in the last two decades. There have undoubtedly been shifts in ITE in recent decades, most notably the transfer of ITE from teacher training colleges to universities in the late 1990s. Anecdotally, this resulted in teacher training becoming increasingly academic and less focused on the practical skills of teaching and running a classroom (in fact, this opinion was stated by a number of respondents in our interviews). Therefore, it is possible that younger teachers were not as well prepared for the practical side of teaching.

However, it is also possible that the survey results reflect recency bias: younger teachers are more likely to remember the challenges they faced when they started their careers, while for older teachers this memory may have already faded. Therefore, it may be more likely that older teachers will overestimate how well prepared they were for their first year of work.

Another possibility is that teachers who feel less well prepared and consequently less able to cope with the rigours of teaching are more likely to leave the profession, so there are fewer such teachers among the older cohorts.
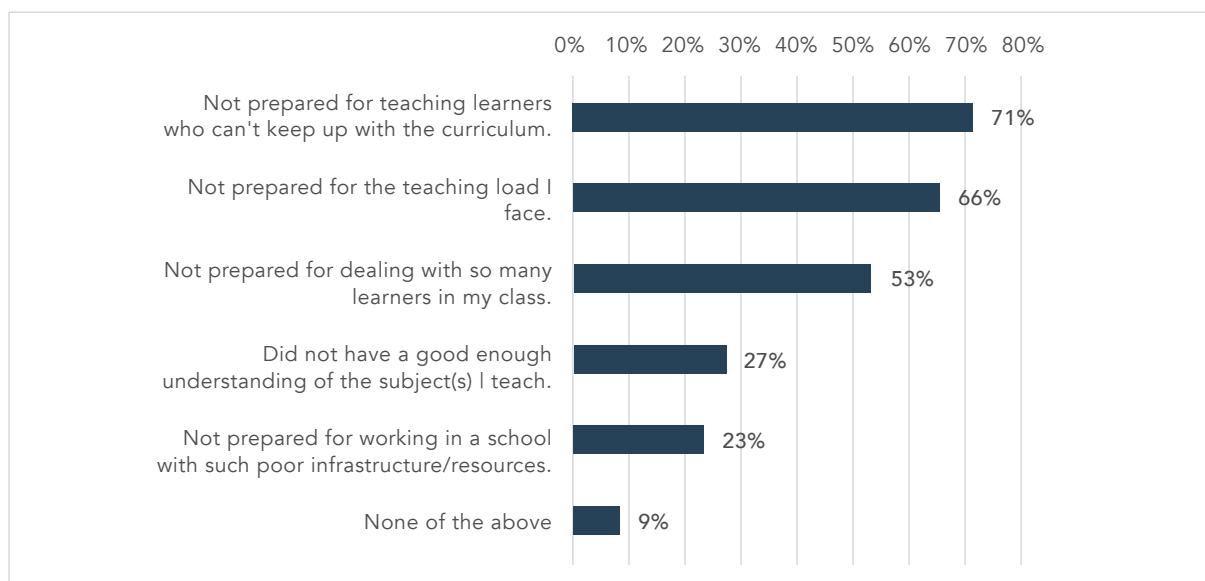
A final possibility is that school environments have become more demanding, or demanding in new ways, while teacher preparation has not kept pace with changes in the classroom. Indeed, in the interviews, one older teacher mentioned that Departmental demands and paperwork have been increasing over time. In addition, it is common knowledge that the ubiquity of digital communications technology, the rise of social media and changing family dynamics and social values have changed the nature of teaching quite significantly in recent decades. While older teachers have been able to adapt gradually to the growing demands of the profession, this is not the case for younger teachers. They may face a relative "baptism of fire" when they begin to work, and thus feel the lack of formal preparation more keenly than older teachers.

7.2. Reasons for feeling unprepared

If respondents indicated that they felt "poorly" or "very poorly" prepared for their first year of teaching, they were asked to select the statement or statements which best described the reason behind their answer. Results are shown in Figure 20. Note that the sample size for this question is substantially smaller, since this follow-up question was only asked of those respondents who indicated they were "poorly" or "very poorly" prepared for teaching – about 16% of the total sample.

As shown in Figure 20, the most common reason for feeling underprepared was not feeling prepared for teaching learners who are unable to keep up with the curriculum. This theme came through clearly in the interviews. Many respondents reported that they were not trained or equipped to support students who had academic difficulties and who in some cases were many years behind the curriculum. Low reading ability among learners, in particular, was mentioned as a major challenge, even among high school teachers. Compulsory grade progression, large class sizes, and not knowing how to implement differentiated assessment and teaching were mentioned as barriers to addressing learning shortfalls. The DBE was generally regarded as being unhelpful in solving this problem. One teacher reported that remedial support was not provided by the department as their school had fewer than 500 learners, while another commented that the department was more concerned with ensuring that teachers finished the ATP (Annual Teaching Plan) rather than ensuring that learners understood the content.

Figure 20: Reasons for feeling underprepared

Reason	Percentage
Not prepared for teaching learners who can't keep up with the curriculum.	71%
Not prepared for the teaching load I face.	66%
Not prepared for dealing with so many learners in my class.	53%
Did not have a good enough understanding of the subject(s) I teach.	27%
Not prepared for working in a school with such poor infrastructure/resources.	23%
None of the above	9%

Notes: This question was only asked of teachers who indicated their studies did not prepare them well for teaching, thus the sample size is 233. Proportions do not add up to 100% as respondents could select multiple options.

The majority of survey respondents also indicated that teaching workload and class size were important issues that they felt their studies had not prepared them well for. In the interviews, it was clear that large class sizes were not only problematic from a remedial perspective. Several respondents mentioned that applying the theories and teaching strategies they had learned in university was difficult in very large classes, and that it was difficult to maintain discipline in large classes. The issue of ill-discipline is expanded upon in Section 10. In addition, large class sizes add to teachers' workload in the form of more marking and associated paperwork.

By far the most common theme regarding under-preparation that emerged from the interviews was administrative work. Many teachers commented that they were not trained to complete administrative tasks, such as preparing subject files for moderation, attending meetings and workshops, filling out and submitting various forms and documents to the department, marking, and financial management – and yet these tasks take up a large proportion of their working time. Several teachers mentioned that the departmental subject advisors allocated to their schools struggled with a large workload, and as a result they often put teachers under pressure to meet departmental requirements at very short notice. A few teachers mentioned that while departmental training sessions and workshops were sometimes useful, they were nonetheless time-consuming and took away much needed teaching time.

A related issue of under-preparation was assessment. Several teachers reported that they had not been prepared for the sheer amount of marking that was required. Some also mentioned that they did not know how to mark learners' work, and one observed that he would have liked training in how to set exam papers.

Another very common theme in the interviews was classroom management. Many respondents reported that they were not taught how to deal with students when they misbehaved. They pointed to the need to be able to understand and resolve behavioural issues at a deeper level – as one teacher said, just giving detention will not necessarily solve the problem. A few expressed the

opinion that the psychology courses they did at university did not equip them with practical tools to address behavioural issues. Several observed that, at least at first, they mimicked the disciplinary strategies of teachers they had known in their youth. This can be problematic if one's own teachers did not have productive ways of managing misbehaviour. In fact, two slightly older respondents mentioned that learners now had "rights", and that the "rules" of teaching had changed, which they believed made it difficult to discipline learners. This is presumably a reference to corporal punishment, and it is telling that some teachers do not know how to manage a class without resorting to (the threat of) corporal punishment. It is also concerning if indeed young teachers are primarily learning disciplinary strategies from older teachers rather than learning more modern methods from teacher training institutions.
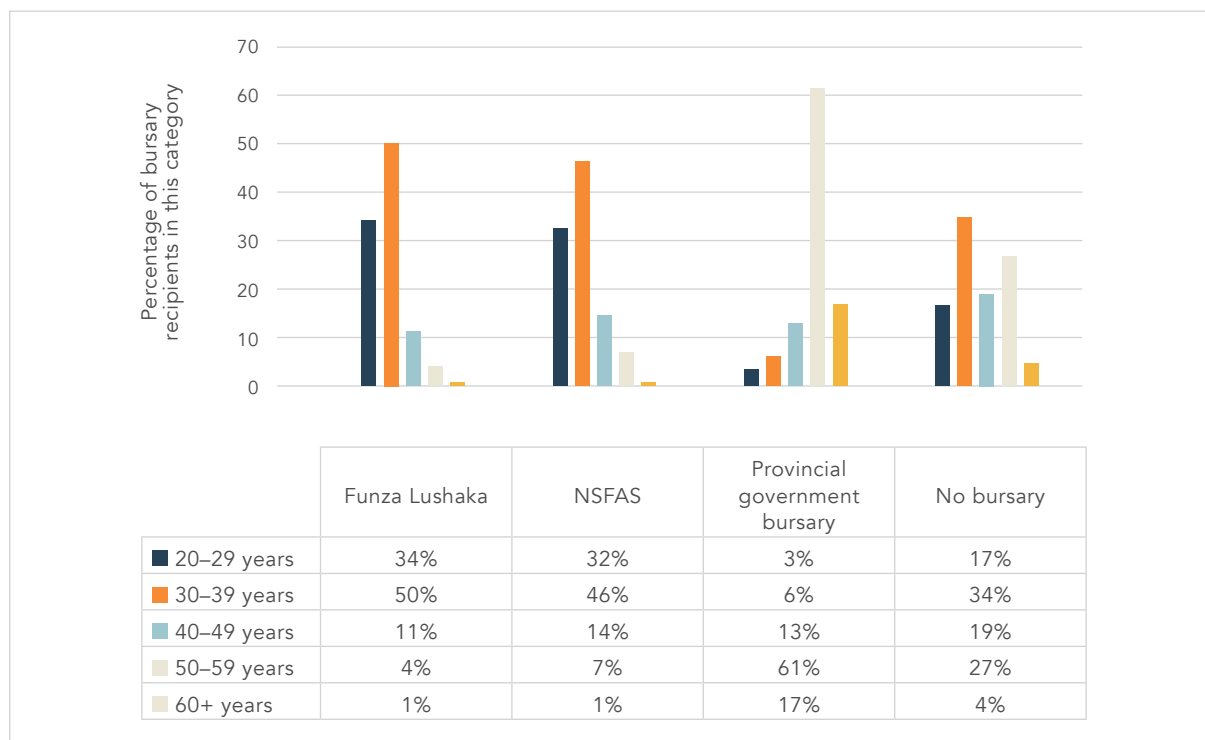
Teaching practicals during initial teacher training emerged in the interviews as a potentially powerful tool for developing young teachers. Some respondents recalled being given a great deal of responsibility during their practical training – being shown how to take register, fill in mark sheets, being required to teach a heavy workload or fill in for other teachers on short notice – which they said prepared them well for the demands of full-time teaching. However, others were not allowed this much responsibility during teaching practicals and therefore felt less well equipped when they began teaching. One teacher commented that she believed there was too much observation and too little actual teaching in her practicals, as she was only required to teach a handful of lessons each year during her initial training. It is clear that teaching practicals can provide a good opportunity to develop the expertise that is not a focus of the university training curriculum, but in order for this to happen, students must have good supervision and mentorship at schools, and the university requirements must allow for substantial hands-on teaching experience.

8. Bursary recipients

This section compares those who received no bursary at all to those who received a Funza Lushaka, NSFAS or provincial government bursary. The aim is to establish if bursary recipients (particularly Funza Lushaka recipients) are in any way different to non-bursary recipients when it comes to their motivation to become a teacher, their level of preparation, and their commitment to the profession.

To contextualise the analysis, we first examined the age distribution in each category. As can be seen in Figure 21, those who have received Funza Lushaka or NSFAS bursaries are overwhelmingly young – typically under 40, with a smaller proportion currently in their 40s, and very few aged 50 years or older. This is to be expected, for scholarships that have been introduced in the last two decades and that typically target young people.

Figure 21: Age distribution of recipients of different bursaries

|	Funza Lushaka	NSFAS	Provincial government bursary	No bursary
■ 20–29 years	34%	32%	3%	17%
■ 30–39 years	50%	46%	6%	34%
■ 40–49 years	11%	14%	13%	19%
■ 50–59 years	4%	7%	61%	27%
■ 60+ years	1%	1%	17%	4%

Notes: Sample size: Funza Lushaka 189, NSFAS 192, Provincial government 254, No bursary 666. Mean age for each group: Funza Lushaka recipient (34 years), NSFAS recipient (35 years), Provincial government bursary recipient (53 years), no bursary (41 years).

Table 18 considers differences between Funza Lushaka bursary recipients and respondents who had not received a bursary to study teaching. Results in the table show that Funza Lushaka recipients are similar to non-bursary recipients in many ways. The groups did not differ significantly in terms of gender, area of employment (rural, urban, etc.), or whether they worked at primary, high or combined schools. However, Funza Lushaka recipients were substantially more likely to work at no-fee schools (shown in Figure 22). Around half of the respondents in each group indicated that teaching was their first-choice career, and there was no significant difference between the groups either in terms of how long they intended to remain at their current school, or how long they intended to remain in the teaching profession. This might suggest that, contrary to anecdotes that "Funzas" are not committed to the teaching profession, they actually have similar career plans to other teachers. It is also possible, however, that survey respondents were generally more highly motivated than other teachers (given that survey participation was voluntary), and thus that the sample of Funza Lushaka bursary recipients represented in the survey data are more motivated than Funza Lushaka bursary recipients in general. However, this would also apply to non-bursary holders.

Table 18: Differences between Funza Lushaka bursary recipients and non-bursary recipients

	None		Funza Lushaka	
Age***	41 (mean)	11.1 (SD)	34 (mean)	7.7 (SD)
Gender				
Female	502	75%	143	76%
Male	169	25%	45	24%
Type of school				
Primary	424	63%	126	67%
High	215	32%	55	29%
Combined	34	5%	7	4%
School area type				
Metro area	212	32%	59	31%
Non-metro city/large town	123	18%	36	19%
Small town	171	25%	49	26%
Village or rural area	167	25%	45	24%
First-choice career				
No	339	51%	89	48%
Yes	326	49%	97	52%
How well prepared for first post				
Very poorly	40	6%	5	3%
Quite poorly	95	14%	30	16%
Quite well	336	50%	100	53%
Very well	198	30%	53	28%
Intended stay at current school				
1 year or less	91	14%	26	14%
2-5 years	176	27%	57	31%
6-10 years	112	17%	27	15%
Foreseeable future	269	42%	71	39%
Intended stay in teaching profession				
1 year or less	46	7%	8	4%
2-5 years	117	18%	34	19%
6-10 years	119	19%	33	19%
Foreseeable future	361	56%	103	58%
Fee status of school*				
No-fee	249	37%	96	51%
Low-fee (<R3000 p.a.)	120	18%	21	11%
Mid-fee (R3000-R20 000 p.a.)	165	25%	50	27%
High-fee (>R20 000 p.a.)	137	20%	21	11%

Figure 22: Proportions of respondents working in no-fee, low-fee, mid-fee or high-fee schools (Funza Lushaka recipients vs non-bursary recipients)
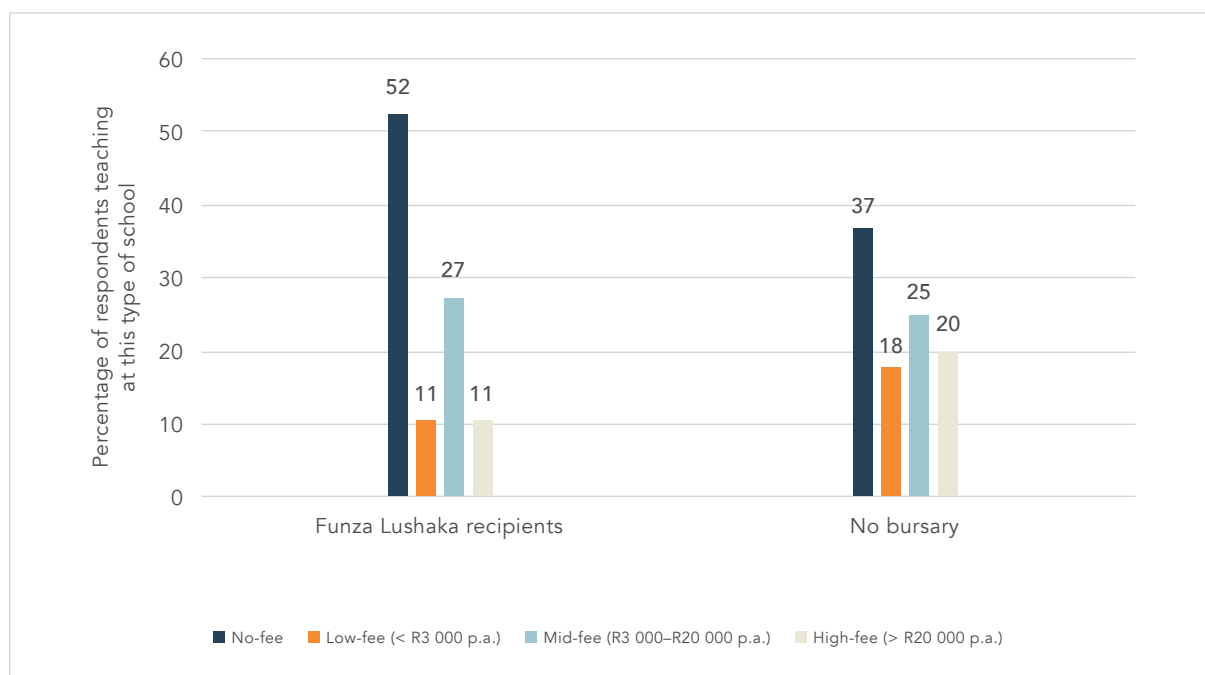
Notes: Sample size: Funza Lushaka 188, No bursary 671.

Similarly to Funza Lushaka bursary recipients, we do not observe any notable difference between NSFAS bursary recipients and non-bursary recipients (shown in Table 19). The groups did not differ significantly in terms of whether teaching was the respondent's first-choice career (just under half of each group indicated that teaching was their first-choice career), nor in whether they intend to leave their current school or to leave the teaching profession in the short-to-medium term. There is also no significant difference between these groups in terms of their propensity to work at a primary school, high school or combined school. There was a small gender difference (significant at the 10% level, p=0.07), with a slightly higher percentage of males among NSFAS recipients (32%) than among non-bursary recipients (25%).

Table 19: Differences between NSFAS bursary recipients and non-bursary recipients

	None		NSFAS	
Age***	41 (mean)	11.1 (SD)	35 (mean)	8.7 (SD)
Gender*				
Female	502	75%	131	68%
Male	169	25%	61	32%
Type of school				
Primary	424	63%	121	63%
High	215	32%	63	33%
Combined	34	5%	7	4%
School area type*				
Metro area	212	32%	43	22%
Non-metro city/large town	123	18%	28	15%
Small town	171	25%	60	31%
Village or rural area	167	25%	62	32%
First-choice career				
No	339	51%	98	52%
Yes	326	49%	90	48%
How well prepared for first post				
Very poorly	40	6%	5	3%
Quite poorly	95	14%	19	10%
Quite well	336	50%	93	49%
Very well	198	30%	72	38%
Intended stay at current school				
1 year or less	91	14%	32	17%
2-5 years	176	27%	55	30%
6-10 years	112	17%	32	17%
Foreseeable future	269	42%	67	36%
Intended stay in teaching profession				
1 year or less	46	7%	12	7%
2-5 years	117	18%	34	18%
6-10 years	119	19%	38	21%
Foreseeable future	361	56%	100	54%
Fee status of school*				
No-fee	249	37%	124	65%
Low-fee (<R3000 p.a.)	120	18%	33	17%
Mid-fee (R3000-R20 000 p.a.)	165	25%	22	11%
High-fee (>R20 000 p.a.)	137	20%	13	7%

9. Predicting the probability that teachers want to leave the profession

The availability of a relatively large sample of surveyed teachers made it possible to investigate key relationships in a multivariate context. Given the importance of teacher job satisfaction in both teacher quality and retention, we were particularly interested in the factors associated with teachers' overall levels of job satisfaction. In addition, given the large proportion of teachers who indicated a desire to leave the profession, we were interested in identifying the factors associated with this desire, paying particular attention to the role of teacher job satisfaction.

To investigate these questions, we make use of ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analysis to investigate (1) the factors associated with teacher job satisfaction and (2) the factors associated with wanting to leave the profession. Logistic OLS regression is used to estimate the latter, with the desire to leave the profession coded as a binary variable (yes/no). Results of these regressions are presented in Table 20. The middle column shows coefficients on the factors associated with levels of job satisfaction, which is standardised to have a mean of zero and standard deviation of 1. As such, coefficient values represent standard deviation changes. For example, the coefficient of -0.16 on the stress index indicates that one standard deviation increase in teacher stress is associated with 16% of a standard deviation decrease in job satisfaction. That is, teachers who report higher levels of stress report lower levels of job satisfaction, all else being equal. Similarly, the coefficient of 0.07 on female indicates that female teachers have 7% of a standard deviation higher job satisfaction than male teachers.

Interestingly, a few associations that were not significant in the descriptive analysis emerge as statistically significant when controlling for the covariates included here. For example, school fee group emerges as a significant predictor of job satisfaction in the multivariate context, with teachers in mid-fee and high-fee schools reporting higher levels of job satisfaction relative to teachers in no-fee schools. There were no statistically significant differences in reported levels of job satisfaction between teachers in different provinces, with the exception of Limpopo, where teachers reported slightly higher levels of job satisfaction[3].

The third column in Table 20 shows the probability of a respondent indicating they would like to leave the profession in the next 10 years. Coefficients are presented as odds ratios, with a value lower than 1 indicating a lower probability and a value higher than 1 indicating a higher probability of wanting to leave the profession. Job satisfaction emerges as a significant predictor, with higher job satisfaction being associated with a lower probability of expressing a desire to leave the profession. Teachers who experience more stress are also more likely to want to leave the profession, as one would expect. It is interesting to note that teachers in low-fee schools are less likely than teachers in no-fee schools to want to leave, while teachers in mid-fee and high-

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3   Relative to the reference category, namely the Eastern Cape.

fee schools are no less likely than teachers in no-fee schools to want to leave. It should be kept in mind that this result emerges in the presence of all the controls listed in the table, including teacher job satisfaction and stress. In other words, comparing two teachers with the same levels of job satisfaction and stress, the teacher in a no-fee school is no more likely than the teacher in the mid- or high-fee school to want to leave the profession.

Table 20: Regression results

	Job satisfaction (Standard deviatoins)	Desire to leave (Yes/No) (Odds ratios)
Job satisfaction index (SD's)		0.324** (5.86)
Stress index (SD's)	-0.160** (14.61)	1.254** (3.05)
Preparedness: Quite poorly	0.048 (0.79)	0.616 (1.32)
Preparedness: Quite well	0.066 (1.19)	0.662 (1.24)
Preparedness: Very well	0.099 (1.73)	0.613 (1.42)
Female	0.075** (3.03)	0.909 (0.63)
Age		
30-39 years	-0.049 (1.54)	0.973 (0.14)
40-49 years	-0.024 (0.66)	0.876 (0.57)
50-59 years	-0.025 (0.77)	3.013** (5.41)
60-69 years	0.059 (1.11)	6.782** (5.54)
Full time post	-0.010 (0.18)	1.481 (1.08)
School fee group		
Low-fee	0.049 (1.44)	0.634* (2.16)
Mid-fee	0.101** (3.09)	0.718 (1.65)
High-fee	0.190** (5.14)	0.783 (1.05)
Area type		
Large town	0.015 (0.45)	1.196 (0.88)
Small town	-0.024 (0.74)	1.398 (1.66)
Village/rural area	-0.045 (1.10)	1.690* (2.06)
Province		
Free State	0.020 (0.47)	1.234 (0.82)
Gauteng	-0.043 (1.07)	0.951 (0.20)
Kwa-Zulu Natal	-0.009 (0.21)	0.688 (1.46)
Limpopo	0.111* (2.18)	0.948 (0.17)
Mpumalanga	-0.065 (1.24)	0.832 (0.57)

(Continues on next page)

	Job satisfaction (Standard deviatoins)	Desire to leave (Yes/No) (Odds ratios)
Province		
North West	0.030 (0.51)	1.161 (0.41)
Northern Cape	0.051 (1.04)	1.342 (0.98)
Western Cape	-0.051 (1.33)	0.980 (0.08)
Constant	0.402** (4.43)	
R2	0.21	0.16
N	1,229	1,157

Notes: Asterisks indicate statistically significant associations such that * $p<0.05$; ** $p<0.01$. Standard errors calculated at the individual level are reported in parentheses. Coefficients in the third column are presented as odds ratios such that a value lower than 1 indicates a lower probability of wanting to leave the profession, and a value higher than 1 indicates a higher probability of wanting to leave the profession. Reference categories are as follows: Preparedness: Very poorly; Age: 20-29 years; Full-time post: Part-time post; School-fee group: No-fee; Area type: Metro; Province: Eastern Cape.

10. Additional insights from interviews

10.1. Learner poverty

Many teachers in South Africa, particularly those working in underprivileged areas, face significant challenges that extend beyond teaching academic content. One key theme that emerged from the interviews was the impact of poverty on both the teaching environment and learners' ability to learn. Some teachers in township and rural schools spoke of the stark contrast between well-resourced former Model C schools and the schools where they currently work, which are plagued by a range of social issues. As one teacher in a small town in the Eastern Cape explained:

> [I]n the school that I'm currently in there are a lot of social problems. So, it's not only now we are only teaching learners the content on everything, we also have to deal with the problems, the social issues that the children faced.

Multiple respondents mentioned parental abuse of children or alcoholism as some of the social problems faced by learners. Gangsterism and drug abuse were also mentioned. Teachers also encountered teenage pregnancy at their schools, with one teacher in the Free State noting that while it is more common in high schools, it also occurs in primary schools. These experiences highlight the multifaceted role of teachers in these environments, as they navigate not only academic responsibilities but also the complex social challenges their learners face daily. Perhaps because of this, several teachers emphasised the need for better access to counselling services,

not only for learners but also for educators themselves. They highlighted the emotional challenges that many learners face, often bringing their personal struggles into the classroom. One teacher from a rural school in the Northern Cape noted how learners frequently confide in them about difficult situations at home, such as parental divorce. However, the teacher pointed out that it is extremely difficult to secure a social worker or psychologist to provide the necessary support for these learners.

Some educators also expressed a desire for similar support for themselves, recognising the emotional toll their roles can take. Two teachers teaching in no-fee schools expressed the following sentiments:

> *I can tell you that on Friday we went to visit one of our children at home. You call it a home, but it's not even a home. It's really devastating. I couldn't even sleep on Friday.*
>
> *We have a lot of trauma too. Sometimes I lie awake at night thinking about children who have been taken away, and you feel guilty.*

These teachers believe that access to therapy could help address their own mental and emotional well-being, enabling them to better cope with the challenging aspects of their profession.

Poverty also affects the ability of parents to pay for school supplies like stationery, or even basic goods like clothes. Many interviewed teachers indicated that they simply paid for their learners' stationery out of their own pockets. One teacher in the Northern Cape was forced to buy pens and sell them to her learners at a discounted price because neither the school nor their parents could afford pens. She also arranged a shoe donation drive for the learners in her school, and was despondent when she only received 10 pairs of shoes which she was to distribute to the entire school of more than a thousand learners. This teacher's experience shows how learner poverty adds additional work for dedicated teachers, who spend their free time arranging food or clothes donation drives to be able to provide their learners with basic necessities. This, too, points to teachers' jobs extending beyond that of educators to taking on roles as caregivers, social workers, and counsellors.

10.2. Low achievement levels

As discussed in Section 7, many teachers indicated that they felt unprepared to teach learners who could not keep up with the curriculum. This question was investigated further in the interviews by asking teachers which skills they felt learners were lacking in particular. Reading and writing skills were mentioned by most respondents. One teacher from a no-fee school in the Eastern Cape remarked:

> *We are facing a problem where kids cannot read and write and on top of that the Department will then tell you that you must make sure that the children are passing. They need to pass. They need to progress to the next grade. But when you're telling them that this child cannot progress to the next grade due to the fact that the child is not doing any work, cannot read, cannot write, they will then tell you that the child needs to pass... So in this manner, they will now expect us to change stones to bread.*

This reflects a broader problem of learners being progressed through the grades without mastering basic skills, which exacerbates the difficulties as they move up in school. Another teacher made the point that the children in her class struggle with mathematics because they cannot read the question properly.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has only worsened this issue, with many learners falling behind, especially in their literacy development. One teacher in a mid-fee school in the Western Cape observed that even children who were not directly affected by the pandemic, like current Grade R learners, struggle with listening and concentration because they were left at home unsupervised, often in front of a screen. Despite their efforts to help learners improve, some teachers feel that more needs to be done at the systemic level to address these foundational literacy issues. A few of the teachers stated that they were not trained to deal with learners that cannot read and write.

10.3. Behavioural and socio-emotional challenges

As mentioned in Section 7, discipline and behavioural issues emerged as a significant challenge for many teachers, often hindering their ability to teach effectively. In schools across various contexts, particularly in townships and no-fee schools, discipline is perceived as almost non-existent. One teacher in KwaZulu-Natal expressed frustration with the lack of control, stating:

> The discipline [in township schools] is almost non-existent. You kind of just teach the kids that want to be taught and make sure the rest don't die.

This stark reality resonates with the experiences shared by other educators, revealing a common struggle: the inability to maintain order and engage all learners. This phenomenon creates a scenario in which teachers are compelled to focus on those who demonstrate a willingness to learn, while attempting to manage disruptive behaviours among the rest.

Interviewees' narratives vividly illustrate the daily chaos they face in the classroom. One teacher in a no-fee school in the Eastern Cape highlighted the overwhelming nature of managing aggressive behaviour, recounting:

> You need to take note of everything the kids do, like if they hit each other, or bite the teachers - believe me that has happened, I've been bitten and hit by children.

This same teacher went on to explain how the children throw bricks at each other:

> I'm actually on maternity leave at the moment, but just before I left and was heavily pregnant I literally had to hang off the child to get the brick out of his hands so he wouldn't hit someone else. And the other teachers were just staring, wide eyed.

Another teacher in a no-fee school in the North West reflected on an incident where a learner pushed her while she was eight months pregnant. These examples not only emphasise the alarming prevalence of violence in schools but also indicate that many educators are not only facing the challenge of ill-discipline but are also putting their safety on the line. The combination of aggressive learner behaviour and the lack of institutional support creates a stressful environment, where teachers often find themselves prioritising physical safety over academic engagement.

Teachers also spoke about learners with socio-emotional challenges, including conditions like ADHD, which complicate classroom management. As noted by one teacher in a high-fee school in Mpumalanga:

> I almost feel like they hand out the diagnosis like it's free candy; every second child has ADHD or ADD.

The perception of over-diagnosis among learners leads to frustration and a sense of inadequacy among teachers, many of whom feel ill-equipped to handle such diverse learner needs. Another teacher expressed frustration over children with attention span problems being placed in mainstream schools. This sentiment was echoed by a teacher in a metro no-fee school in the Western Cape who suggested that many learners placed in mainstream schools would be better suited for technical high schools or vocational training. As he put it:

> We have learners there that are supposed to have autism. Learners that are supposed to have vocational skills that are supposed to go to technical high school or FET college. But they cannot go further and study somewhere because they cannot have a bus fare, bus transport, whatever, that is, the transport fees to go there.

This lack of access to specialised schools not only limits opportunities for learners but also puts additional pressure on mainstream schools, affecting overall performance. This same teacher pointed out the challenge of implementing policies intended to direct Grade 9 learners to more suitable educational streams, noting that

> …there are not enough technical high schools here in Khayelitsha. Where are these learners going to go? Because I think almost 80 or 70% of learners in my school are supposed to go there.

These insights underscore the need for better support systems and access to appropriate educational pathways for learners with diverse needs.

The issue of socio-emotional challenges transcends mere unruliness; it often reflects broader societal problems that permeate the school environment. For example, a teacher at a no-fee school in the Eastern Cape reflected on how gangsterism influences the behaviour of learners:

You can see it clearly by the way they carry themselves, how they dress, how they speak to you. They swear at you. I've been called every word under the sun.

In some schools, teachers noted that learners engage in risky behaviours, such as drug use and experimenting with sex. Interestingly, many of the teachers believe that discipline is better in rural areas. For instance, a teacher in a North West rural school spoke about how the children in rural schools listen, but the learners at the township schools she has taught at are really hard to discipline. A teacher in a rural school in KZN also expressed the view that the discipline is better in rural areas:

Whenever you're teaching in rural areas, it's better than teaching in urban areas whereby the learners in urban areas they disrespect teachers. I'm at the place where, a rural area [inaudible] where they show respect every time. It's better than in the townships.

A teacher at a no-fee school in the Eastern Cape reflected on the reasons why the discipline is better in rural areas:

I feel like when it comes to discipline, respect, I feel like people from rural areas, learners are groomed you know. Let me suggest children are groomed in that respectful manner of the real life, where you find grandparents teaching the children the values that they were taught when they were growing up even themselves.

Discipline issues in schools significantly influence teachers' job satisfaction and their decisions to remain in the profession. For many educators, a supportive discipline environment enhances their ability to teach effectively, as highlighted by one teacher who stated, "I feel that my current school's discipline is better, and I am better able to teach because the children have better manners." Another teacher in the North West wanted to be at her school because, "the discipline was very good". In contrast, previous experiences with poor discipline have either prompted some teachers to consider resigning or leaving the profession entirely. One teacher in Mpumalanga, for instance, shared that "in previous experience, [she] resigned because the bad discipline was an issue for [her]." Another teacher in a Mpumalanga no-fee school stated that she would only consider proceeding with teaching if she could find a better school:

I don't know whether you will relate to that, but what I've realized is that a number of learners in our black township schools, they are in school because they have to be at school, not because they want, not because there is something that is pushing them. So like the problems that we're experiencing is that you struggle teaching them … About 80% of the learners, they don't care about school.

The overwhelming burden caused by managing learner behaviour can lead to fatigue, as expressed by another teacher in a rural school in the North West:

*You spend all your time begging learners to write, begging them to do their work...
So that's tiring.*

Several teachers expressed feeling unprepared to manage discipline effectively, particularly as they are not adequately trained in alternatives to corporal punishment. As a teacher in a low-fee school in the Western Cape explained:

Of course, we really cannot administer corporal punishment. We also do not want to administer corporal punishment. But then if they could just, you know, advise us on ways to deal with discipline at our school, especially at our township schools.

Even when teachers are aware of alternatives, these alternatives are not always practical. For instance, a teacher in a low-fee school in the Easter Cape stated:

We know that it's not legal for you to use corporal punishment. We all know that. But you find that sometimes with the kids it's not really possible to use alternatives. Let's say you want to take them for detention and then you find that the people have sports. – "I want to have the kids for sport" -. So it's very difficult to do that. Like, get detention in their location schools and you find that some of the kids are staying in farms that are very far away. So if they do not catch that bus then there's gonna be problems.

This leaves teachers with limited options to enforce boundaries, making it difficult to maintain classroom order.

Moreover, some teachers pointed out that their training programmes placed more emphasis on subject content and understanding how learners learn, rather than equipping them with strategies for managing classroom behaviour. One teacher in Gauteng noted that during their teaching practicum, they did not encounter significant discipline issues because they were always under the supervision of another teacher, who managed the classroom environment. As a result, they felt unprepared when they transitioned into their own classrooms, facing discipline challenges independently for the first time. This gap in training leaves many teachers uncertain about how best to address misbehaviour, especially when conventional methods like detention are not feasible.

10.4. Parental involvement

Several teachers face significant challenges with parental involvement, experiencing either a complete lack of support or instances of overbearing behaviour. A teacher in a rural school in the Western Cape explained how she

… sent a letter every month for the parents to come... and they just never pitched up. I don't even know what most of them look like... They say they don't have time, this and that, the school is too far away … The children who are excelling are the ones whose parents are showing up.

Another teacher in a no-fee school in the Eastern Cape explained how learners "will live with a grandma, and the grandma doesn't know what they are up to, or is too old to come to the school, and things like that."

A few teachers also shared experiences of more hostile interactions with parents. For example, one teacher in a mid-fee school in the Western Cape recalled a situation where, after addressing a child's disrespectful behaviour, "[the parent] roll[ed] her eyes at [her] and pull[ed] her middle finger". Another teacher described the growing trend of parents airing grievances publicly, saying:

> Yes, and these days parents will take to social media, some parents have no tact, or they will insult the school, or attack you for how you coached hockey. And for someone like me, who has the children's best interest at heart, I wonder if they even think about how I feel about it? Me, who puts in the hours and walks the extra mile for your child?

Other teachers refer to "helicopter parents" "who are always looking to make trouble" and who make phone calls to teachers after hours. A teacher in a mid-fee school in KwaZulu-Natal reflected on her experience at a school she had worked previously:

> We formed WhatsApp groups to run sports events and things like that, and through that, [the parents] obviously got our contact details and they were allowed to make suggestions personally after hours, before hours whenever. So that was a major red flag for me. At my current school no parent should ever have your number.

10.5. Collegial environment and school management

Some teachers expressed concerns about school management, highlighting issues such as favouritism, uneven workloads, and a lack of support among managers and staff. These challenges can negatively affect morale and the overall working environment within schools.

A few teachers brought up favouritism in their accounts. One teacher in the Eastern Cape described experiencing tribalism at a previous school, where staff were treated differently based on their background:

> I prefer [this school] because, first of all, it's close to where I live and secondly, it's not tribal. There's no tribalism, because in the first one there was too much tribalism, we're discriminated according to where you are coming from.

Another teacher in a small town in the North West spoke about unequal treatment during routine activities like morning briefings, stating:

> ...you will be scolded at in front of everyone. Because you're the least favourite and then somebody else who is the favourite would arrive later than you had arrived, and that person would not get called at all.

These instances of preferential treatment sometimes contribute to a divisive atmosphere among staff.

Additionally, some of the teachers raised concerns about the uneven distribution of workloads. One teacher in a mid-fee school in Gauteng pointed out that while some manage multiple extra-mural activities, others contribute little, yet salary differences are based solely on years of service:

> ...there are teachers that get paid a lot more than me because they've been doing it longer, but I do 5 or 6 extra mural activities and they don't do anything. That feels unfair, because you're putting in so many more hours.

Other teachers shared how they take on more responsibility because their co-workers are either not capable or unwilling to do their part. As one teacher in a mid-fee school in the Western Cape explained it, "it's one of those things if you don't do the work yourself, it doesn't get done properly". This imbalance can lead to resentment, as those taking on additional responsibilities feel undervalued and overburdened.

Some teachers also highlighted a lack of support and collaboration between experienced and newer staff members. One teacher in a low-fee school in the Eastern Cape described feeling that experienced colleagues were reluctant to share important information, referring to this behaviour as "gatekeeping," and noting that "they don't want to share or they don't feel comfortable giving some of the responsibility to some of the new teachers." Others noted that the older teachers in their school are resistant to change, unwilling to adopt new technologies or update their teaching practices. This lack of support and openness is seen as a barrier to creating a more collaborative and progressive teaching environment.

Beyond favouritism and workload distribution, other general school management issues were brought up, including poor leadership and a lack of effective oversight. Some teachers noted that leadership positions were often filled through connections rather than merit, leading to ineffective management. As one teacher in a no-fee school in Mpumalanga observed:

> I've realised … normally people are elected to leadership because they are related to some other people, not because they are qualified or because they are capable, so you will find that the entire school is struggling because it is led by people who are clueless.

The perception of unqualified leaders can contribute to a sense of frustration and a lack of direction among staff.

Teachers also mentioned issues with micromanagement, inconsistent leadership, and a lack of support for teachers facing personal challenges. One teacher described a situation where management was unsupportive, even when a colleague was dealing with severe stress:

She ended up like having to check herself in a psychiatric ward and the principal was like, you know what, can you meet me outside in the parking lot, I've brought your June exam for you to mark. She's like, 'I'm medically booked off,' but there's no one else to mark it.

Another teacher in a mid-fee school in the Free State lamented the lack of a strong leader in their school. "There isn't a principal willing to take charge, and it's organised chaos at the moment."

These accounts underscore the various challenges stemming from ineffective management, including a lack of supportive leadership, micromanagement, and decisions that overlook the well-being of staff. Such issues can create a challenging work environment and make it difficult for teachers to perform their roles effectively.

10.6. District and Department support

Teachers frequently expressed frustrations with the level of support they receive from the DBE and district authorities. These issues include unrealistic expectations, administrative burdens, poor communication, lack of understanding of the challenges faced at the school level, and a tendency to criticise rather than provide assistance.

One challenge that some of the teachers mentioned is the unrealistic expectations from the department, particularly around curriculum implementation and performance. As one teacher explained, the department often proposes initiatives without fully considering the practical needs of schools and learners:

They want to implement certain things at the foundation phase that just isn't useful, or not ideal... sometimes [they] want to skip some of those building blocks to reach a result faster.

Another teacher in a low-fee school in the North West described how the department is always pressuring teachers to improve pass rates:

They set goals, like they want you to have a 100% pass rate at all costs, they don't care if you are teaching well or working hard, they just want 100% pass rates.

This pressure for rapid results can undermine the efforts of teachers who are working hard to build a solid foundation for their learners.

Another common concern is the administrative load placed on teachers, often with short deadlines and inadequate preparation time. One teacher in a mid-fee school in Gauteng provided a number of examples:

We were covering a topic with the matrics until the middle of August, only to get an email from the department in the holidays saying we had to be finished with it by the end of July, which means we have to squeeze two weeks of content in somewhere, which is very unrealistic for matrics, because they have a lot going on and still need to excel. Or they would ask you where you are on your syllabus, then you get an email from another person asking [inaudible], then you fill in seven forms for the same thing. Or the department tells you to do an assessment on a certain date but the exam people want you to do it on a different day. They don't communicate amongst themselves. I send out letter after letter to the parents about changing dates, and all those things add up.

This constant barrage of tasks detracts from classroom time and adds unnecessary stress to an already demanding job.

The lack of timely communication and follow-through from department officials was also highlighted. One teacher in a low-fee school in Limpopo described an instance where they were asked to submit files with little notice, but months later, the files had not been returned:

They will only give us a couple of days' notice that our files need to go into the department... now it's the third term and I still haven't gotten my file back. They keep saying 'it's coming, it's coming,' but you can call them daily and the files don't arrive."

Such delays hinder teachers' ability to plan and execute their work effectively, leaving them feeling unsupported by the system.

In addition, many teachers feel that the department is too critical, and fails to provide practical support. One teacher from a no-fee school in the Eastern Cape expressed their frustration with the lack of genuine support, saying:

I would want more support from the department, rather than criticism. It's easy to say do this, do that, why are the results not good enough. But come here for a day, try yourself! We had someone from the department coming in on Saturdays to teach Life Sciences, and the results didn't improve at all. He didn't come again ... But the department will still ask us why we are doing so badly, and then won't send us enough money for the feeding scheme, or they send it a month or two late... So they criticise but don't help."

Other teachers have complained that the departmental staff do not fully grasp the realities of teaching on the ground. As one teacher in a rural school in the Western Cape put it:

The people at the top aren't working with the children, they aren't getting the bowl of porridge thrown in your face, you don't get the ugly language… So I want the people at the top to come here, live the reality.

Overall, these insights reflect a gap between policy and practice, where decisions made at the departmental level do not always align with the needs and realities of teachers on the ground. As a result, some teachers feel overburdened, underappreciated, and sometimes alienated from the very system that is meant to support them.

10.7. Transport

Time taken to commute to school and lack of availability of transport was raised in the interviews as a significant factor compromising respondents' job satisfaction. Although results from the survey indicate that small proportions of teachers have long commutes (see Table 21), those who do have to travel far to get to work indicated that this was a major frustration, with many teachers comparing their current school to previous schools citing travel time and the availability of transport as a major reason for preferring their current position. Table 21 further shows that a much higher proportion of teachers in rural areas spend more than an hour travelling to work (9%) compared to teachers in non-rural areas (1-2%).

Table 21: Time taken to travel to work, by area type

	Metro area	Non-metro city/large town	Small town	Village or rural area	Total
Less than 10 minutes	27%	42%	48%	26%	35%
10-20 minutes	34%	30%	29%	27%	30%
20-30 minutes	23%	14%	12%	16%	17%
30-40 minutes	9%	9%	5%	13%	9%
40-60 minutes	5%	5%	3%	8%	5%
More than an hour	1%	1%	2%	9%	3%

Notes: Sample size 1495.

11. Discussion

The results presented in this report shed light on the experiences of South African teachers, and have the potential to inform policies aimed at improving teacher job satisfaction and retention. While the questionnaire items aimed at gauging teachers' levels of job satisfaction reveal a similarly high level of reported job satisfaction among this sample of teachers as documented in the nationally representative TALIS survey, the fact that roughly half of teachers indicated a desire to leave the profession in the next 10 years suggests levels of job satisfaction are lower than responses to questionnaire items explicitly asking about job satisfaction would suggest. Of course, whether these teachers actually leave the profession is dependent among other things on whether they manage to find jobs in other professions, which makes it unlikely that we will

see such a large extent of pre-retirement teacher attrition in the next 10 years. Nonetheless, the fact that so many teachers expressed a desire to leave the profession points to widespread dissatisfaction among South African teachers, echoing qualitative findings presented by Kruger, Hompashe and Swelindawo (2024).

We are able to expand on these results by presenting quantitative evidence of the factors influencing teacher job satisfaction, and to what extent job satisfaction is associated with the desire to leave the teaching profession. Results from the OLS regression analysis reveal that, as one would expect, teachers who experience more stress on the job report lower levels of job satisfaction. Controlling for other factors, teachers in mid-fee and high-fee schools also report higher levels of job satisfaction than teachers in no-fee and low-fee schools, despite the evidence presented throughout this report that teachers in mid-fee and high-fee schools seem to experience more pressure to deliver excellent results. Findings from the interviews suggest that learner poverty and discipline issues in no-fee and low-fee schools may partly explain the lower levels of job satisfaction among teachers in these schools.

Results from the survey reveal that teachers generally have a preference for teaching in urban areas. It is worrying that half of teachers currently working in rural areas rated this type of area as their least preferred, indicating that these teachers are unhappy living in these areas. At the same time, the qualitative interviews revealed that there are some teachers who prefer rural areas, with these teachers stating that working in these areas allows them to make a contribution to society by impacting on the lives of rural children. It should be noted that most of these teachers had grown up in rural areas themselves, and therefore did not express the same reservations about rural life as teachers who had not grown up in rural areas.

An important finding from both the survey and interviews is that teaching is an extremely demanding job, made more so by the caregiving role that many teachers have to take on in circumstances where learners do not receive adequate support at home. As society at large increasingly recognises the importance of mental health for human flourishing, the negative mental health effects reported by 30% of teachers should be taken seriously.

11.1. Policy implications

The findings presented in this report have a number of implications for policy. These are outlined below.

1. Consider incentives to move to rural schools.

71% of teachers rated rural areas as their least preferred type of area, suggesting that incentives may have to be introduced if we are to ensure that rural schools are able to fill their teaching posts. While financial incentives were rated as the top incentive that would draw teachers to rural areas, this is unlikely to be reintroduced as a policy option given that financial incentives for rural teachers have recently been discontinued. Results from the survey reveal that other incentives that would draw teachers to rural areas include subsidised accommodation, teaching assistants, school fee subsidies for their children, and community orientation programmes. There is much scope for government to consider some of these incentives as options for attracting teachers to rural schools.

2. Lessen the administrative burden faced by teachers.

Results from both the survey and interviews reveal that administrative duties form a large part of teachers' workload, and contributes to their sense of overwhelm. From a policy perspective, there is a clear need to review the administrative responsibilities of teachers with the view to reducing these to only those that are crucial for effective school management. Expanding the national teaching assistant programme may also be an effective policy solution for lessening teachers' administrative burden, as teaching assistants could take on some of the administrative tasks currently completed by teachers.

3. Provide mental health support for both teachers and learners.

Evidence of teachers having to extend beyond their role as educators and acting as caregivers, social workers and counsellors suggests that there is a great need for these professionals among learners, especially those from socio-economically disadvantaged homes. Providing this type of support to teachers is also crucial, given the demands placed on them by the profession.

4. Train teachers in practical remedial teaching strategies.

Addressing learning backlogs that accumulate as learners move through school without mastering the curriculum emerged as a challenge faced by many teachers. Low reading ability, even among high school learners, was often mentioned as a particular challenge. In addition to improving the teaching of reading in the Foundation Phase, there is therefore a clear need to equip teachers with strategies for supporting learners with major learning backlogs.

5. Include classroom management strategies in ITE programmes.

It is clear from the interviews that dealing with behavioural problems in the classroom significantly detracts from teaching time. This is especially the case in large classes. A possible response to this would be to include training in classroom management in ITE programmes.

12. Conclusion

As the national and provincial education departments prepare for upcoming teacher shortages, it is important to consider the voices of in-service teachers regarding their experiences, preferences, and challenges. The results from both the survey and interviews presented in this report suggest that while teachers have a clear preference for working in urban areas, there are some teachers who would be willing to work in rural areas, provided they received certain benefits such as housing subsidies and community orientation programmes. While it is clear from the results presented in this report that teaching is a demanding job that often impacts negatively on teachers' mental health, interviews with teachers provide insight into the kind of support that would improve teachers' job satisfaction, including the provision of training for dealing with large classes and learning backlogs, and the provision of professionals such as counsellors and social workers in schools, particularly those serving impoverished communities. It is crucial that these suggestions are taken seriously if we are to attract and retain highly motivated and dedicated teachers in the teaching profession.

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