

Australian study finds teachers want respect

October 24 2022, by Sue Smethurst



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Education experts are calling on the public and policy makers to show more respect for teachers following a landmark study from Monash University which revealed 70% of Australian teachers don't feel that the teaching profession is respected or appreciated by the public.

The Australian Teachers' Perceptions of their Work Report 2022 is a comprehensive national survey of more than 5,000 [teachers](#) nation-wide.

The key findings of this year's report reveal:

- 7 in 10 teachers do not feel respected by the Australian public
- 1 in 4 teachers do not feel safe at work
- Less than 14% of teachers report their workload is manageable
- Teachers who feel satisfied with their role has dropped from 65.9% to 45.8% since 2019
- Teachers want a voice in policy making

Alarming, between the 2019 and 2022 surveys, teachers' satisfaction with their roles has dropped from 65.9% to 45.8%, with only 3 in 10 teachers planning on staying in the profession, despite a strong sense of belonging to the vocation.

The report's lead author Dr. Fiona Longmuir, Lecturer in Educational Leadership at Monash University's Faculty of Education, says these findings highlight the need for Australians to change the way they interact with, and talk about teachers, if we are to retain them in the profession and address critical workforce shortages.

"These results are a wake up call for us all. They highlight the urgent need for systemic action and personal change. Teachers play a critical role in shaping our shared future, they deserve the utmost respect and appreciation, and that includes having a place at the table when it comes to policy making," Dr. Longmuir says.

The need for respecting teachers as people and professionals was a key theme among the survey respondents, noting the way we talk about teachers directly impacts how they feel about their work. Seven in ten teachers don't feel respected by the Australian public and these feelings

are more likely to impact teachers as their careers progress.

Further, less than 10% of teachers feel respected by politicians.

"Teachers are qualified professionals, we need to respect them as people and professionals, trust them to do their jobs and create safe workplaces to ensure we not only retain them, but encourage others into the profession," Dr. Longmuir says.

This report, which is co-authored by Dr. Beatriz Gallo Cordoba, Associate Professor Michael Phillips, Associate Professor Kelly-Ann Allen and Dr. Mehdi Moharami, builds on research from 2019 in which teachers highlighted a variety of challenges in respect to their workload, and their perceived respect.

"Our current research found that 7 out of 10 teachers don't feel respected or appreciated, despite the fact that [a 2019 survey](#) suggested there were high levels of respect for teachers and a follow up [survey in 2020](#) found that levels of respect improved due to teachers' responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. The current disconnect highlights a gap between what we think and how we behave," says Dr. Longmuir.

Additional pressures addressed in the 2022 report included complexity of the learning, behavior and social needs of children and [young people](#), an increasing burden of administration and data collection tasks, limited support from school and system leadership, and an overloaded curriculum.

More than 38,000 comments were received in response to the survey with teachers offering practical solutions to retain staff and create positive change including:

- reducing administrative workload

- a reduction in class sizes
- employing more staff (including staff with expertise to support complex student needs)
- higher expectations of students and parents
- more value placed on teachers and the profession articulated through public platforms and symbolized by increased salaries.

"Teachers want to do the best for children and young people, they are highly skilled, caring and incredibly dedicated to improving the lives of their students, but they are burdened by extreme workloads and excessive accountabilities and compliances and it's driving them away," says Dr. Longmuir.

"Teachers are the backbone of our community. We need to prioritize respect for this highly valuable workforce and respect takes many forms. We must appreciate our teachers, advocate on their behalf, and enable their voices to be heard at the policymaking table," Dr. Longmuir says.

Encouragingly, despite the current challenges facing the industry, 8 in 10 teachers still felt a strong sense of belonging to the profession, particularly from their relationships with other teachers, school staff and students.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, 4,030,717 students are enrolled in 9,581 schools across Australia. The average student to teaching staff ratio for all schools was one teacher to every 13.3 students.

More information: Australian Teachers' Perceptions of Their Work in 2022: www.monash.edu/perceptions-of-teaching

Provided by Monash University

Citation: Australian study finds teachers want respect (2022, October 24) retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2022-10-australian-teachers-respect.html>

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