

Teachers among happiest professionals

October 29 2020



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The wellbeing and mental health of teachers in England is similar to those in other professions and teachers are less likely to report feelings of 'low self-worth', according to new research from academics at the UCL Institute of Education.

The paper, published in BERA's Review of Education and funded by the

Nuffield Foundation, looked at data from more than 60,000 teachers in England collected over the last decade. The study, which is the first to compare the [wellbeing](#) of such a large number of teachers to other professional groups, found that teachers had similar levels of anxiety, unhappiness and life satisfaction to other professional groups.

Overall, the study found that 22% of secondary and 20% of primary teachers were unhappy, compared to figures of 21% and 23% for demographically similar individuals working in other professional jobs. Relatively few primary (5%) and secondary (7%) teachers had low levels of self-worth, compared to around 11% for other professional workers.

The situation was even brighter for headteachers, who were found to be happier, have higher levels of life-satisfaction and were more likely to feel that their life is worthwhile than other occupational groups.

Co-author of the study, Professor John Jerrim (UCL Social Research Institute) added: "A myth seems to have emerged that teachers have worse mental health and lower levels of wellbeing than other groups. Our study provides clear, comprehensive evidence that this simply isn't true. On the whole, teachers have similar levels of wellbeing to other professional employees."

Co-author, Dr. Sam Sims (UCL Centre of Education Policy and Equalising Opportunities) added: "We should be encouraging graduates into the teaching profession, and not lead them to believe becoming a [teacher](#) is bad for your mental health. Like all jobs, teaching has its challenges—but not the excessively bad picture we sometimes hear about."

Of the other professional groups included in the study, authors and writers, graphic designers, journalists and solicitors were found to be amongst the most anxious and with the lowest levels of reported self-

worth.

On the other hand, accountants, IT professionals and Human Resources (HR) workers were amongst the happiest, least anxious and with high levels of [life satisfaction](#).

The researchers note that the data they used in the analysis was collected before the COVID-19 pandemic hit the UK. It is not yet known at a detailed level how this has affected the wellbeing of different occupational groups.

Cheryl Lloyd, Education Programme Head at the Nuffield Foundation said: "By helping us to better understand the well-being and mental health of teachers compared to other professions over the past decade, this research can inform how we talk about teaching as a career path. However, it remains important to identify the causes of work-related anxiety and to offer mental health support to existing and new school leaders and teachers. Indeed, as previous research from this project has shown, anxiety has increased amongst headteachers since lockdown."

Researchers based their analysis upon data gathered from 11 large-scale surveys collected over the last decade. Within these surveys, teachers and other professionals were asked questions about their wellbeing and mental health. This included subjective measures, as well as some surveys about prescription of anti-depressant medication. The study authors analysed this large amount of data to provide the largest and most comprehensive assessment of how the [mental health](#) and wellbeing of teachers compares to other professional groups to date.

More information: John Jerrim et al. How does the mental health and wellbeing of teachers compare to other professions? Evidence from eleven survey datasets, *Review of Education* (2020). [DOI: 10.1002/rev3.3228](#)

Provided by University College London

Citation: Teachers among happiest professionals (2020, October 29) retrieved 27 April 2024
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