10 YEAR EDITION



Teacher Wellbeing Index 2026

Education Support

This is our tenth year of the Teacher Wellbeing Index.

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This research series provides an evidence base on the experiences of education staff in the UK. It strengthens our policy work and helps us call for change at a Government level.

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Teacher Wellbeing Index 2026

We would like to thank **Charlie Behrens** for the design of this report and **Simon Ellis** for the photography.

We would also like to thank **Honor Gray**, **Ella Mintz**, and **Sophie Webb** from **YouGov**.

The Teacher Wellbeing Index 2026 is based on a survey of **3,155** teachers and education staff working across the UK. Fieldwork took place between the 11th of June and 9th of July and was carried out by **YouGov**. Datasets are weighted to be representative of the education workforce.

Findings are reported for three groups of staff: school teachers, senior leaders and support staff. Where relevant, we also compare staff by education phase: early years, primary, secondary, sixth form, further education, and vocational/adult education.

Most findings are shown as percentages. Differences in percentages always refer to a percentage point increase or decrease. Some findings, such as wellbeing scores and ratings out of **10**, are also shown as mean (average) scores. Differences in these are reported in points on their relevant scale.

Where a difference is statistically significant, this is marked with a ♦. If no ♦ is shown, the difference is indicative only.

In some cases, graphs do not add up to **100%**. This is due to rounding.

Full details on the methodology, including the research aims and links to Education Support's previous Teacher Wellbeing Index reports, can be found in Appendix A.

Contents

Foreword 5

Key findings 7

1. The challenges in 2026 8
2. Mental health of education staff 9
3. Measuring wellbeing 10
4. Spotlight themes 11

Worth remembering: a decade of data 13

Chapter 1: Teacher Wellbeing Index 2017-2026: A ten-year view 15

1.1 Stress across the workforce 17
1.2 School and college support for staff 19
1.3 Organisational culture 21
1.4 Symptoms of pressure 23
1.5 Wellbeing of teachers and education staff 26

Sample profile 31

Chapter 2: The wellbeing of education staff in 2026 32

2.1 Stress 33
2.2 Organisational support 35
2.3 Organisational culture and wellbeing 36
2.4 Mental health and work 39
2.5 Workforce wellbeing 42
2.6 Job satisfaction 45

Sample profile 48

Chapter 3: Spotlight themes 50

3.1 Safeguarding 52
3.2 Financial stability 58
3.3 Relationships 61

Sample profile 65

Conclusions 68

Recommendations 69

Appendices 72

A. Methodology 73
B. Sample profile 75
C. Measuring subjective wellbeing: Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale 76
D. Measuring personal wellbeing 79
E. Measuring workplace wellbeing 82

Foreword

Things sometimes can get better, it seems. There has been a meaningful increase in the proportion of staff who feel that their school or college is supportive of colleagues with mental health problems, up from **41%** in 2019 to **54%** in 2026. This demonstrates that improvement is possible.

That said, this is the only sustained improvement of the past decade. Around three quarters of staff are stressed, poor wellbeing is pervasive and burnout continues to rise. Better support can help people when they're struggling, but it doesn't stop them struggling in the first place. This is why the next decade must be about effective prevention.

> "It is not my vocation to be stretched so thinly that I'm not effective at work and I'm not as effective as I want to be at home."
>
> Teacher, secondary school, 2026

This matters beyond the staff themselves because their wellbeing shapes what happens in classrooms. Staff wellbeing is linked to learner outcomes[1], and poor wellbeing is one of the main reasons people give for leaving the profession[2]. Attrition is costly in the least well-resourced communities: teacher turnover is higher, and teacher experience is lower, in disadvantaged schools than everywhere else[3]. From this perspective, poor educator wellbeing looks like a regressive tax on learners. This isn't just something that would be nice to fix some day - it's a fundamental obstacle to social justice.

Educator wellbeing matters for many reasons. At the most basic level, employers have a duty to protect staff from harm. The harm arising from teacher stress and poor wellbeing is predictable. The Health & Safety Executive (HSE) has acted on work-related stress in the Higher Education sector[4], and is encouraging all employers to treat stress like any other workplace hazard[5].

1. Harding, S. et al. (2019) 'Is teachers' mental health and wellbeing associated with students' mental health and wellbeing?', Journal of Affective Disorders, 242, 180—187.
2. Department for Education (2025) Working Lives of Teachers and Leaders: wave 4 — research report (summary report November 2025).
3. Cardim Dias, J., Jiménez, E. and Zuccollo, J. (2025), Closing the Workforce Quality Gap: Experience, expertise and stability in disadvantaged schools, London: Education Policy Institute. Published April 2025. https://epi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/EPI-Report-workforce-quality-gap.pdf
4. Weightmans (2026) How the HSE's recent actions against the University of Birmingham highlight the growing issue of workplace stress and employer responsibilities in managing risks. https://www.weightmans.com/media-centre/news/from-guidance-to-enforcement-hse-steps-up-enforcement-action-on-workplace-stress/
5. HSE (2026) HSE ebulletin. Stress awareness month 2026: Take action to prevent work-related stress. https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKHSE/bulletins/4103e8e

The cost to our system of elevated sickness absence and staff attrition is more than a rounding error on education budgets. **53%** of work-related ill health in education is due to stress, depression or anxiety and the rate of staff suffering from work-related ill health is significantly higher statistically than for workers across all industries in Great Britain[6]. The HSE estimates that work-related ill health in the education sector has cost around **£2.0bn** in the 2023/24 academic year[7].

> "We are in school either physically or mentally 24 hours a day. We spend the entire time dedicating ourselves to the children and to being the best we can be. But nobody can do that alone."
>
> Teacher, primary school, 2026

38,600 full-time equivalent teachers left the state sector in 2024/25[8].It has been estimated that it costs **£92,000**[9] to train a replacement teacher: retaining just **1,000** more teachers each year would save around **£90 million** in training costs alone. This is equivalent to a year of professional supervision for over **100,000** educators.

When we began this work in 2017, we didn't expect a ten-year Index series. As we look to the 2030s, we are committed to strengthening the research with a clearer wellbeing framework and an improved sample. Our participants come from an opt-in panel, so there is a risk that some self-select because of a particular interest in wellbeing. Our ONS4 results are broadly in line with the Department for Education's own survey[10] of teachers, which recruits participants differently. This gives some reassurance that self-selection is not substantially distorting our findings.

Notwithstanding its limitations, the Index is one of the most consistent sources of evidence on educator wellbeing in the UK and beyond, capable of highlighting trends over time. The combination of validated instruments (e.g. WEMWBS and ONS4) and inquiry derived from our direct work with education staff provides insight into the experience of the workforce that is not routinely available elsewhere.

We ask governments and employers to work with us to learn from these findings and build a healthy workforce for every classroom.



Sinéad Mc Brearty
Chief Executive Officer

6. HSE (2025) Education statistics in Great Britain, 2025. https://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/assets/docs/education.pdf
7. ibid., 17.
8. Department for Education (2025) School workforce in England. https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england/2025
9. Sims, S. and Benhenda, A. (2022), The effect of financial incentives on the retention of shortage-subject teachers: evidence from England, CEPEO Working Paper No. 22-04, London: UCL Centre for Education Policy and Equalising Opportunities. https://repec-cepeo.ucl.ac.uk/cepeow/cepeowp22-04.pdf
10. Department for Education (2026) Working Lives of Teachers and Leaders: wave 4 — research report (summary report November 2025) https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/693bdc426a12691d48491e9b/Working_lives_of_teachers_and_leaders_wave_4_summary_report.pdf

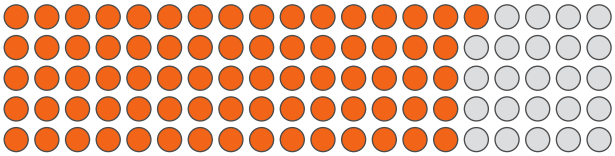
Key findings



Education Support

1. The challenges in 2026

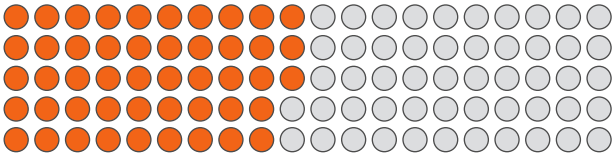
76%



of all staff are **stressed** **(no change on 2025)**

85%♦ of senior leaders **(–1% on 2025)**
75% of school teachers **(–1% on 2025)**

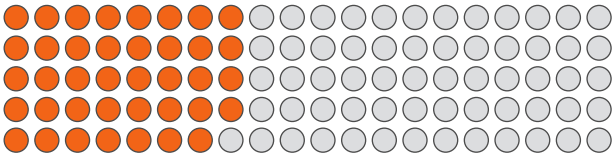
48%



of all staff consider **their organisation's culture has a negative effect on staff's mental health and wellbeing** **(–1% on 2025)**

47% of senior leaders **(+2% on 2025)**
49% of school teachers **(–2% on 2025)**

39%



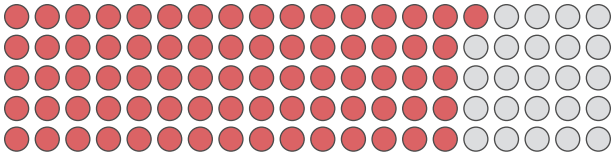
of all staff say their organisations **do not support employees who have mental health and wellbeing problems well** **(–1% on 2025)**

39% of senior leaders **(+4% on 2025)**
43% of school teachers **(–1% on 2025)**

♦Statistically significant difference between senior leaders and school teachers.
Change since 2025 shown in percentage points.

2. Mental health of education staff

76%*

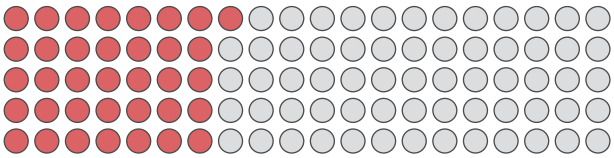


of all staff **experienced physical, psychological or behavioural symptoms due to their work** (−1% on 2025)

81% of senior leaders **(+3% on 2025)**

77% of school teachers **(−1% on 2025)**

36%

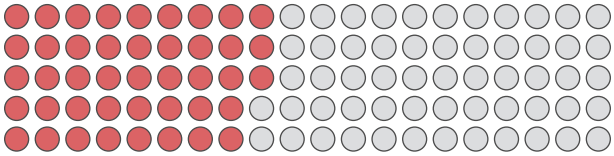


of all staff **have experienced a mental health issue in the past academic year** (+2% on 2025)

35% of senior leaders **(+2% on 2025)**

37% of school teachers **(+1% on 2025)**

43%

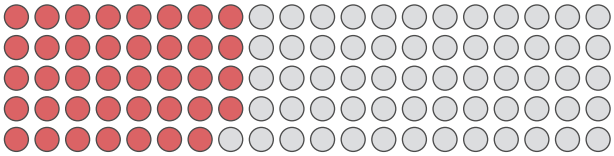


of staff with symptoms felt (or someone else suggested to them) that their symptoms could be signs of **anxiety** (no change on 2025)

40% of senior leaders **(+4% on 2025)**

45% of school teachers **(−1% on 2025)**

39%

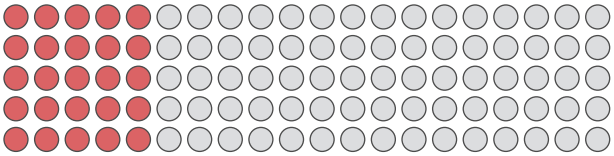


of staff with symptoms felt (or someone else suggested to them) that their symptoms could be signs of **burnout** (+3%♦ on 2025)

44%♦ of senior leaders **(+3% on 2025)**

38% of school teachers **(+1% on 2025)**

25%



of staff with symptoms felt (or someone else suggested to them) that their symptoms could be signs of **depression** (+2% on 2025)

19%♦ of senior leaders **(+3% on 2025)**

27% of school teachers **(+1% on 2025)**

*Excludes respondents who preferred not to answer the question.
♦Statistically significant difference between senior leaders and school teachers.
Change since 2025 shown in percentage points.

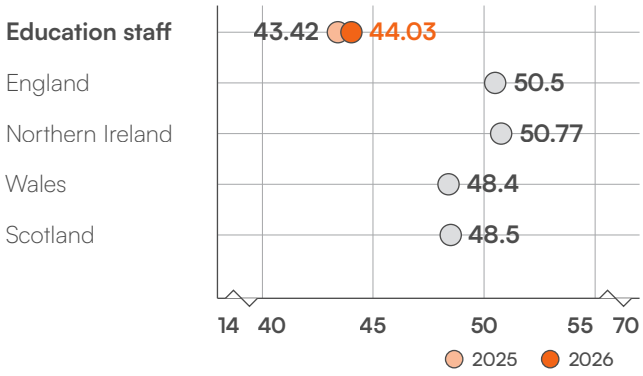
3. Measuring wellbeing

Subjective wellbeing: Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS)

44.03 Education staff WEMWBS score
(43.42 in 2025)

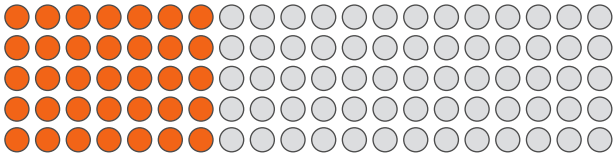
44.28 for senior leaders **(43.44 in 2025)**
43.66 for school teachers **(43.30 in 2025)**

Average score compared with national populations



Sources: National population mean scores from the Health Survey for England 2024 (age 16+); Scottish Health Survey 2024; National Survey for Wales 2024—25; Health Survey Northern Ireland, first results 2024/25.

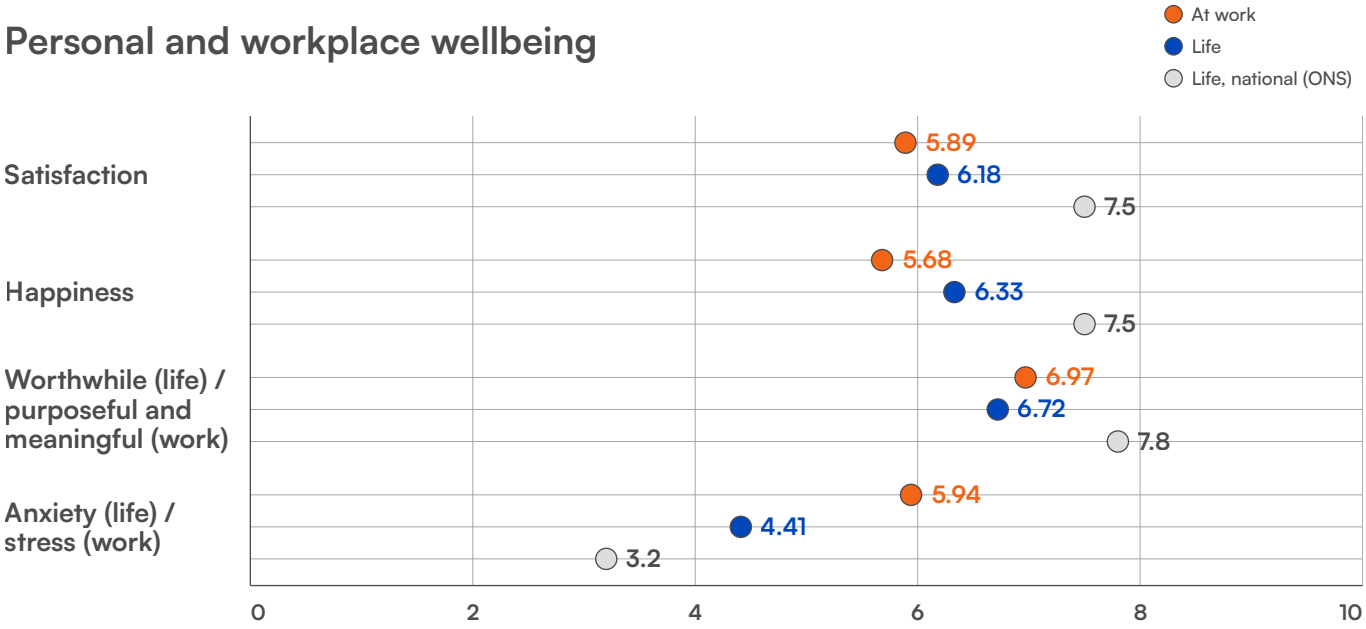
35%



of all staff had a score associated with **probable depression** **(36% in 2025)**

34% of senior leaders
36% of school teachers

Personal and workplace wellbeing

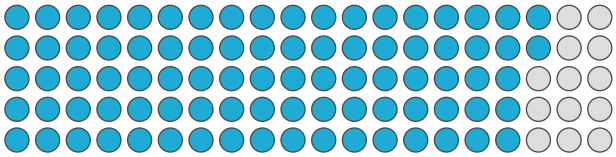


For anxiety and stress, 0—1 indicates very low levels, 2—3 low, 4—5 medium and 6—10 high.

4. Spotlight themes

Workplace relationships

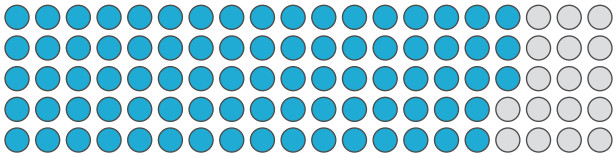
87%



of all staff rate **their relationships with colleagues** as very or quite good

90%♦ of senior leaders
86% of school teachers

83%

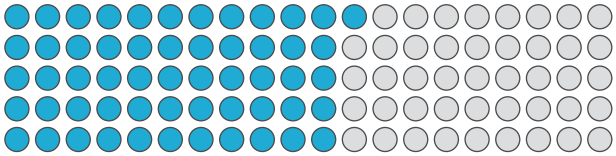


of all staff rate **relationships with the wider school community** as very or quite good

88%♦ of senior leaders
82% of school teachers

Financial stability of school or college

56%



of all staff are **concerned about the financial stability of their school or college**

64%♦ of senior leaders
55% of school teachers

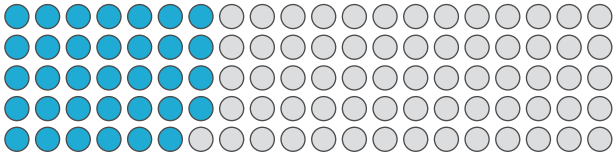
62%*



of the 56% who are concerned say **this affects their mental health and wellbeing** a lot or somewhat

61% of senior leaders
61% of school teachers

34%*



of all staff say **pupil numbers have fallen** at their school or college in the last five years

40% of senior leaders
34% of school teachers

33%



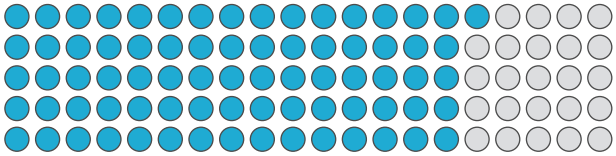
of the 34% who report falling rolls think it is **quite or very likely their school or college will merge or close**

34% of senior leaders
33% of school teachers

*Excludes respondents who preferred not to answer the question.
♦Statistically significant difference between senior leaders and school teachers.

Safeguarding

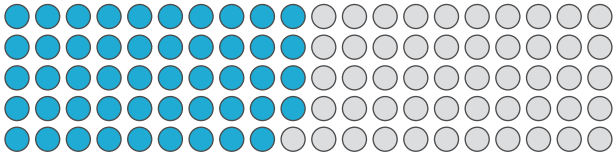
76%*



of all staff think **their school or college has done enough to keep pupils safe**

85%♦ of senior leaders
72% of school teachers

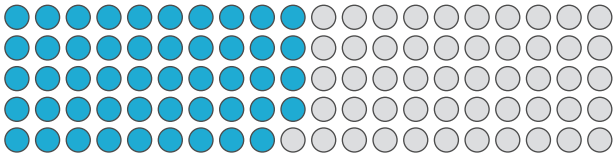
49%



of all staff say there is **too little staff time for direct contact with pupils at risk**

60%♦ of senior leaders
48% of school teachers

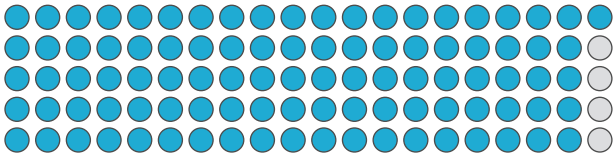
49%*



of all staff **experienced at least one safeguarding disclosure from a pupil** in the past academic year

65%♦ of senior leaders
47% of school teachers

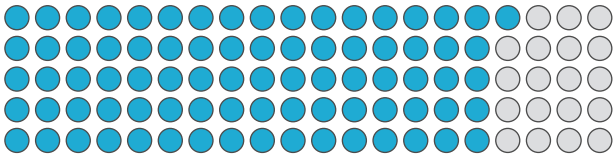
96%*



of those who experienced a disclosure **felt equipped to respond**

97%♦ of senior leaders
95% of school teachers

81%*



of those who experienced a disclosure **felt able to make a difference for the pupil**

85%♦ of senior leaders
79% of school teachers

*Excludes respondents who preferred not to answer the question.
♦Statistically significant difference between senior leaders and school teachers.

Worth remembering: a decade of data

A lot of people think about leaving the profession

Every year from 2017 to 2022, more than half of education staff had considered leaving because of pressures on their mental health and wellbeing (**53**—**59%**). Volume of workload was consistently the most common reason.

Teacher Wellbeing Index 2021 p.6 (2017—2021 trend table);
Teacher Wellbeing Index 2019 p.45;
Teacher Wellbeing Index 2022 p.34

Educators work long hours

Around a third of all staff (**33**—**37%**), and two-thirds or more of senior leaders (**66**—**70%**), worked more than 51 hours a week on average, though almost none were contracted to. In 2025, **63%** of staff said they had too many things to do and not enough time for at least three-quarters of their working time, rising to **81%** of senior leaders.

Teacher Wellbeing Index 2019 p.24;
Teacher Wellbeing Index 2020 p.28;
Teacher Wellbeing Index 2021 p.25;
Teacher Wellbeing Index 2025 p.10

Behaviour in classrooms

In 2024, **57%** of staff said pupils had become more disruptive in lessons. Of staff who had seen more challenging behaviour, **82%** said it harmed their mental health and wellbeing.

Teacher Wellbeing Index 2024 pp.34, 41

Trust of/from line managers matters

In 2021, fewer than half of staff (**44%**) felt fully trusted by their line manager to do their job well. In 2022, **88%** of staff who felt distrusted had considered leaving, compared with **54%** of those who felt trusted.

Teacher Wellbeing Index 2021 pp.7, 28-29;
Teacher Wellbeing Index 2022 p.38

Inspection takes a toll

In 2023, **71%** of staff said inspections harm staff mental health and wellbeing, rising to **82%** of senior leaders. Nearly three-quarters (**73%**) said inspections are not fit for purpose.

Teacher Wellbeing Index 2023 pp.38—39

Loneliness at work

In 2023, **14%** of education staff always or often felt lonely at work. In England, at **15%**, that is twice the rate in the general population measured at the same time (**7%**).

Teacher Wellbeing Index 2023 pp.30—32

Few safe spaces

In 2020, just **8%** of staff had access to supervision as a safe space to discuss issues.

Teacher Wellbeing Index 2020 pp.6, 55

The job goes far beyond teaching

In 2024, **69%** of staff who deal with public bodies such as CAMHS and social services said they received little or no support from them for their pupils. In 2025, **73%** of staff helped pupils manage their emotions, and almost a third (**32%**) provided food for pupils who had none.

Teacher Wellbeing Index 2024 p.51;
Teacher Wellbeing Index 2025 p.55

Not confident to speak up

Nearly six in ten staff (**57—60%**) were not confident telling their employer about unmanageable stress or mental health problems.

Teacher Wellbeing Index 2019 p.60;
Teacher Wellbeing Index 2020 p.53;
Teacher Wellbeing Index 2021 p.79;
Teacher Wellbeing Index 2022 p.15

Coming in when unwell

Around half of staff (**45—49%**) felt compelled to always come to work when unwell, rising to more than half of senior leaders.

Teacher Wellbeing Index 2019 p.54;
Teacher Wellbeing Index 2020 p.29;
Teacher Wellbeing Index 2021 p.25;
Teacher Wellbeing Index 2022 p.12

Chapter 1

Teacher Wellbeing Index 2017-2026: a ten-year view



Education Support

Education Support has been collecting annual data about staff mental health and wellbeing for the last ten years. Over **3,000** teachers and education staff have taken part in the Teacher Wellbeing Index survey each year since 2019, giving us one of the most consistent pictures of the profession's mental health in the UK. Alongside the questions we ask every year about stress, workplace support, symptoms and mental health, each Index has also explored something new.

The first surveys in the series, in 2017 and 2018, were smaller and so we do not include them in the comparisons in this chapter.

Topic focus each year

2018 – Violence and threats at work

2019 – WEMWBS wellbeing scale*

2020-21 – Covid-19 and burnout

2022 – Safeguarding, pastoral care and abuse from pupils

2023 – Loneliness and Ofsted inspections

2024 – Challenging behaviour from pupils and parents

2025 – Time poverty and the cost of living

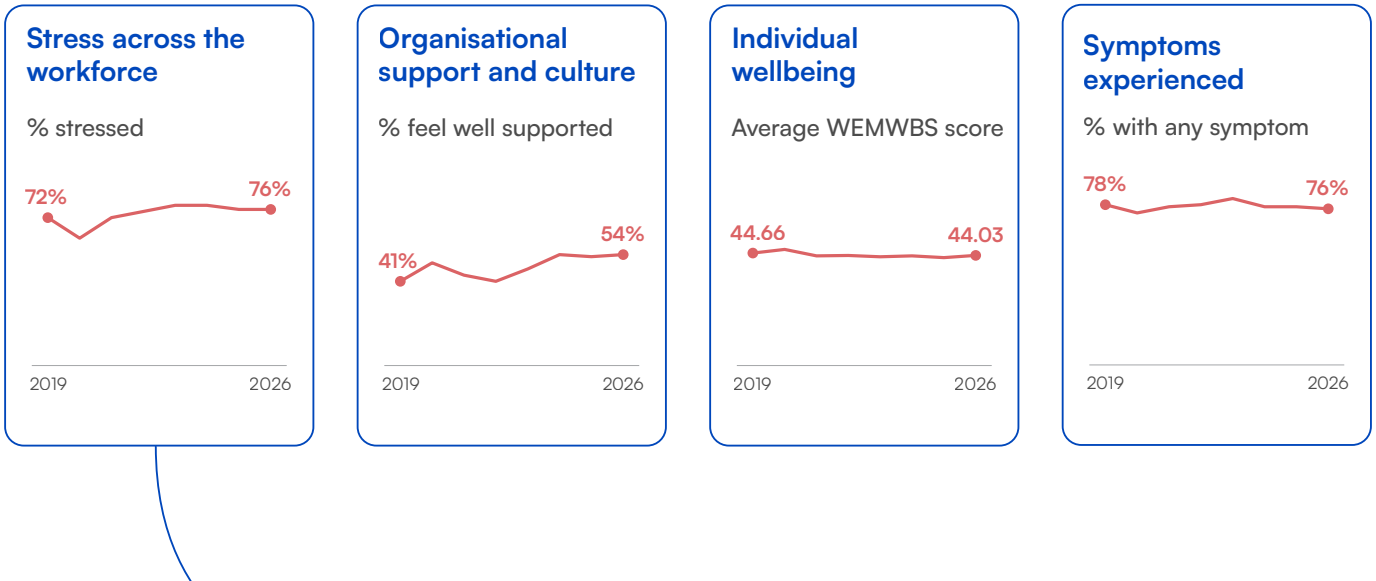
2026 – Safeguarding, relationships at work, and financial stability of school or college

*The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS)

10 years in a nutshell

The clearest pattern across the past decade is of a workforce stuck at a high plateau of stress and compromised wellbeing. Overall wellbeing, the impact of local organisational culture, and symptom prevalence, have moved only marginally and have settled at an undesirable level.

This chapter traces that pattern from five perspectives: stress across the workforce, organisational support, culture, mental health symptoms and individual wellbeing.



1.1 Stress across the workforce

Why do we investigate this?

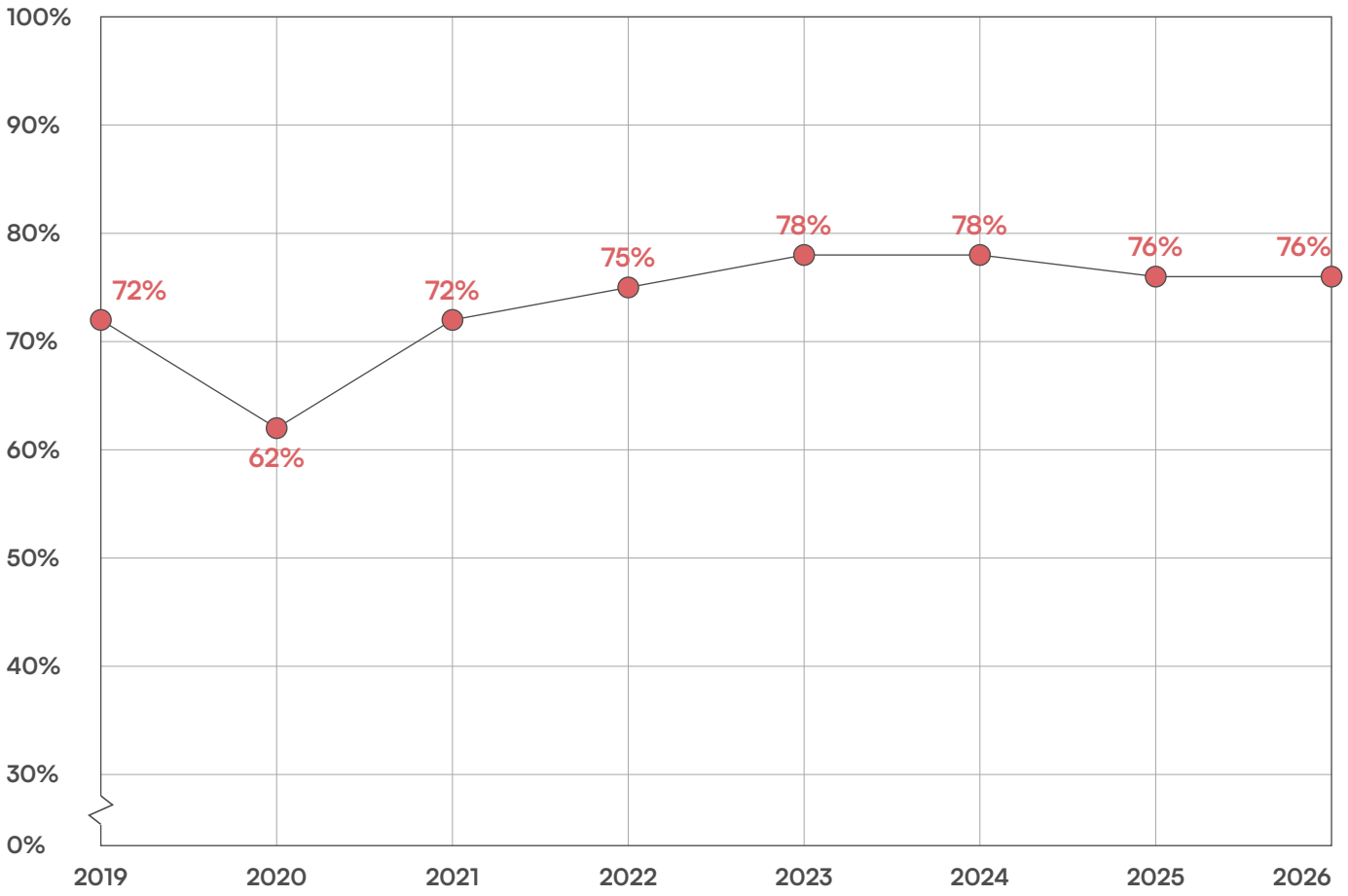
Stress is associated with reduced teacher health (physical and mental), reduced job satisfaction and can affect a teacher's ability to do their job[1]. It is also negatively related to student achievement[2, 3]. Experiencing long-term or severe stress can lead to physical, mental and emotional exhaustion, often called "burnout[4]."

Stress is stuck at a high level

For eight years, we have asked the same question about stress at work, on a scale from **1** (not at all stressed) to **4** (very stressed). The chart below shows the percentage of staff who said they felt stressed[5] each year.

Percentage of staff reporting stress from work, 2019—2026

Fig. 1.1



1. Education Support and Education International. (2024). Teacher well-being: A global understanding. Education Support; Education International.
2. Madigan, D. J., & Kim, L. E. (2021). Does teacher burnout affect students? A systematic review of its association with academic achievement and student-reported outcomes. International Journal of Educational Research, 105, Article 101714. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2020.101714
3. Klusmann, U., Richter, D., & Lüdtke, O. (2016). Teachers' emotional exhaustion is negatively related to students' achievement: Evidence from a large-scale assessment study. Journal of Educational Psychology, 108(8), 1193—1203.
4. Maslach, C., Schaufeli, W. B., & Leiter, M. P. (2001). Job burnout. Annual Review of Psychology, 52, 397—422. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.52.1.397
5. Stressed: staff who selected either "very" or "somewhat" stressed.



Stress amongst education staff **in 2026 is four points higher than in 2019** (72% to 76%), slightly below the 2023-24 peak of 78%.

Stress levels have changed little across roles over the decade, with **senior leaders reporting the highest levels of stress throughout** (**85% in 2026**).

1.2 School and college support for staff

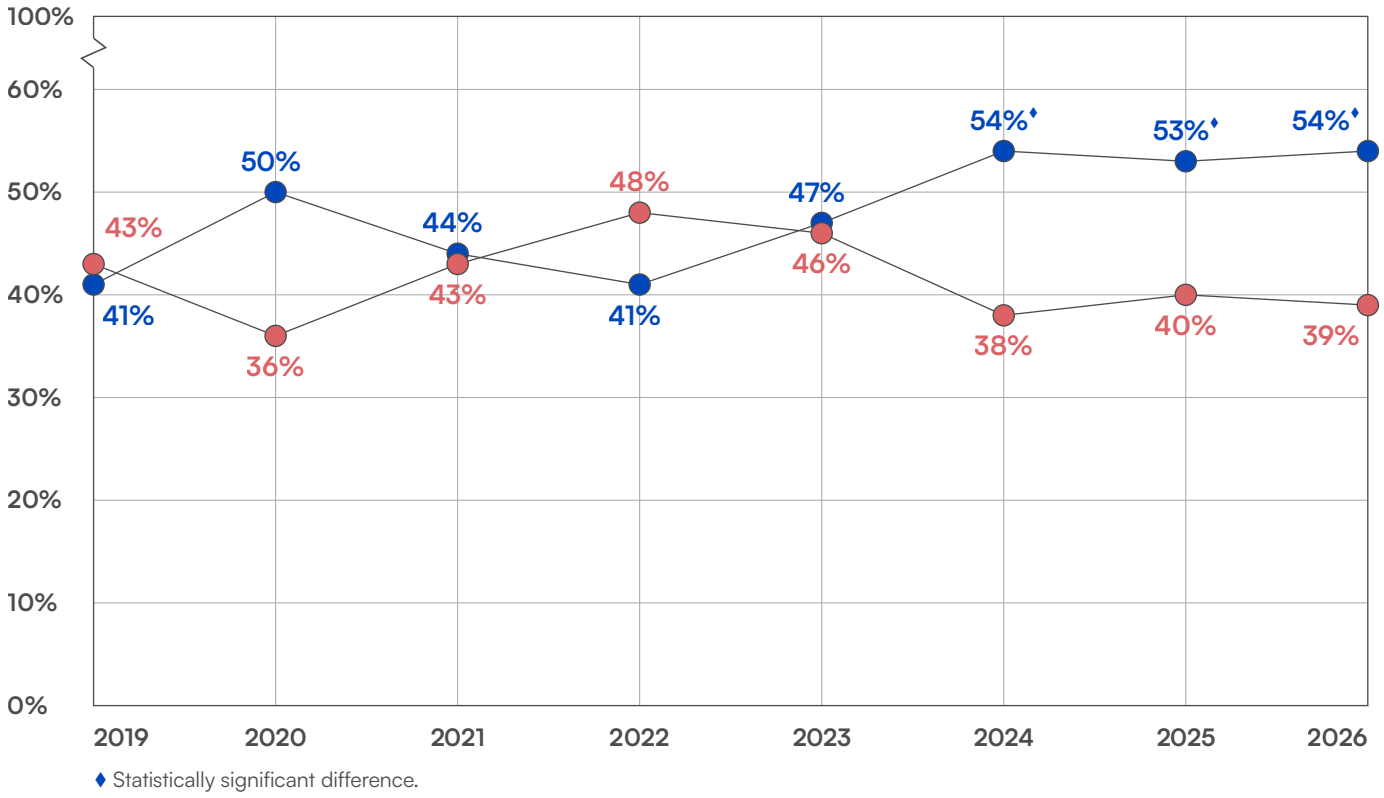
Why do we investigate this?

Organisational support is positively associated with teacher wellbeing[6]. Across all industries, perception of organisational support is related to commitment and job satisfaction[7].

For eight years, we've asked staff how well they think their institution supports employees who experience problems with their mental health and wellbeing. The chart below shows the perception of staff on this question.

Perceived organisational support for staff with mental health and wellbeing problems, 2019—2026

Fig. 1.2



♦ Statistically significant difference.

Organisational support is the one measure that has improved steadily since 2019. There has been a sustained rise in the proportion of the workforce agreeing that their schools/colleges/MATs support staff who experience wellbeing or mental health issues. The improvement is statistically significant over the period (Fig **1.2**).

A large share of staff continue to report that organisational support is "not well" delivered. When we look at the differences between job roles, teachers are the group least impressed with the available support. The figures for school teachers (**43%**) are not significantly higher than senior leaders (**39%**) but are significantly higher than support staff (**24%**).

6. Nwoko, J.C.; Emeto, T.I.; Malau-Aduli, A.E.O.; Malau-Aduli, B.S. A Systematic Review of the Factors That Influence Teachers' Occupational Wellbeing. Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health 2023, 20, 6070. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20126070

7. Kurtessis, J. N., Eisenberger, R., Ford, M. T., Buffardi, L. C., Stewart, K. A., & Adis, C. S. (2017). Perceived organizational support: A meta-analytic evaluation of organizational support theory. Journal of Management, 43(6), 1854—1884. https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206315575554

"I've not known a headteacher that doesn't genuinely care or do their absolute best, but their hands are tied. They're doing as much as they can. Trying to support a hugely stressed workforce. They have to make really difficult decisions, and cuts to staffing... we're all struggling."

Senior business manager, primary school, 2026

"I went down due to stress ... to four days a week because I thought it would be a better work-life balance."

Teacher, primary school, 2026

1.3 Organisational culture

Why do we investigate this?

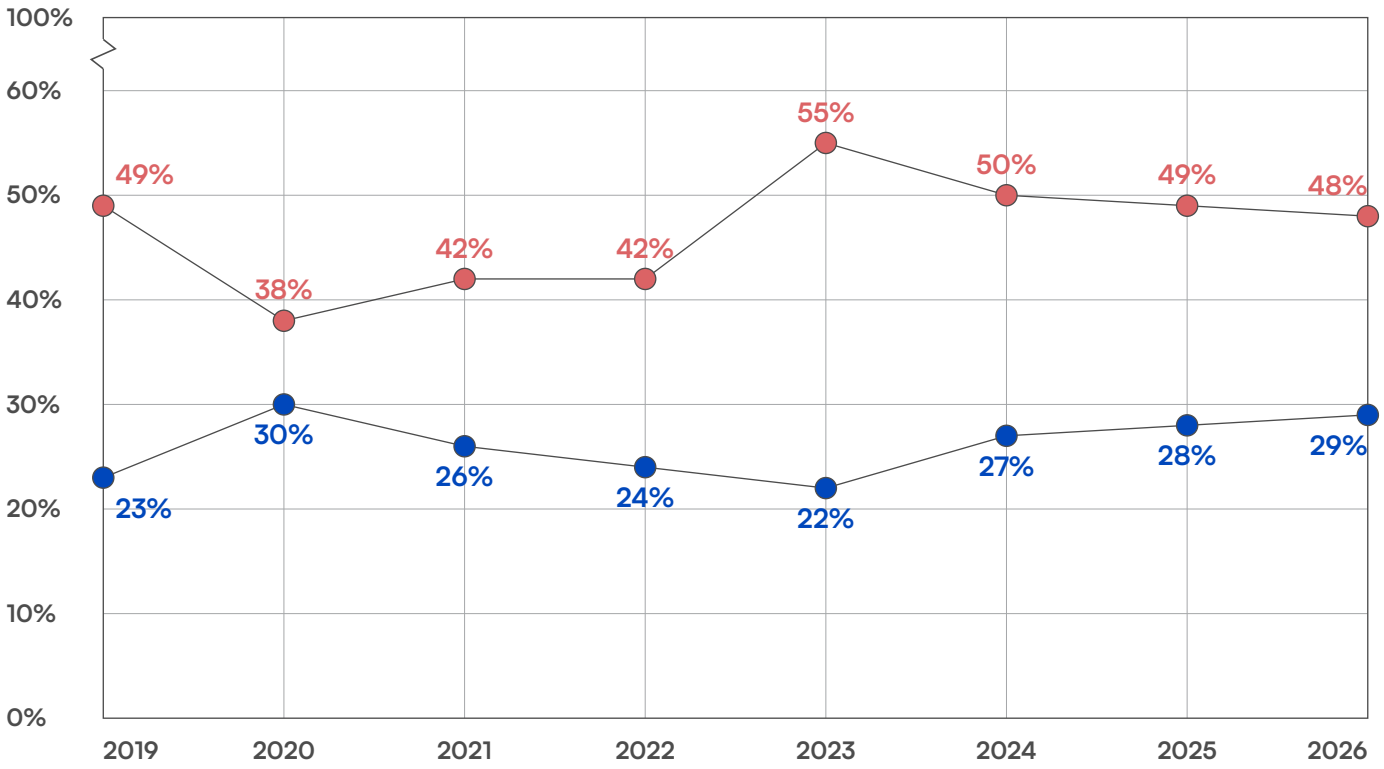
Culture is associated with teacher wellbeing in the research literature[8, 9]. It is also linked with teacher self-efficacy[10] and staff retention[11].

For almost half the workforce, organisational culture is negative

Since 2019 we have asked what effect staff felt their organisational culture had on their mental health and wellbeing.

Perceived effect of organisational culture on staff mental health and wellbeing, 2019—2026

Fig. 1.3



Despite movement over the past eight years, the share of education staff saying that their organisational culture[12] negatively affects their mental health and wellbeing is just one percent lower than before Covid. Over the same period, the proportion of staff who identify a positive effect from organisational culture has increased, narrowing the gap between the two. Job role makes little difference to this finding.

8. Zhou, S., Slemp, G. R., & Vella-Brodrick, D. A. (2024). Factors associated with teacher wellbeing: A meta-analysis. Educational Psychology Review, 36, 63. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-024-09886-x
9. Hascher, T., & Waber, J. (2021). Teacher well-being: A systematic review of the research literature from the year 2000—2019. Educational Research Review, 34, 100411.
10. Day, C., & Gu, Q. (2013). Resilient teachers, resilient schools: Building and sustaining quality in testing times. Routledge.
11. Nguyen, D., See, B. H., Brown, C., & Kokotsaki, D. (2023). Reviewing the evidence base on school leadership, culture, climate and structure for teacher retention: Rapid evidence assessment. Education Endowment Foundation. https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/evidence-reviews/leadership-approaches
12. Culture here means staff's own school or setting's culture, not the education sector's culture in general.

"It can be stressful, but there is a really supportive team and an understanding team as well. So if you haven't quite reached the task that you were supposed to do, people are quite understanding about that and that's really important."

Headteacher, all-through school, when speaking about a recently retired staff member, 2026

"It's hard to get maths teachers, it's hard to get any teachers. So I think my school genuinely recognises now that they have to look after us ... we need to keep staff and the only way we're going to do that is if they're well. And I think that culture change has come from not being able to recruit, not being able to retain."

Head of maths, secondary school, 2026

1.4 Symptoms of pressure

Why do we investigate this?

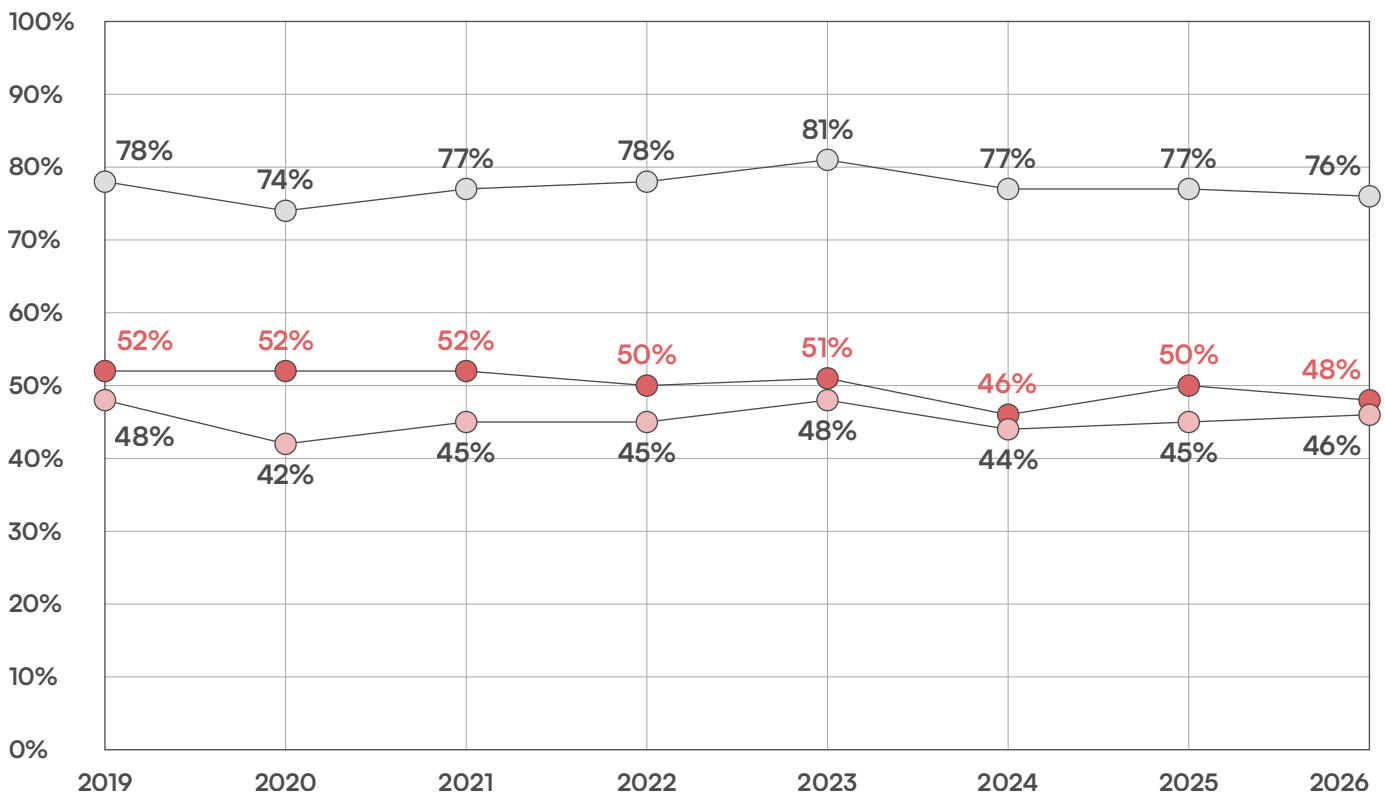
The symptom checklist tracks recognised warning signs of harm[13, 14, 15] that tend to appear before more serious mental health issues. Common mental health problems (e.g. anxiety and depression[16]), along with the occupational phenomenon of burnout[17], are widely understood to be damaging to both an individual and their professional capacity. Burnout is also related to teacher retention[18].

Little change in symptoms reported since 2019; sleep and mood challenges remain constant

To understand the symptoms staff have experienced, we ask education staff to share their experience over the past academic year.

Work-related symptoms in the past academic year: any symptom and the two most common, 2019—2026

Fig. 1.4



13. HSE, Work-related stress and how to manage it. https://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/signs.htm
14. Li, Liqing & Wu, Chunmei & Gan, Yong & Qu, Xianguo & Lu, Zuxun. (2016). Insomnia and the risk of depression: A meta-analysis of prospective cohort studies. BMC Psychiatry. 16. 10.1186/s12888-016-1075-3
15. Van Hoffen, M.F.A., Joling, C.I., Heymans, M.W. et al. Mental health symptoms identify workers at risk of long-term sickness absence due to mental disorders: prospective cohort study with 2-year follow-up. BMC Public Health 15, 1235 (2015). https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-015-2580-x
16. Chisholm, D. Sweeny, K. Sheehan, P. et al. Scaling-up of depression and anxiety. Lancet Psychiatry. 2016; 3:415-424.
17. Salvagioni DAJ, Melanda FN, Mesas AE, Gonza´lez AD, Gabani FL, Andrade SMd (2017) Physical, psychological and occupational consequences of job burnout: A systematic review of prospective studies. PLoS ONE 12(10): e0185781. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0185781
18. Madigan, D. J., & Kim, L. E. (2021). Towards an understanding of teacher attrition: A meta-analysis of burnout, job satisfaction, and teachers' intentions to quit. Teaching and Teacher Education, 105, Article 103425. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2021.103425

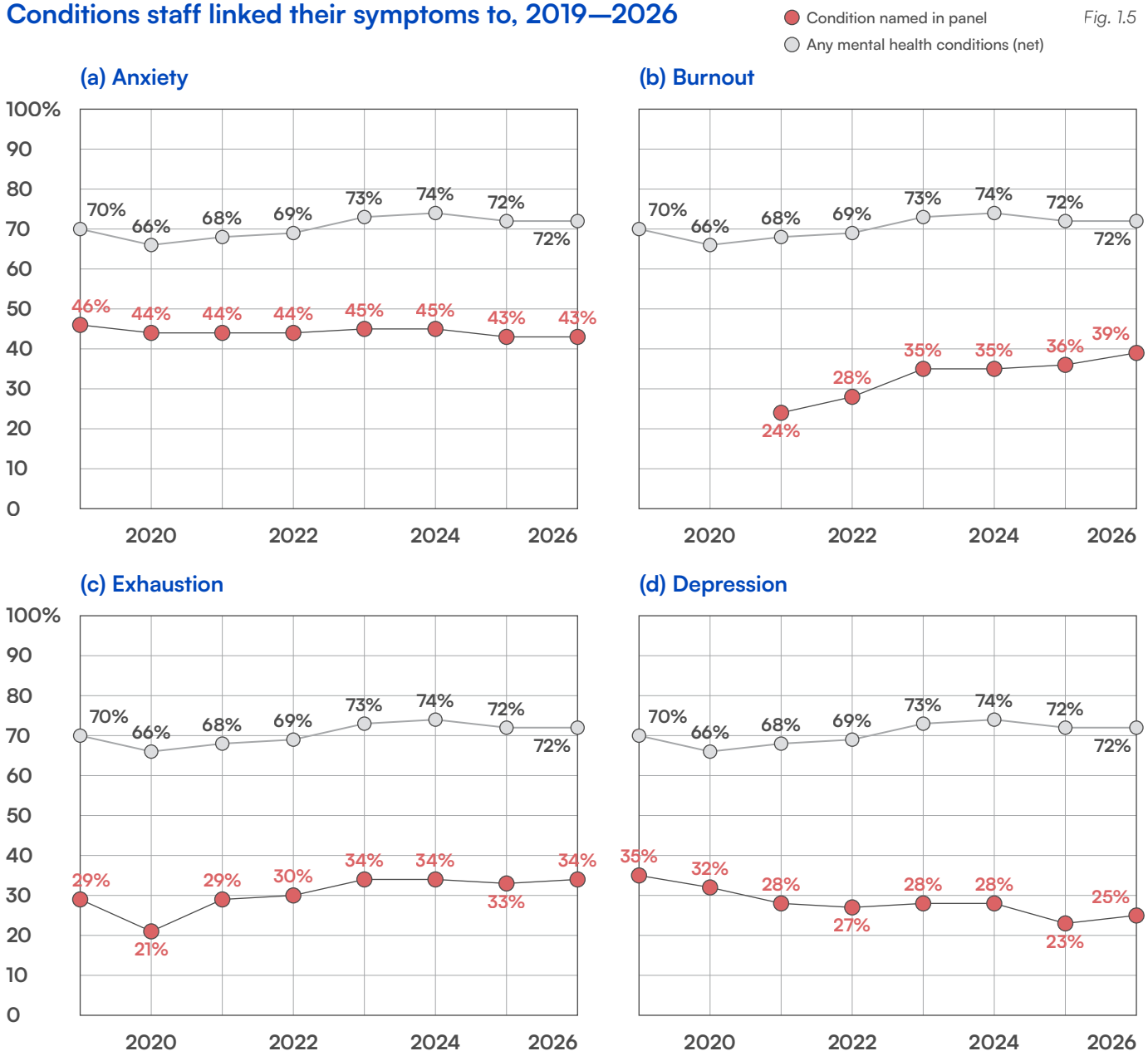
Over the last eight years the proportion of staff reporting that they experienced at least one symptom over the previous year has remained consistent. Looking at the specific symptoms reported, insomnia/difficulty sleeping and irritability/mood swings have been the most common issues reported throughout.

Anxiety remains at a high plateau

Each year we ask whether any symptoms experienced are considered signs of a mental health issue. **We began measuring reports of burnout in 2021**.

Conditions staff linked their symptoms to, 2019—2026

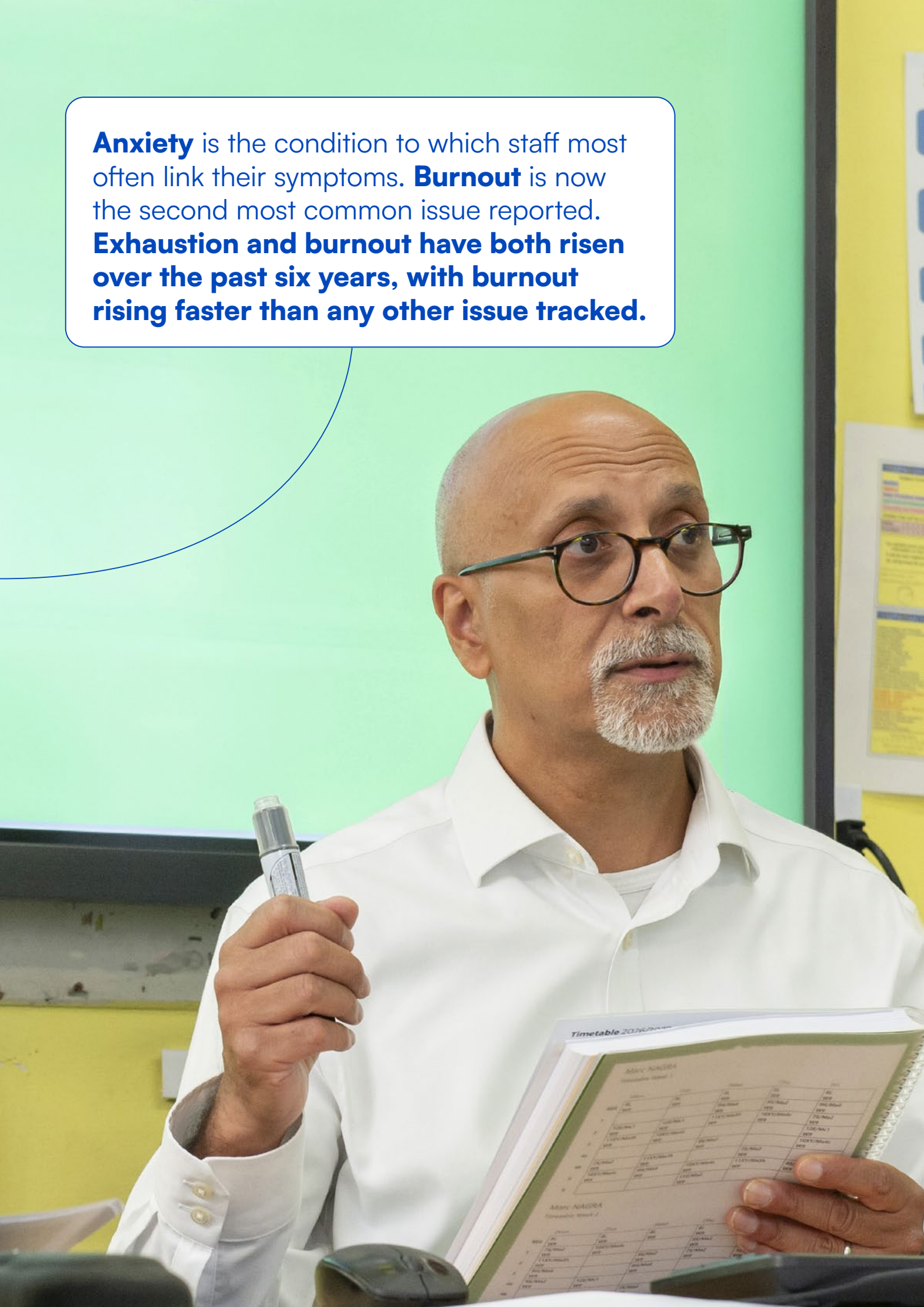
Fig. 1.5



Excludes 'prefer not to say'.

"You're trying to manage your workload as best you can, stress levels, the amount of colleagues that are just reaching complete burnout, you know, people that are leaving." School business manager, 2026

Anxiety is the condition to which staff most often link their symptoms. **Burnout** is now the second most common issue reported. **Exhaustion and burnout have both risen over the past six years, with burnout rising faster than any other issue tracked.**



1.5 Wellbeing of teachers and education staff

Why do we investigate this?

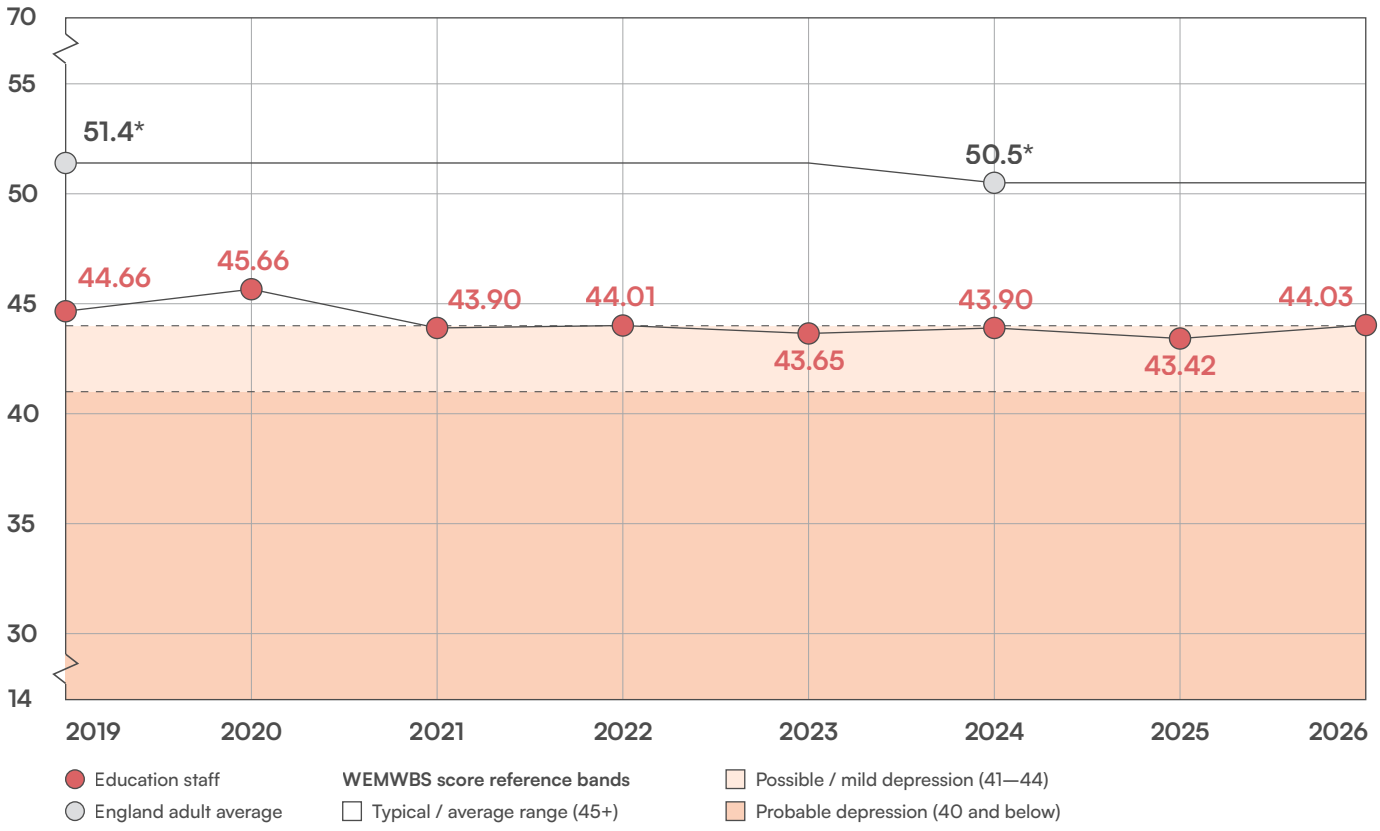
The wellbeing of education staff matters for a variety of reasons, not least that it is associated with staff retention[19], staff absence[20], cost pressure on schools, and with the duty of care that employers hold for all staff. It also matters for the quality of teacher-pupil interaction[21].

Average mental wellbeing is low

Over the past eight years we have measured the wellbeing of the education workforce using the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS), a validated measure. While WEMWBS measures positive mental wellbeing rather than mental illness, very low scores are closely linked with depression. Scores of **40** or lower are associated with probable depression; between **41-44** associated with possible or mild depression. For further information, see Appendix C.

Average mental wellbeing (WEMWBS) score of education staff compared with the England adult average, 2019—2026

Fig. 1.6



Education staff scores are shown to two decimal places. The England adult average is only available to one decimal place.
*The England adult average is normally measured every three years, but reporting paused during Covid-19.
There is no new figure between 2019 and 2023. The line carries each figure across the years between surveys.

19. Department for Education. (2025). Working lives of teachers and leaders: Wave 4. Summary report (Research Report RR1578; research conducted by IFF Research). https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/693bdc426a12691d48491e9b/Working_lives_of_teachers_and_leaders_wave_4_summary_report.pdf

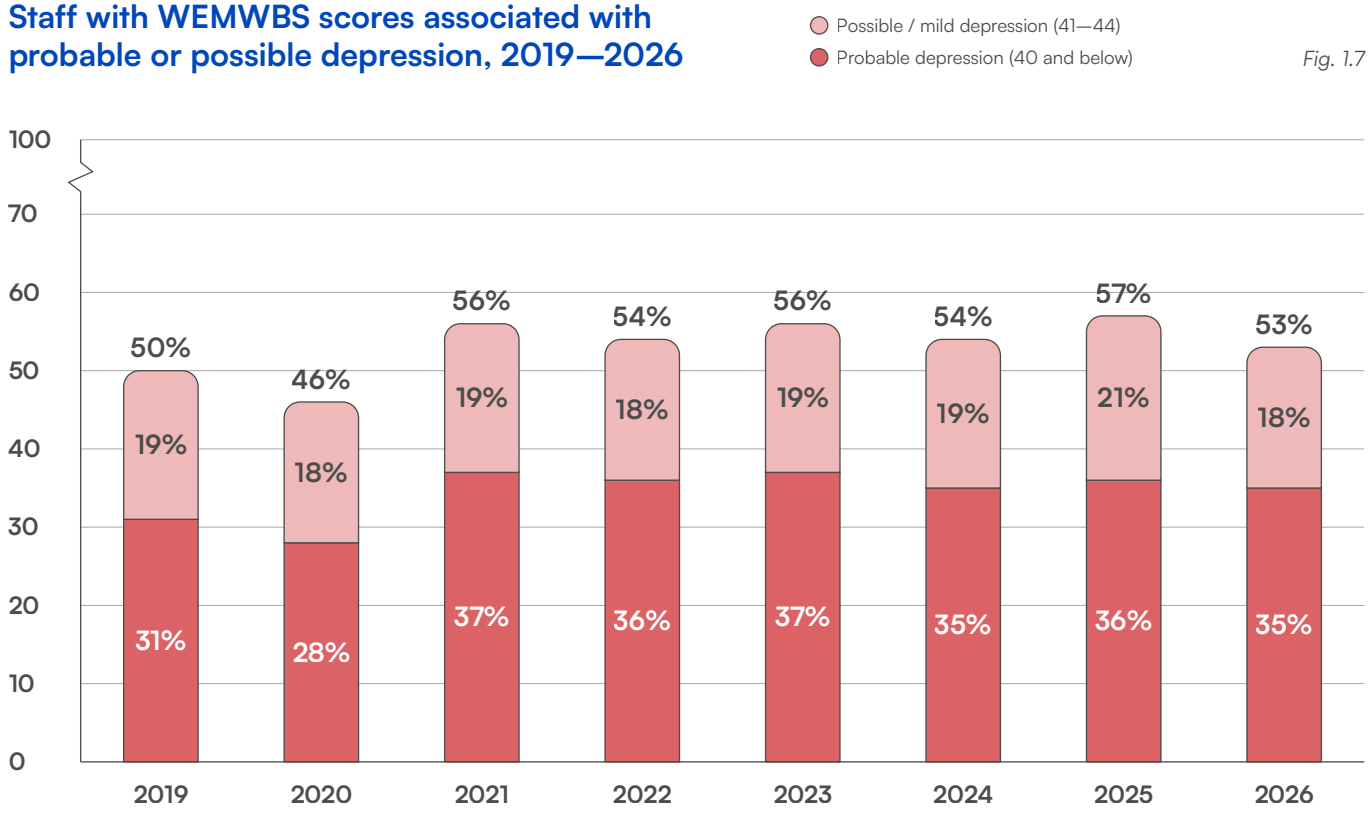
20. Deloitte (2024), Mental health and employers: The business case to support employees and, in particular, working parents, London: Deloitte LLP. Published May 2024. https://www.deloitte.com/uk/en/about/press-room/poor-mental-health-costs-uk-employers-51-billion-a-year-for-employees.html

21. Harding, S., Evans, R., Morris, R., Gunnell, D., Ford, T., Hollingworth, W., Tilling, K., Bell, S., Grey, J., Brockman, R., Campbell, R., Araya, R., Murphy, S., & Kidger, J. (2019). Is teachers' mental health and wellbeing associated with students' mental health and wellbeing? Journal of Affective Disorders, 242, 180—187.

Over the last six years the average mental wellbeing score (WEMWBS) has remained low. This year's average score is **44.03**. The Health Survey for England 2024[22] reports a mean WEMWBS of **50.5** for adults aged 16 and over in England. The two surveys differ in method and population so the comparison is indicative.

Staff with WEMWBS scores associated with probable or possible depression, 2019—2026

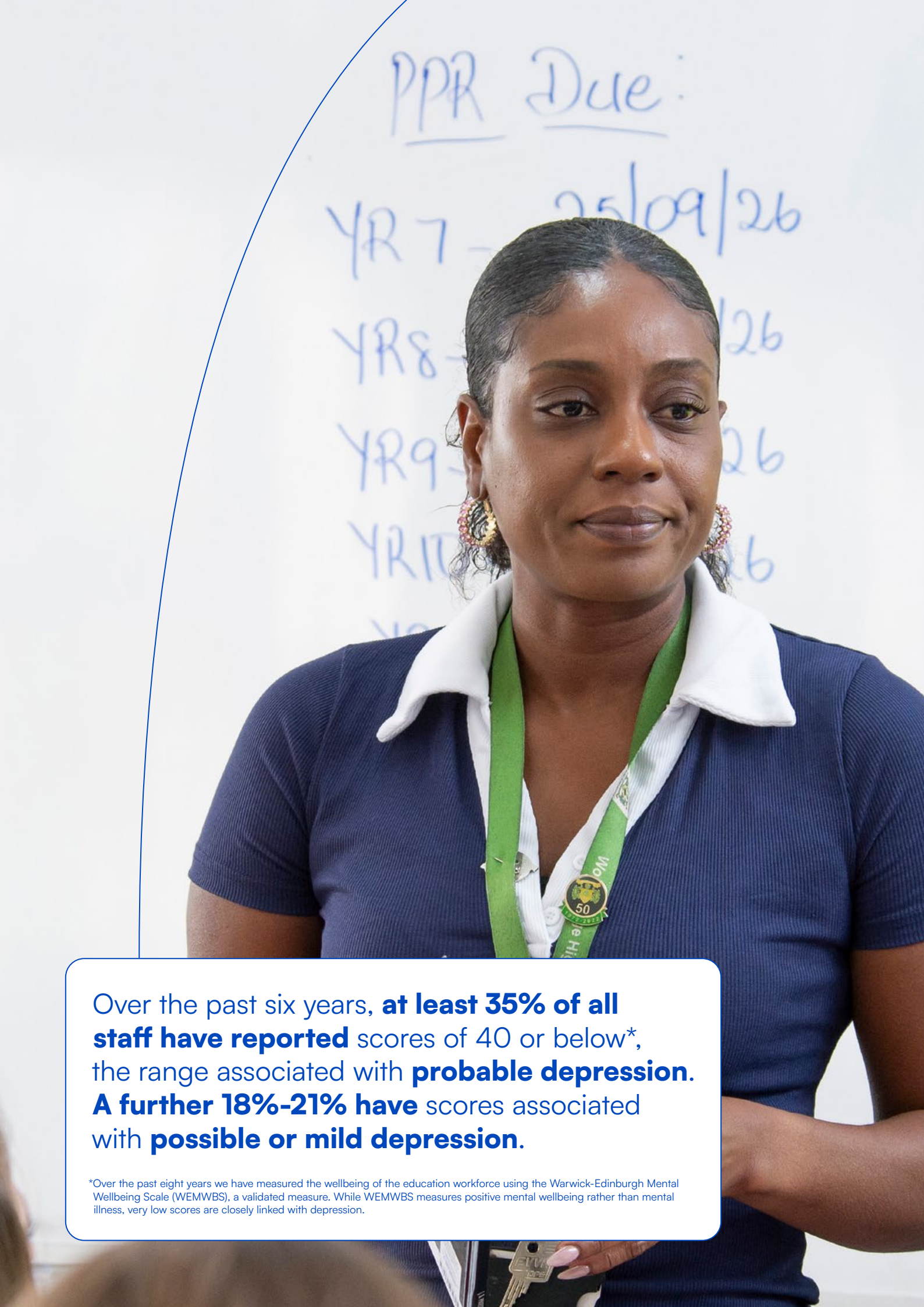
Fig. 1.7



Over the past six years, at least **35%** of all staff have reported scores of **40** or below, the range associated with probable depression. A further **18%-21%** have scores associated with possible or mild depression.

When combined, that's just over half of all staff scoring in one of these two risk bands, a proportion that has remained relatively consistent over time.

22. NHS England. (2026). Health Survey for England 2024: Loneliness and wellbeing. NHS England Digital. https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/health-survey-for-england/2024/loneliness-and-wellbeing



Over the past six years, **at least 35% of all staff have reported** scores of 40 or below*, the range associated with **probable depression**. **A further 18%-21% have** scores associated with **possible or mild depression**.

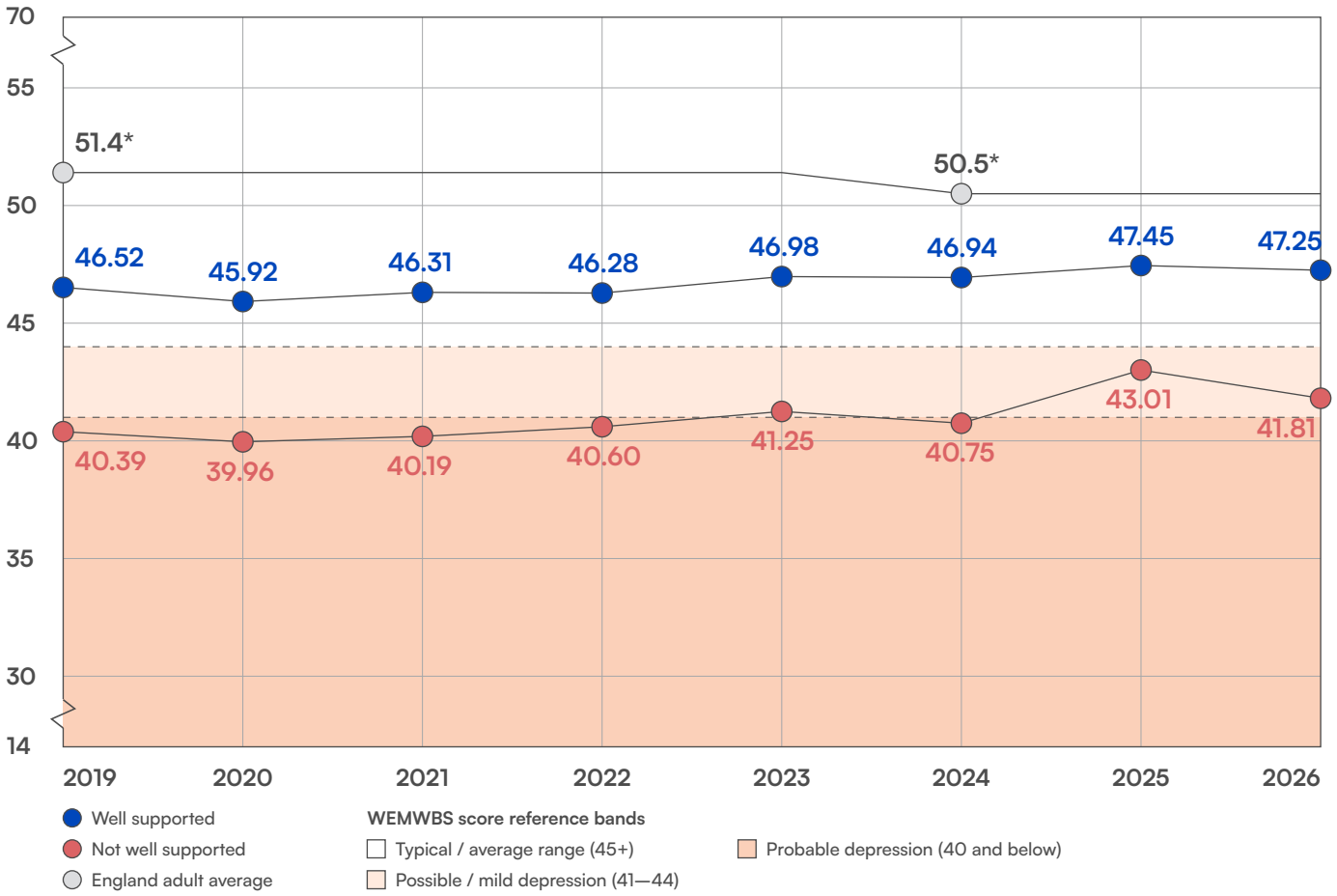
*Over the past eight years we have measured the wellbeing of the education workforce using the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS), a validated measure. While WEMWBS measures positive mental wellbeing rather than mental illness, very low scores are closely linked with depression.

Wellbeing and organisational support

We compared mental wellbeing scores (WEMWBS) against how well staff feel their organisation supports staff experiencing a mental health or wellbeing problem.

Average WEMWBS score by how staff feel their school or college support employees who experience problems with mental health and wellbeing

Fig. 1.8



Education staff scores are shown to two decimal places. The England adult average is only available to one decimal place.
*The England adult average is normally measured every three years, but reporting paused during Covid-19.
There is no new figure between 2019 and 2023. The line carries each figure across the years between surveys.

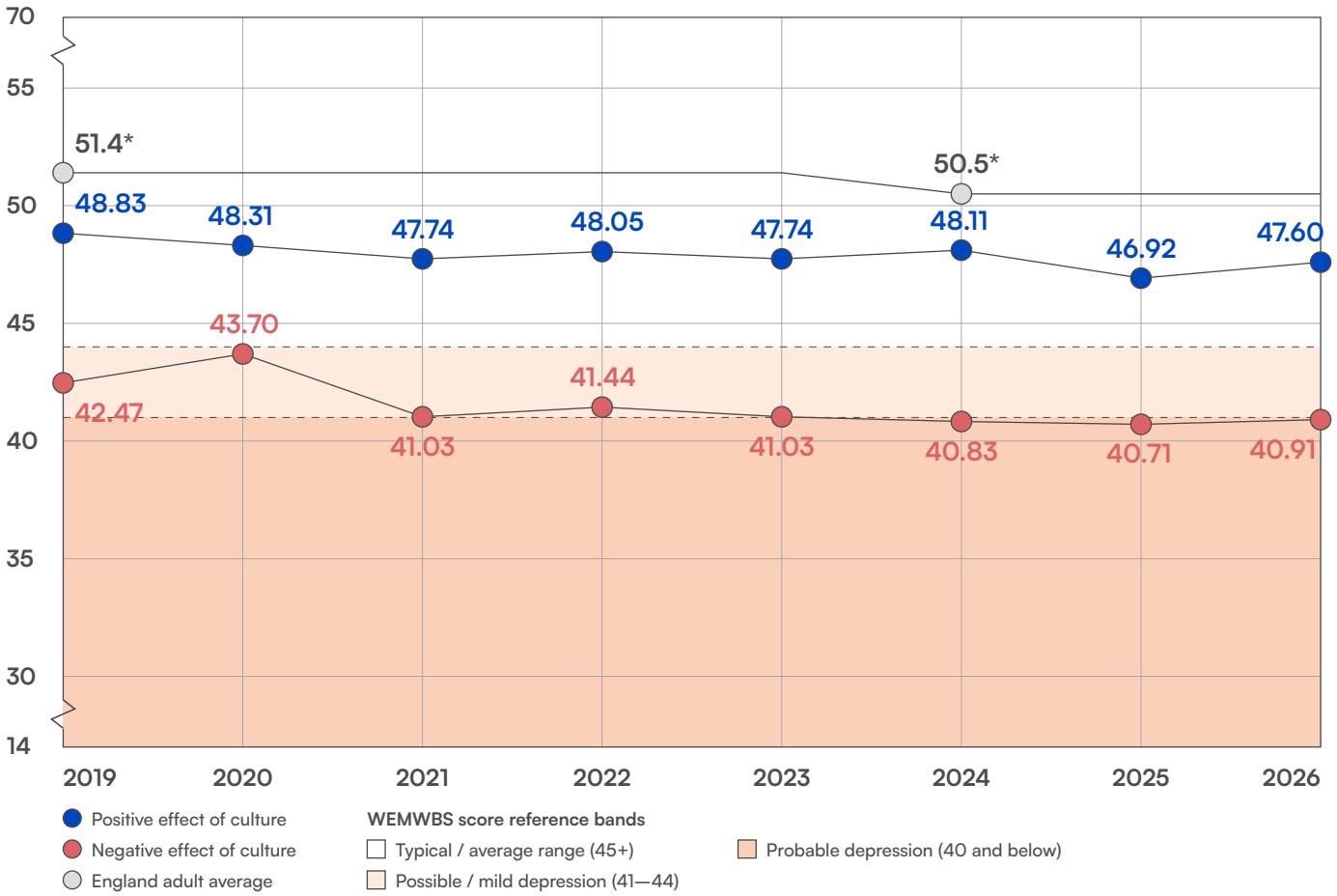
Staff who feel that their organisation doesn't support employees well report average wellbeing scores of **40**-**43** across the period. That level, for an individual, would be associated with probable or possible depression. Staff who feel well supported report relatively higher wellbeing scores (WEMWBS), with average scores consistently above the low wellbeing threshold. There is a gap between these two groups.

Wellbeing and school culture

Using WEMWBS as a measure of wellbeing, a further comparison was made with how staff feel that the culture of their school or college affects their mental health and wellbeing.

Average WEMWBS score by how staff feel their school or college's culture affects their mental health

Fig. 1.9



Education staff scores are shown to two decimal places. The England adult average is only available to one decimal place.
*The England adult average is normally measured every three years, but reporting paused during Covid-19.
There is no new figure between 2019 and 2023. The line carries each figure across the years between surveys.

Staff who associate organisational culture with a negative effect report lower average wellbeing scores. Staff who report that organisational culture has a positive effect report higher wellbeing scores across the period.

Sample profile

Fig 1.1 **Percentage of staff reporting stress from work, 2019—2026**

2019 Base: All staff (n = 3019); 2020 Base: All staff (n = 3034); 2021 All staff (n = 3354); 2022 All staff (n = 3082); 2023 All staff (n = 3004); 2024 All staff (n = 3025); 2025 All staff (n = 3082); 2026 All staff (n = 3155).

Fig 1.2 **Perceived organisational support for staff with mental health and wellbeing problems, 2019—2026**

2019 Base: All staff (n = 3019); 2020 Base: All staff (n = 3034); 2021 Base: All staff (n = 3354); 2022 Base: All staff (n = 3082); 2023 Base: All staff (n = 3004); 2024 Base: All staff (n = 3025); 2025 Base: All staff (n = 3082); 2026 Base: All staff (n = 3155).

2019 to 2021 average: 44.8% (n = 9,407). 2024 to 2026 average: 53.3% (n = 9,262). Difference is 8.5%. Statistically significant, p < .0001

Fig 1.3 **Perceived effect of organisational culture on staff mental health and wellbeing, 2019—2026**

2019 Base: All staff (n = 3019); 2020 Base: All staff (n = 3034); 2021 Base: All staff (n = 3354); 2022 Base: All staff (n = 3082); 2023 Base: All staff (n = 3004); 2024 Base: All staff (n = 3025); 2025 Base: All staff (n = 3082); 2026 Base: All staff (n = 3155).

Fig 1.4 **Work-related symptoms in the past academic year: any symptom and the two most common, 2019—2026**

2019 Base: All staff (n = 2154); 2020 Base: All staff (n = 2767); 2021 Base: All staff (n = 3101); 2022 Base: All staff (n = 2743); 2023 Base: All staff (n = 2557); 2024 Base: All staff (n = 2550); 2025 Base: All staff (n = 2622); 2026 Base: All staff (n = 2693).

Fig 1.5 **Conditions staff linked their symptoms to, 2019—2026**

2019 Base: All staff (n = 1725); 2020 Base: All staff (n = 1722); 2021 Base: All staff (n = 2006); 2022 Base: All staff (n = 1910); 2023 Base: All staff (n = 1800); 2024 Base: All staff (n = 1684); 2025 Base: All staff (n = 1807); 2026 Base: All staff (n = 1829).

Fig 1.6 **Average mental wellbeing (WEMWBS) score of education staff compared with the England adult average, 2019—2026**

2019 Base: All staff (n = 3019); 2020 Base: All staff (n = 3034); 2021 Base: All staff (n = 3354); 2022 Base: All staff (n = 3082); 2023 Base: All staff (n = 3004); 2024 Base: All staff (n = 3025); 2025 Base: All staff (n = 3082); 2026 Base: All staff (n = 3155).

Fig 1.7 **Staff with WEMWBS scores consistent with probable or possible depression, 2019—2026**

2019 Base: All staff (n = 3019); 2020 Base: All staff (n = 3034); 2021 Base: All staff (n = 3354); 2022 Base: All staff (n = 3082); 2023 Base: All staff (n = 3004); 2024 Base: All staff (n = 3025); 2025 Base: All staff (n = 3082); 2026 Base: All staff (n = 3155).

Fig 1.8 **Average WEMWBS score by how staff feel their school or college support employees who experience problems with mental health and wellbeing, 2019—2026**

2019 Base: All staff (n = 3019); 2020 Base: All staff (n = 3034); 2021 Base: All staff (n = 3354); 2022 Base: All staff (n = 3082); 2023 Base: All staff (n = 3004); 2024 Base: All staff (n = 3025); 2025 Base: All staff (n = 3082); 2026 Base: All staff (n = 3155).

Fig 1.9 **Average WEMWBS score by how staff feel their school or college's culture affects their mental health, 2019—2026**

2019 Base: All staff (n = 3019); 2020 Base: All staff (n = 3034); 2021 Base: All staff (n = 3354); 2022 Base: All staff (n = 3082); 2023 Base: All staff (n = 3004); 2024 Base: All staff (n = 3025); 2025 Base: All staff (n = 3082); 2026 Base: All staff (n = 3155).

Chapter 2

The wellbeing of education staff in 2026



Education Support

2.1 Stress

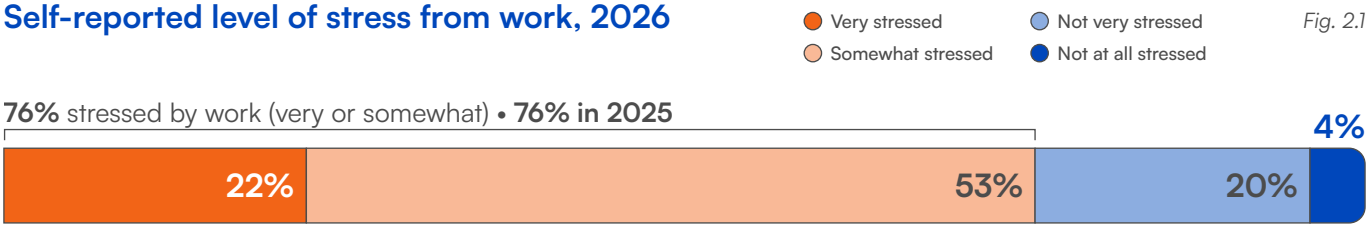
Stress at work

Levels of stress have remained consistent overall since 2025

We asked teachers and education staff to describe their level of work-related stress. Overall, stress levels were found to have remained consistent when compared to recent years. **76%** of education staff describe themselves as stressed. Within that category, **22%** of staff describe themselves as very stressed, whilst **24%** did not identify as stressed.

Self-reported level of stress from work, 2026

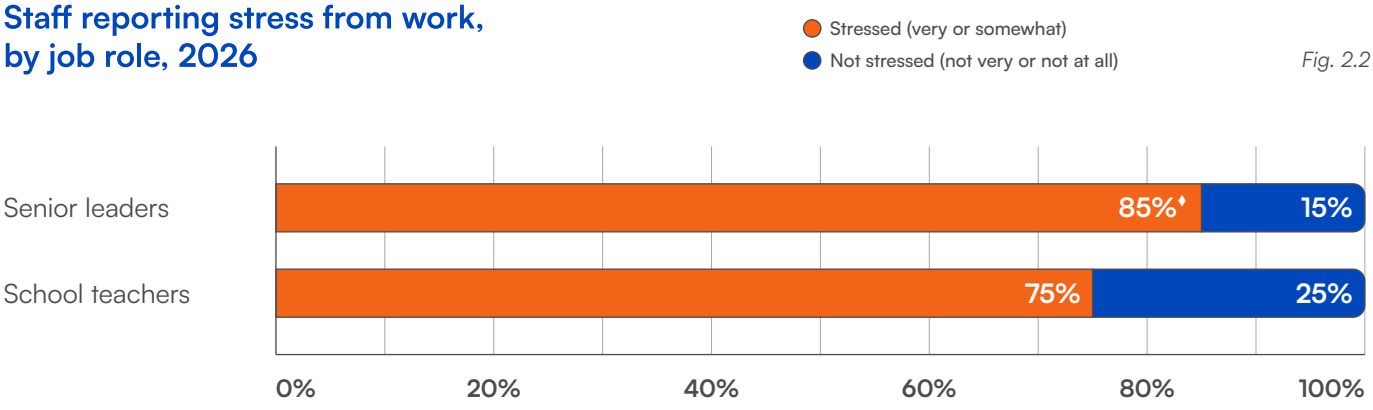
Fig. 2.1



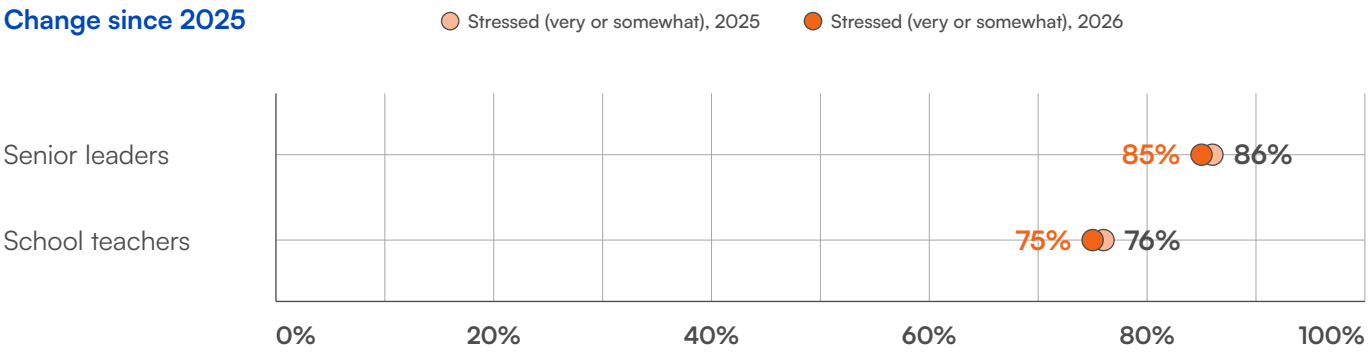
Figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Staff reporting stress from work, by job role, 2026

Fig. 2.2



Change since 2025



Senior leaders continue to be the occupational role group that reports the highest levels of stress.

76% of education staff describe themselves as stressed. More than one in five, **22%**, say they are **very stressed**.



2.2 Organisational support

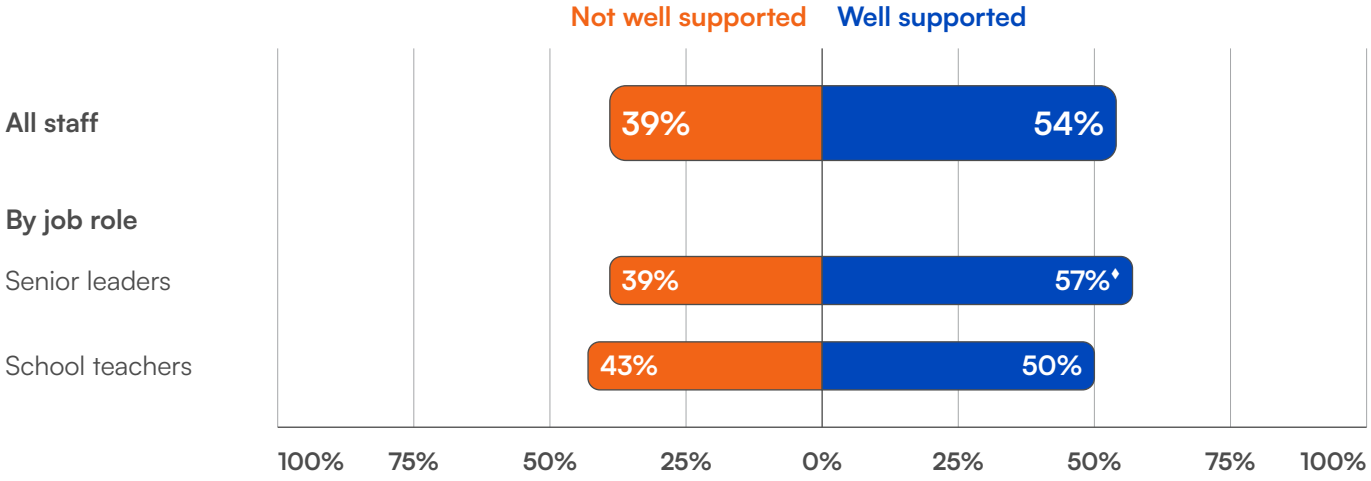
We asked staff how well they thought their organisation supports employees who experience problems with mental health and wellbeing.

Overall **54%** of all staff feel that their organisation supports staff who experience problems with mental health and wellbeing. **39%** feel that their organisation does not support staff well.

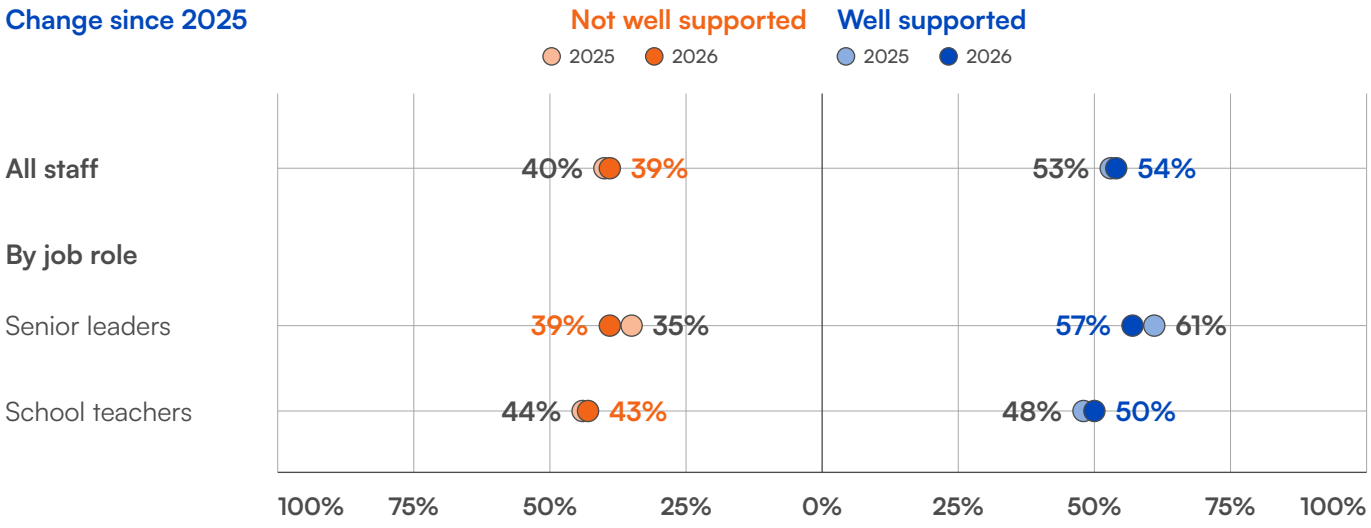
Compared with 2025, fewer senior leaders say their organisation supports staff well (**57%**, **down from 61%**).

Perceived organisational support at school or college for staff with mental health and wellbeing problems, 2026

Fig. 2.3



Change since 2025



'Well' means very or fairly well. 'Don't know' responses are not shown.

Later in this chapter we explore the relationship between organisational support and both wellbeing and job satisfaction.

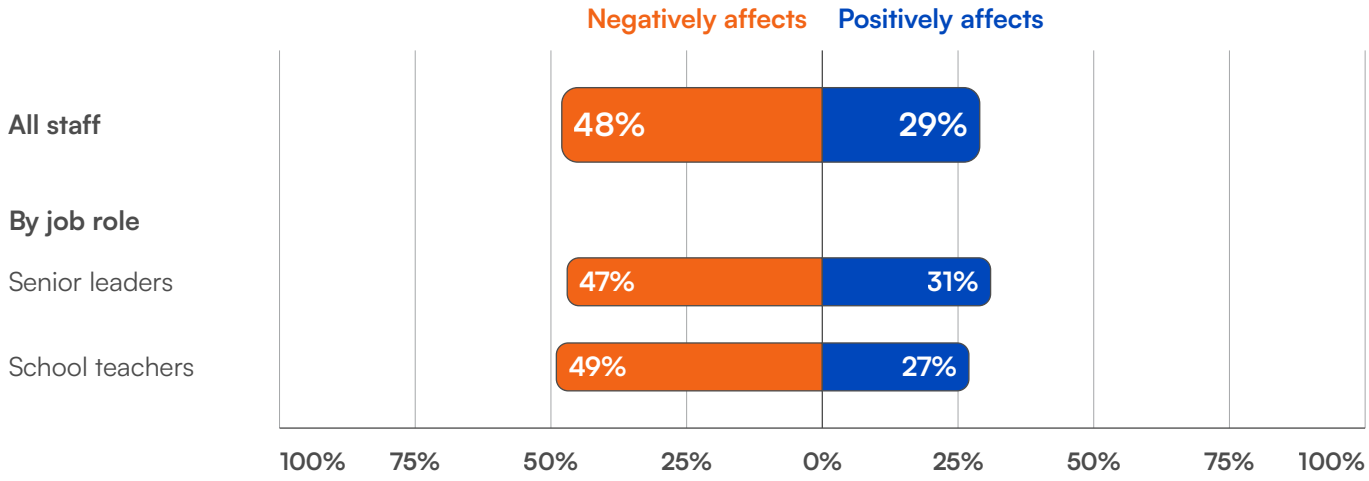
2.3 Organisational culture and wellbeing

Overall **48%** of all staff feel that their organisational culture has a negative impact on their mental health and wellbeing. **29%** report a positive impact.

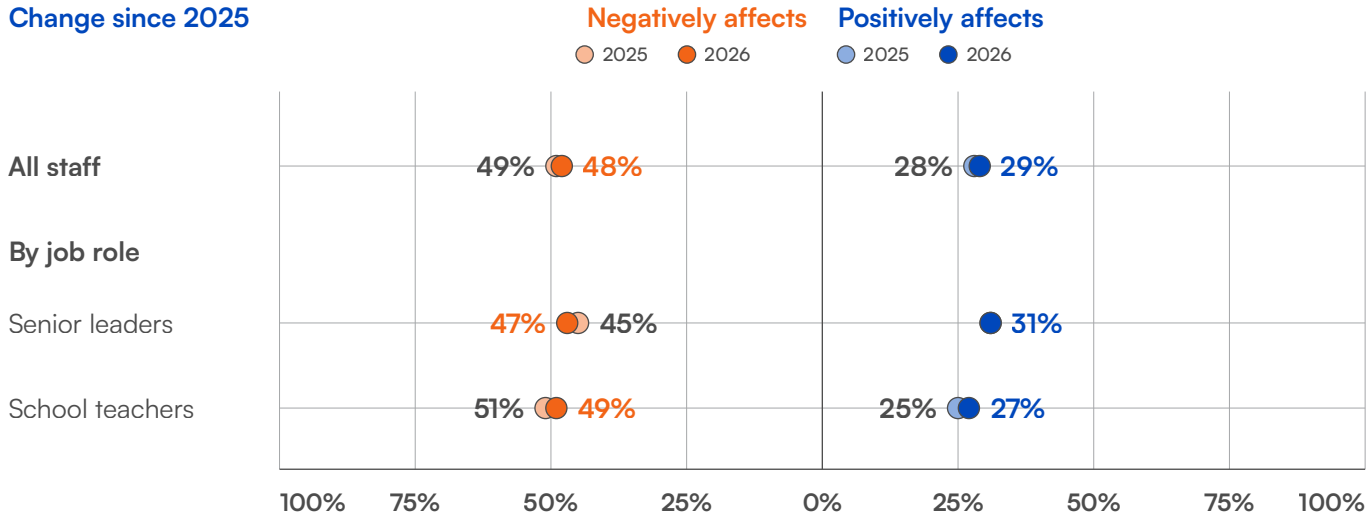
Job role makes little difference. Around half of school teachers (**49%**) and senior leaders (**47%**) report that their organisational culture negatively affects staff mental health and wellbeing.

Perceived effect of organisational culture on staff mental health and wellbeing, 2026

Fig. 2.4



Change since 2025



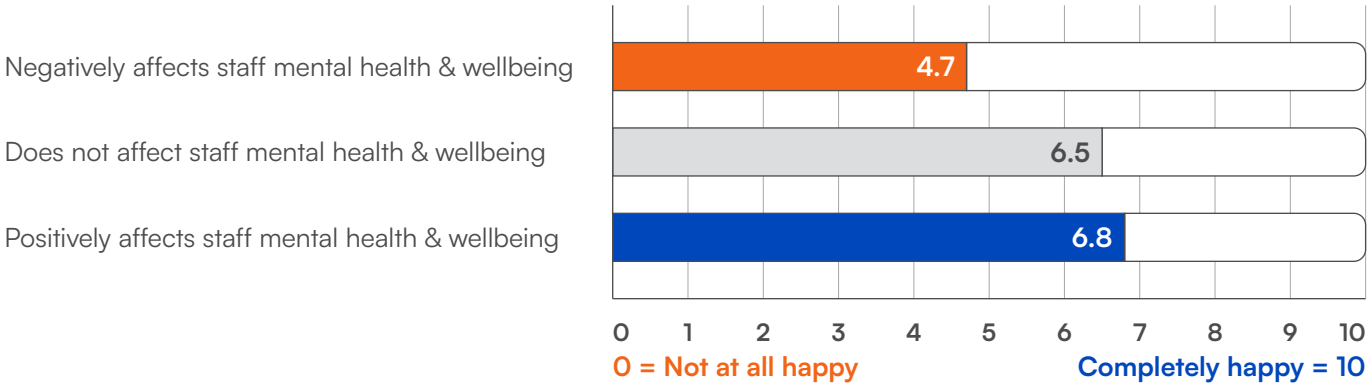
'Does not affect' responses are not shown: all staff 15%, senior leaders 15%, school teachers 16%.

On further analysis, we can see that staff who report that their organisational culture is harmful to staff wellbeing also report a significantly lower level of workplace happiness than staff who do not. For those who say the culture of their organisation negatively affects staff mental health and wellbeing, **42%** rated their happiness between **0—4** and **40% 6—10**. Of those who answered positively, **11%** rated their happiness between **0—4** and **79%** rated it between **6—10**.

Average happiness at work in the past week, 2026

Fig. 2.5

The culture of my workplace:



Respondents rated their happiness at work over the past week on a scale from 0 to 10. They were grouped by their answer to a separate question: whether their workplace's culture had a positive, negative or no effect on staff mental health. The average score within each group shows how happy a typical respondent in that group was. 'Don't know' responses are excluded.

We are interested in positive affect (i.e. "happiness") here since it is understood to be linked to positive performance and outcomes in work environments[1]. Ongoing research by colleagues at the Oxford Wellbeing Research Centre is building an evidence base of the relationship between positive affect ("happiness") and overall wellbeing and performance at work[2]. Understanding this relationship in a context where almost half the workforce reports a negative experience with their workplace culture is an area for further inquiry.

Later in this chapter, we investigate the relationship between the experience of school culture and both wellbeing and job satisfaction.

1. Lyubomirsky, S., King, L., & Diener, E. (2005). The benefits of frequent positive affect: Does happiness lead to success? Psychological Bulletin, 131(6), 803-855. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.131.6.803
2. De Neve, J.-E., & Ward, G. (2025). Why workplace wellbeing matters: The science behind employee happiness and organizational performance. Harvard Business Review Press.

Insomnia or difficulty sleeping remains the most common symptom reported by education staff.



2.4 Mental health and work

36% of teachers and education staff told us they had experienced mental health issues in the past academic year (**+2% on 2025**).

Symptoms of poor mental health due to work

We asked staff if they had experienced any symptoms over the previous year. **76%** of all staff who gave an answer experienced at least one behavioural, psychological or physical symptom linked to their work (**-1% on 2025**).

Symptoms of poor mental health experienced in the last year

Most symptoms of poor mental health have either remained at, or increased slightly from, the levels reported in 2025.

Insomnia or difficulty sleeping remains the most common symptom reported by education staff.

Work-related symptoms experienced in the past academic year, 2025 and 2026

Fig. 2.6

	2025	2026	0% 50% 100%	Change
Insomnia, difficulty sleeping	50%	**48%**		−2%
Irritability, mood swings	45%	**46%**		+1%
Difficulty concentrating	41%	**39%**		−2%
Tearfulness	37%	**39%**		+2%
Forgetfulness	36%	**37%**		+1%
Over-eating	34%	**34%**		No change
Recurring headaches/migraines	33%	**33%**		No change
Muscle tension	31%	**32%**		+1%
Dizziness	20%	**21%**		+1%
Changes to appetite	20%	**20%**		No change
High blood pressure	16%	**16%**		No change
Panic attacks	16%	**16%**		No change
Under-eating	11%	**12%**		+1%
None of these	19%	**19%**		No change

Multiple responses allowed. Excludes ‘prefer not to say’.

"About two years ago, I got myself into such a state where I was exhausted. I was asleep at 6pm every night. I couldn't cope with everything. I was considering just giving up teaching completely."

Head of maths, secondary school, 2026

"I was diagnosed with PTSD related to work and had to take time away from school. During counselling, I was asked to write down significant stressful events from my career. I filled an entire side of A4 with incidents and could have kept going. The pressure of the job has a massive impact on your mental health and a massive impact on your family life."

Teacher, secondary school, 2026

"We are humans first and professionals second, and so that there is an understanding, particularly when we're in a stressful environment, when we're tired, when we're stressed."

Early years lead, infant school, 2026

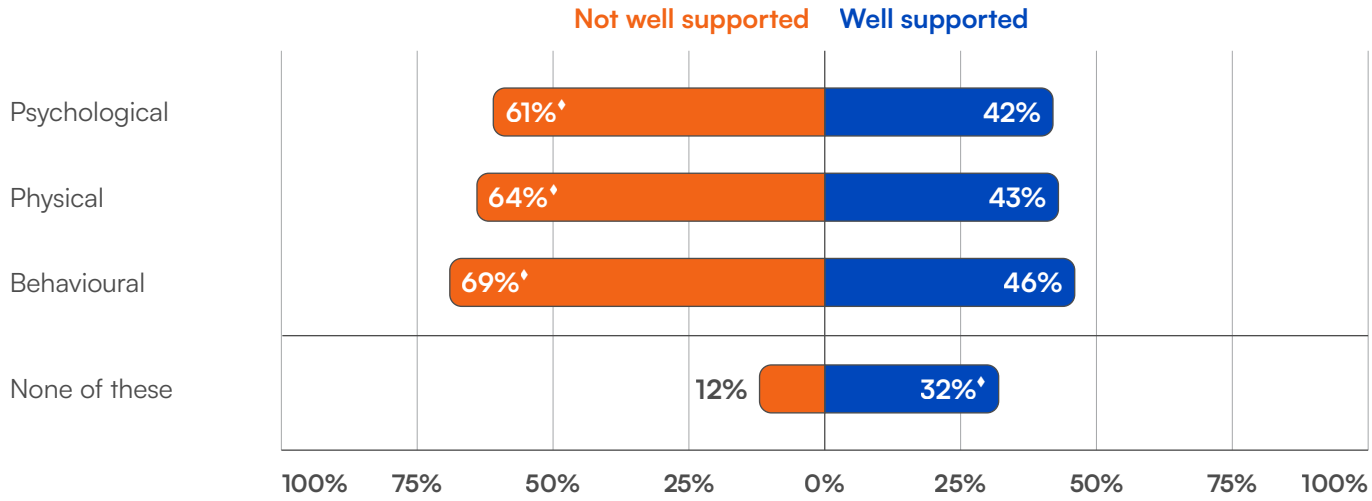
Relationship between organisational support and the prevalence of symptoms

Fig. 2.7 compares work-related symptoms with how well staff feel their school or college supports employees with mental health problems. A clear pattern emerges.

Every type of symptom is more common among staff who don't feel well supported — around **20 percentage points** higher for psychological (**61%** vs **42%**), physical (**64%** vs **43%**) and behavioural symptoms (**69%** vs **46%**). In contrast, staff who feel that their organisation provides good support are almost three times as likely to report no symptoms at all. These data illustrate an association rather than a causal relationship.

Types of work-related symptoms, by perceived organisational support, 2026

Fig. 2.7



♦ Statistically significant.

"Trying to separate work and life in our profession is more stressful than just kind of allowing them to meld into each other."

Head of English and drama, all-through school, 2026

2.5 Workforce wellbeing

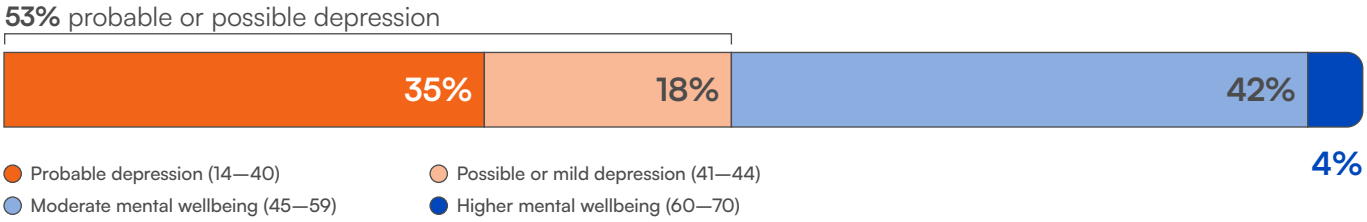
We have measured the wellbeing of the education workforce using the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) since 2019. As wellbeing measurement evolves, we are now also collecting data using the Office for National Statistics (ONS) personal wellbeing questions. Put simply, these questions measure how people judge life satisfaction, how worthwhile they feel their life is, how happy they are and how anxious they feel. For further information, see Appendix C and D.

Headline wellbeing measures

This year, the education workforce WEMWBS score is **44.03**. The Health Survey for England 2024[3] reports a mean WEMWBS score of **50.5** for adults aged 16 and over in England. The two surveys differ in method and population so the comparison is indicative rather than exact.

Distribution of WEMWBS scores across benchmark bands, 2026

Fig. 2.8

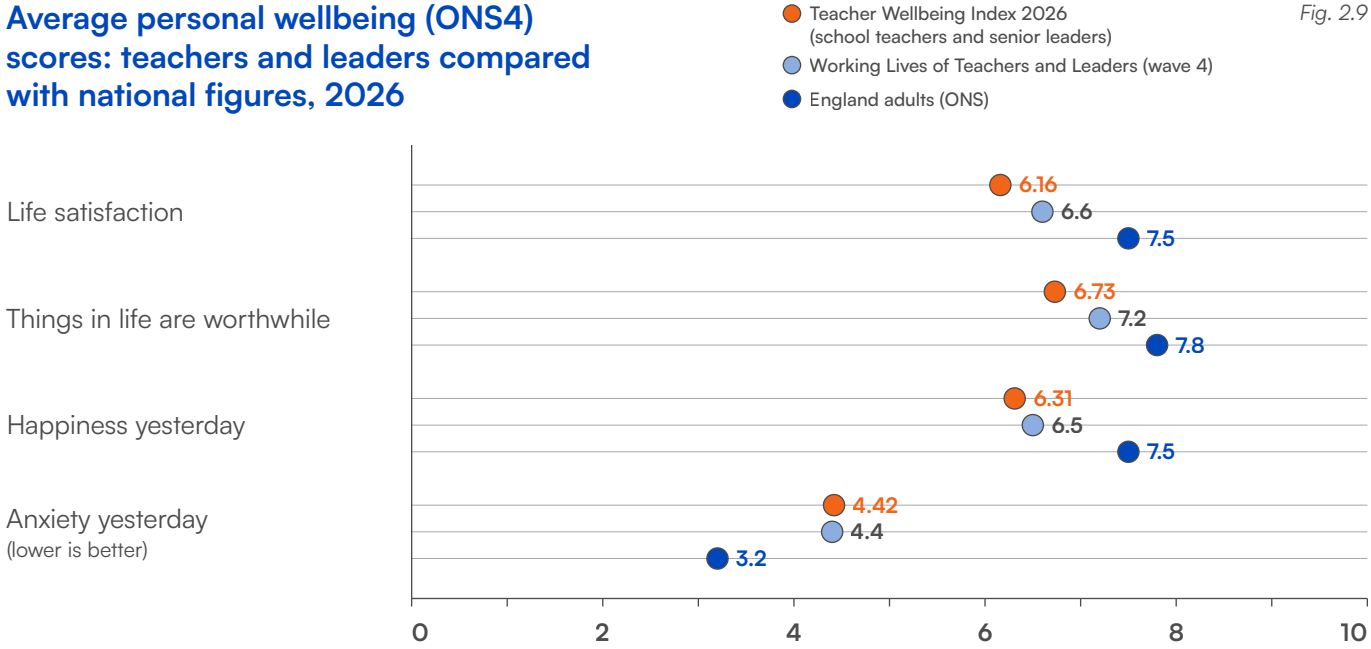


WEMWBS scores range from 14 to 70. Figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
Score bands: University of Warwick, WEMWBS[4]

Looking at the ONS4 measures, we can map the population in this survey against both national benchmark and English Department for Education data[5].

Average personal wellbeing (ONS4) scores: teachers and leaders compared with national figures, 2026

Fig. 2.9



Teacher Wellbeing Index scores are shown to two decimal places. The comparison figures are only available to one decimal place.

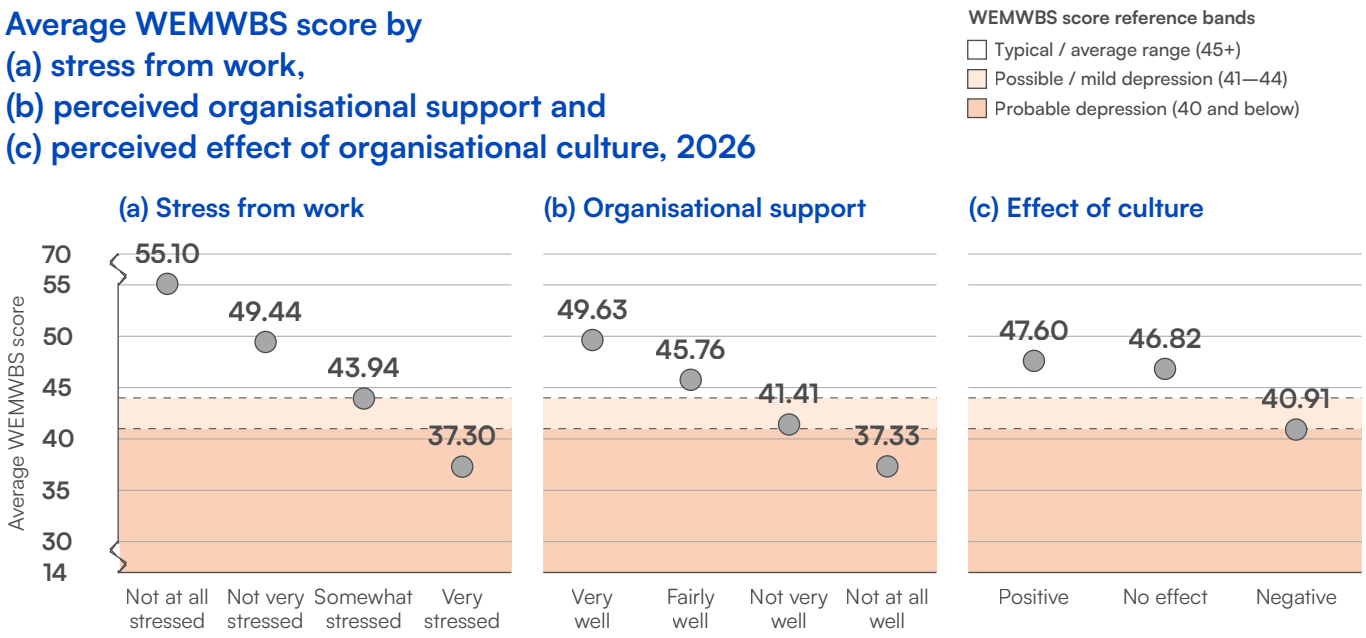
3. NHS England. (2026). Health Survey for England, 2024: Loneliness and wellbeing. https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/health-survey-for-england/2024/loneliness-and-wellbeing
4. University of Warwick, WEMWBS: how to use, score and interpret (score bands and depression cut-offs). https://warwick.ac.uk/services/innovations/wemwbs/how
5. Department for Education. (2025). Working lives of teachers and leaders: Wave 4. Summary report (Research Report RR1578; research conducted by IFF Research). https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/693bdc426a12691d48491e9b/Working_lives_of_teachers_and_leaders_wave_4_summary_report.pdf

Irrespective of which measure we use, the workforce reports lower general wellbeing than the general population. To see how our findings compare with other evidence on the same workforce, we looked at school teachers and senior leaders only, the group closest to the Working Lives of Teachers and Leaders (WLTL) Wave 4 sample. For this group, our scores for life satisfaction, feeling that life is worthwhile and happiness are slightly lower than WLTL's, by **0.44**, **0.47** and **0.19** points respectively on a **0** to **10** scale. **Anxiety** is similar in both surveys. Overall, our findings are broadly in line with WLTL, and the small differences all point the same way.

Wellbeing in relationship to stress, organisational support and culture

To broaden our understanding of staff wellbeing we have taken the analysis further this year to look at how wellbeing interacts with stress, organisational support and culture. We have used WEMWBS to conduct this analysis.

Average WEMWBS score by (a) stress from work, (b) perceived organisational support and (c) perceived effect of organisational culture, 2026



WEMWBS scores range from 14 to 70; higher scores mean better wellbeing.

Fig. 2.10

Fig. 2.10 shows three important relationships. Firstly, staff who are more stressed report lower wellbeing. Average wellbeing scores range from **55.10** among staff who are not at all stressed to **37.30** among those who are very stressed (Fig. 2.10a).

Secondly, staff who feel less well supported by their organisation report lower wellbeing (**37.33**) compared to the wellbeing reported by those who feel better supported (**49.63**) (Fig. 2.10b).

Thirdly, staff who experience their organisation's culture as harmful report much lower wellbeing (**40.91**) than those for whom it is neutral (**46.82**) or positive (**47.60**)[6] (Fig. 2.10c).

These associations are striking. In each case, the higher scores are at a level that, for an individual, would be considered average wellbeing. The lower scores are at a level that would be considered as low wellbeing for an individual. The data show that the experiences go together (e.g. weak organisational support and poor wellbeing), not which causes which.

Staff with a positive experience of organisational culture barely differ from those who see it as neutral (**47.60** vs **46.82**). The striking difference is between a culture experienced as harmful and one that is not. Wellbeing is around six points lower where culture is seen as harmful, a much greater gap than the **0.8** points between neutral and positive experiences.

6. The culture question asks about impact on staff mental health, so some overlap with wellbeing scores is possible.



Wellbeing is around **six points lower** where staff see their culture as harmful; a positive culture is barely different from a neutral one.

2.6 Job satisfaction

Personal wellbeing and wellbeing at work

We asked our respondents to reflect on four aspects of their work life and their life in general with two sets of established measures on a **0** (not at all) to **10** (completely) scale.

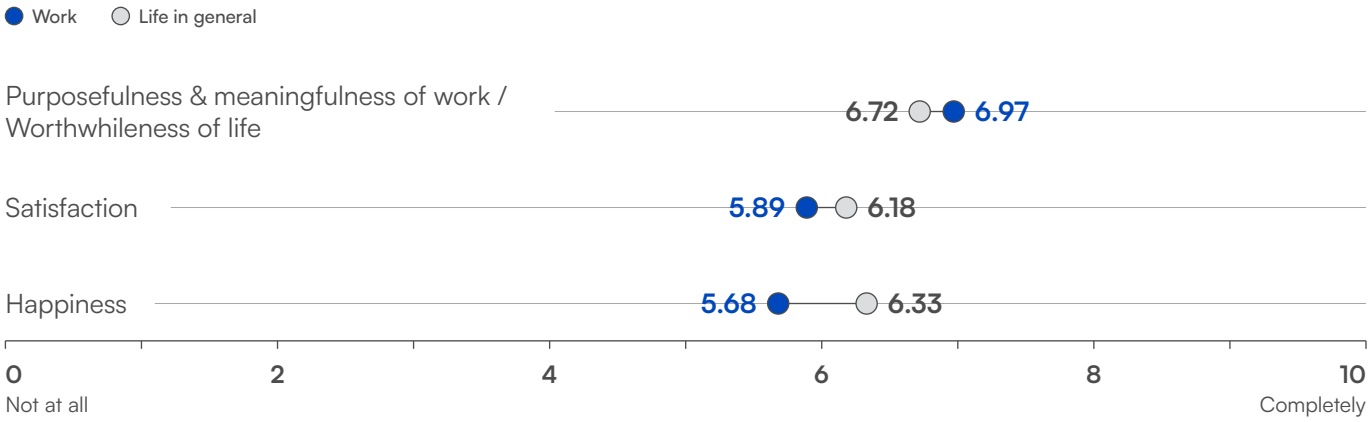
	Work Wellbeing Research Centre University of Oxford[7]	**Life** The Office for National Statistics (ONS)[8]
Satisfaction	Overall, how satisfied are you with your job?	Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?
Purposefulness & meaningfulness / worthwhileness	Overall, how purposeful and meaningful do you find your work?	Overall, to what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile?
Happiness	How happy did you feel while at work during the past week?	Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?
Stress / anxiety*	How stressed did you feel while at work during the past week?	Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?

*Unlike the other wellbeing questions, a higher score for anxiety and stress means poorer wellbeing. We reverse these scores (subtracting each from **10**) so that, across every measure, a higher score means better wellbeing. This makes the measures easier to compare and allows them to be combined into a single score.

Data below shows comparisons between work and life in general on satisfaction, purpose, and happiness.

Average ratings of work and of life in general on three paired measures, 2026

Fig. 2.11



Item wording and reference periods differ slightly between pairs.

Staff rate the purposefulness of their work more highly than the worthwhileness of their life in general. Staff rate their work less satisfying and less happy than life in general. The happiness gap is the largest across the three items (Fig. 2.11).

7. De Neve, J.-E., & Ward, G. (2023). Measuring workplace wellbeing (Wellbeing Research Centre Working Paper No. 2303). Wellbeing Research Centre, University of Oxford. https://wellbeing.hmc.ox.ac.uk/papers/wp-2303-measuring-workplace-wellbeing/

8. Department for Education. (2025). Working lives of teachers and leaders: Wave 4. Summary report (Research Report RR1578; research conducted by IFF Research). https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/693bdc426a12691d48491e9b/Working_lives_of_teachers_and_leaders_wave_4_summary_report.pdf

Education staff report lower life wellbeing than the general population and sector benchmarks published in the English Department for Education's Working Lives of Teachers and Leaders survey[8].

Within this survey, staff also rate their work less favourably than their lives in general: job satisfaction is lower than life satisfaction (**5.89** vs **6.18**), and happiness at work in the past week is lower than happiness yesterday (**5.68** vs **6.33**). The one exception is meaning: education staff rate their work as more purposeful (**6.97**) than they rate their lives as worthwhile (**6.72**).

If staff were simply unhappy in general, we would expect work and life scores to rise or fall together. Instead, work scores higher on purpose but lower on satisfaction and happiness, suggesting that the shortfall lies in the conditions of the job rather than in the value staff place on it. The paired questions are not worded identically: the life questions ask about "yesterday" or life "nowadays", while happiness at work asks about "the past week". These comparisons are therefore indicative.

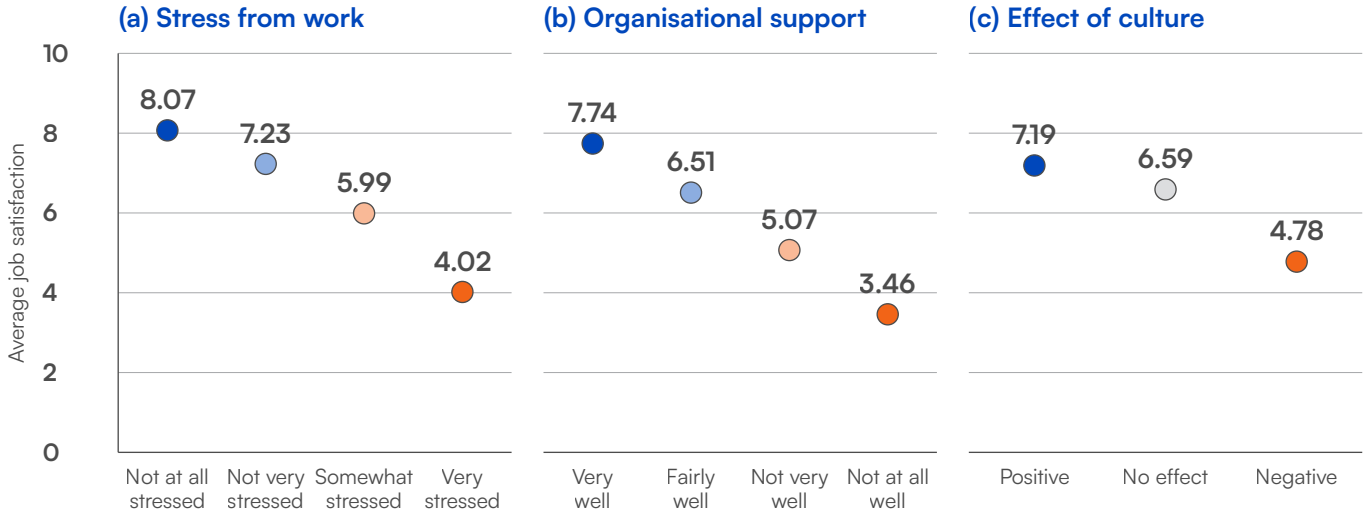
For further information about measuring general life and work wellbeing, see Appendix D and E.

Education staff rate their work as more purposeful than their lives (**6.97** vs **6.72**) — yet less satisfying and less happy. The shortfall appears to lie in the conditions of the job, not the value staff place on it.

Job satisfaction in relation to stress, organisational support and culture

Job satisfaction is about more than the personal wellbeing of an individual. Evidence suggests that it can be related to performance within a role[9, 10]. It is also associated with staff retention[11, 12].

Average job satisfaction by (a) stress from work, (b) perceived organisational support and (c) perceived effect of organisational culture, 2026



0 = not at all satisfied, 10 = completely satisfied. Excludes 'don't know.'

Fig. 2.12

Fig. 2.12 echoes Fig. 2.10, examining the relationships between job satisfaction and each of stress, organisational support and culture. Here we see that staff who are more stressed report lower job satisfaction. Average scores range from **8.1** among staff who are not at all stressed to **4.0** among those who are very stressed — a gap of around **4** points on the **10**-point scale (Fig. 2.12a).

Meanwhile, staff who feel less well supported by their organisation report lower job satisfaction, with a similar gap — **7.7** among those who say their organisation supports staff very well to **3.5** among those who say not well at all (Fig. 2.12b).

Finally, staff who say their organisation's culture negatively affects mental health and wellbeing have markedly lower job satisfaction (**4.8**) than staff who say it has no effect (**6.6**) or a positive effect (**7.2**) (Fig. 2.12c).

Again, these are associations. The data show that these experiences go together, but not which causes which. Job satisfaction is most closely linked to stress and organisation support. On culture, the largest gap is again between a culture experienced as harmful and one that is not (**1.8** points). Staff who see their culture as positive also report somewhat higher job satisfaction than those who see it as neutral (**0.6** points).

9. Judge, T. A., Thoresen, C. J., Bono, J. E., & Patton, G. K. (2001). The job satisfaction-job performance relationship: A qualitative and quantitative review. Psychological Bulletin, 127(3), 376-407. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.127.3.376
10. De Neve, J.-E., & Ward, G. (2025). Why workplace wellbeing matters: The science behind employee happiness and organizational performance. Harvard Business Review Press.
11. Rubenstein, A. L., Eberly, M. B., Lee, T. W., & Mitchell, T. R. (2018). Surveying the forest: A meta-analysis, moderator investigation, and futureoriented discussion of the antecedents of voluntary employee turnover. Personnel Psychology, 71(1), 23-65. https://doi.org/10.1111/peps.12226
12. Madigan, D. J., & Kim, L. E. (2021). Towards an understanding of teacher attrition: A meta-analysis of burnout, job satisfaction, and teachers' intentions to quit. Teaching and Teacher Education, 105, Article 103425. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2021.103425

Sample profile

Fig. 2.1 **Self-reported level of stress from work, 2026**

2026 Base: All staff (n = 3,155).

Fig. 2.2 **Staff reporting stress from work, by job role, 2026**

Base: All staff (n = 3,155).

2026 Base: All staff who gave a stress rating (excludes don't know) (n = 3,147), Senior leaders (n = 697), School teachers (n = 2,067), Support staff (n = 241).

2025 Base: All staff (n = 3,082), Senior leaders (n = 762), School teachers (n = 1,988), Support staff (n = 222).

Fig. 2.3 **Perceived organisational support at school or college for staff with mental health and wellbeing problems, 2026**

2026 Base: All staff (n = 3,155), Senior leaders (n = 697), School teachers (n = 2,067).

2025 Base: All staff (n = 3,082), Senior leaders (n = 762), School teachers (n = 1,988).

Fig. 2.4 **Perceived effect of organisational culture on staff mental health and wellbeing, 2026**

2026 Base: All staff (n = 3,155), Senior leaders (n = 697), School teachers (n = 2,067).

2025 Base: All staff (n = 3,082), Senior leaders (n = 762), School teachers (n = 1,988).

Fig. 2.5 **Average happiness at work in the past week, by perceived effect of organisational culture, 2026**

2026 Base: All staff (n = 3,155), Culture positively affects staff mental health and wellbeing (n = 891), Does not affect (n = 481), Negatively affects (n = 1,536).

Base: all respondents excluding "Don't know" (unweighted n = 2,908; 247 excluded). Raw codes 1—11 recoded to the 0—10 response scale. Means, SDs and percentages are weighted; counts are unweighted. Confidence intervals use the Kish effective sample size.

Significance: happiness at work differed significantly by view of organisational culture (weighted least squares with HC3 heteroscedasticity-robust standard errors, Wald $F(2, 2905) = 263.0$, $p < .001$; weighted $\eta^2 = .19$, a large effect). Holm-adjusted pairwise contrasts showed that staff describing a negative culture scored significantly lower than those describing a positive culture (−2.16 points, 95% CI −2.35 to −1.96, $p < .001$, $d = 1.02$) and those describing no effect (−1.83 points, 95% CI −2.08 to −1.59, $p < .001$, $d = 0.85$). The difference between "positive" and "no effect" was statistically significant but small (−0.32 points, 95% CI −0.57 to −0.07, $p = .012$, $d = 0.16$). Results were unchanged in unweighted robustness checks (one-way ANOVA $F(2, 2905) = 334.2$; Kruskal-Wallis $H(2) = 578.4$; both $p < .001$). p-values shown as <.001 are all below 1×10^{-40}. Both items are concurrent self-reports, so the association should not be read as causal.

Fig. 2.6 **Work-related symptoms experienced in the past academic year, 2025 and 2026**

2026 Base: All staff who gave an answer (excludes prefer not to say and refused) (n = 2,693), Senior leaders (n = 612), School teachers (n = 1,736), Support staff (n = 209).

2025 Base: All staff who gave an answer (excludes prefer not to say and refused) (n = 2,622).

Fig. 2.7 **Types of work-related symptoms by perceived organisational support, 2026**

2026 Base: All staff who answered both questions (excludes don't know and prefer not to say) (n = 2,831): Well supported (n = 1,607), Not well supported (n = 1,224).

Fig. 2.8 **Distribution of WEMWBS scores across benchmark bands, 2026**

2026 Base: All staff (n = 3,155).

Fig. 2.9 Average personal wellbeing (ONS4) scores: teachers and leaders compared with national figures, 2026

2026 Base: All staff (n = 3,155), Senior leaders and school teachers only (n = 2,764).

Scale 0-10; for anxiety, lower scores indicate better wellbeing. Sources: Teacher Wellbeing Index 2026.

(weighted); DfE Working Lives of Teachers and Leaders Wave 4 (2025); ONS personal wellbeing estimates (2024).

Fig. 2.10 Average WEMWBS score by (a) stress from work, (b) perceived organisational support and (c) perceived effect of organisational culture, 2026

2026 Base: All staff (n = 3,155). (a) Not at all stressed (n = 104), Not very stressed (n = 590), Somewhat stressed (n = 1,717), Very stressed (n = 736); (b) Very well (n = 306), Fairly well (n = 1,352), Not very well (n = 952), Not at all well (n = 319); (c) Culture positively affects staff mental health and wellbeing (n = 891), Does not affect (n = 481), Negatively affects (n = 1,536).

(a) Weighted means (WEMWBS, 14—70); "don't know" excluded. WEMWBS differed by stress level, Wald $\chi^2(3) = 718.62$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .25$, with wellbeing lower at each higher stress level. All pairwise comparisons were significant ($p < .001$; Bonferroni-adjusted).

(b) Weighted means (WEMWBS, 14—70); "don't know" excluded. WEMWBS differed by perceived support, Wald χ^2 (3) = 322.06, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .14$, with wellbeing lower at each lower level of support. All pairwise comparisons were significant ($p < .001$; Bonferroni-adjusted).

(c) Weighted means (WEMWBS, 14—70); "don't know" excluded. WEMWBS differed by culture rating, Wald χ^2 (2) = 299.05, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .12$. Staff reporting a negative culture scored significantly lower than those reporting a positive culture or no effect (both $p < .001$). Positive and no-effect ratings did not differ ($p = .52$; Bonferroni-adjusted).

Fig. 2.11 Average ratings of work and of life in general on three paired measures, 2026

2026 Base: All staff (n = 3,155).

Whole-sample weighted means (0—10 scale; N=3,155, weighted), compared using paired design-based t-tests, since each respondent rated both the work and life version of each item. Work purposeful/meaningful 6.97 vs general life-worthwhile 6.72, a significant gap (+0.24, 95% CI +0.17 to +0.32, p<.001, dz=0.12). Job satisfaction 5.89 vs general life satisfaction 6.18, significant (−0.30, 95% CI −0.38 to −0.22, p<.001, dz=0.14). Happiness at work 5.68 vs general happiness yesterday 6.33, significant and the largest of the three gaps (−0.65, 95% CI −0.74 to −0.57, p<.001, dz=0.30). Weighted signed-rank tests give the same result. Differences are computed before rounding.

Fig. 2.12 Average job satisfaction by (a) stress from work, (b) perceived organisational support and (c) perceived effect of organisational culture, 2026

2026 Base: (a) Not at all stressed (n = 104), Not very stressed (n = 590), Somewhat stressed (n = 1,717), Very stressed (n = 736); (b) Very well (n = 306), Fairly well (n = 1,352), Not very well (n = 952), Not at all well (n = 319); (c) Culture positively affects staff mental health and wellbeing (n = 891), Does not affect (n = 481), Negatively affects (n = 1,536).

(a) Weighted means (0—10); "don't know" excluded. Job satisfaction differed by stress level, Wald χ^2 (3) = 664.33, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .23$, with satisfaction lower at each higher stress level; all pairwise comparisons $p \leq .002$ (Bonferroni-adjusted).

(b) Weighted means (0—10); "don't know" excluded. Job satisfaction differed by perceived support, Wald $\chi^2(3) = 664.15$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .24$, with satisfaction lower at each lower level of support; all pairwise comparisons $p < .001$ (Bonferroni-adjusted).

(c) Weighted means (0—10); "don't know" excluded. Job satisfaction differed by culture rating, Wald $\chi^2(2) = 616.65$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .21$; all pairwise comparisons $p < .001$ (Bonferroni-adjusted).

Chapter 3
Spotlight themes



Education Support

Each year, Education Support works with thousands of education staff. Through various mechanisms, we hear a lot of direct feedback on what matters most to the workforce. We explore the emerging themes through a set of spotlight questions in this year's report.

This year, we have turned our attention to safeguarding, relationships, and financial stability.

"There are more and more parents now that are looking to school to solve everything for them... the children's centres have closed... the early help workers aren't there... And we're the front door, aren't we? They see us every day. They know us, they trust us."

Headteacher, primary school, 2026

"I get four periods a fortnight to do [safeguarding]. I don't know who thinks it falls so neatly into that 100 minutes a week... if I have to involve external agencies, my two periods can easily be spent on hold waiting for someone to answer the phone at children's services."

Deputy designated safeguarding lead, secondary school, 2026

3.1 Safeguarding

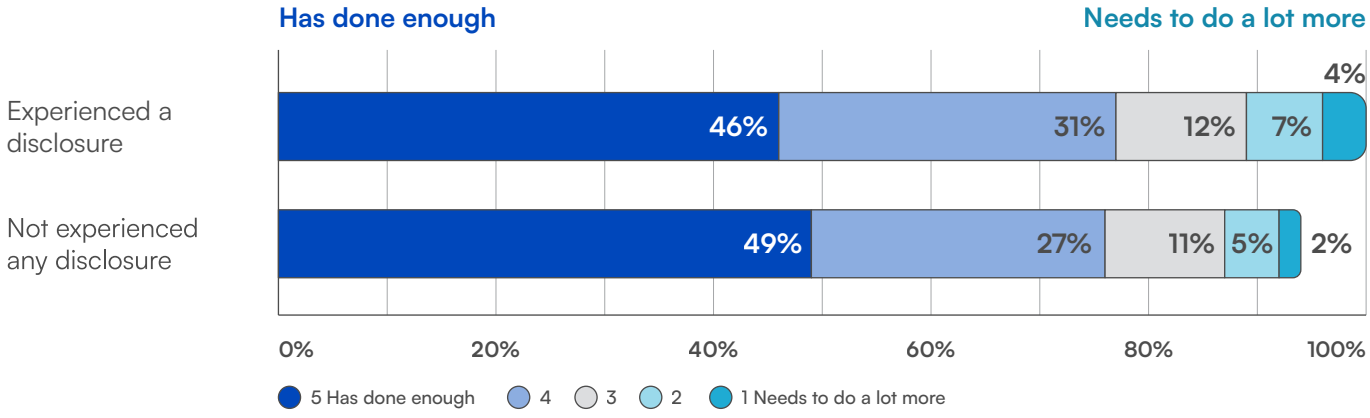
Effective safeguarding is a priority in every school or college in the UK. As a statutory duty on schools and colleges, it reflects our collective commitment to keep children safe using approaches developed in response to past failures, coupled with a widely shared ambition for the best possible outcomes for all of our children and young people.

Here, we explore the perceptions of education staff around safeguarding, including how well education staff feel it supports children, and how it impacts their workload, confidence and mental health.

How well do staff feel safeguarding works?

There is a broad level of confidence across education staff in the efficacy of safeguarding in their school or college. A significant majority, **76%**, believe their school or college does enough to keep pupils safe and that a disclosure makes a difference for the pupils concerned. Perceived barriers among those who did not feel able to make a difference when handling a safeguarding disclosure include complex circumstances and lack of support from external agencies or from parents and guardians. Inadequate safeguarding training was not largely cited.

Views on whether the school or college has done enough to keep pupils safe, by personal experience of a safeguarding disclosure in the past academic year, 2026



Excludes 'prefer not to say' and 'don't know. Figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding. *Fig. 3.1*

About half of all respondents, **49%**, reported that they had personally experienced a safeguarding disclosure in the past academic year. Among these staff, **76%** feel their school or college has done enough to keep pupils and students safe, while **11%** feel their school or college needs to do more or a lot more. Personal experience of disclosure appears to make little difference to staff perceptions of school effectiveness in this area.

School and college leaders report higher levels of confidence in the adequacy of their school or college's safeguarding compared to school teachers. **85%** of leaders report that their schools have done enough to keep pupils and students safe, compared to **72%** of school teachers.

Extent to which staff felt able to make a difference for the pupil after their most recent safeguarding disclosure in the past academic year, 2026



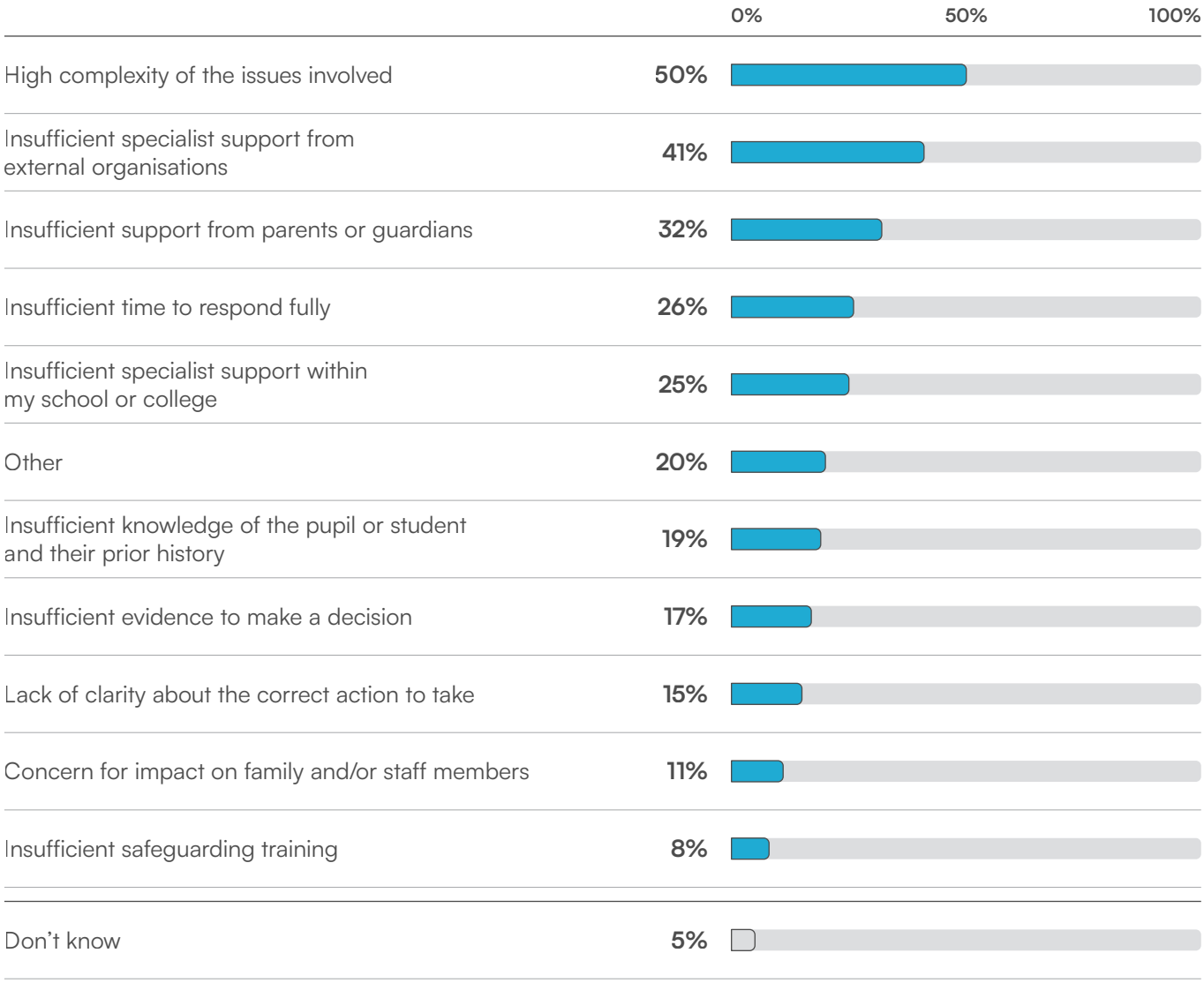
Excludes 'prefer not to say.'

Fig. 3.2

81% of staff who experienced a disclosure in the past year felt able to make at least some difference to the pupil or student concerned during their most recent experience. **3%** did not feel able to make any difference at all.

Barriers to making a difference

Reasons staff felt unable to make a difference after a safeguarding disclosure in the past academic year, 2026



Staff who felt unable to make a difference after their most recent safeguarding disclosure (n = 239). Multiple responses allowed. Ordered by frequency.

Fig. 3.3

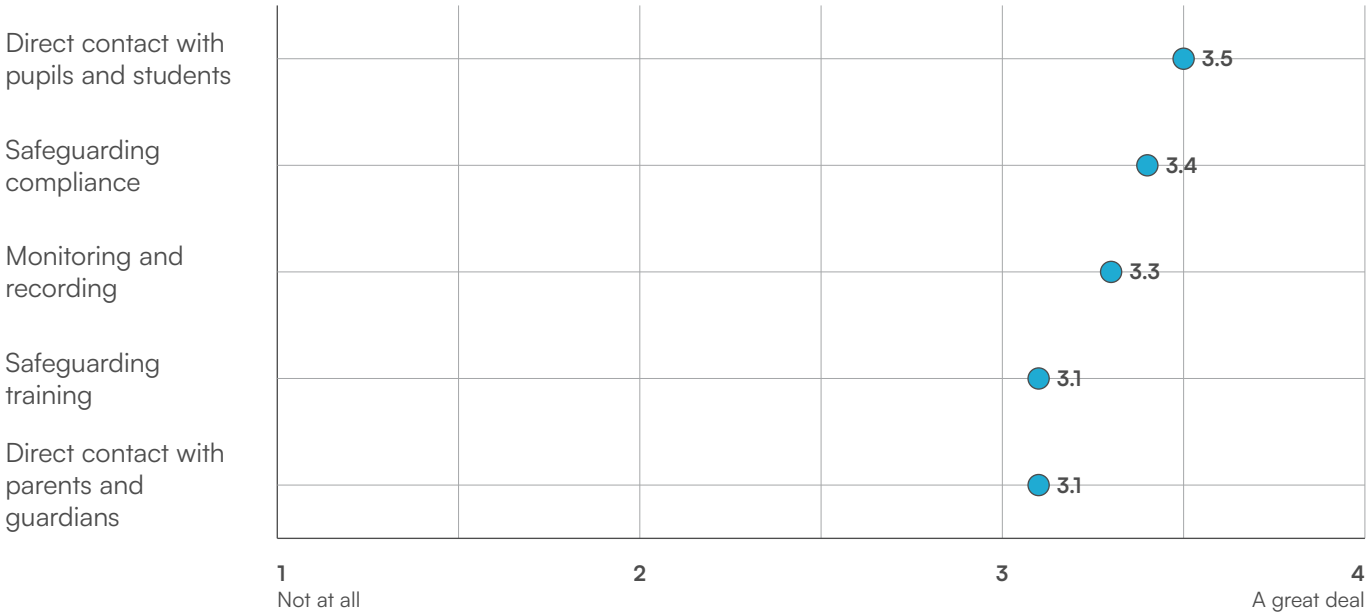
The most significant barrier reported was 'High complexity of the issues involved', suggested by **50%** of those who felt they were unable to make a difference regarding a safeguarding disclosure from a student. Insufficient specialist support from external organisations (**41%**) and from parents and guardians (**32%**) were the next most frequently reported barriers. **8%** of respondents identified insufficient safeguarding training as a barrier.

Capacity and experience

We asked staff to think about how they spend time in relation to safeguarding and to consider which activities they felt most contribute to pupil and student wellbeing. Responses indicated that staff believe that the time they spend talking or working directly with pupils and students is most beneficial, whilst time spent with parents and guardians is the least impactful on pupil and student wellbeing (Fig. 3.4).

Perceived contribution of staff time allocation to pupil or student wellbeing, by activity

Fig. 3.4



Respondents rated how much staff time spent on each of five activities contributes to pupil wellbeing. They used a four-point scale: not at all (1), not very much (2), a fair amount (3) and a great deal (4). Respondents who answered "don't know" were left out of that activity's average. The average score for each activity shows how much a typical respondent thought time spent on it helps pupils, so a higher score means staff saw it as more valuable.

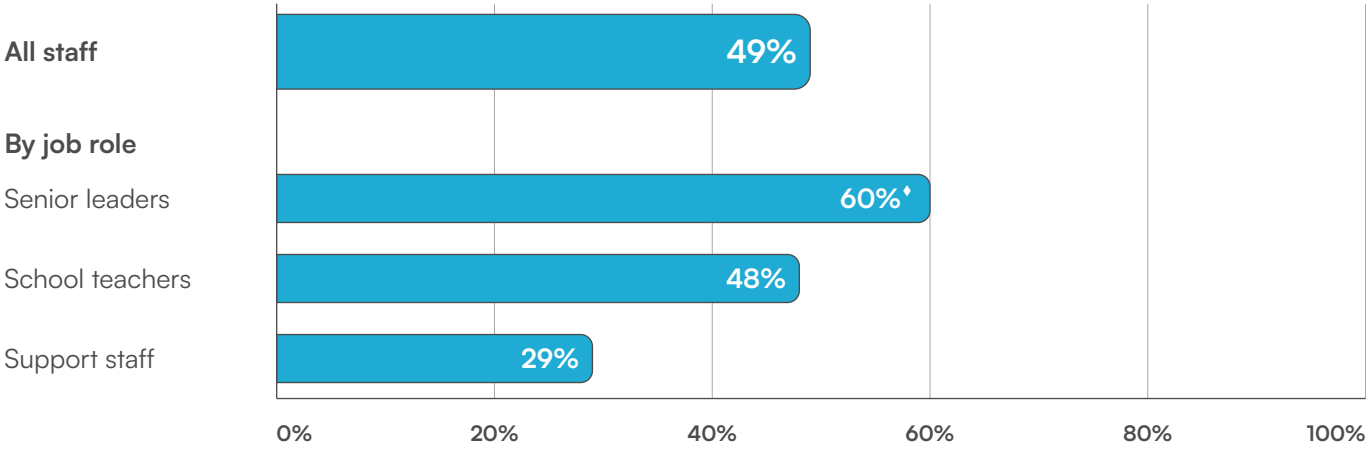
Despite its perceived importance, **49%** of education staff report that the staff time available for direct contact and building relationships with pupils at risk is too little. This figure rises to **60%** for senior leaders, significantly higher than school teachers and support staff (Fig. 3.5a).

In terms of the amount of data collection and reporting required for safeguarding, **61%** of education staff feel that the amount is about right. **23%** believe it is too much and **7%** believe it is too little (Fig. 3.5b).

Of those who believe that data collection and reporting is too much, there is little difference between the perspective of senior leaders and that of school teachers.

Time for direct contact with pupils and students at risk, and views on safeguarding data collection and reporting

(a) Too little staff time available for direct contact and building relationships with pupils and students at risk



(b) Amount of safeguarding data collection and reporting



All bars on a 0—100% scale. Figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
♦Significantly different from school teachers and support staff.

Fig. 3.5

> "You can be talking to a student who [is] self-harming, suicidal ideation, whatever it might be... and then I'm expected to go and teach a Year 7 lesson and be all smiles and enthusiasm... you just end up at the end of the day absolutely exhausted by it."
>
> Deputy designated safeguarding lead, secondary school, 2026

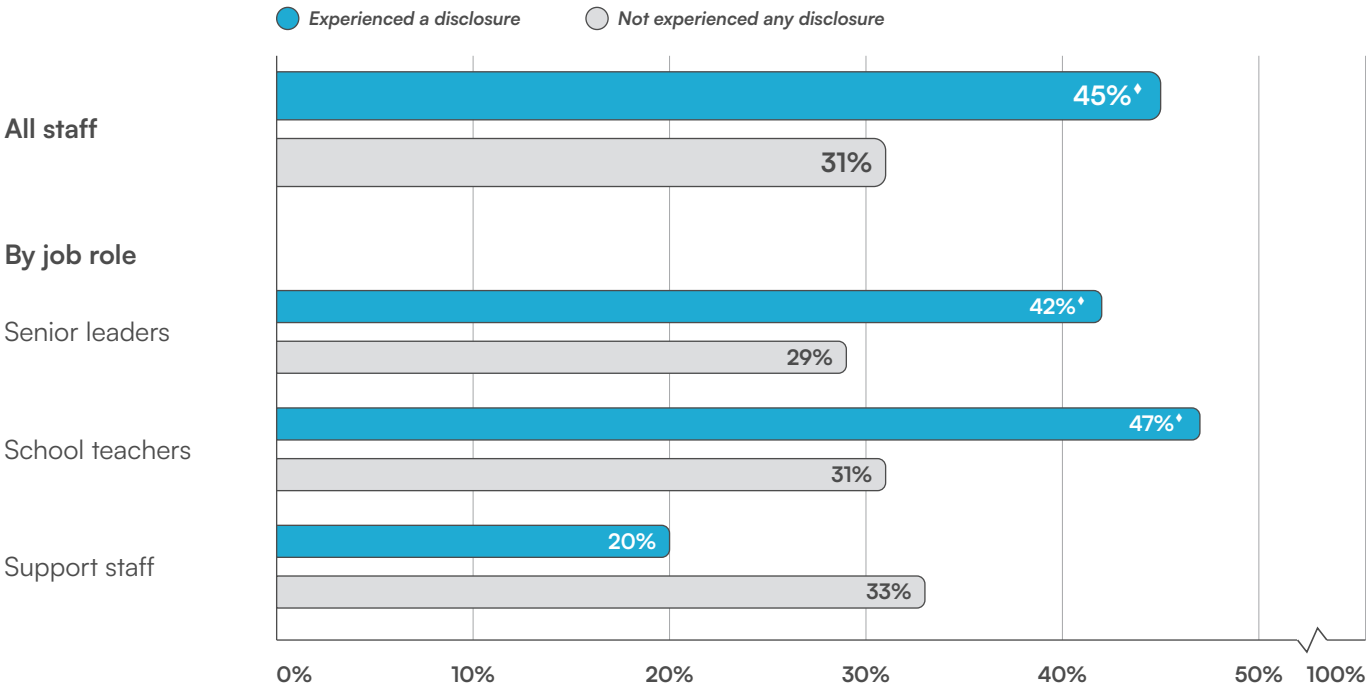


49% of education staff report that the staff time available for direct contact and building relationships with pupils at risk is too little. This figure rises to **60%** for senior leaders, significantly higher than school teachers and support staff.

Staff who experienced a disclosure were more likely to report a mental health issue

45% of staff who experienced a disclosure in the past year also reported a mental health issue, compared to **31%** of staff who had not experienced a disclosure. The same pattern plays out across senior leaders and teachers (Fig. 3.6).

Staff reporting a mental health issue in the past academic year, by experience of a safeguarding disclosure and job role in the past academic year, 2026



Percentage reporting a mental health issue in the past academic year.
♦Statistically significant difference.

Fig. 3.6

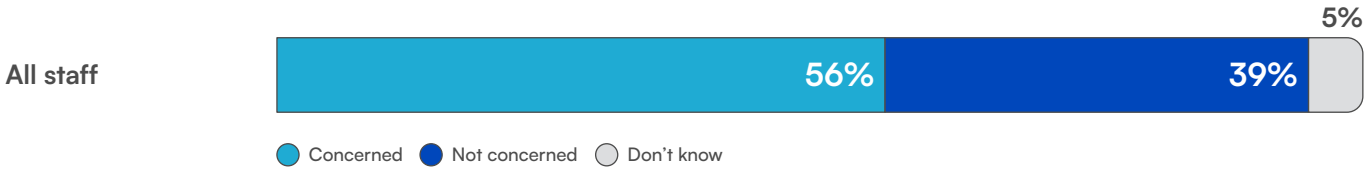
Staff who experienced a disclosure report a noticeably higher rate of mental health issues. That pattern is true for both school teachers (**47%** vs **31%**) and for senior leaders (**42%** vs **29%**). It is also true in both primary (**43%** vs **28%**) and secondary (**39%** vs **27%**) school settings. The numbers are too small to draw conclusions for support staff or for other educational settings. The data do not show why there is an association between handling disclosures and poorer mental health, so we are unable to draw a causal link. Further inquiry is required to better understand this relationship.

> "These things are very hard to hear... it's still as bad as the first time you hear it because you never get used to hearing these things. And you just look at that little child's face and you think, oh gosh, that's terrible."
>
> Headteacher, primary school, 2026

3.2 Financial stability

56% of staff are concerned about the financial stability of the school or college they work in, compared to **39%** of staff who are not concerned.

Concern about the financial stability of the school or college

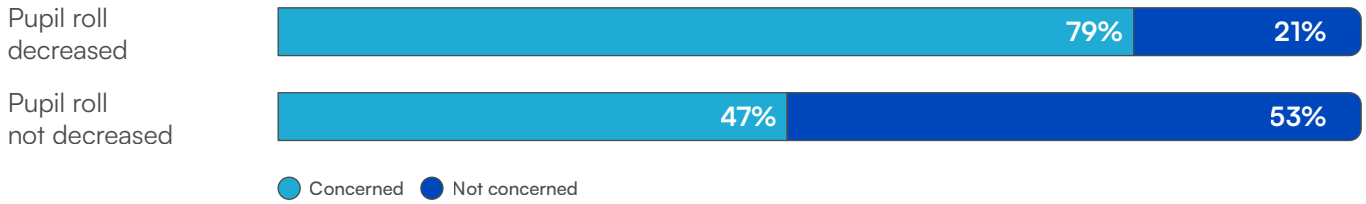


Concerned means very or quite concerned; not concerned means not very or not at all concerned.

Fig. 3.7

79% of staff in a school or college with self-reported falling enrolment in the past five years are concerned about its financial stability. This drops to **47%** of staff in schools or colleges where enrolment is not falling.

Percentage of staff concerned about the financial stability of their school or college, by whether they think there has been a decrease in the number of pupils or students on roll at their school or college in the last five years



Concerned means very or quite concerned; not concerned means not very or not at all concerned. Excludes don't know.

Fig. 3.8

70% of staff who are concerned about the financial stability of their school or college say this impacts how secure they feel at their job. **62%** of staff who are concerned report that financial (in)stability affects their mental health at least somewhat.

Effect of concern about financial stability on staff's sense of job security and on their mental health and wellbeing

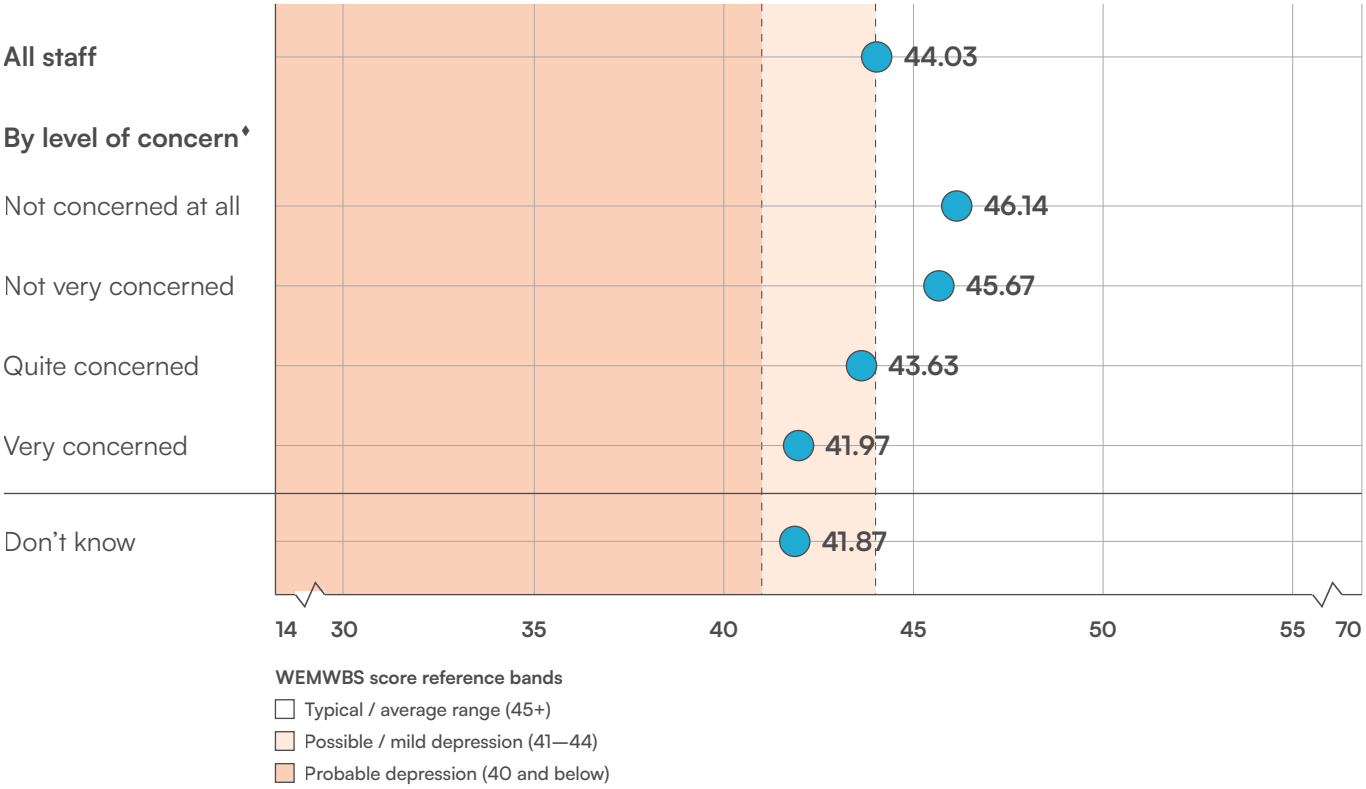


Staff concerned about financial stability; excludes prefer not to say.

Fig. 3.9

Financial concerns and wellbeing

Average WEMWBS score by level of concern about the financial stability of the school or college, 2026



Mean WEMWBS score. Scores range from 14 to 70.
♦The association between concern and wellbeing is statistically significant.

Fig. 3.10

Staff who are very concerned about their school or college's finances report lower wellbeing (**41.97**) than those who are not at all concerned (**46.14**). The gap is statistically significant, albeit modest in size, and smaller than those linked to stress, support or culture.

> "[Staff] that are off, they're not getting replaced, the amount of... redundancies that I'm seeing... it really takes a toll on you... that's what sometimes pushes [people] to leave the profession."
>
> Teacher, secondary school, 2026



79% of staff in a school or college with self-reported falling enrolment in the past five years are concerned about its financial stability. This drops to **47%** of staff in schools or colleges where enrolment is not falling.

3.3 Relationships

In the literature, strong teacher-student relationships in schools or colleges are consistently linked with higher student engagement and attainment[1]. Relationships between schools and families influence parental engagement[2]. Positive relationships between colleagues support higher job satisfaction and retention[3] and relational leadership is associated with more positive and supportive organisational cultures[4].

Here, we explore the perceptions of education staff around general relationships at work among colleagues and with the wider school or college community, and also actions their school or college has done to support positive relationships.

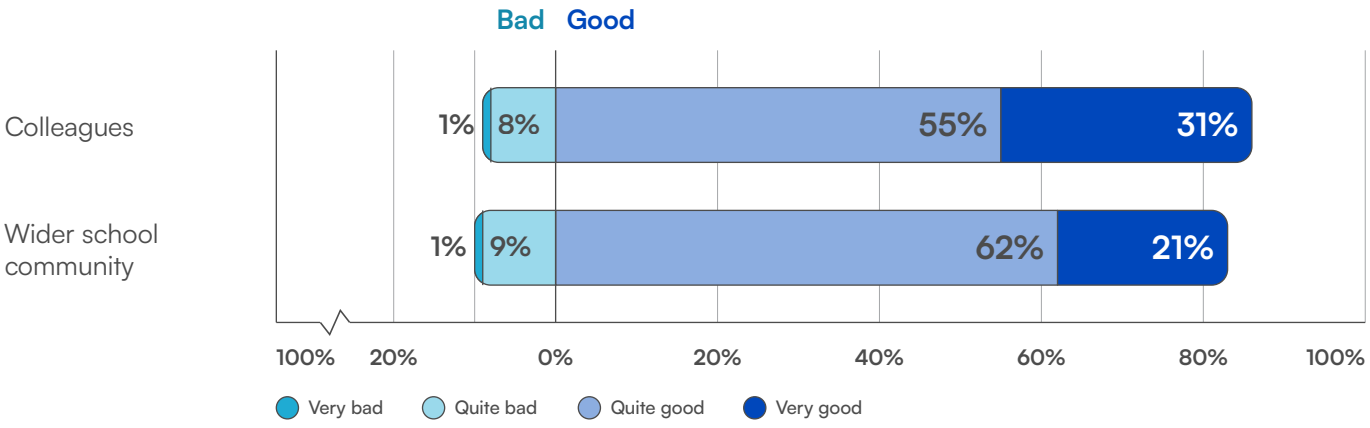
General relationships at work

87% of education staff rate the relationships between colleagues at their school as either very good or quite good. **83%** rate relationships between staff in their school and the wider school community as very good or quite good.

This is a strong and positive finding and one which provides important context for so much that is good in education across the UK.

Around **one in ten** rate them as quite or very bad: **9%** for relationships with colleagues and **10%** for relationships with the wider school community.

Quality of working relationships with colleagues and with the wider school community



Don't know: colleagues 4%, wider school community 7%.
Figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Fig. 3.11

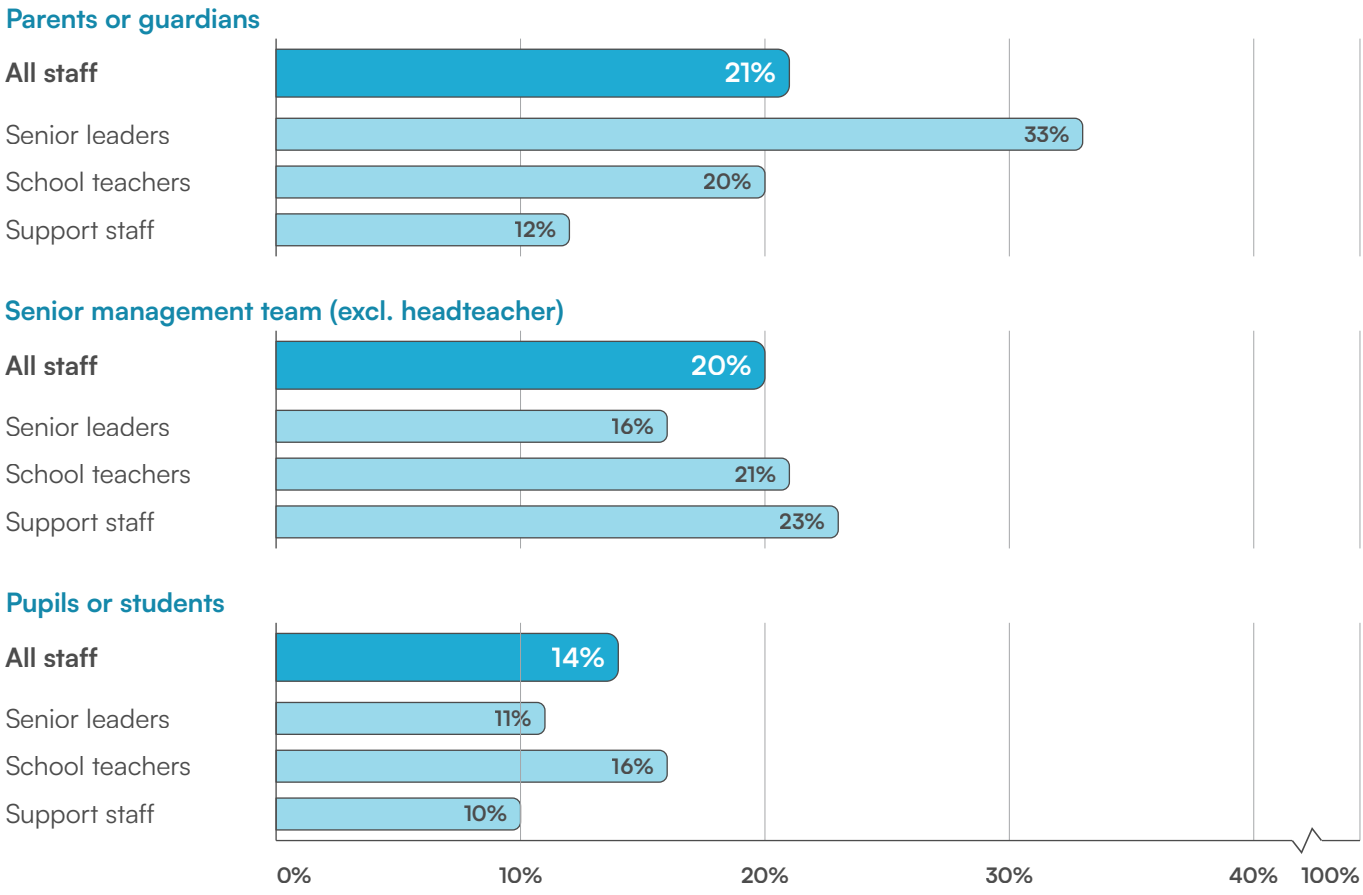
1. Roorda, D.L., Koomen, H.M.Y., Spilt, J.L. and Oort, F.J. (2011) 'The influence of affective teacher—student relationships on students' school engagement and achievement: a meta-analytic approach', Review of Educational Research, 81(4), pp. 493—529.
2. Desforges, C., & Abouchaar, A. (2003). The Impact of Parental Involvement, Parental Support and Family Education on Pupil Achievement and Adjustment: A Literature Review. London: Department of Education and Skills.
3. Johnson, Susan & Kraft, Matthew & Papay, John. (2012). How Context Matters in High-Need Schools: The Effects of Teachers' Working Conditions on Their Professional Satisfaction and Their Students' Achievement. Teachers College Record: The Voice of Scholarship in Education. 114. 1-39. 10.1177/016146811211401004
4. Nguyen, D., See, B. H., Brown, C., & Kokotsaki, D. (2023). Reviewing the evidence base on school leadership, culture, climate and structure for teacher retention: Rapid evidence assessment. Education Endowment Foundation. https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/evidence-reviews/leadership-approaches

In a question that asks respondents about challenging relationships they have at work from a list of thirteen, parents or guardians, the senior management team (excluding the headteacher), and pupils are the most selected options. Around one third of staff report there are no relationships that they consider to be challenging.

Senior leaders were more likely to say they had challenging relationships with parents or guardians than with any other group. School teachers were more likely to have challenging relationships with parents or guardians compared to support staff.

Both school teachers and support staff were most likely to select the senior management team (excluding headteacher) as someone they have challenging relationships with.

Groups with whom staff most often report challenging relationships, by job role, 2026



The three most frequently chosen groups are shown.
Up to three choices allowed; excludes prefer not to say.

Fig. 3.12

> "I think departments become little kind of silos, don't they? And you develop this amazing solidarity within your department within a really big school."
>
> Head of maths, secondary school, 2026

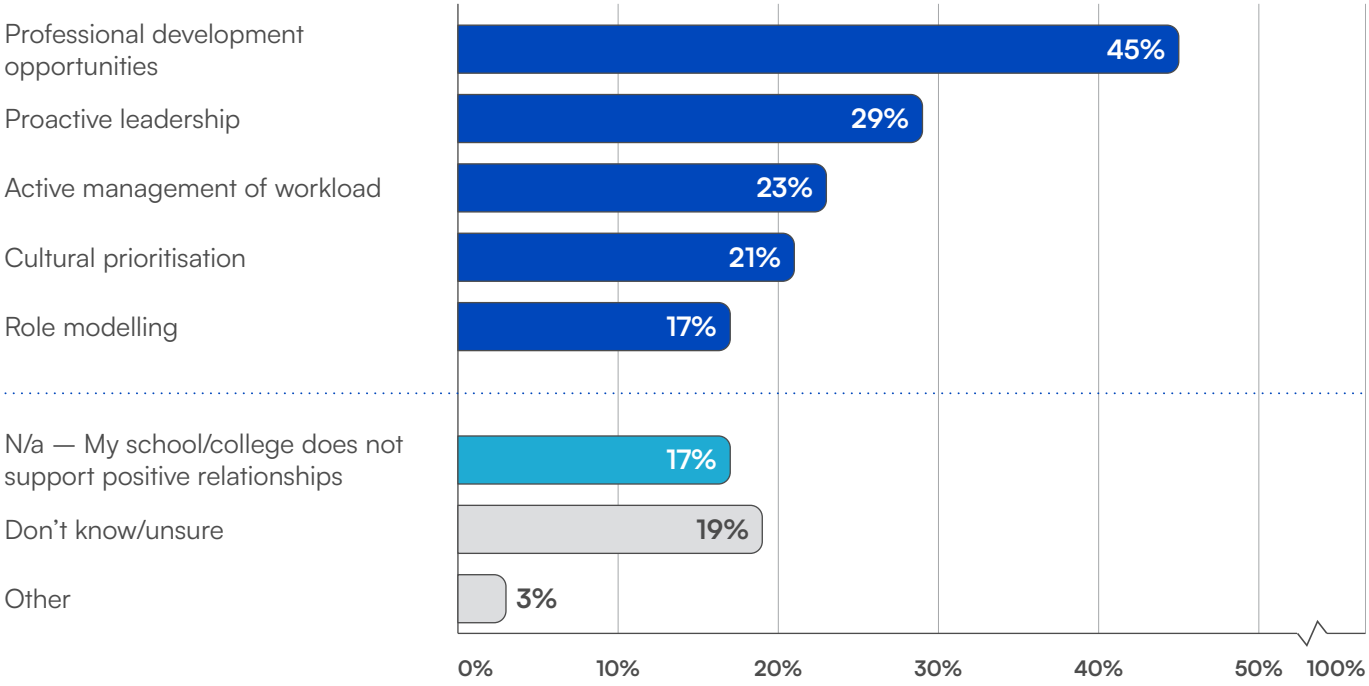
Capacity for relationships

Across all roles, **70%** of staff agree that competing demands at school or college affect the time they have for relationship building with colleagues.

When asked what their school or college has done in the past academic year to support positive relationships between staff members, the most common response is professional development opportunities (**45%**). We do not assume that this professional development was focused explicitly on relational practice: development opportunities with colleagues can be positive for relationships irrespective of the learning objective.

17% of all respondents reported that their school or college does not support positive relationships.

Actions schools and colleges have taken to support positive relationships between staff in the past academic year, 2026

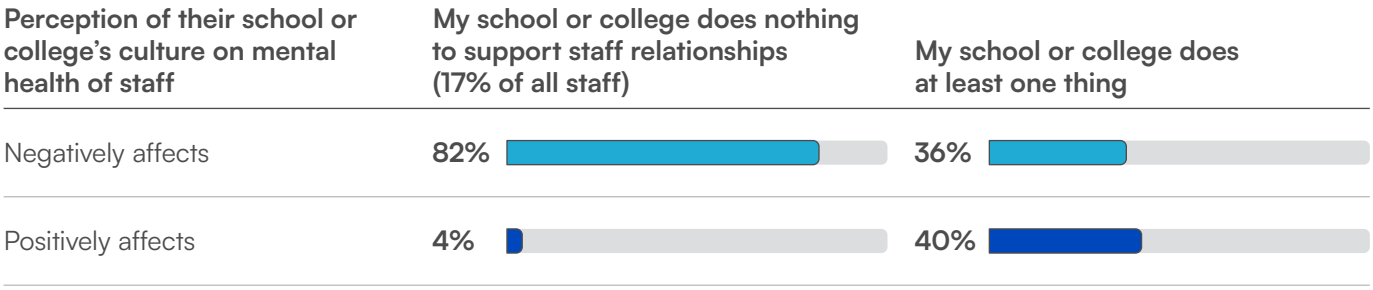


Percentage selecting each action over the past academic year.
Multiple responses allowed.

Fig. 3.13

> "Teaching can be the loneliest job in the world. You know, you can work in the busiest school and if you don't come out of your classroom, and I had points last year where I was like this, I was just in my classroom all the time."
>
> Teacher, secondary school, 2026

Perceived effect of organisational culture on staff mental health, by whether the school or college supports positive relationships between staff in the past academic year, 2026



'Don't know' responses are not shown.

Fig. 3.14

Across all staff, **17%** say that their school or college does nothing to support positive relationships between staff. Among this group, **82%** say that their organisation's culture negatively affects staff mental health, compared with **36%** of staff whose school or college does at least one thing to support relationships.

Staff who say their school or college does nothing to support positive relationships between staff also have a lower average wellbeing score than those whose school or college does at least one thing to support positive relationships. Their average WEMWBS score is around six points lower (**39.62** vs **45.67**). At **39.62**, the group average sits at a level that, for an individual, would be associated with probable depression.

The answers to these questions are likely to overlap. A setting seen as doing nothing for relationships is likely to also be experienced as having a negative culture.

> "I don't leave my classroom. I literally do not leave the classroom. I'll dash to the loo once, maybe... I might go two, three days without having a conversation with a colleague. And that is difficult. It's difficult to build relationships, it's difficult to share resources."
>
> Teacher, secondary school, 2026

Sample profile

Fig 3.1 **Views on whether the school or college has done enough to keep pupils safe, by personal experience of a safeguarding disclosure, 2026**

2026 Base: All staff who gave an answer on both questions (excludes prefer not to say): Experienced a disclosure (n = 1,507), Did not experience a disclosure (n = 1,441).

Fig 3.2 **Extent to which staff felt able to make a difference for the pupil after their most recent safeguarding disclosure in the past academic year, 2026**

2026 Base: All staff who experienced at least one safeguarding disclosure in the last academic year (excludes prefer not to say) (n = 1,496), Senior leaders (n = 437), School teachers (n = 915), Support staff (n = 78).

Fig 3.3 **Reasons staff felt unable to make a difference after a safeguarding disclosure in the past academic year, 2026**

All staff who felt unable to make a difference following a safeguarding disclosure (excludes prefer not to say) (n = 239).

Fig 3.4 **Perceived contribution of safeguarding activities to pupil wellbeing, 2026**

Base: All staff, excluding don't know: monitoring and recording (n = 3,037), safeguarding training (n = 3,088), safeguarding compliance (n = 3,038), direct work with pupils/students (n = 3,070), direct work with parents/carers (n = 3,012). Friedman test on staff who rated all five activities (n = 2,900): $\chi^2(4) = 1{,}106.57$, $p < .001$, Kendall's W = .095 (small effect). Staff rate the five activities differently, but they agree only weakly on the order: individual staff vary considerably in how they rank them.

Fig 3.5 **Time for direct contact with pupils and students at risk, and views on safeguarding data collection and reporting, 2026**

"The staff time available for direct contact and building relationships with pupils/students at risk" Too little (n=1,530). Senior leaders, 60%; School teachers, 48%; Support Staff, 29%.

The amount of data collection and reporting required for safeguarding: Too much (n=711): Senior leaders, 26%; School teachers, 23%; Support staff, 16%.

Fig 3.6 **Staff reporting a mental health issue in the past academic year, by experience of a safeguarding disclosure and job role in the past academic year, 2026**

2026 Base: All staff who answered both the disclosure and mental health questions (n = 2,702; disclosure n = 1,388, no disclosure n = 1,314), Senior leaders (n = 613), School teachers (n = 1,751), Support staff (n = 203); 135 staff in other roles are not shown. Overall: $\chi^2(1, N = 2{,}702) = 51.39$, $p < .001$, Cramér's V = .138 (small effect). The difference is significant for senior leaders ($p = .005$) and school teachers ($p < .001$) but not for support staff ($p = .45$).

Fig 3.7 **Concern about the financial stability of the school or college in the past academic year, 2026**

2026 Base: All staff (n = 3,155).

Fig 3.8 **Percentage of staff concerned about the financial stability of their school or college, by whether they think there has been a decrease in the number of pupils or students on roll at their school or college in the last five years.**

2026 Base: All staff who gave an answer on falling rolls and financial concern (excludes don't know): Roll decreased (n = 1,138), Roll not decreased (n = 1,501).

Fig 3.9 **Effect of concern about financial stability on staff's sense of job security and on their mental health and wellbeing**

2026 Base: All staff concerned about the financial stability of their school/college (excludes prefer not to say). Job security (n = 1,843): Senior leaders (n = 467), School teachers (n = 1,170), Support staff (n = 113). Mental health and wellbeing (n = 1,840): Senior leaders (n = 467), School teachers (n = 1,168), Support staff (n = 112).

Fig 3.10 **Average WEMWBS score by level of concern about the financial stability of the school or college, 2026**

2026 Base: Very concerned (n = 753), Quite concerned (n = 1,102), Not very concerned (n = 771), Not concerned at all (n = 368), Don't know (n = 161).

Fig 3.11 **Quality of working relationships with colleagues and with the wider school community, 2026**

2026 Base: All staff (n = 3,155).

Fig 3.12 **Groups with whom staff most often report challenging relationships, by job role, 2026**

2026 Base: All staff who gave an answer (excludes prefer not to say) (n = 3,079), Senior leaders (n = 691), School teachers (n = 2,013), Support staff (n = 231).

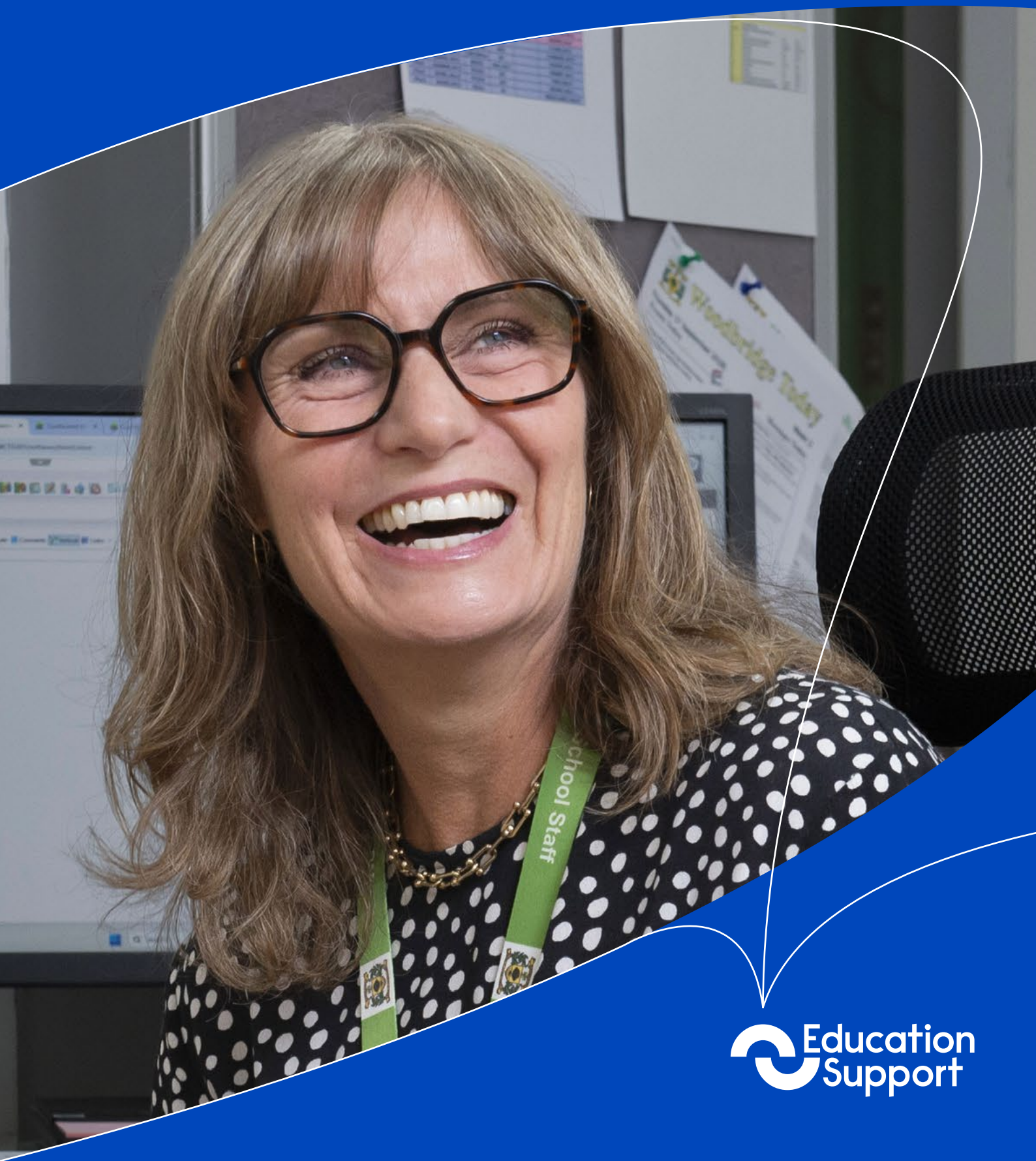
Fig 3.13 **Actions schools and colleges have taken to support positive relationships between staff in the past academic year, 2026**

2026 Base: All staff (n = 3,155).

Fig 3.14 **Perceived effect of organisational culture on staff mental health, by whether the school or college supports positive relationships between staff in the past academic year, 2026**

2026 Base: Don't know/unsure (n = 619), School/college does not support positive relationships (n = 535), At least one form of support (n = 2,001), All staff (n = 3,155).

Conclusions & recommendations



Education Support

Conclusions

High stress and low wellbeing within the education workforce are entrenched problems. Despite attempts to promote and improve workplace wellbeing, the issues persist. The more we understand about the dynamics of these issues, from ten years of this research series and elsewhere, the clearer it becomes that the people aren't the problem. Rather, this is a deep-rooted structural problem.

A deep-rooted problem requires a structural response.

It is positive to see the improvement in how staff feel about organisational support in relation to mental health and wellbeing. There is a relationship between that experience of support and both wellbeing and job satisfaction. This is to be celebrated.

At the same time, we must hold our attention on the four in ten staff who do not feel supported within their settings. It is in all our interests to continue the improvement trend across the whole workforce population.

This year we have deepened our understanding of how organisational culture interacts with wellbeing. Positive cultures are associated with better wellbeing. Neutral cultures are not much worse. Cultures that are negatively experienced however are associated with significantly lower wellbeing.

We take this as the clearest signal yet that our first priority should be to improve cultures that are negatively experienced by staff. That's a big ask with almost half of the workforce identifying their organisational culture as negatively affecting staff mental health. But it is also practicable, starting with evidence-informed[1] pathways for culture improvement e.g. improving line management practice, increasing staff voice, providing high-quality professional development.

Stress is a corrosive force across the education workforce, linked to every measure we examine. It is particularly concerning to see the sustained high rate of leader stress. Sustained high stress as a chronic feature of the job is detrimental to individuals and to their capacity to do their job well.

Over the past ten years we have looked at various specific pressure points within the system, including classroom behaviour and accountability. This year our findings show that those who experienced a safeguarding disclosure are an identifiable group with a higher rate of mental health issues than those who have not handled disclosures. In addition, we note that falling rolls and financial insecurity are a source of worry for many in the sector.

Our overriding conclusion is that meaningful change in the system requires push back against the idea that being a teacher means accepting compromised mental health. A better future for everyone depends on long-term system interventions that, over time, unwind this high-pressure norm. Our recommendations are a starting point for this journey.

1. Nguyen, D., See, B.H., Brown, C. & Kokotsaki, D. (2023) Reviewing the evidence base on school leadership, culture, climate and structure for teacher retention. London: Education Endowment Foundation.

Recommendations

Over the past decade, we have called for action on the dimensions of educator wellbeing that matter most. This year's recommendations echo past calls, but also set out specific actions that key actors can take for improvement. Many of these recommendations build on findings from across the decade (see 'Worth remembering' on page 13).

A healthy workforce for every classroom

1. Protect workforce wellbeing: start with workload

For the past decade, around three quarters of education staff surveyed have reported stress. Over the past six years, reports of burnout have risen faster than any other mental health issue we track. Education staff continue to leave the profession due to poor wellbeing and high workload[2]. This report series, alongside findings from sector stakeholders and scholars, suggests that making workload manageable is a valuable lever for improvement[3].

We call on governments across the UK to:

a. **Publish workload impact assessments for every new policy, and identify specific requirements that will be removed to make time for any new additions**

b. **Set out explicitly what schools or colleges are and are not responsible for, including around gaps left by other public services**

c. **Specify a reasonable expectation that staff ought not routinely work evenings and weekends**

The success of action taken will be evident through outcomes: improvements in perceptions of workload and hours worked (Working Lives of Teachers and Leaders) and educator sickness absence (HSE statistics).

2. Duty of care — take action on the workplace hazard that is work-related stress

HSE data makes clear that work-related ill health in education is significantly higher than the average across all industries.

We call on employers across the UK to:

a. **Carry out stress risk assessments across the HSE's six Management Standards, in line with their legal duty**

b. **Reassess workload when staff return from stress-related absence**

c. **Routinely review workload across individual schools and colleges, with the explicit intention of seeking opportunities to reduce administrative tasks**

Additionally:

We call on the HSE and HSENI to work with employers, governors and Education Support to develop sector specific guidance on managing work-related stress in schools and colleges. The success of these actions will be visible through declining stress levels (HSE statistics & Teacher Wellbeing Index).

2. Department for Education. (2025). Working lives of teachers and leaders: Wave 4. Summary report (Research Report RR1578; research conducted by IFF Research). https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/693bdc426a12691d48491e9b/Working_lives_of_teachers_and_leaders_wave_4_summary_report.pdf

3. Worth, J. and Scott, M. (2026) The School Teacher Labour Market in England: Annual Report 2026. Slough: NFER

3. Accountability — lower the stakes, increase the support

Across this report series, inspection and accountability systems have been identified as significant sources of strain for the workforce. We have written extensively on this elsewhere[4].

a. **We call on policymakers to act to reduce the personal and professional stakes of inspection, in particular the cliff-edge threat to careers, livelihoods and school funding**

b. **We call on inspectorates to commit to co-creating future reforms with the profession and to rolling out new systems at a pace that schools can absorb**

c. **We call on employers and governors to ensure that support is readily available for leaders after a disappointing inspection outcome**

The success of these actions will be seen in a reduction of senior leader stress (Teacher Wellbeing Index).

4. Culture — address the harm of poor organisational culture

Almost half of the education workforce say their school or college culture harms staff mental health.

We call on employers to:

a. **Strengthen line-management capability**

b. **Protect time for collegiate relationships**

c. **Ensure strong, fair HR procedures are in place**

d. **Ensure opportunities exist for staff voice, including an independent mechanism for feedback to be shared with Governors/central MAT**

Additionally:

We call on governments to increase the relational practice, culture and people leadership content in national leadership training programmes. In response to these actions, we expect to see improvement in staff perceptions of workplace culture (Teacher Wellbeing Index).

5. Support — target support where risks are predictable

This series continues to flag specific groups of professionals who face predictable risks to their wellbeing, e.g. senior leaders, staff handling safeguarding disclosures.

a. **We call on governments to provide sufficient investment to ensure that timely support is available for colleagues at risk. We welcome the Every Child Achieving and Thriving White Paper commitment in England to increase funding for wellbeing support for school and college leaders. We ask that this be extended to a level that will reach all those whom we can reasonably predict face wellbeing risks due to the nature of their role. For example, we know that reflective practice, such as professional supervision, is an effective intervention that provides educators space for reflection, learning and development outside of line management and is associated with improved wellbeing, life satisfaction and happiness**

4. Mc Brearty, S. (2025) Independent wellbeing impact assessment of the revised Ofsted framework. London: Ofsted.

b. We call on governors and employers to communicate to staff, with care, the financial position of the school or college annually

The clearest evidence of success for these actions will come through the perception of support reported by the workforce (Teacher Wellbeing Index).

For its part, Education Support will strengthen the Teacher Wellbeing Index question set, improve survey sampling and work together with partners to articulate a wellbeing framework for the workforces across the UK. We will continue to pilot and evaluate approaches for improvement across the sector.

We cannot change the system by ourselves, and we invite partners across the sector to work with us. The last decade showed that schools and colleges can get better at supporting staff who are struggling. Over the next ten years we must ensure that fewer of them struggle in the first place.

Appendices



Education Support

A. Methodology

This research study had three main aims:

1. Provide a description of the mental health and wellbeing of education staff using data collected in 2026.
2. Review trends over the last 10 years.
3. Identify differences found between the mental health and wellbeing of senior leaders, school teachers and support staff working in the education sector.

The research was conducted using an online survey of education staff drawn from YouGov's panel. A total of **3,155** education staff completed the survey, which was conducted between **11 June and 9 July 2026**.

The sample included all job roles within the education profession from senior leaders through to support staff. The job category 'Senior leaders' includes headteachers and principals, deputy and assistant headteachers and principals and head and deputy heads of year and departments and senior business leaders. 'School teachers' includes teachers, supply teachers, early career teachers, teaching assistants and specialists working in the classroom (eg SEN staff). 'Support staff' includes all non-classroom based roles, eg cover supervisors, technicians, careers advisors, librarians, youth officers, data administrators, IT support and exams officers etc.

Staff worked in a variety of settings including early years, primary, secondary, further, adult and vocational education sectors. A detailed breakdown of the respondents by sector, region, gender, age and time spent working in education can be found in **Appendix B**.

As a result of GDPR legislation, all YouGov respondents taking part from 2018 onwards were given the option to opt-out of questions which gathered sensitive personal data, including questions which captured information about their health. In the analysis these were coded as 'refused', or 'preferred not to say'. Where index comparisons have been made in our publications below using 2018 or 2017 data, the figures are based on those who responded to the questions (ie excluding 'refused' and 'preferred not to say').

This is the tenth large-scale survey that Education Support has conducted. In 2018-2026, the results of the surveys have been published as the "Teacher Wellbeing Index" and in 2017 as "Health Survey 2017 — The mental health and wellbeing of education professionals in the UK". The 2020 and 2021 indices relate to staff mental health and wellbeing during the Covid-19 pandemic. The publications are available on the Education Support's website, or by clicking on the image on the next page.

Click on the cover images below to view previous reports.



2025



2024



2023



2022



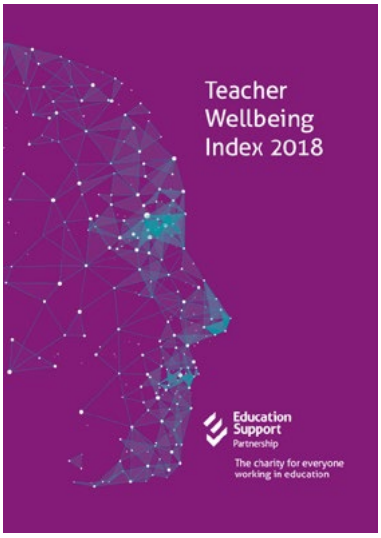
2021



2020



2019



2018



2017

B. Sample profile

A total of **3,155** responses were received to the overall survey. All respondents were drawn from the YouGov panel of people that have signed up to undertake research with YouGov. The data has been weighted to be representative of the wider education population by phase, organisation, type and respondent age to ensure generalisations can be made to the wider education population. The table below provides a summary of the achieved sample profile by key demographics.

Role	Number	Proportion
School teachers	2,067	69%
Senior leaders	697	23%
Support staff	241	8%

Phase		
Early years	211	7%
Primary	1,232	39%
Secondary	1,274	40%
Sixth form college	78	2%
Further	186	6%
Adult	40	1%
Vocational	17	1%
Other	117	4%

Gender		
Male	810	26%
Female	2,345	74%

Age		
18-34	684	22%
35-49	1,518	48%
50+	953	30%

Region/Country	Number	Proportion
North East	110	3%
North West	352	11%
Yorkshire and the Humber	223	7%
East of England	271	9%
West Midlands	282	9%
East Midlands	228	7%
London	400	13%
South East	442	14%
South West	254	8%
Wales	300	10%
Scotland	218	7%
Northern Ireland	75	2%

Length of Time Working in Education		
0-2 years	137	4%
3-5 years	304	10%
6-10 years	468	15%
11-20 years	1,074	34%
21-30 years	808	26%
31+ years	364	12%

C. Measuring subjective wellbeing: Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale

Background to the use of the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale

The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) is a measure used by a variety of different organisations, including governments, to gauge the mental wellbeing of a population.

The WEMWBS Questionnaire

The WEMWBS is a self-administered questionnaire of subjective wellbeing and psychological functioning. There are **14** questions, each with five response options on a Likert scale. The options for selection are 'all of the time', 'often', 'some of the time', 'rarely' and 'none of the time'. The questions refer to a person's feelings over the preceding two weeks. The scores are summed together to provide a single score that ranges from **14-70**, which are then aggregated to form a total score for each group. A higher total WEMWBS score indicates a greater level of positive mental wellbeing, with the median score to be around **50** for the UK adult population[1].

Using the benchmarking approach, scores of less than **41** suggest probable depression, scores between **41-44** possible/mild depression, **45-59** moderate mental wellbeing and **60+** higher mental wellbeing[2].

The table below summarises all WEMWBS scores for 2026 with comparisons for 2025.

	WEMWBS Score		Number		SD		2025-2026 Difference (rounded)
	2025	2026	2025	2026	2025	2026	
Total							
All education professionals	43.42	44.03	3,082	3,155	9.03	9.17	0.61
Role							
Senior leaders	43.44	44.28	739	650	8.94	8.61	0.84
School teachers	43.30	43.66	1,909	2,008	8.96	9.09	0.36
Support staff	44.16	45.41	305	321	9.33	10.33	1.25

1. 2024, the mean wellbeing score of adults in England based on WEMWBS was 50.5. Loneliness and wellbeing - NHS England Digital
2. University of Warwick (2025). "Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS)". How it works, Analysis. Updated 24 April 2025.

	WEMWBS Score		Number		SD		2025-2026 Difference (rounded)
	2025	2026	2025	2026	2025	2026	
Phase							
Early years	41.74	44.50	59	227	8.70	9.14	2.76
Primary	42.67	43.39	1,015	1,000	9.04	8.85	0.72
Secondary	43.39	44.23	1,015	1,034	9.08	9.08	0.84
Sixth Form Colleges	44.46	44.47	254	194	9.40	9.25	0.01
Further Education	44.19	44.18	464	463	8.67	9.57	-0.01
Adult Education	44.34	44.33	127	100	8.64	10.00	-0.01
Vocational Education	44.24	46.82	53	42	8.05	10.47	2.58
Other	44.56	44.41	97	95	9.58	9.57	-0.15
Region							
North East	44.41	44.24	111	113	10.18	9.58	-0.17
North West	42.92	44.45	362	372	8.45	9.19	1.53
Yorkshire and the Humber	41.70	42.92	248	226	8.76	8.82	1.22
East of England	44.15	44.12	253	281	9.51	8.92	-0.03
West Midlands	42.58	43.11	299	282	9.12	9.51	0.53
East Midlands	44.44	45.41	274	230	8.59	9.43	0.97
London	44.21	45.41	398	396	8.99	8.68	1.20
South East	43.29	44.08	455	430	9.06	9.28	0.79
South West	43.23	43.33	251	252	8.86	8.42	0.10
Wales	42.83	43.12	198	315	9.06	9.43	0.29
Scotland	43.33	43.49	178	196	9.19	8.80	0.16
Northern Ireland	45.00	43.99	54	63	9.30	11.49	-1.01
England	43.44	44.19	2,652	2,581	9.00	9.10	0.75

	WEMWBS Score		Number		SD		2025-2026 Difference (rounded)
	2025	2026	2025	2026	2025	2026	
Gender							
Male	43.32	44.41	851	868	9.53	9.59	1.09
Female	43.46	43.89	2,231	2,287	8.83	9.00	0.43
Age							
18-34	42.85	44.04	661	647	8.75	8.74	1.19
35-49	42.57	42.99	1,412	1,444	8.76	9.01	0.42
50+	44.99	45.45	1,009	1,064	9.37	9.45	0.46
Length of time working in education							
0-2 years	44.73	44.34	100	137	9.01	9.08	-0.39
3-5 years	43.23	43.92	272	306	8.83	9.21	0.69
6-10 years	42.77	43.74	519	455	8.98	8.76	0.97
11-20 years	42.94	43.47	1,042	1,047	8.97	9.11	0.53
21-30 years	43.63	43.99	756	802	9.06	9.15	0.36
31+ years	44.96	45.88	392	409	9.15	9.60	0.92

D. Measuring personal wellbeing

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) uses four measures to gauge the personal wellbeing of a population. The four measures are satisfaction with life, happiness, the feeling that things done in life are worthwhile and the level of anxiousness felt the previous day.

For the first three measures, scores of **0-4** indicate low levels, **5-6** medium levels, **7-8** high levels and **9-10** very high levels. For anxiety, scores of **0-1** indicate very low levels, **2-3** low levels, **4-5** medium levels and **6-10** high levels. These scores have been recalculated as percentages in order to show the differences between the UK population and this survey's findings, which are also broken down by job role and nation.

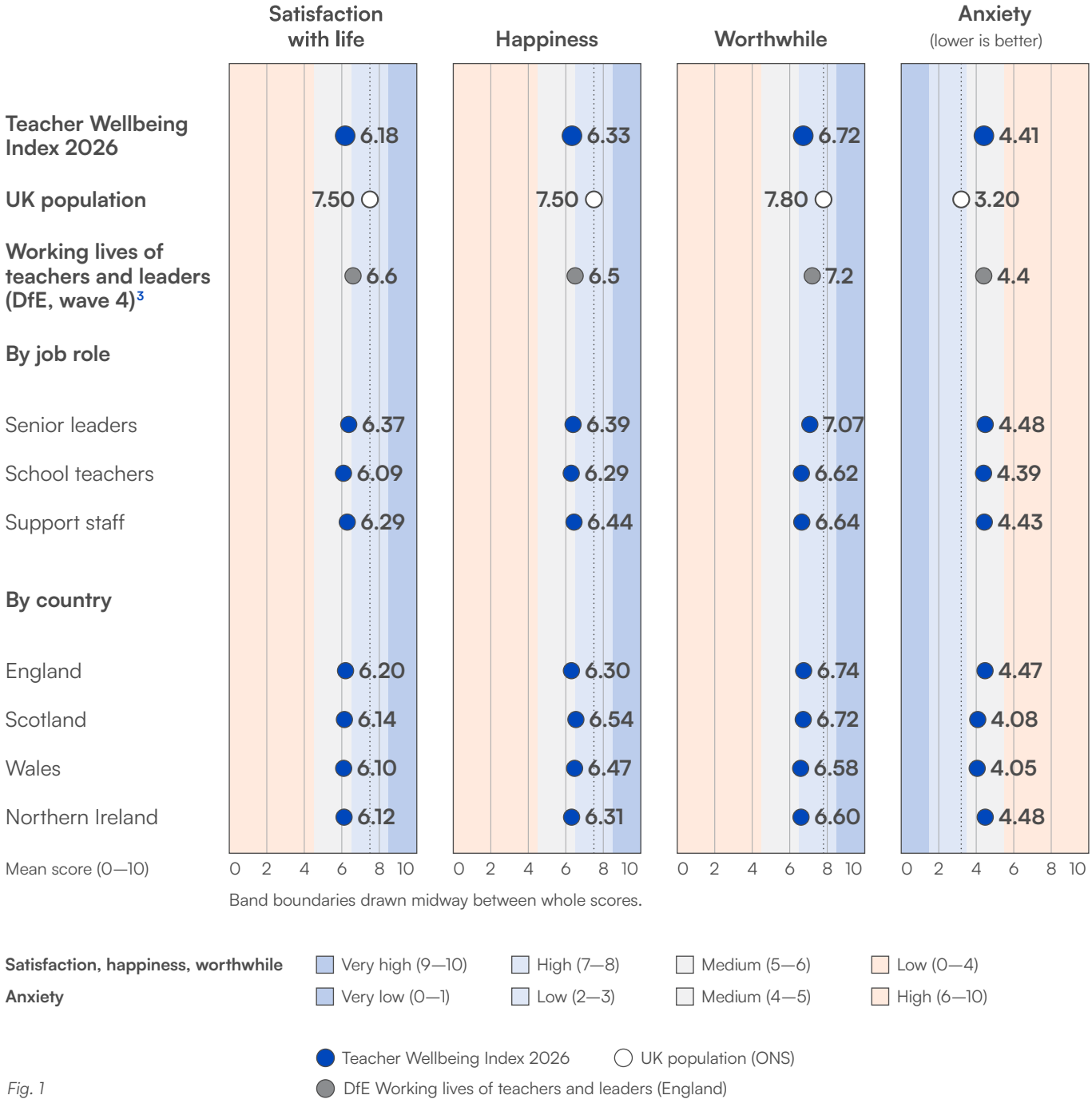
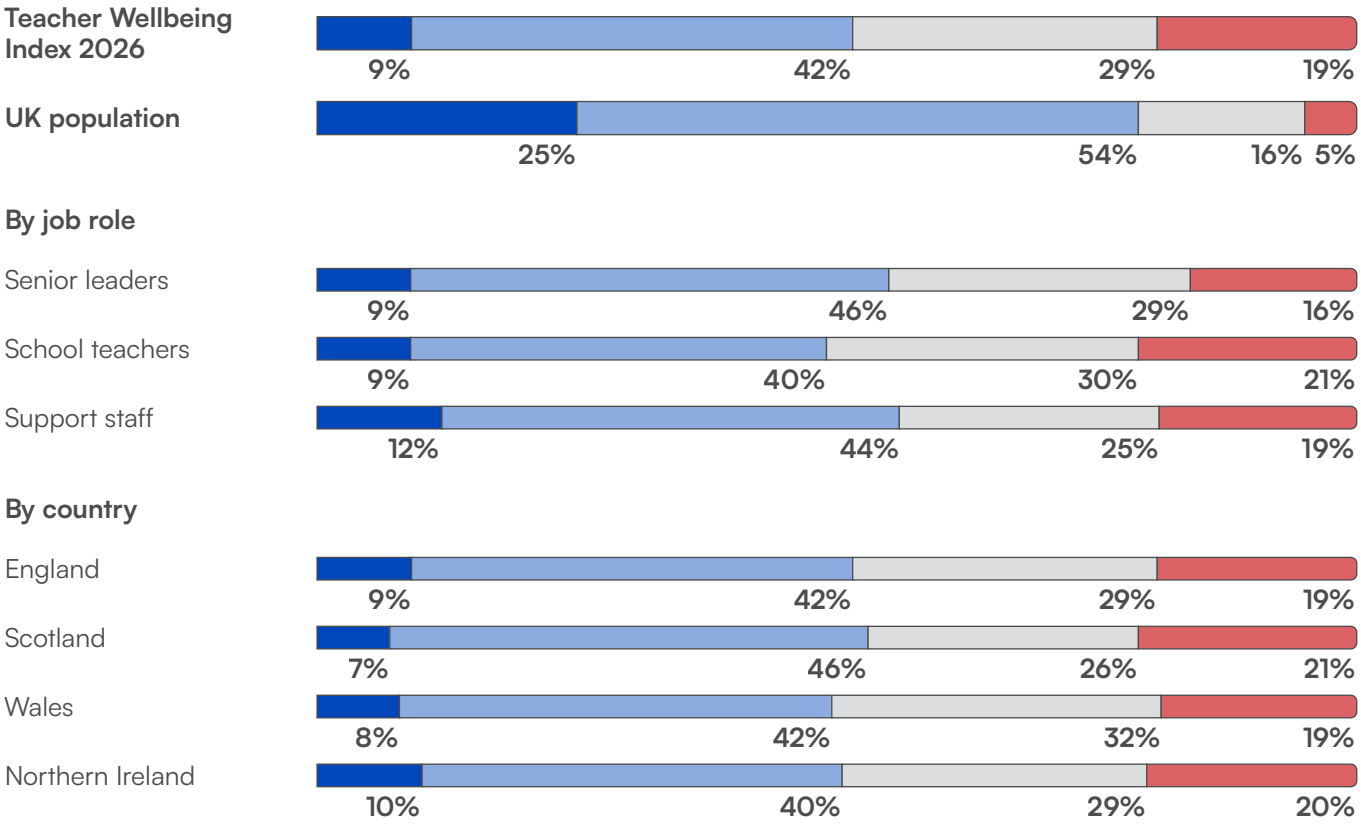


Fig. 1

3. DfE (2026). "Working lives of teachers and leaders: wave 4. April 2026 Working lives of teachers and leaders wave 4 research report: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/69f1fe220bb62e692c5d6e27/WLTL_Wave_4_research_report.pdf

Overall satisfaction with life



Feeling that the things done in life are worthwhile

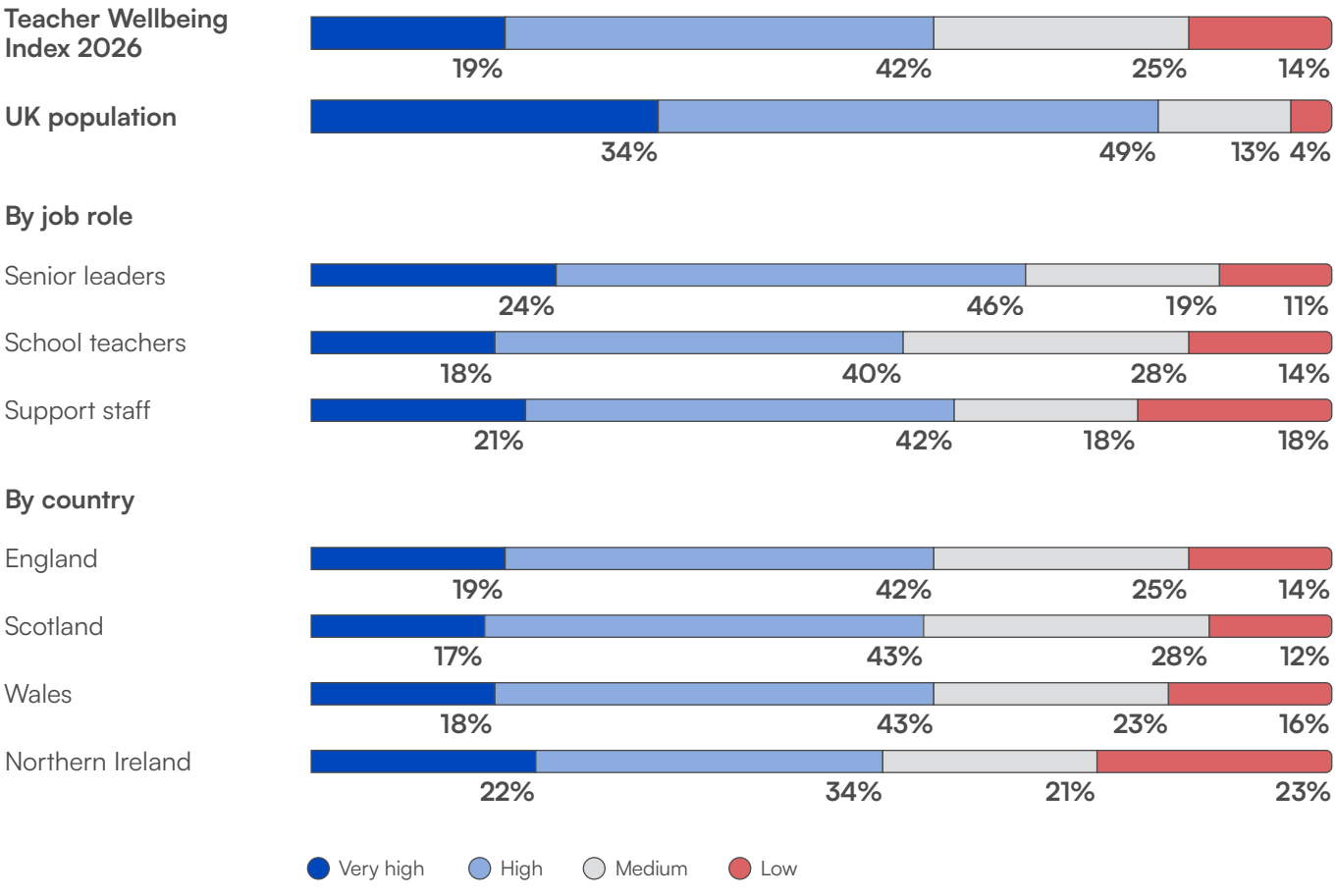
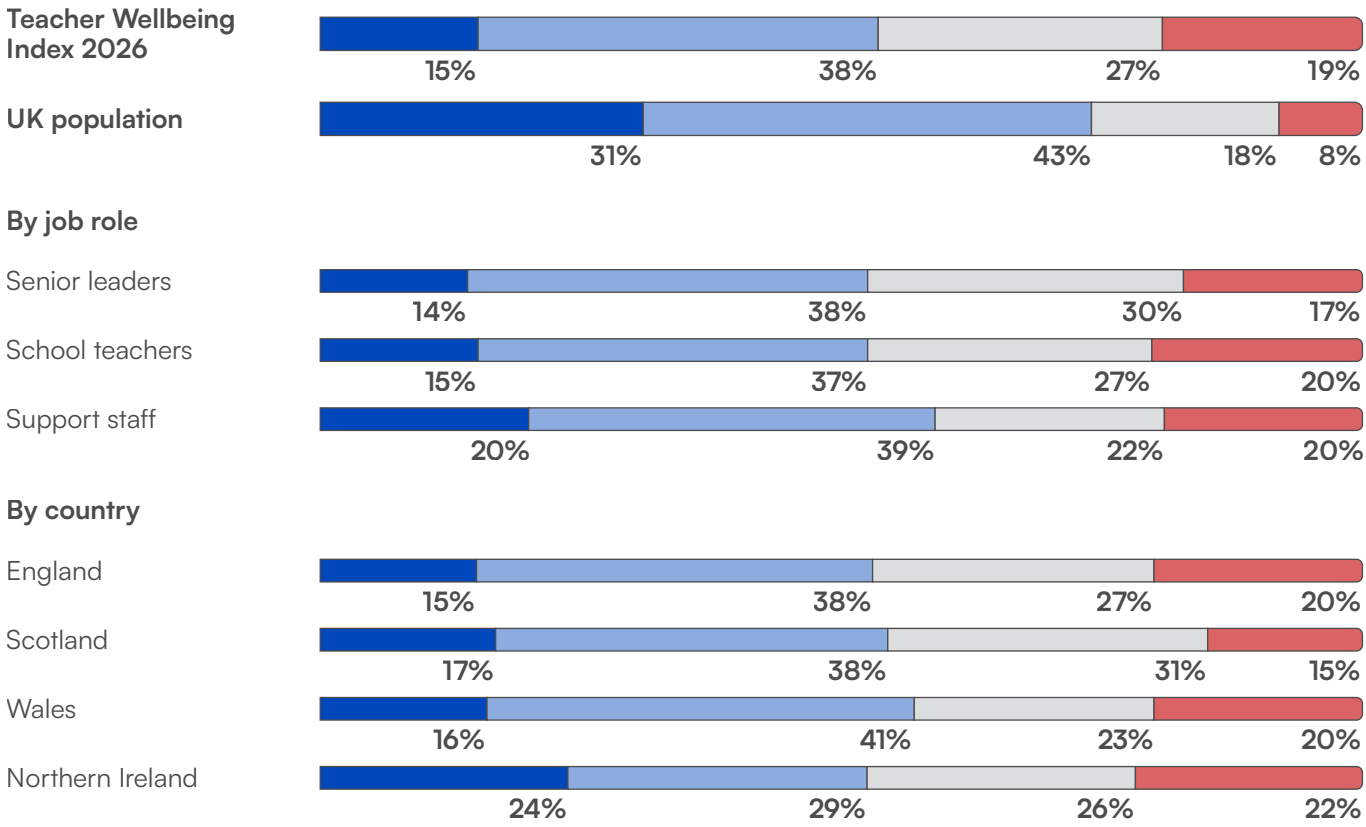


Fig. 2 Very high = 9—10, high = 7—8, medium = 5—6, low = 0—4. Figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Level of happiness felt the previous day



Level of anxiousness felt the previous day

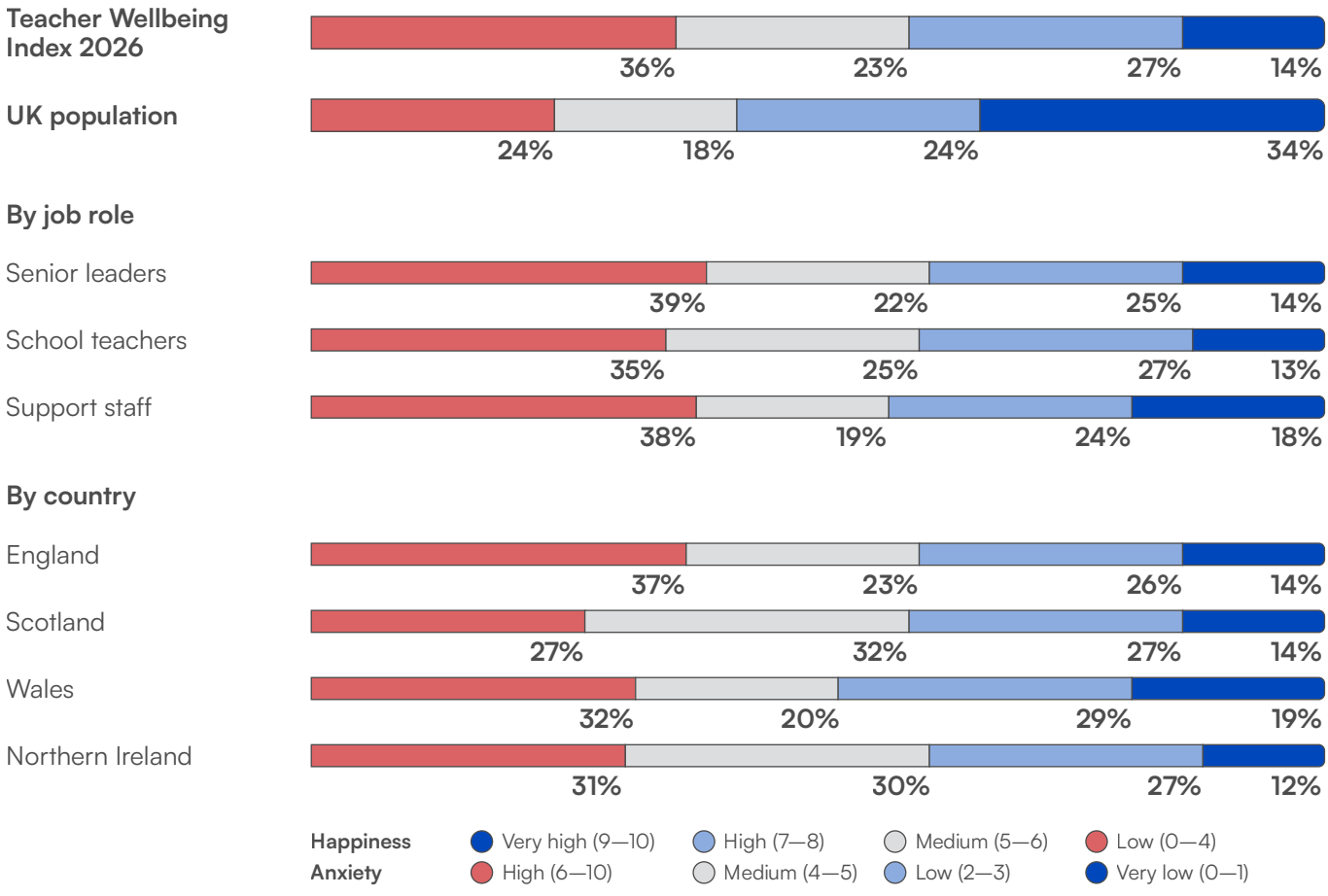


Fig. 3 Figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

E. Measuring workplace wellbeing

The Wellbeing Research Centre at the University of Oxford has suggested the use of four questions to measure staff wellbeing at work. There is some broad similarity with the ONS questions used to measure satisfaction and happiness in Appendix D (although these specifically refer to teachers and education staff's lives at work), and the other two questions explore if work is regarded as purposeful and meaningful, and stress experienced at work.

The same approach to scoring has been taken for the first three measures as used by the ONS, ie for the first three measures scores of **0-4** indicate low levels, **5-6** medium levels, **7-8** high levels and **9-10** very high levels. For stress, scores of **0-1** indicate very low levels, **2-3** low levels, **4-5** medium levels and **6-10** high levels. These scores have been recalculated as percentages in order to show the differences, and are broken down by job role and nation.

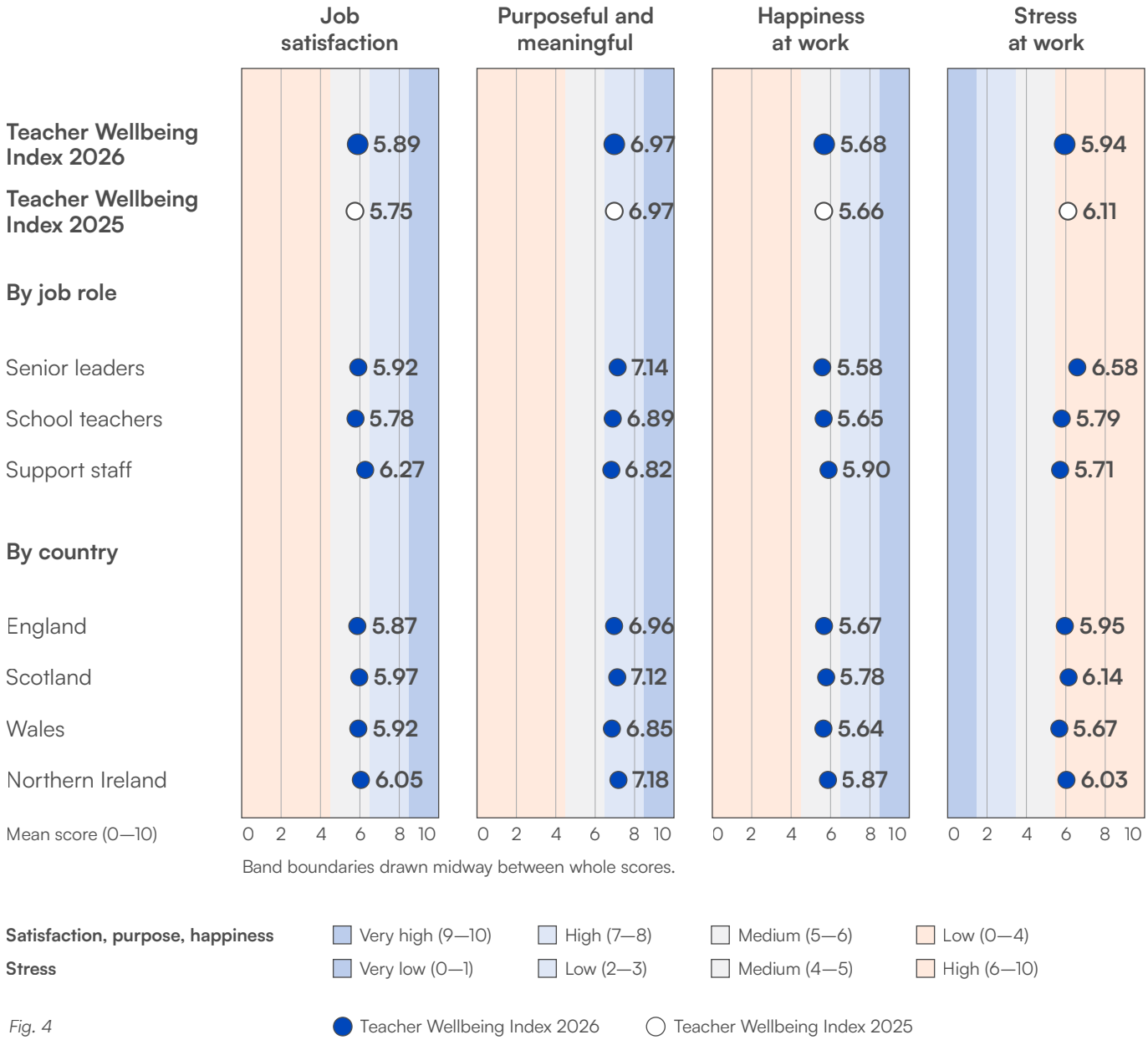
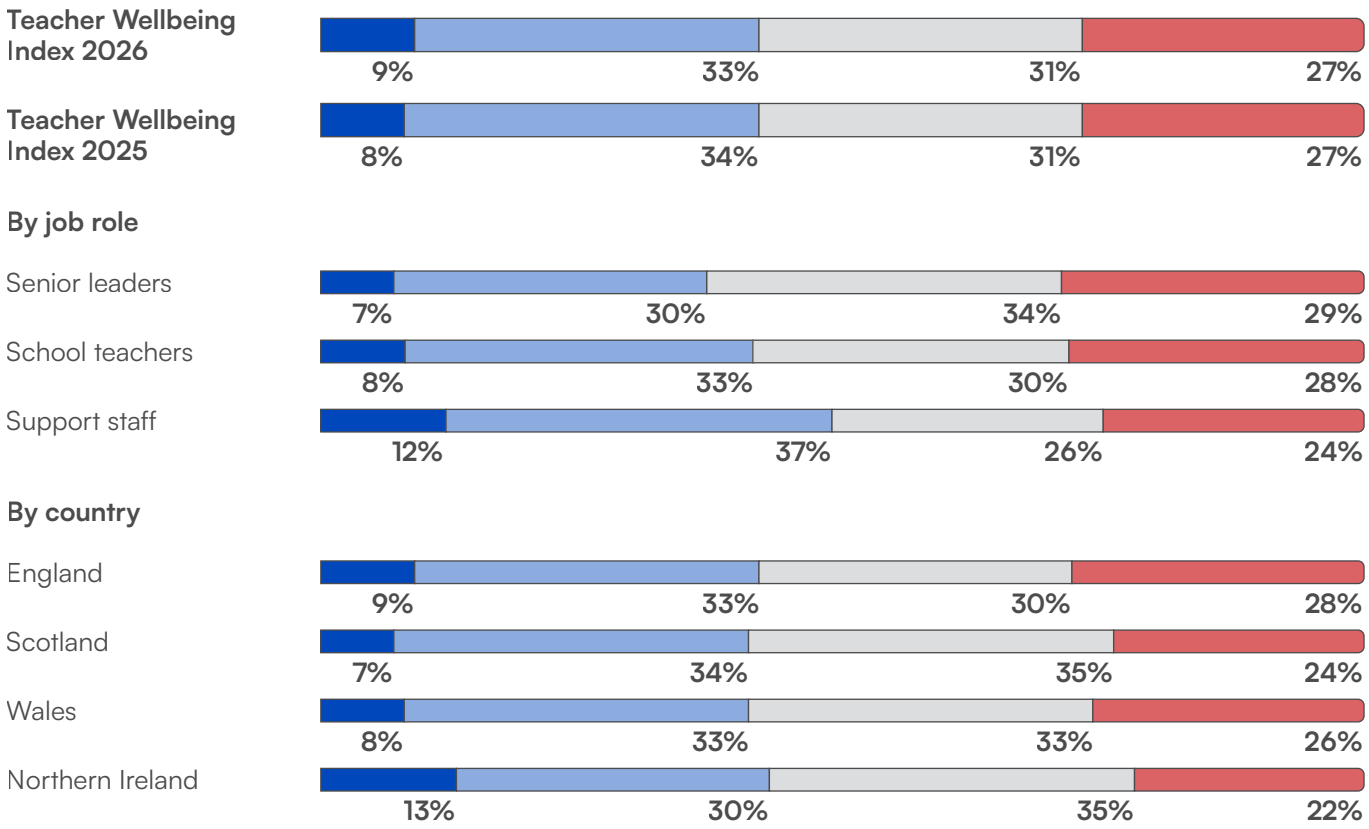


Fig. 4

Happiness at work



Levels of stress felt at work during the past week

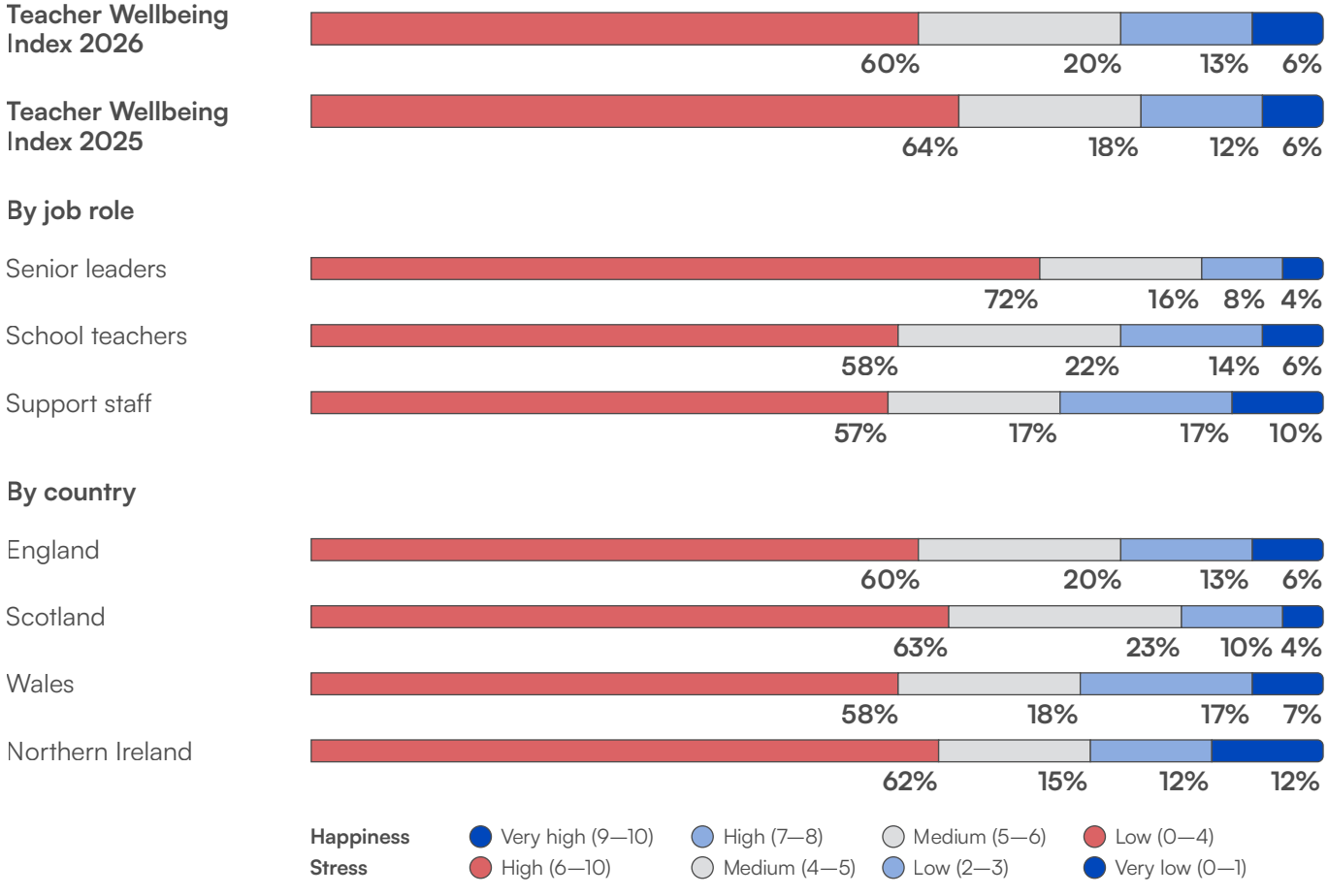
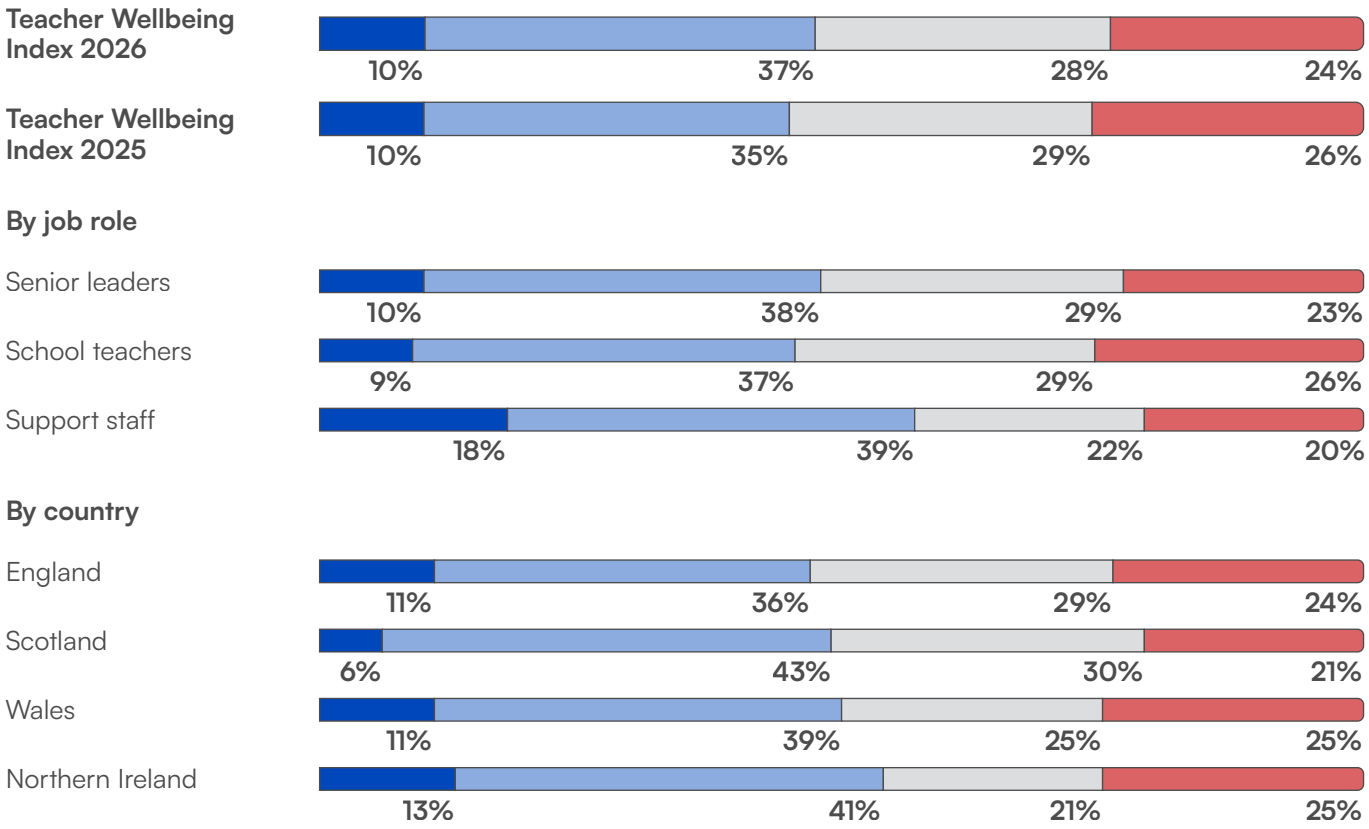


Fig. 5 Figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Job satisfaction



How purposeful and meaningful staff find their work

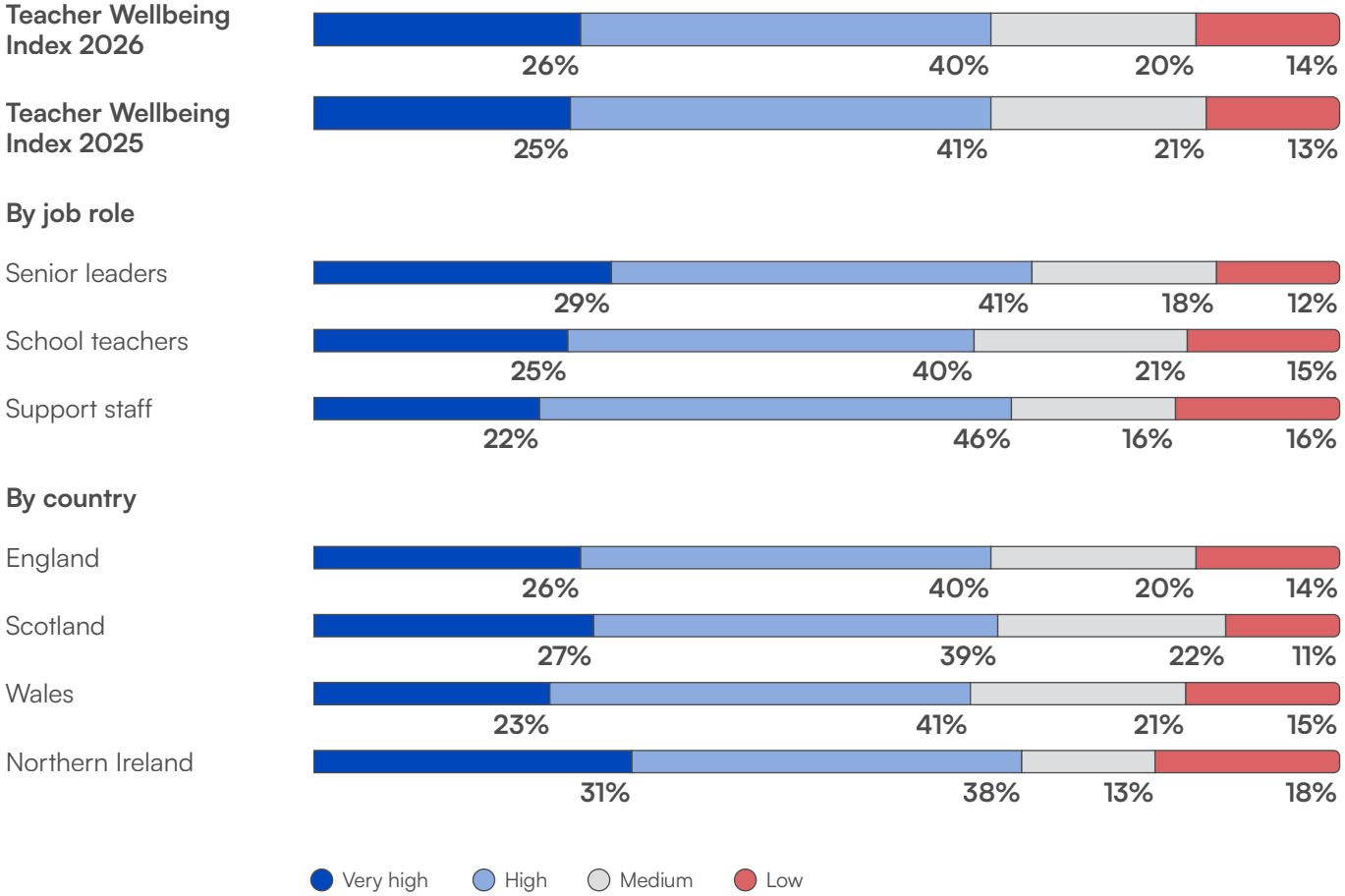


Fig. 6 Very high = 9—10, high = 7—8, medium = 5—6, low = 0—4. Figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

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