

Survey finds US teachers are less satisfied with their pay than most working adults

September 12 2023



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Sixty-six percent of U.S. teachers who responded to a new, nationally representative RAND Corporation survey said their base salary was inadequate, compared with 39% of U.S. working adults. These teachers

want a \$17,000 increase in base pay, on average, to feel that their pay is adequate.

This equates roughly to a 27% pay increase, which is comparable to the estimated gap in pay between teachers and other similarly college-educated workers, also known as the "teacher pay penalty."

In early 2023, RAND researchers surveyed public-school teachers about how [salary](#) and work hours affect intentions to leave their jobs and relate to well-being. Researchers also conducted a parallel survey of working adults to provide context for teachers' responses.

"Most teachers feel overworked and underpaid, but we didn't know what teachers considered to be fair pay or how the amount of their desired pay is related to cost of living and the working conditions in their schools," said Elizabeth D. Steiner, lead author of the report and a policy researcher at RAND, a nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization. "Teachers at all levels of experience said they deserved higher pay, suggesting the importance of raising pay across the salary schedule."

Low salary and long working hours were the top-ranked reasons why teachers said they were considering leaving their jobs as well as commonly reported job-related stressors. The researchers found that dissatisfaction with pay was strongly related to dissatisfaction with weekly hours worked.

The survey also found that, during the [school year](#), teachers worked more hours per week, on average, than all working adults—53 hours compared with 46. About one of every four hours teachers worked per week was uncontracted and uncompensated.

"The survey shows that pay, hours worked and working conditions are interrelated, suggesting that pay increases alone—without improvements

in working hours or conditions—are unlikely to bring about large shifts in teachers' well-being or intentions to leave the profession," said Ashley Woo, co-author and an assistant policy researcher at RAND.

Black teachers were also more likely than White teachers to consider leaving their jobs, potentially threatening recent gains in racial and [ethnic diversity](#) in the teacher workforce. Black teachers reported working more hours per week, receiving slightly lower base salaries, and being less satisfied than White [teachers](#) with their [base salary](#).

The authors recommend increasing teacher pay, reducing hours worked—particularly uncontracted and uncompensated hours—and improving working conditions to boost teacher retention.

Another author of [the report](#), "All Work and No Pay—Teachers' Perceptions of Their Pay and Hours Worked: Findings from the 2023 State of the American Teacher Survey," is Sy Doan, associate policy researcher at RAND.

Provided by RAND Corporation

Citation: Survey finds US teachers are less satisfied with their pay than most working adults (2023, September 12) retrieved 22 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2023-09-survey-teachers-pay-adults.html>

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