



**Workforce Survey**  
**Why teachers are leaving  
the industry ?**

**2022**



# Overview

You have probably seen some alarming statistics recently, suggesting that in New South Wales, as many as two thirds of all teachers are planning on leaving the profession in the near future. With reports of shortages in every state of Australia there's no doubt the country is in the midst of a crisis.

While it's clear some of the factors contributing to the shortage—like COVID-19 and each state's response to it—have come out of the blue, the teacher shortage is complex with many longer-term causes.. Speaking to The Educator earlier this year, ClassCover CEO, Ben Grozier, touched on these causes.

“First and foremost, it’s a drop in the number of new teachers joining the industry. While numbers have been trending down for a while, this has accelerated in recent years. Without this new blood, things are starting to look dire as more and more existing teachers head towards retirement age.”

To get a better understanding of the issue, we reached out to over 120,000 educators using ClassCover to hear what they had to say. In this downloadable, we have summarised the findings and, based on that, provided actionable tips for schools to ensure they can prevent unnecessary staff turnover and minimise the impact of the teacher shortage.

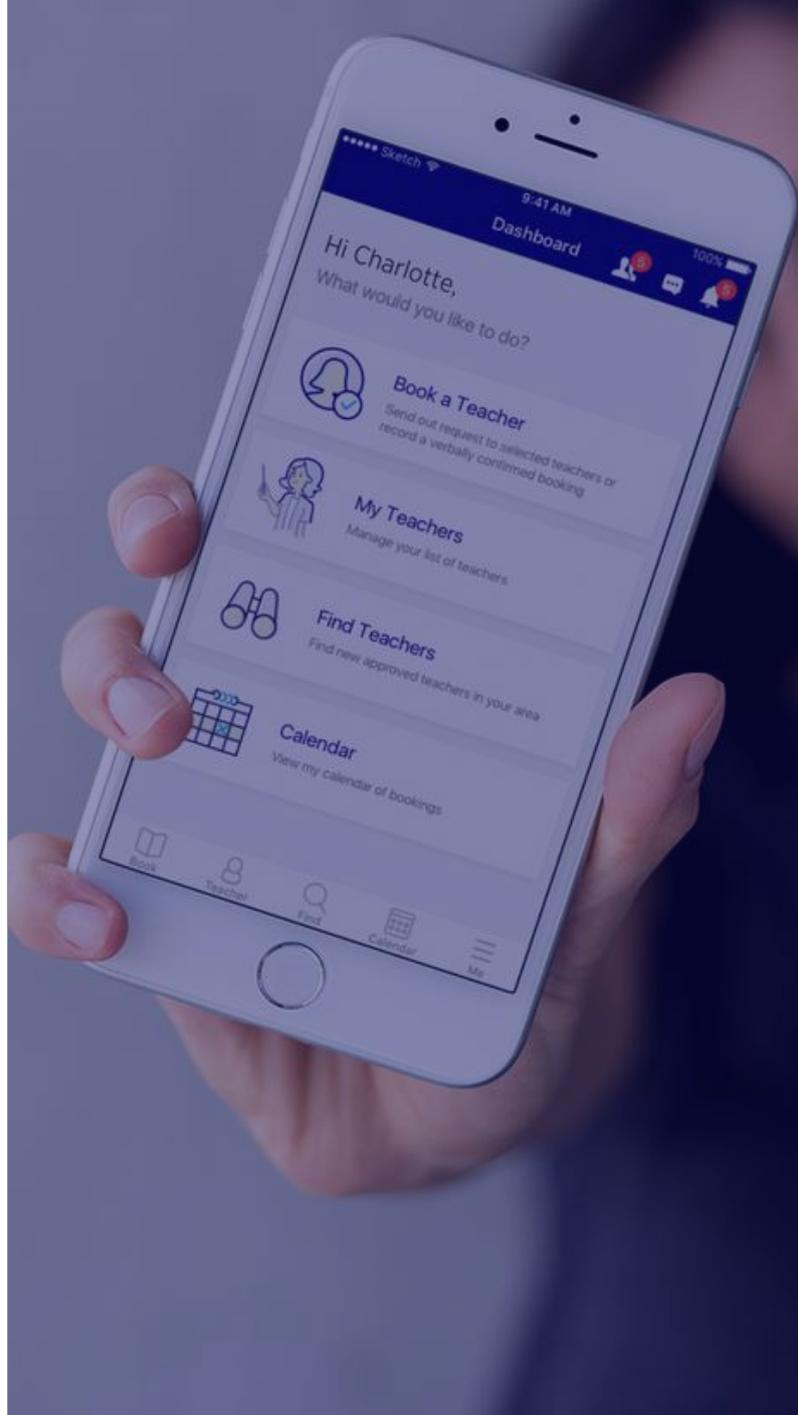
James Hanlon  
Content Manager - ClassCover  
- **Author**

# About ClassCover

ClassCover has been connecting schools across Australia and New Zealand with casual relief teachers for over 10 years. Our user-friendly app democratises the booking process, eliminating the need for costly agencies. All schools have access to educators in their local area to book in seconds via our booking app, or to alert to full-time, part-time and contract teaching positions in schools via ClassCover Jobs.

With Australia's largest database of casual relief teachers – 97,500 and growing – our focus is on connecting educators with schools and supporting teacher career development. With features like an online PD platform (LMS), and a deep jobs platform with networking features due to be released this year, ClassCover keeps educators engaged and at the top of their game.

Used by both individual schools and enterprise clients such as the NSW Department of Education and Brisbane Catholic Education, ClassCover is the perfect solution for every school and educator looking for work.



# 500,000

CASUAL RELIEF TEACHER  
BOOKINGS PER YEAR

# 19,800

NUMBER OF JOB APPLICATIONS  
TO JOBS POSTED ON  
CLASSCOVER IN 2021

# 2mins 17 secs

AVERAGE TIME TO BOOK A CASUAL RELIEF TEACHER ON CLASSCOVER



# Why this survey?

As it stands, the teacher shortage has the potential to impact every corner of the education sector, and, by extension, the broader economy. Keen to find out more, we took advantage of ClassCover's database of educators to hear about the state of the industry from their perspective. The survey was designed to gather quantitative results to gauge teachers' thoughts and feelings on a number of key areas of their work, as well as on issues of concern that have been flagged by those in the industry.

What drew graduates to the industry in the first place? How confident did educators feel teaching the different subjects required of them? Did certain aspects of the job cause stress and lead to burnout? And finally, just how many respondents were planning on leaving the industry in the foreseeable future? We asked these questions and more, giving educators the opportunity to air their thoughts on the state of the education industry today.



## Who we surveyed

To get the most balanced data, we sent the survey out to all educators with profiles on the ClassCover platform, including casual relief teachers, full and part-time teachers and on and off-class executives.

### A snapshot of those who responded:

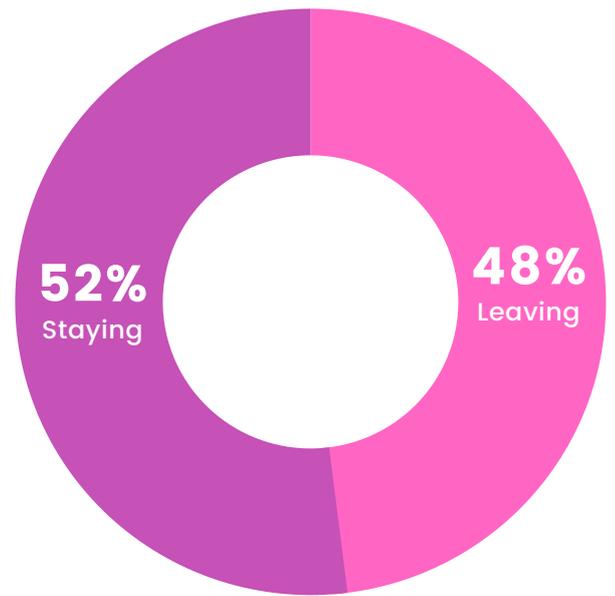
- Over 3,150 educators responded to the survey
- Participants were a mix of educators currently working in schools, and those who have recently left the industry either temporarily or permanently
- Respondents were from all Australian states and territories, with responses balanced to ensure no one region skewed the data
- We surveyed casual relief teachers, full-time and part-time classroom teachers, and those in executive on-class and executive off-class roles
- Participants were from a mix of government, catholic and independent schools



# Key findings

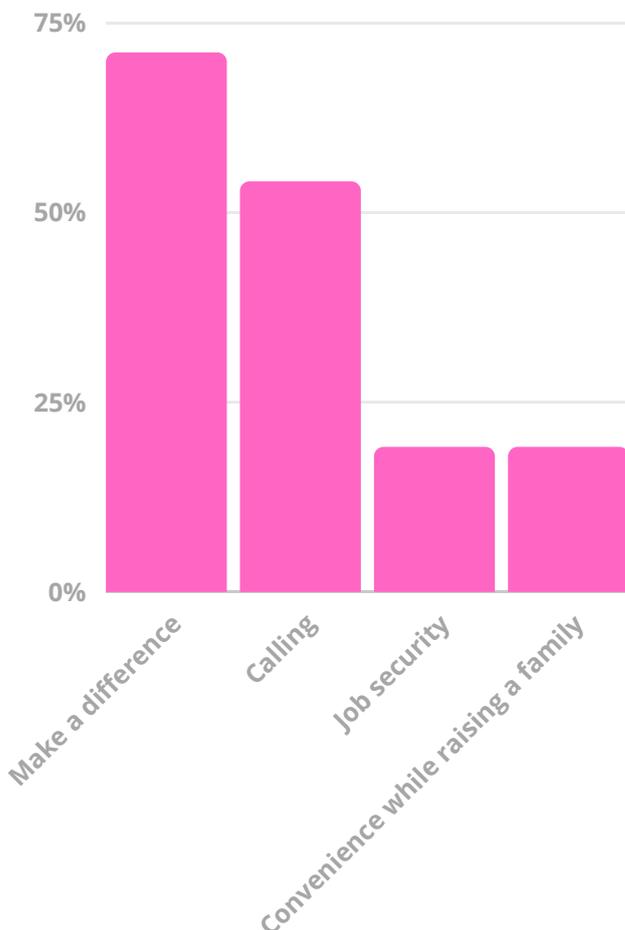
Here are some of the key findings from the survey:

- Of those still in the industry, 48% of survey respondents across all roles are planning to leave the industry in the next 5 years
- Of those planning to leave, workload, the behaviour of students and parents, retirement and COVID-19 vaccine mandates were the biggest contributing factors
- Giving their reason for first joining the profession, 71% of respondents said it was to make a difference, and a further 54% said it was their calling. Interestingly, factors like work hours and income potential ranked in the bottom three reasons for joining education



**Are you planning on leaving the profession in the next 5 years?**

# What attracts teachers to the industry?



Before we dive into the reasons educators are leaving the profession, it's worth learning more about the things that drew them to it. As mentioned above, the desire to make a difference and the feeling that education was their calling were the most common reasons for entering the industry, with 71% and 54% of participants listing these reasons. Job security and the perceived convenience of the job while raising a family were both mentioned by 19% of educators. At the bottom of the list was the cost and ease of access to an education degree at university (3% of participants), income potential (6%) and work hours (12%).

The vast majority of respondents (62%) took a traditional path into the industry, studying education at university before beginning a school-based role. Another 30% transitioned to education from another industry, while the final 7% pursued a career in teaching after studying in another area at university.



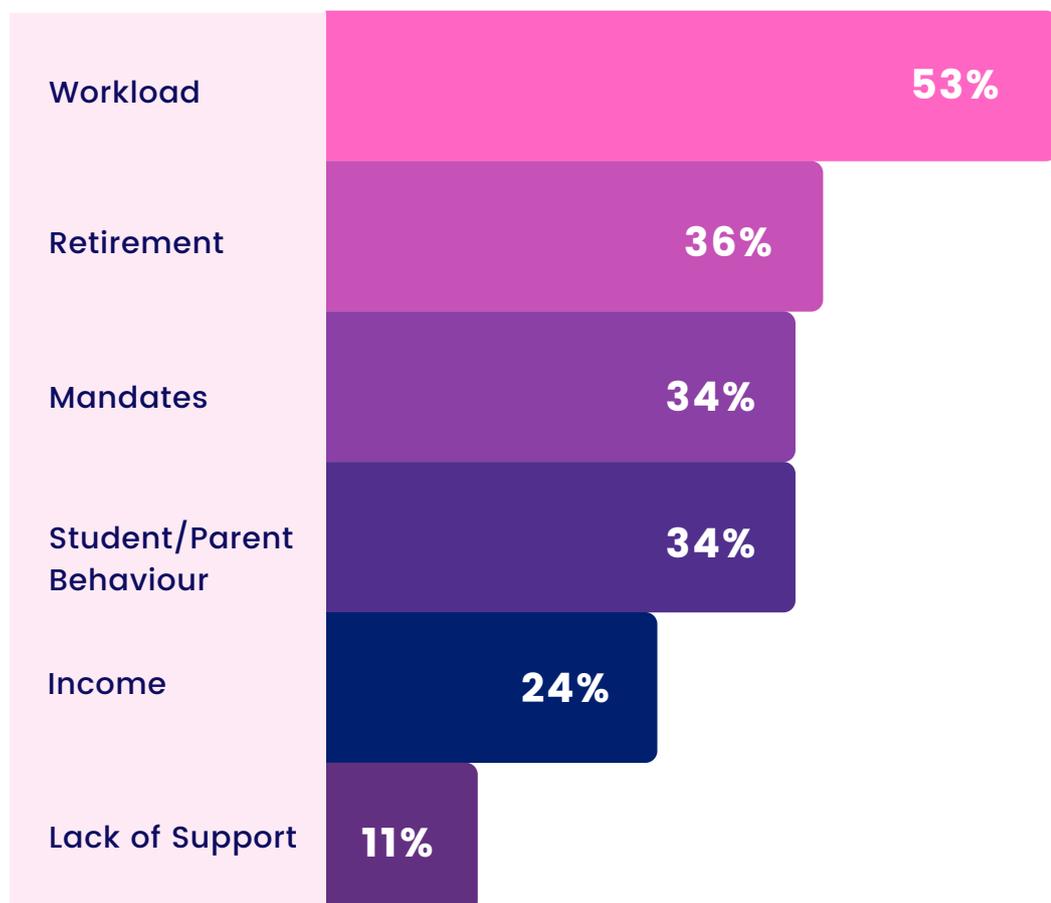
# Why are teachers leaving?

Looking closer at the staggering number of teachers planning on leaving the profession in the next five years, experienced educators made up the biggest chunk of the group, with 53% of those answering yes listing their experience at 21 years or more.

Those in certain roles were also more likely to be eyeing an exit, including 53% of part-time teachers and 51% of casual relief teachers.

Looking at primary vs secondary teachers, secondary teachers were more likely to want to leave the profession, with 50% of respondents answering yes, compared to 45% of primary school teachers.

Here is a full breakdown of the factors participants selected as influencing their decision to want to leave the industry.



## Reason for leaving: Workload

In the survey, workload was the biggest contributing factor for both current and former educators, with 53% of all respondents listing it as one of their biggest reasons for wanting to leave. Interestingly, work hours for teachers—who have long faced the misconception that their workdays end at 3pm with the bell—didn't rate as a reason for entering the profession, with only 12% of respondents listing it as a consideration.

Here's what one educator had to say about their current workload:

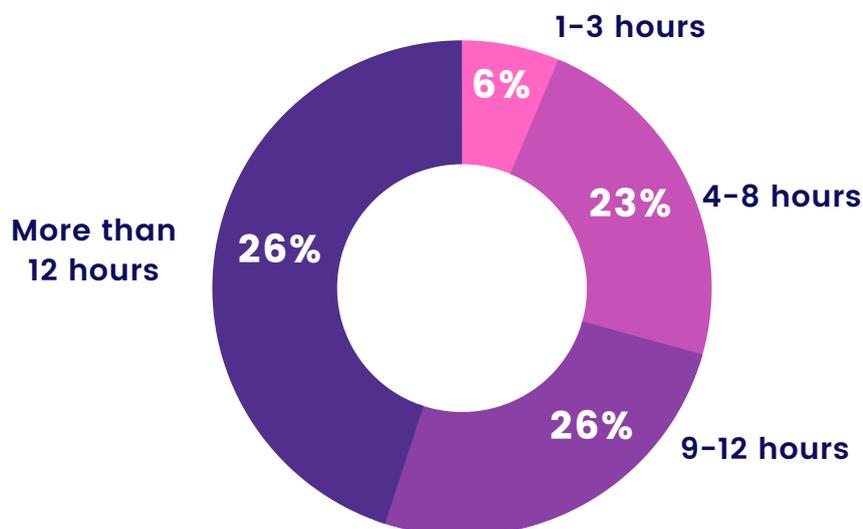
*"The workload for full-time teachers is too much. I have recently left full-time teaching to do casual relief teaching because of the workload. I was doing work every day after school and on weekends. It's unsustainable." - Anonymous survey response*

*"We can support our teachers to connect with one another using the ClassCover platform. Less days without casual relief can take some of the pressure off classroom teachers and executive staff."*

**- Anonymous school executive response**

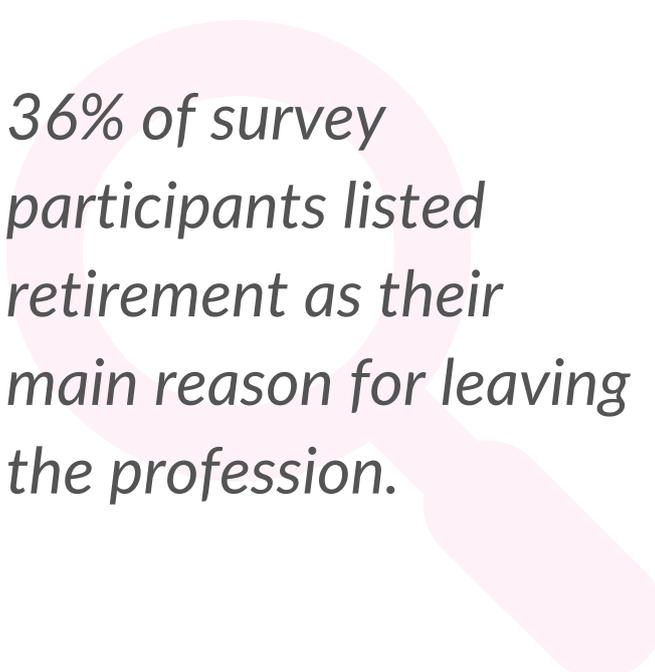
This ever-increasing and unrelenting workload has been well publicised even before the pandemic. More recently, a teacher who chose to remain anonymous spoke of the difficulty they faced sitting by and watching students miss out on elements of their education because the teachers that were available at their school were already stretched to the limit.

While some participants acknowledged that expectations placed on teachers have long been trending upwards, even more cited understaffing as a contributing factor.



**Insight:** how many hours per week do you spend preparing work, making professional phone calls, completing professional development, attending meetings?





36% of survey participants listed retirement as their main reason for leaving the profession.

## Reason for leaving: Retirement

Considering Australia's ageing workforce, it's no surprise that 36% of survey participants listed retirement as their main reason for leaving the profession. In NSW alone, 28% of current teachers are set to reach retirement age by 2024.

What is surprising, and of concern to school executives and policy makers around the country, is the growing group of educators choosing to retire at the height of their careers. Whether from COVID-19 vaccine mandates, an inability to adapt to new technologies, or the additional pressure of teaching during lockdowns, for a small but significant group of teachers, this is the reality.

*"A year ago, I remember sitting with my team of teachers (both young and older) talking about how much they give of themselves and how little they feel respected and valued. We then discussed the option of leaving teaching to get a 'job where you can switch off when you get home' as it was a real consideration for many of them. Since then, three of those teachers have left teaching before retirement age." - Anonymous survey response*

***"Numbers have been trending down for a while, this has accelerated in recent years. Without this new blood, things are starting to look dire as more and more existing teachers head towards retirement age." - Ben Grozier***

## Reason for leaving: COVID-19 response

34% of teachers who have recently left or are planning to leave the industry cited COVID-19 vaccine mandates as the biggest reason for their decision. While some states and territories have moved faster than others, vaccinations have now been mandated across the board for teachers, with some exceptions in the Northern Territory and ACT. For this reason, a considerable chunk of teachers who aren't willing to be vaccinated against COVID-19 have been forced to exit the industry.

Some respondents felt that "an easy way to alleviate teacher supply concerns was to reinstate unvaccinated teachers." Whether or not this would be considered by state governments is unknown.



## Reason for leaving: Student and parent behaviour

34% of respondents listed the behaviour of students, parents, or both as one of their main reasons for leaving the profession. While the responses in this area were varied, there were some clear patterns particularly in relation to the inability for policy—from governments and schools—to keep up with the changing nature of students.

*“Policy makers should be up to date with current school issues and preferably, still actively involved in the school setting - teaching, observing student behaviour.” - Anonymous survey response*

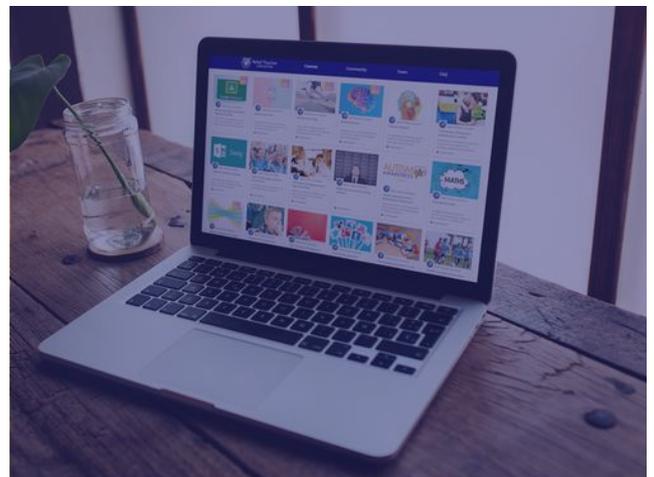
While 72% of teachers said they were confident in their behaviour management skills, many respondents spoke of feeling like their hands were tied when it came to acting in line with the school’s policies and procedures.

*“We need to introduce firm and easily accessible behaviour management strategies with escalating consequences. Otherwise, repeat offenders make misery for the other students, frustration for teachers and prevent learning for all.” - Anonymous survey response*

One group at particular risk of poor student and parent behaviour are new graduates, who often lack the experience and confidence needed to deal with these situations.

*“I feel that beginning teachers seriously lack the skills to deal with challenging behaviour. This is not a reflection on their ability to teach, rather the way in which they are prepared for teaching. Helping preservice teachers gain an understanding of how to navigate difficult behaviour and how to respond constructively and appropriately should be explicitly taught. I think this is a serious contributor to teacher burn out in those early years when many are still finding their feet in the profession.” - Anonymous survey response*

*I feel that beginning teachers seriously lack the skills to deal with challenging behaviour. This is not a reflection on their ability to teach, rather the way in which they are prepared for teaching. - Anonymous survey response*



### Behaviour Management courses available online through ClassCover's PD

ClassCover offers educators a range of behaviour management courses to do at your own pace. These courses are accessible through a ClassCover profile and are perfect for casual teachers, new graduates and full-time educators in need of some fresh strategies.



## Reason for leaving: Income

24% of teachers listed income as a major reason for wanting to exit the industry. Looking at the statistics on the reasons teachers enter the profession, only 6% of respondents listed income as a factor. So why the disconnect? While it's clear from the results that the overwhelming majority of teachers don't enter the profession for the promise of money, when faced with the rigours of the role, the earning potential is not enough.

*"There is no other job where you are expected to pay for resources out of your own pocket, spend your free time shopping for and collecting them, only to be told you do it for "your passion" and will not be reimbursed. I pay for all my PD out of my own pocket, too, because my executives say they don't have the money or it's not a priority. Teachers need to be valued and paid well." - Anonymous survey response*

With the teacher skillset in increasing demand from other, higher paying industries, the brain drain makes sense.

## How ClassCover can help

### Connecting teachers with new opportunities

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, many teachers—particularly casual relief teachers—found themselves with less work and some with none. With rolling lockdowns across the country, much of the in-school work for casuals evaporated overnight. Thanks to the success of our partnership with The Smith Family's Catch-Up Learning Program, we have been able to offer tutoring work to many of our network of educators to supplement their income while they help children in need.

### Providing high quality, low cost professional development

ClassCover offers educators online teacher PD that can be done out of school hours at a pace that suits. With 85 hours of teacher PD to offer so far, this low cost but high value approach to teacher PD is assisting educators across Australia in their accreditation while keeping abreast of current trends in education.



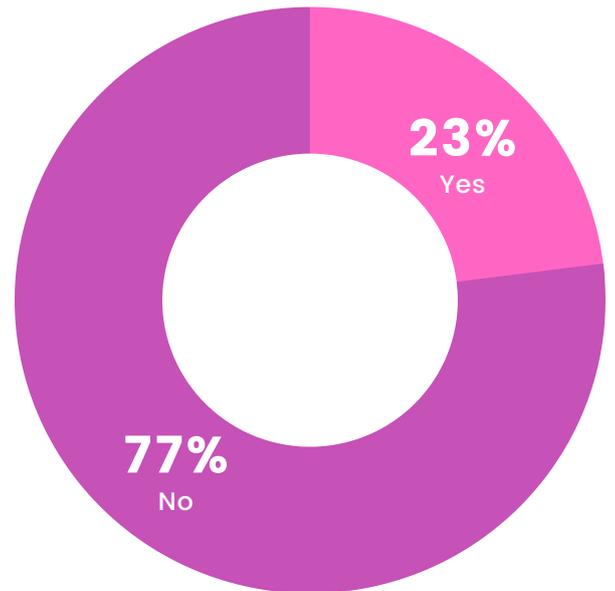
## Reason for leaving: Lack of support

For teachers, a lack of support from school leaders, particularly when it comes to gaining their accreditation, is another major factor leading to them leaving the industry. When we asked accredited teachers about the level of support they received in the process, 57% said they didn't receive any mentoring or support at the school level. This figure varied considerably when viewed state by state.

For newer teachers with conditional accreditation, things get worse, with 77% of teachers saying they don't have a mentor or supervisor to assist with the process.

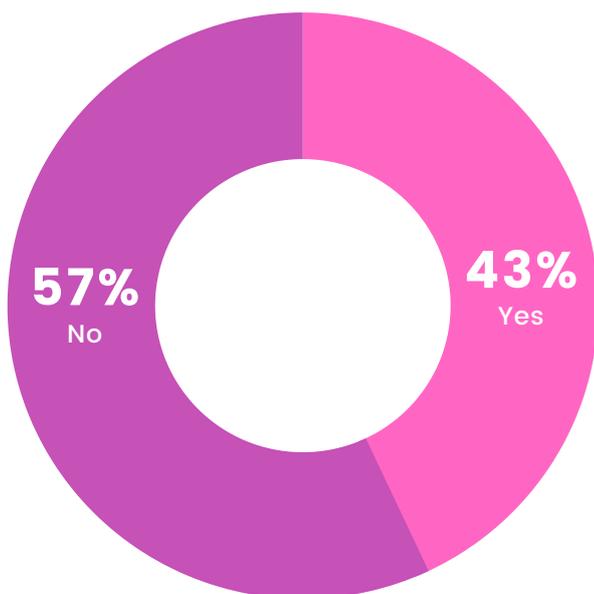
*"It would be good to have a mentor as a graduate casual teacher. It is very isolating and can be very difficult without support."* - Anonymous survey response

When you drill down by teacher type, 71% of part-time teachers and 88% of casual relief teachers said they received no support and had navigated or were navigating the accreditation process alone.



**If conditional, do you have a mentor / supervisor to support you to complete your accreditation?**

*"Casual staff do not receive enough support on a day-to-day basis with routines, rules and behaviour management. The accreditation process is also particularly challenging for staff who are only employed on a casual basis as it is difficult to show how many of the elements have been met."* - Anonymous survey response



**If accredited, did you get timely and ongoing support to gain your accreditation?**

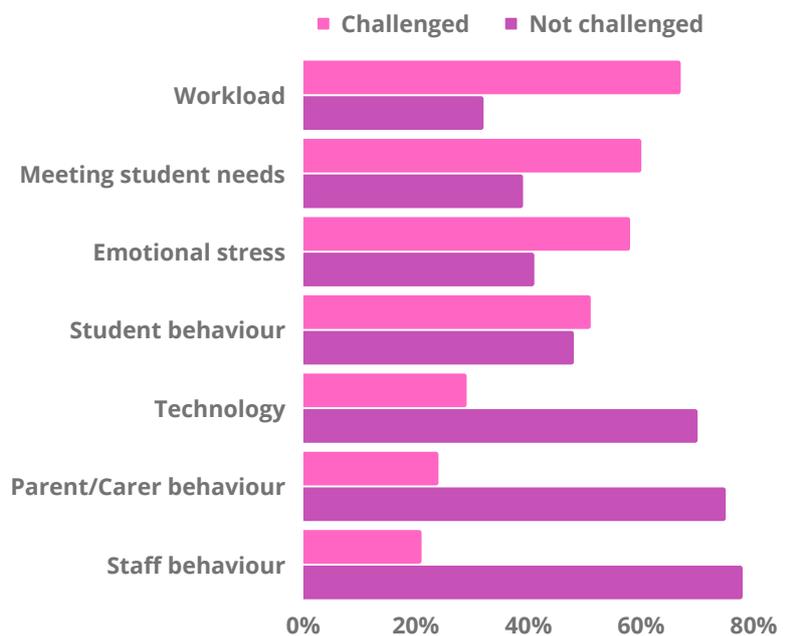




## The challenges educators are facing

In an effort to delve deeper into the day-to-day lives of teachers and get an understanding of their main pain points, we asked survey respondents about the biggest challenges they faced in their role. Options included workload, behaviour of students, parents, and other staff, technology, emotional stress, changes to policy and curriculum and meeting the needs of students.

While there were some clear findings—51.2% of all participants listed their workload as a challenge all or most of the time—the challenges facing teachers varied depending on their job type.



**Challenges faced by educators: Full breakdown**

### **How ClassCover can help**

#### **Reducing On and Off Class Executive's workload with the ClassCover booking and jobs app**

ClassCover significantly reduces the time taken to find, manage and book casual relief teachers. The booking platform provides schools with a seamless and easy to use booking platform, reducing workload so focus can be on other tasks.

ClassCover Jobs is connecting our large database of educators to job opportunities posted by schools, simplifying the hiring process and reducing workload in this area.



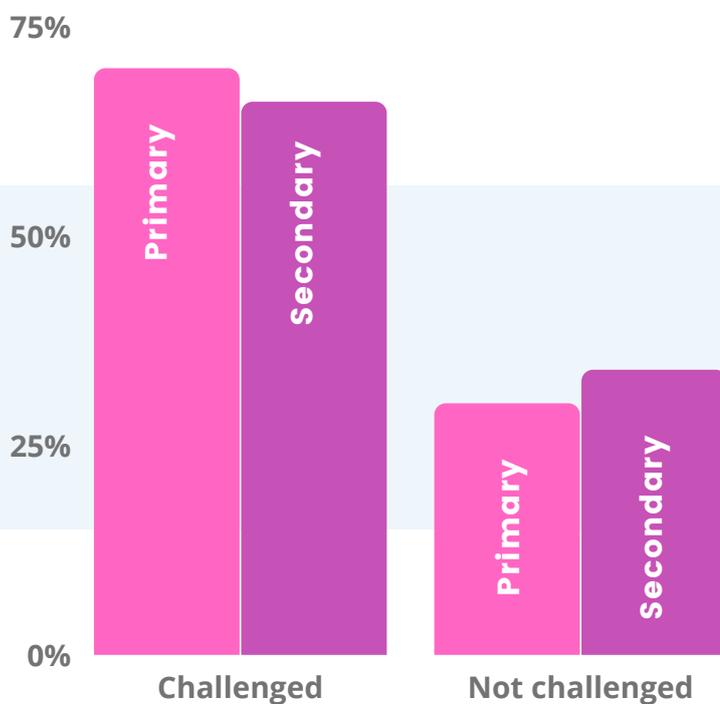
## Challenge: Workload

Given an unsustainable workload is the number one reason for teachers leaving the profession, it's not surprising that over half of respondents said their workload is a constant challenge.

It's worth noting that this varied between job type, with around 30% of casual teachers citing workload as a challenge all or most of the time. At the other end of the scale, 89% of on-class executives, 85% of off-class executives, and 79% of full-time teachers listed their workload as a challenge always or most of the time.

*“There is so much curriculum to cover. Add to this the extras that get thrown on to teachers, our jobs can become overwhelming. Balancing family, life and work is very hard during term. As an experienced teacher I still get stressed and quite emotional. I'm putting in more hours now than I ever have. I take pride in my teaching and want to do the best I can, but this can be at the detriment of my own family at times. The balance is very hard.” - Anonymous survey response*

## Primary vs Secondary data: Workload



### Workload challenges: Primary vs Secondary.

Data shows a close correlation, however primary school educators are reporting the challenge at a higher rate.



## Challenge: Meeting student needs

Right up there with workload in challenges faced by educators, is the ability to meet the needs of students.

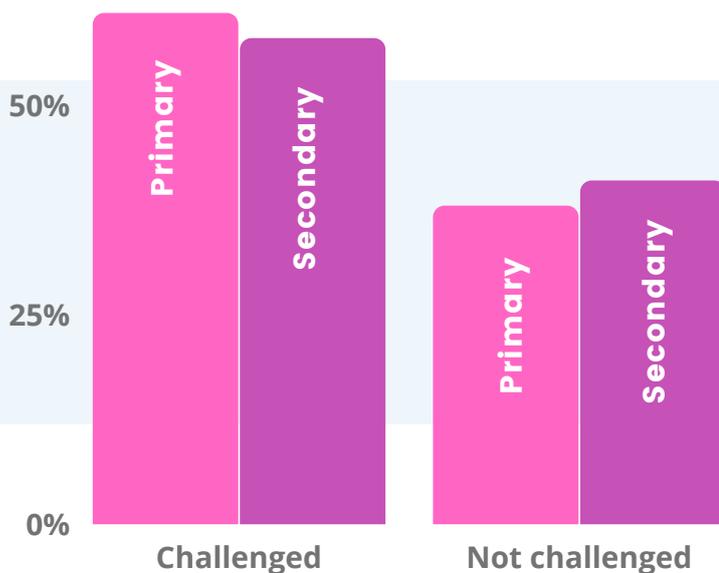
Overall, 38% of teachers said they found this a challenge always or most of the time, while a further 56% reported finding it a challenge half the time or less.

Like workload, the percentage of survey respondents who found it challenging to meet the needs of their students varied by job type. At the top were on-class executives, with 59% finding this a challenge always or most of the time. 54% of full-time teachers found this challenging always or most of the time, as well as 43% of off-class executives.

*“More support for teachers in the classroom is required to assist students with special needs, diagnosed medical conditions and behaviour difficulties.” -*  
**Anonymous survey response**

## Primary vs Secondary data: Meeting student needs

75%



### Meeting student needs challenges: Primary vs Secondary.

Data shows that primary school educators are reporting this as a challenge at a similar but still noticeably higher rate.



## Challenge: Emotional stress

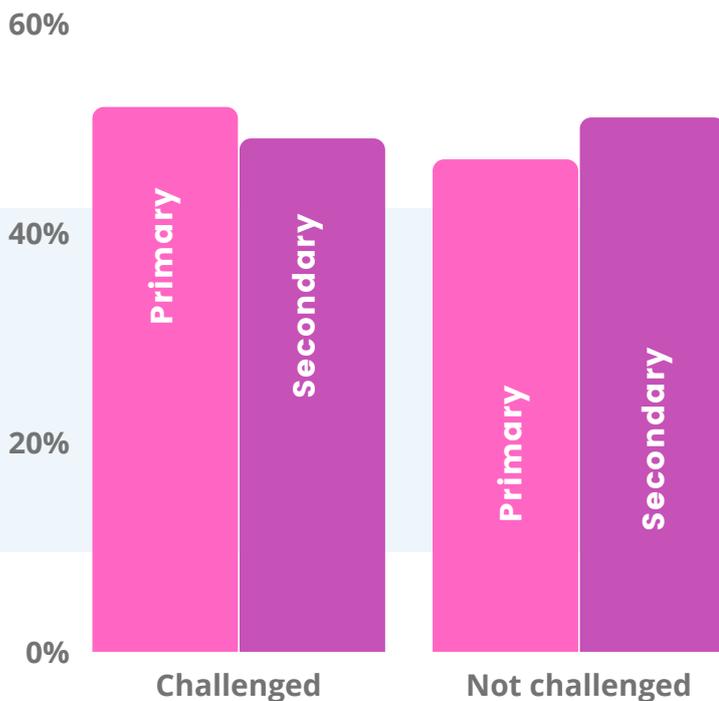
Emotional stress was the third biggest challenge faced by teachers overall, with 28% of participants finding it a challenge all or most of the time, and a further 61% finding it a challenge half the time or less.

Again, this varied by job type, with 59% of on-class executives, 54% of full-time teachers and 43% of off-class executives finding emotional stress a challenge all or most of the time.

Positively, the majority of casual relief teachers reported finding emotional stress a challenge only sometimes.

*“Greater support is needed for teachers. This profession is emotionally draining, and I don't think people understand how taxing it is until they become a teacher. I am at the beginning of my teaching career, and I already feel burnt out.”* -  
**Anonymous survey response**

## Primary vs Secondary data: Emotional stress



### Emotional stress challenges: Primary vs Secondary.

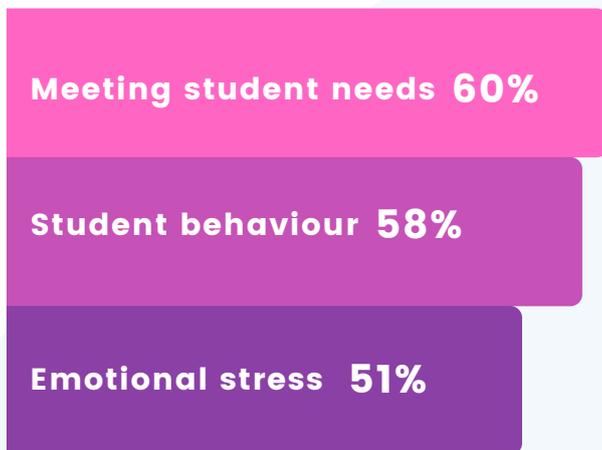
Primary school educators are reporting slightly higher challenges when it comes to feeling emotional stress.



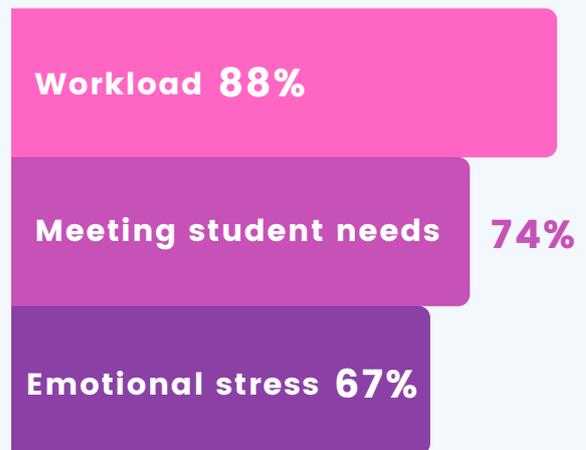
# Breakdown

Top 3 challenges educators are facing by role type

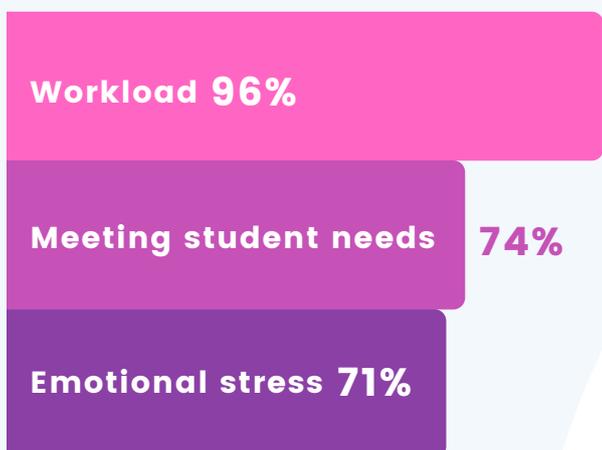
## Casual Relief Teachers



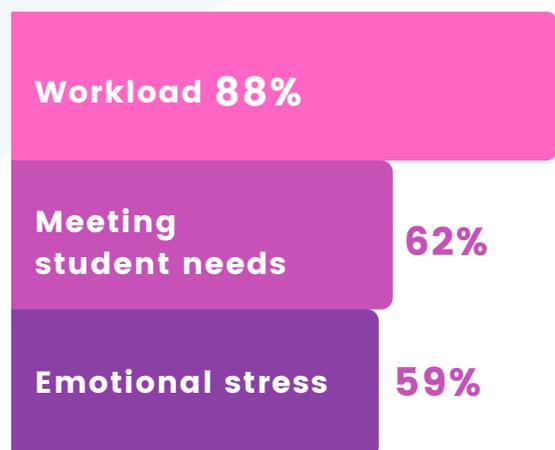
## Full-time Classroom Teachers



## Executive on Class

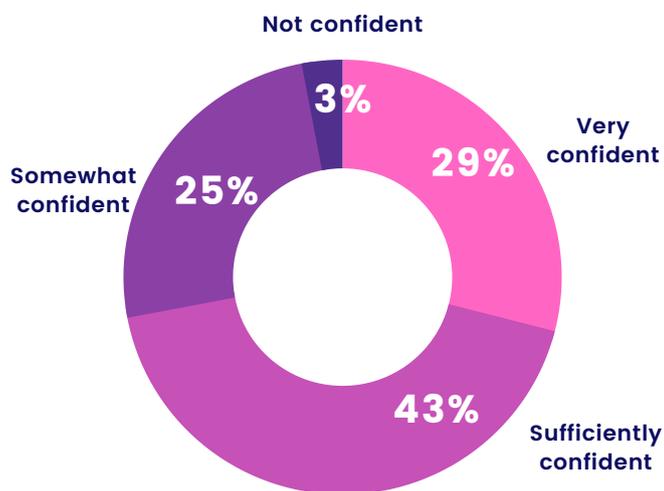


## Executive off Class



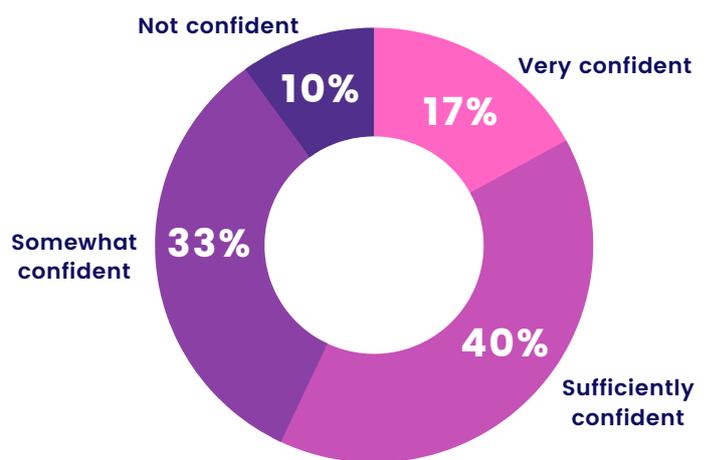
# Confidence in subject areas and classroom management skills

In addition to the challenges teachers face performing their jobs, we were interested in understanding their confidence levels in teaching different subjects and other skills needed to manage a classroom effectively.



## How confident are you that your behaviour management skills are sufficient?

Yes, it's true that in some settings—high school, for example—teachers may not be expected to regularly work outside of their areas of specialty. Increasingly, though, educators are expected to know it all, and fill in as needed in areas where they may have no training or knowledge.



## ICT - How confident are you with technological and online aspects of teaching?

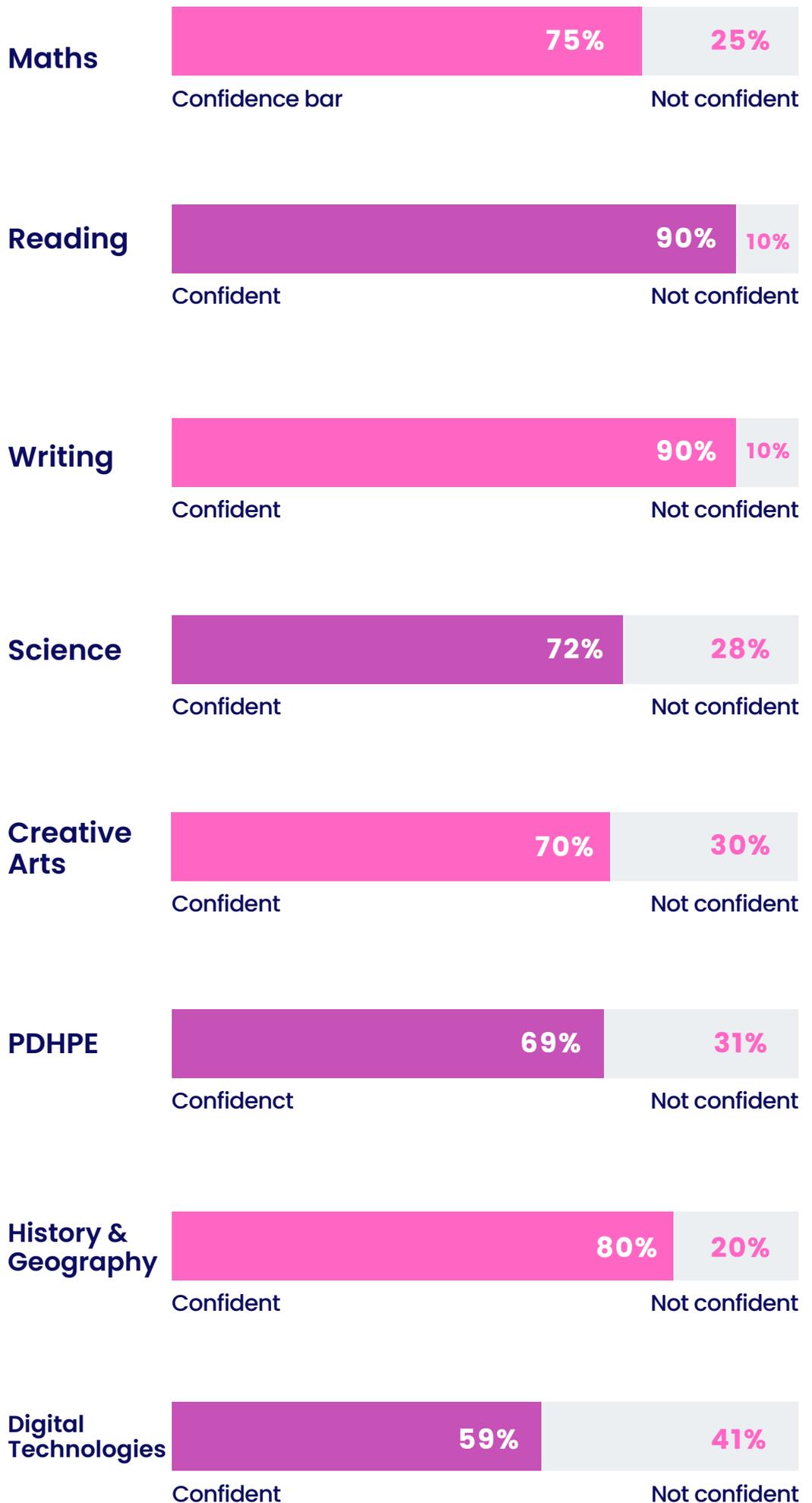
Looking at the results, it's encouraging that 90% of all respondents felt confident to teach reading and writing. 80% of respondents also felt confident teaching History and Geography. While most teachers are confident across most areas, there are still 25-40% who report needing further training in teaching one or more of the following subjects: Science, Mathematics, Creative Arts, PDHPE and most notably Digital Technologies. It is clear from teacher confidence levels that teachers cannot be expected to know it all, and yet that is often what is expected.

## 3 in 10 educators have completed Non-violent Crisis Intervention of Actual Potential or Aggression training

That's 70% of survey respondents who haven't completed this training



# Confidence by subject area



# Securing your staff into the future

Now that you are armed with data from teachers themselves, your school is better placed to take action. Whether your goal is to keep your current teachers happy and reduce turnover or fill current vacancies, there are several steps you can take to make it happen.

## Explore ClassCover

If you haven't already, create a profile for your school and explore all that ClassCover has to offer. We are proud to have the largest database of casual teachers seeking work in Australia, which has proven to be a great solution for thousands of schools across the country to fill the gap left by full-time staff absences.

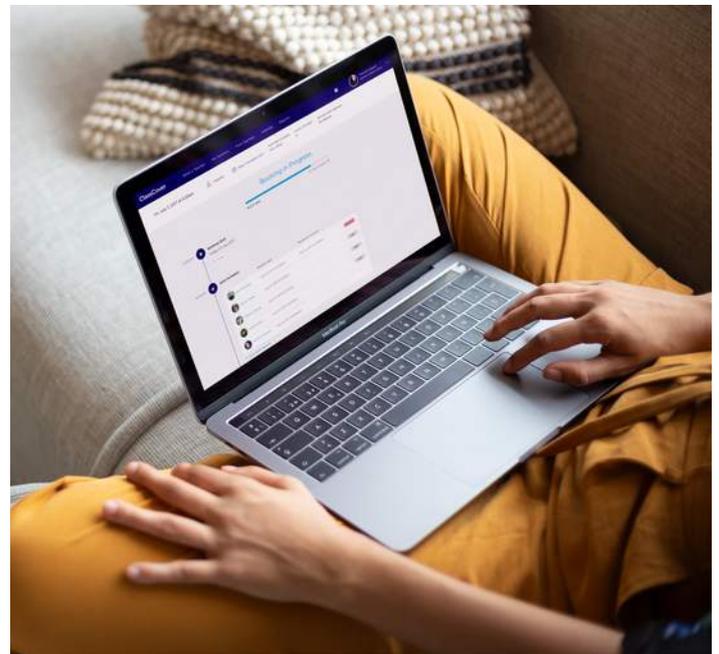
We are always introducing new features to the platform, so if you haven't been into ClassCover in a while, it's worth coming back for a look.

We also offer a 30-day free trial so you can see if the platform is right for you, risk free.

## Maintain a dialogue with your teachers

If your school has educators who have temporarily stepped away from the profession, it's worth keeping in touch. Maybe they have taken some time to focus on their family, decided to try out casual relief teaching or just taken an extended break.

Whatever the reason, when you find talented educators, it's worth keeping the conversation going and leaving the door open for their return.



## Support your team where they need it

While there's no doubt all educators are different, the results of this survey have shown similarities in the experience of teachers right around Australia. Using the data as a starting point, your school's executive team can begin to make changes where they will have the most impact.

You could even conduct your own survey to find out where your school is doing well and hone in on opportunities for growth.





# Case Study

## How we assist the NSW Department of Education

Since 2018, ClassCover has been the contracted supplier for a casual relief teacher booking and managing solution for NSW Department of Education schools. We work closely with the department to assist in alleviating teacher shortages and reducing workload for their schools by providing a platform that reduces the time to find, book and manage casual relief teachers and connect educators to current job openings in their schools. Here are a few other ways we assist.

### Reducing workload for schools and ensuring teacher compliance

Our partnership with the New South Wales Department of Education has made life easier for schools and teachers alike. Our integration with the department's data feed has made it quick and simple for schools to check teacher compliance at a glance. Gone are the days of having to physically sight credentials, thousands of schools across the state need only look for the green tick next to a teacher's profile on ClassCover to confirm they are certified and ready to teach.

### Assisting the NSW Department of Education to fill emergency placements

In NSW, we expanded our platform to help the Department of Education book emergency NSBTs and PSL staff who have been called in to assist with shortages due to COVID in 2022. This has allowed the department to better maintain staffing levels in their schools by setting up profiles for their Non-School-Based Teachers (NSBTs) and PSLs (Principal, School Leadership). These staff can be booked for school placements in emergency situations only by corporate staff in the head office when the need arises.

**25,000**

NUMBER OF ACTIVE TEACHERS  
IN NSW GETTING BOOKED FOR  
CASUAL WORK

**1,990**

NUMBER OF NSW PUBLIC  
SCHOOLS USING CLASSCOVER

**40,000**

CASUAL RELIEF TEACHER BOOKINGS  
BY NSW SCHOOLS EACH MONTH





**Get started for free**  
**[classcover.com.au](https://classcover.com.au)**

