

# Why Teachers are Leaving the Classroom

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## Summary

K-12 education is the most crucial part of one's life and development. It is not only supposed to teach the basic curriculum surrounding mathematics, writing, reading and comprehension, but also acts as a child's first experience working with and around others. Meaning that the teachers have an immense responsibility to teach and guide these students. However, as time passes more and more teachers are leaving the education system, with some going into more administrative roles, becoming substitute teachers or advisors, or completely leaving the classroom altogether. This report's objective is to look into why teachers are leaving the classroom, and find solutions the government can take, as well as, what parents and students can do to alleviate these issues.

## National Center for Education Statistics 2012 Survey

This 2012 survey was conducted with graduating educators from 2007-2008 teaching K-12 and why those teachers were leaving. As you can see, there is a percentage instead of a numerical value of teachers leaving the education system, this is because of the restricted

nature of these teacher surveys. The National Center for Educational Statistics has always kept datasets regarding educators/teachers closed off to the public. The main reason for this is so the teachers feel safe sharing their experiences honestly with no chance of retaliation from their respective school boards. This is also because of the type of information they give in their surveys from sex, year of graduation, the state they are teaching in, and a lot more personal information that could be used to pinpoint at least which county a specific teacher may be teaching in. This is why the data is seen as a percentage rather than a numeric value. Also, you can see that if you were to add every bar from the graph together, it would add higher than 100%. This phenomenon is due to these options being picked more than once, where each participant may have selected more than one option to describe why they left the education system.

### Why are Teachers Leaving the Classroom? (2012)

Source: NCES Survey 2012 (<https://nces.ed.gov/datalab/table/library/detail/10893>)



Figure 1: Why teachers are leaving the education system separated by reason for leaving and the percentage of teachers that chose each option, sometimes choosing more than one option.

Although the highest percentage for leaving are the most vague answers, being personal reasons and other reasoning, there is a good chance that teachers were dissatisfied with some aspect of the education system. The highest dissatisfaction comes from their salary and benefits. According to NCES the average salary of a school teacher was around \$56,000 whereas the national average salary was around \$61,000 (adjusted for 2024 inflation). Also, these are just averages meaning that a lot of teachers weren't even making the \$56,000 average so the exodus of teachers does make sense especially in a highly stressful job shown in the teachers leaving due to workplace conditions. Where almost a quarter of the teachers who left showed dissatisfaction with the career as a whole and a smaller percentage wanting to return to school for a different career path.

Even with this data being more than 10 years old, a lot of these sentiments are the reason why teachers are leaving the education system today or going to private schools. There is just more support and resources for teachers and job security at these private schools. If they are not leaving the profession altogether for a different career path such as one with better pay or even less stress.

## Teacher Satisfaction 2015-2016 Survey

In 2015 NCES surveyed teachers from all 50 states and the District of Columbia to find teacher salary satisfaction. Just as before, we are provided a summary of the data rather than an actual dataset, however, in this case there was a better provided explanation to why they use percentages. To make sure teachers were the only ones answering these surveys, NCES asked for names, addresses, and identifying information about the school they taught at so the data couldn't be fabricated or tampered with. These datasets would have hundreds if not thousands of teachers that could be identified, even after their names and identities were scrubbed out in lieu of an identification number only certain employees in NCES with clearance can access these datasets. To replace a numeric value there is a total percentage of teachers who 'agreed' or 'disagreed' with the survey questions presented and those answers were turned into figures as such:

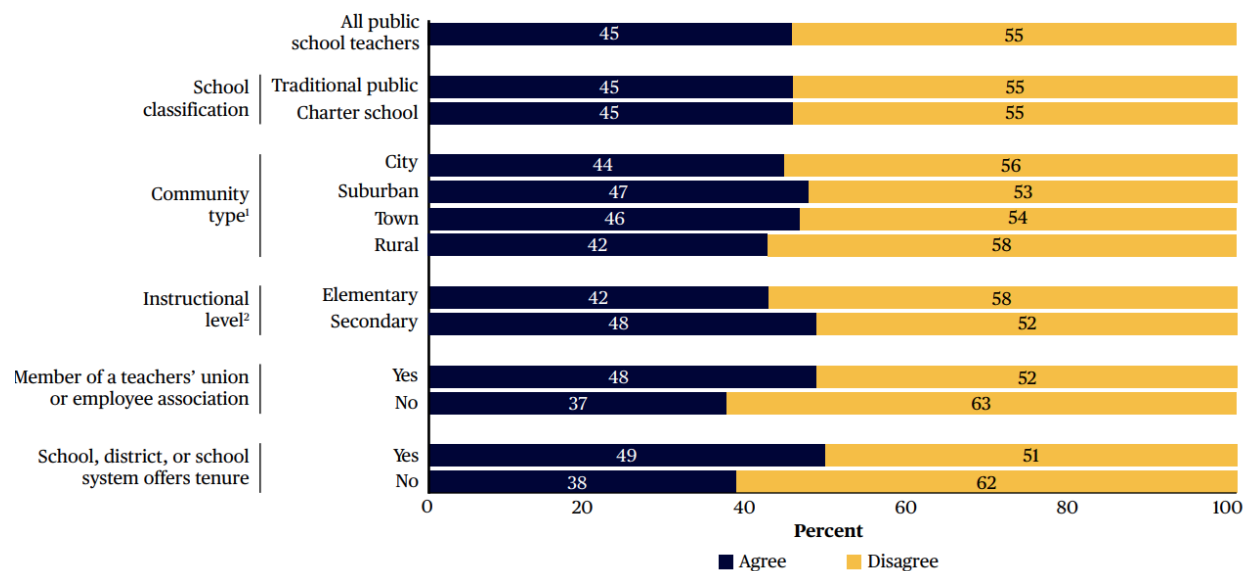


Figure 2: Public school teacher percentages who agree or disagree that they are satisfied with their salary and sorted by certain characteristics

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), "Public School Teacher Data File," 2015–16.

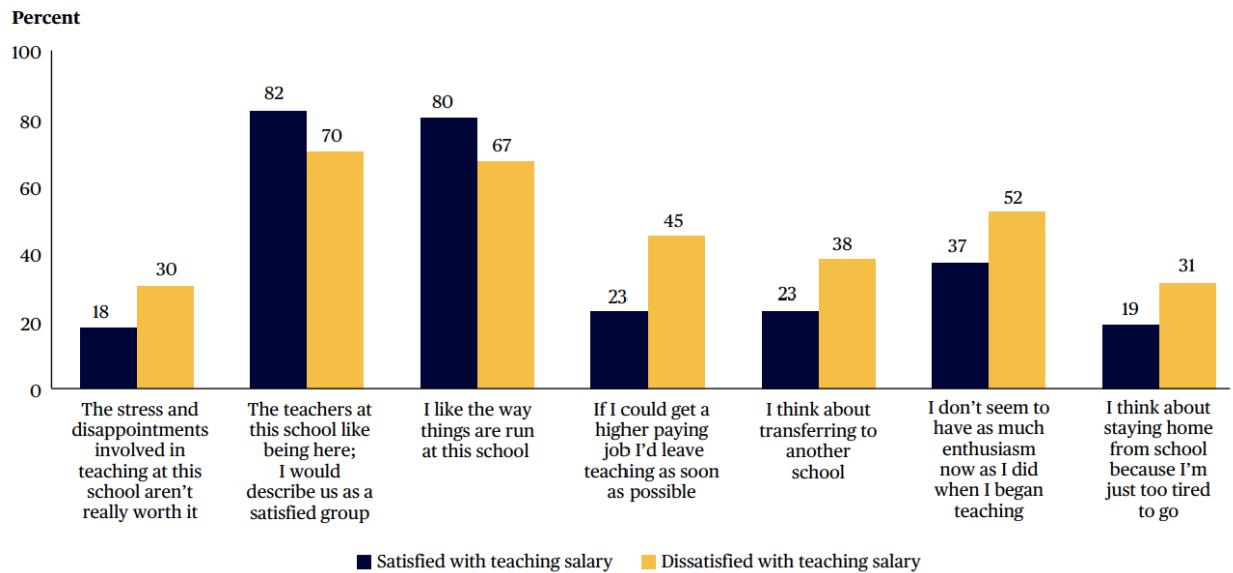


Figure 3: Percentage of public school teachers who agree with certain statements about the teaching profession, sorted depending on their previous answer for salary satisfaction

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), "Public School Teacher Data File," 2015–16.

Salary satisfaction at face value seems to almost be a 50/50 split in Figure 2, however, when comparing every teaching situation there is not one instance where a majority of teachers are satisfied with their current salary. The highest percentage of teachers that agree that their salary is satisfactory are teachers who are teaching older kids in secondary schools and those who work in institutions that offer tenure positions (i.e. extreme job security). These were only the highest percentage of satisfaction of salary however, and it didn't even consist of 50% of the teachers who responded.

Figure 3 displays seven unique statements teachers had the option to choose if they agreed with it and were categorized depending on the previous question of if they were satisfied with their salary. Two statements that a majority of teachers picked was that they liked their environment and how things were run at each of their schools. Although the highest percentage of teachers picked these two statements, this isn't to deal with Salary or the actual education curriculum, but rather the environment other teachers and the school itself has built. It can be pointed out that any statement that relates to leaving the education system or dissatisfaction with the job is led by teachers who state that they are not satisfied with their salary. These teachers do not believe they are being compensated for fairly with the amount of work given and the little resources provided by the education system. Finally, looking at the

statement '*I don't seem to have as much enthusiasm now as I did when I began teaching*' is led by those who weren't satisfied with their salary (52%), but 37% of teachers who were satisfied with salary also agreed that they no longer have that same enthusiasm. Over a third of teachers who were satisfied with their salary still were losing the passion of teaching over the years, which could be caused by burnout, little to no support from the school board, or even just becoming tired of school itself and the lack of respect from students or even parents.

The summarization write-up did talk lightly about the average teacher being in the educational system for around 15 years, and compared that to the US average of how long a person lasts at a specific job is more around 5 years per the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Meaning that teaching is a profession that people can be passionate about, however, burnout is a real possibility.

## Conclusion

Even with all of this information, the only solid evidence is what teachers are going through and not the why. We would need more articulation on why teachers are not satisfied with their jobs and why they aren't getting the salary they believe they deserve. I say this as there are many strikes persisting throughout the United States with teachers refusing to go back to the classroom unless better pay and resources are established. Although it would be easy to say that raising the salary would alleviate all of these issues, that is only one part of the problem. As shown in *Figure 2*, many teachers are actually satisfied with their salary, but may have other reasons for quitting or wanting a different career. We need to look at this in more ways than one not just for our teachers, but the next generation of students.

## Appendix

Classroom Stock Photo:

“School Images.” Adobe Stock, VasyL,

[https://stock.adobe.com/search?k=school&asset\\_id=374849081](https://stock.adobe.com/search?k=school&asset_id=374849081).

NCES 2012 Survey:

U.S. Department of Education. “Table 8: WHY TEACHERS LEAVE: Among graduates who had taught at the K–12 level since receiving the 2007–08 bachelor’s degree, percentage who were not teaching in 2012, and of those graduates, percentage who reported one or more reasons for not teaching in 2.” National Center for Education Statistics, NCES, 2012,

<https://nces.ed.gov/datalab/table/library/detail/10893>

NCES 2012 Teacher Salary Average:

National Education Association, Estimates of School Statistics, 1959-60 through 2012-13; and unpublished tabulations. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, National Income and Product Accounts, tables 6.6B-D, retrieved November 2, 2011, from <http://www.bea.gov/iTable/iTable.cfm?ReqID=9&step=1#reqid=9&step=1&isuri=1>. (This table was prepared April 2013.)

2012 Median Salary in America:

U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, 1990 Summary Tape File 3 (STF 3), "Median Household Income in 1989," retrieved May 12, 2005

(<https://www.census.gov/hhes/www/income/data/historical/state/state1.html>); Decennial Census, 2000, Summary Social, Economic, and Housing Characteristics; Census 2000 Summary File 4 (SF 4), retrieved March 28, 2005

([http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=DEC\\_00\\_SF4\\_PCT089&prodType=table](http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=DEC_00_SF4_PCT089&prodType=table)); and American Community Survey, 2005 through 2012. (This table was prepared December 2013.)

2015-2016 Teacher Satisfaction:

National Center for Education Statistics. “Teacher Satisfaction With Salary and Current Job.” National Center for Education Statistics at IES, 2021,

<https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2018/2018116rev.pdf>.