Supporting the Educators:

Occupational stress and well-being across the teaching career span

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Interview questions and survey measures have not been included as appendices in this report. However, if any parties are interested in finding out more information regarding the measures used and/or the interview questions asked, please feel free to contact Professor Paula Brough (p.brough@griffith.edu.au) for more information.

Project Overview

The necessity and value in providing effective workplace support and personal development opportunities for teachers as they transition through their careers is of increasing concern to education interest groups, education advocacy groups and employing authorities alike. Evidence suggests that teachers are working longer hours in order to meet obligations and are experiencing increased workloads, both of which factors are unsustainable in the long-term (Timms, Graham & Cottrell, 2007). As a result, teachers may be at risk of physical and mental ill-health as well as reduced well-being and career satisfaction (Timms et al., 2007).

Although recent findings indicate that career satisfaction is influenced by teacher perceptions of meaning and fulfilment in their role (Timms & Brough, 2013), few studies have sought to identify how perceptions vary among career stages. Furthermore, current knowledge is limited in identifying the specific experiences of occupational stress, work-life balance, and technological demands for teaching employees at the early-career, mid-career, late-career and pre-retirement career stages.

To address these issues, Griffith University instigated a 2015 research project to assess teachers' job attitudes and outcomes across their careers. The Queensland College of Teachers (QCT) and the Independent Education Union (IEUA-QNT) were both approached to collaborate with this project and both agreed to provide in kind and direct support.

This project was implemented across two phases. The first phase was conducted in July 2015 and involved interviews with teachers of different career stages and school regions in Queensland. The second phase of this research was conducted in November 2015 and included a state-wide survey distributed to teachers who were registered with the QCT and /or members of the IEUA-QNT.

The aim of this project is to provide recommendations regarding support practices and development strategies for teachers across career stages and in doing so, identify practices that will retain productive and engaged teaching employees.

This research project was approved through and subject to the Griffith University research ethics requirements. Participation in any aspect of this research was voluntary and confidential. All data is strictly confidential and is retained by Griffith University researchers in a secure holding on premises. All results and information provided in any form are based on amalgamated data only.

Overall, there were 794 survey responses; however, after accounting for missing data and incomplete responses, the final sample was approximately 560 complete responses.

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Interview Results

Interviews were conducted in July 2015 with a total of ten respondents. Based on the findings of the interviews three major themes emerged as current work issues. These themes informed the content of the subsequent survey questions, to ensure the survey addressed current concerns.

1. Administration

Administration includes aspects such as paperwork, reporting and general administrative duties. Respondents suggested that they were required to perform excessive paperwork that often impacted on non-work hours. Additionally, respondents indicated that paperwork was seen to be intensifying their work responsibilities through an increased number of report writing deadlines.

2. Workload

Workload refers to the management and intensification of various teacher roles. Respondents indicated that traditional teaching roles were "a thing of the past" and they felt they were now required to perform multiple roles including counsellor, parent, nurse etc.

3. Accountability

Accountability includes management of others' expectations and of student behaviour. Respondents suggested that it was becoming increasingly difficult to manage student behaviour; they felt that excessive attention on disruptive students deprived engaged students of learning opportunities. Additionally, respondents indicated that parental expectations were becoming difficult to meet, including increased expectations of accountability on low student grades and less favourable student reports. Excessive accountability expectations were also reported to occur from principals and administration staff within schools.

Survey Results

This section of the report focuses on results obtained for each of the constructs measured in the survey. The survey measured different aspects that may contribute to teacher stress. Results are assessed and are identified as being statistically significant only in some specific cases. All other results are not necessarily statistically significant. The report will present findings according to the following measures:

1. Job Satisfaction
2. Work-life Balance
3. Job Demands
4. Technology at Work
5. Bullying
6. Workload Management
7. Role Demands
8. Social Support
9. Job Control
10. Coping
11. Strain
12. Turnover Intentions

In addition to the above analyses, the results have also been reported as amalgamated sample averages according to:

- Career stage
- School setting
- Teaching year level
- Teacher job status

This report will conclude with recommendations and additional comments provided by respondents within the survey.

Respondents' Characteristics

Supporting organisations invited members to participate in this research by distributing an online link to the research survey.   Characteristics for the total sample are listed below.

Characteristic	Total Sample
Gender	Male 18% Female 82%
Marital Status	Single 11% Married/De facto 54% Divorced 7%
Highest Qualification	High School .3% Diploma 6% Degree 57% Other 8%
Tenure	Average 19 years
Teacher Career Stage	Early-Career 12% Mid-Career 22% Late-Career 25% Pre-Retirement 12%
Job Status	Full-time 54% Part time 9% Contract 5% Supply 2%
Teacher Setting	Urban 38% Rural 8% Regional 23% Remote 2%
Teacher Year Level	Prep 5% Primary 30% Middle 5% Secondary 31%
Student Characteristics	Special needs 9% Non-special needs 58% Alternative Pathway 3%
School Setting	State 42% Independent 11% Catholic 14% Independent Public 3% Special School 1%
Queensland Region	South East Qld 42%

*Please note not all values add to 100% due to missing data and rounding numbers*
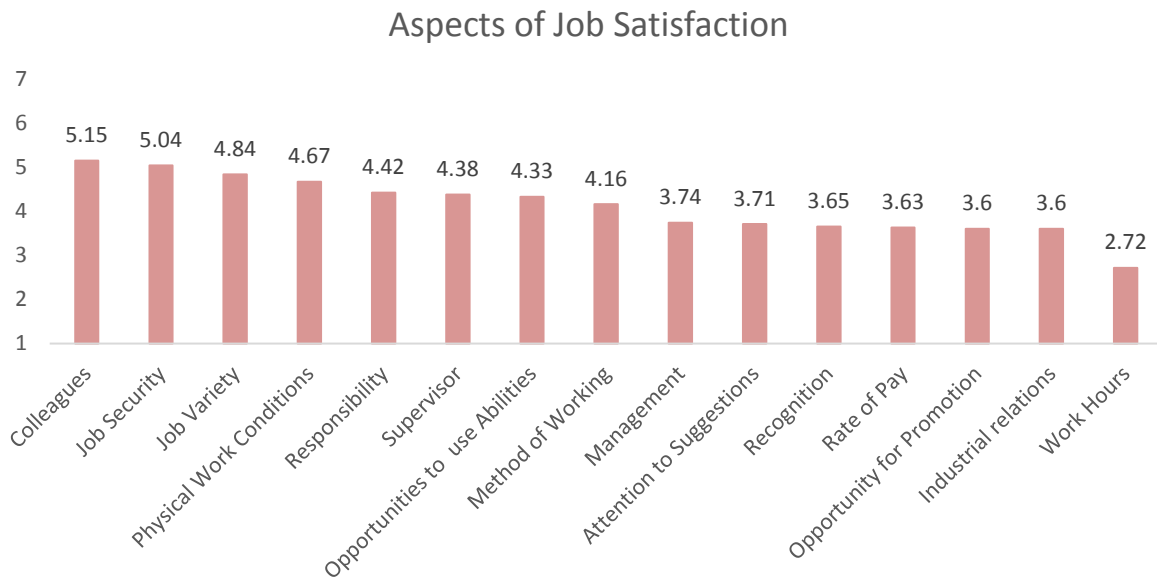
Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction refers to the acceptance of a situation that can be based on intrinsic (e.g., pride) and/or extrinsic (e.g., rewards) factors. Overall job satisfaction (as reported in this research) reflects the degree to which teachers are satisfied with their current job as a whole.

Job satisfaction therefore includes general satisfaction with aspects of the physical working environment (e.g., facilities, workspace), method of working (e.g., task vs process, independent vs collaborative), colleagues, recognition, immediate supervisor, level of responsibility, pay, personal abilities (e.g., skills application and learning), industrial relations, promotion, school management, work hours, job variety and job security (Warr, Cook & Wall, 1979).

Job satisfaction is an important consideration for organisations as it reflects the positive perceptions and feelings of employees about how their job is helping them to achieve desirable outcomes or values, e.g., pay, personal development. If employees show low satisfaction (demonstrated as low scores) they are more likely to also experience a reduction in motivation and engagement at work.

Respondents indicated their level of agreement with 15 statements regarding their overall job satisfaction. Responses ranged from *1 (extremely dissatisfied)* to *7 (extremely satisfied).* Higher scores indicate greater overall job satisfaction. Overall job satisfaction scores for the sample average are displayed in the graph below:

Aspects of Job Satisfaction
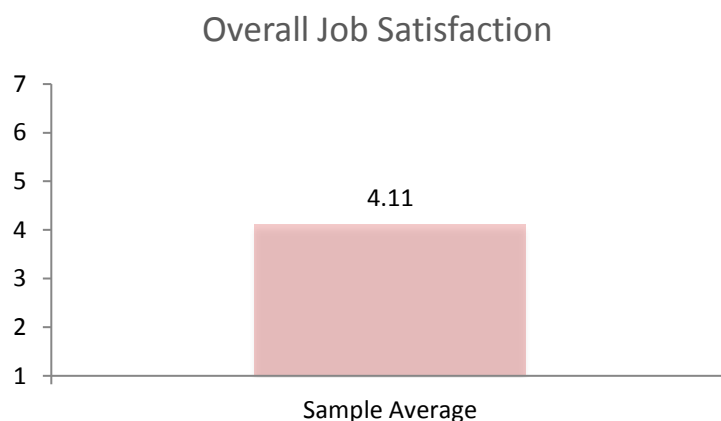

Key findings for the sample:

- Respondents reported moderate job satisfaction
- Respondents indicated that they were most satisfied with their colleagues at work and least satisfied with their work hours
- Many respondents' scores fell above the scale midpoint for responses (1 being no satisfaction, 3.5 being average and 7 being satisfied), indicating general overall job satisfaction

Additional key findings:
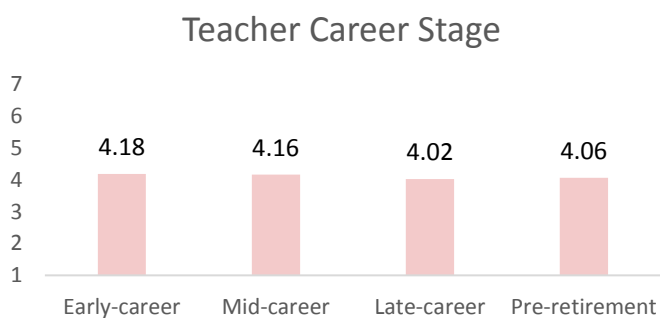
- Early-career teachers reported slightly higher overall job satisfaction scores compared to other career stages
- All career stages were above the scale average, indicating general overall job satisfaction

School Location

|			
4.05	4.32	4.05	4.19
Urban	Rural	Regional	Remote
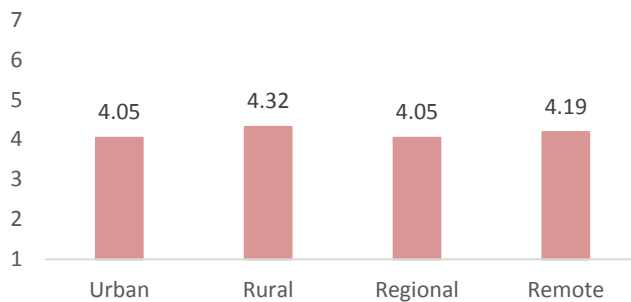
- Rural teachers reported the highest average job satisfaction, indicating that they are slightly more satisfied with their job compared to other locations
- All respondents within different school locations reported above average scale scores, suggesting that they are all generally satisfied with their job

Teaching Year Level

4.3	4.11	4.03	4.05
Prep	Primary	Middle	secondary
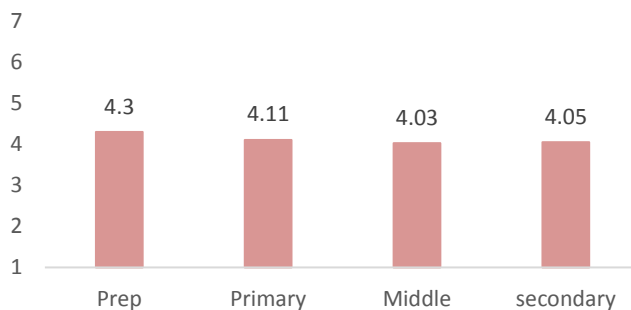
- Teachers of the prep year reported slightly higher average job satisfaction compared to teachers of other year levels, suggesting they are slightly more satisfied with their jobs
- All respondents, regardless of year level, reported higher scores than the average scale scores, indicating general overall job satisfaction

Job Status

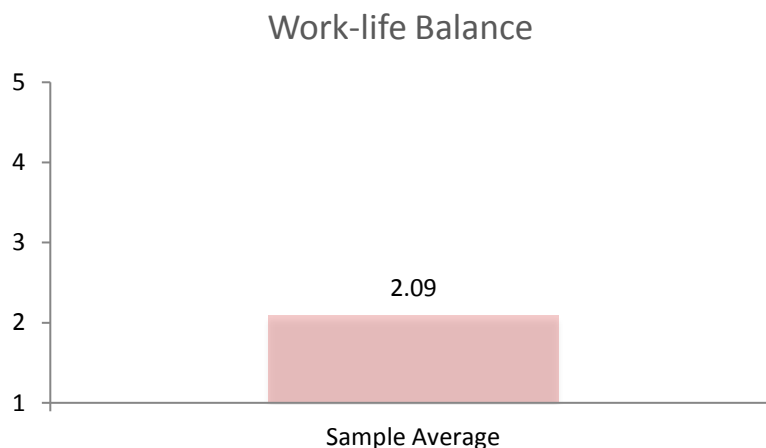|			
4.09	4.18	4.03	4.05
Full time	Part time	Contract	Supply
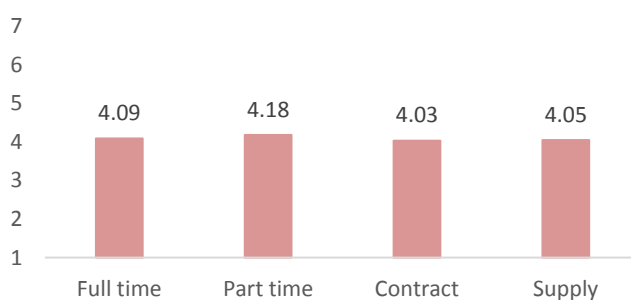
- Part- time teachers reported slightly higher job satisfaction compared to other types of job status, suggesting they are generally more satisfied with their jobs
- All respondents, regardless of job status type, reported slightly higher scores than the average scale scores, indicating general overall job satisfaction

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Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance refers to an individual's subjective appraisal of the balance between his/her work, non-work and life activities (Brough et al., 2014). As such, work-life balance describes how different types of role demands interact with work and non-work factors.

Recently, it has been suggested that multiple work and non-work demands may not be negative (e.g., as they may also be enriching; Brough et al., 2014). However, maintaining perceived balance is critical for employee well-being, satisfaction and performance.
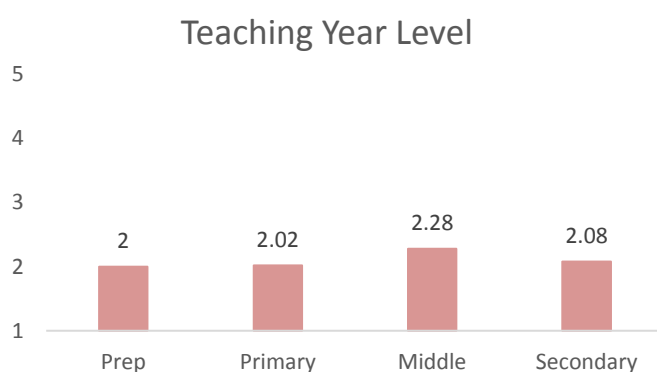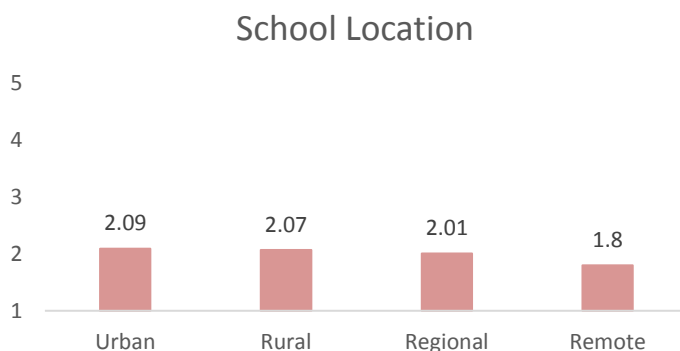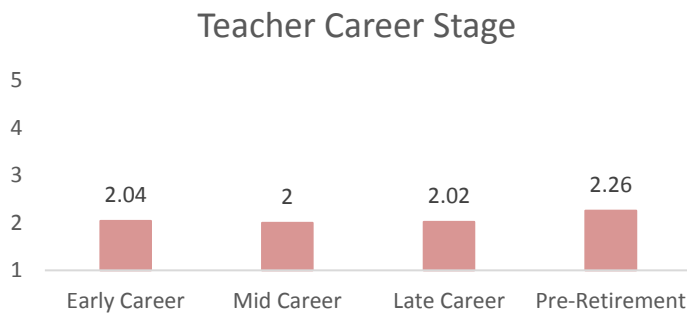
For the purposes of this research, employees indicated their level of agreement with statements in four questions regarding their overall perception of work-life balance. Responses ranged from *1 (strongly disagree)* to *5 (strongly agree)*. Higher scores indicate greater perceptions of work-life balance. Overall work-life balance for the sample average is presented below:

Work-life Balance

```
5

4

3
                                    2.09
2                              ┌──────────┐
                               │          │
1 ─────────────────────────────┴──────────┴──────────
                                Sample Average
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Key findings for the sample:

- Respondents reported low work-life balance, indicating that respondents may not perceive themselves to have adequate work-life balance in their current role.

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Additional key findings:

Teacher Career Stage

2.04	2	2.02	2.26
Early Career	Mid Career	Late Career	Pre-Retirement

- Pre-retirement teachers reported the highest work-life balance, indicating that they may have greater perceived balance between work, non-work and life demands
- All respondents reported relatively low work-life balance, indicating that this may be an area for improvement, particularly for mid-career teachers

School Location

2.09	2.07	2.01	1.8
Urban	Rural	Regional	Remote

- Teachers in urban school locations reported slightly higher work-life balance, indicating slightly higher perceptions of work, non-work and life demand balance
- All respondents reported low work-life balance, indicating that this may be an area for improvement, particularly in remote school locations

Teaching Year Level

2	2.02	2.28	2.08
Prep	Primary	Middle	Secondary

- Middle school teachers reported higher work-life balance compared to teachers of other year levels, suggesting that they may perceive greater balance between demands
- All respondents reported low work-life balance, indicating that this may be an area for improvement, particularly with teachers of prep

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11
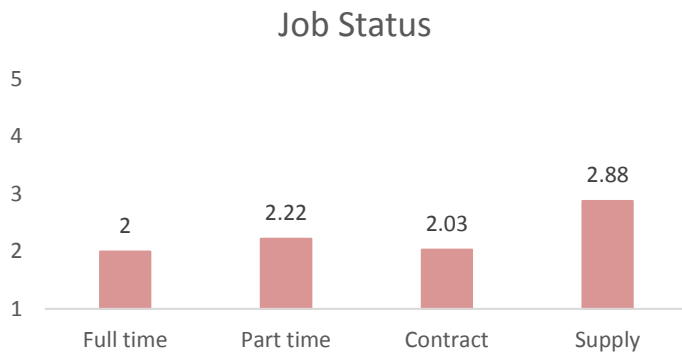
Job Status

- Supply teachers reported significantly higher work-life balance compared to teachers of other job status types; this may indicate a greater perceived balance between demands
- Full time, part time and contract teachers reported low work-life balance, indicating that this may be an area for improvement, particularly with full time teachers

Job Demands

Job demands are physical, social and/or organisational aspects of the job that require sustained long-term physical and mental effort (Bakker, Demerouti & Euwema, 2005). Job demands within teaching and education vary widely, but often include aspects such as role ambiguity, role stress (managing multiple roles), organisational management (supervisors, interactions with supervisors, pressure by supervisors) and task stress (e.g., excessive paperwork, report writing; Schutz & Long, 1988).

For organisations, job demands are important aspects of the work environment as they can have detrimental effects on employee well-being, strain, satisfaction, engagement and turnover intentions. Furthermore, job demands are also important considerations as they are closely related to perceived job stress.

In the current project, teachers indicated their level of agreement with statements in 24 questions exploring specific teacher job demands. Responses ranged from *1 (strongly disagree)* to *5 (strongly agree)*. Higher scores indicate higher experiences of job demands. Overall job demand averages for the sample are presented below. Additionally, individual job demands of interest are displayed below:

Overall Job Demands

Individual Job Demands
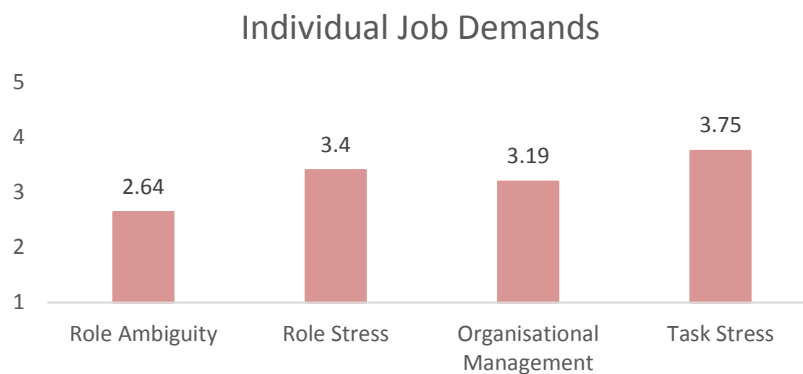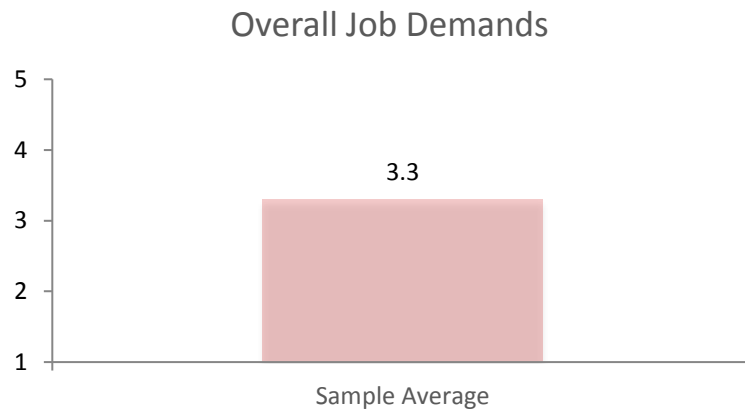

Key findings for the sample:

- Respondents reported that the highest area contributing to overall job demands was task stress; this suggests that teachers may find administrative duties and paperwork to be more demanding
- Respondents indicated that role ambiguity was least likely to be perceived as a job demand

Additional key findings:
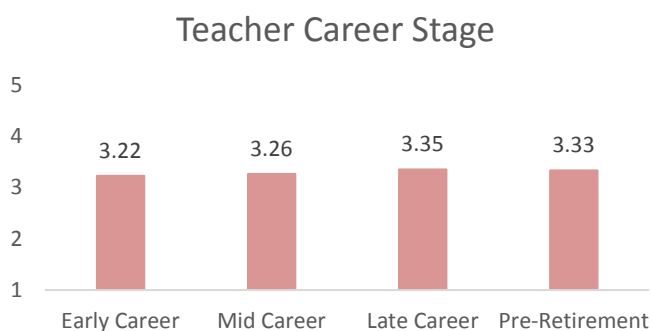
Teacher Career Stage

- Late career teachers reported slightly higher job demands compared to teachers at other career stages, indicating that they perceive more job demands
- All respondents indicated mild to moderate experiences of job demands at each career stage, indicating mild experiences of stress

School Location

|			
Urban 3.31	Rural 3.22	Regional 3.32	Remote 3.35
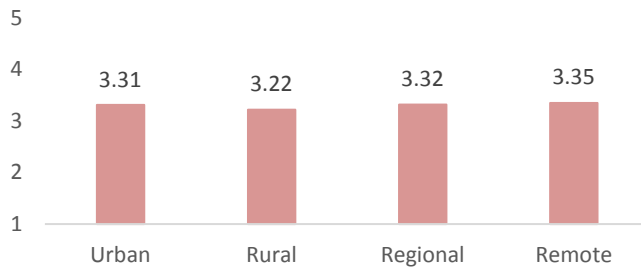
- Teachers in remote school locations perceive slightly higher job demands compared to teachers at other locations; this may indicate slightly higher levels of stress
- All respondents indicated mild to moderate experiences of job demands at different school locations, indicating moderate experiences of stress

Teaching Year Level
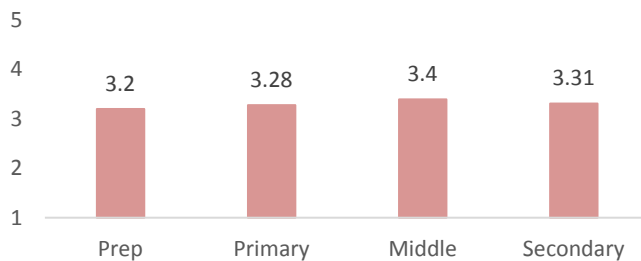
Prep 3.2	Primary 3.28	Middle 3.4	Secondary 3.31

- Middle school teachers reported slightly higher perceptions of job demands compared to teachers of other year levels, indicating slightly higher levels of stress
- All respondents indicated moderate experiences of job demands, regardless of year levels taught, indicating moderate experiences of stress

Job Status
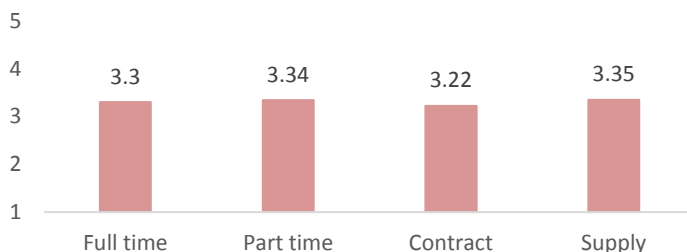
|			
Full time 3.3	Part time 3.34	Contract 3.22	Supply 3.35

- Supply teachers reported slightly higher perceptions of job demands compared to teachers of other job status types, indicating they may experience slightly higher stress
- All respondents indicated moderate experiences of job demands, indicating moderate experiences of stress

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Technology at Work

The use of modern technology, particularly information and communication technologies (ICT), in classrooms has greatly increased in recent years. This presents a new challenge for teachers not only to include more technology-based learning, but also to manage how technology is used within the classroom.

Technology use may be perceived as an additional job demand for teachers. For this reason, this project asked participants to indicate their level of agreement with statements in eight questions regarding their perceptions and experience of technology at work as a job demand. Responses ranged from *1 (strongly disagree)* to *5 (strongly agree)*. Higher scores indicate higher perceptions of technology being a job demand.

The sample average for technology at work is presented in the graph below:
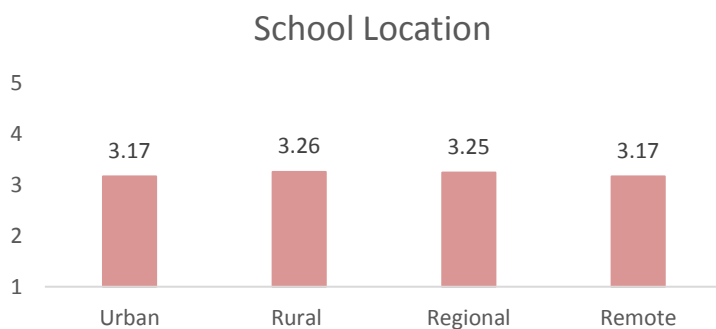
Technology at Work

3.27

Sample Average
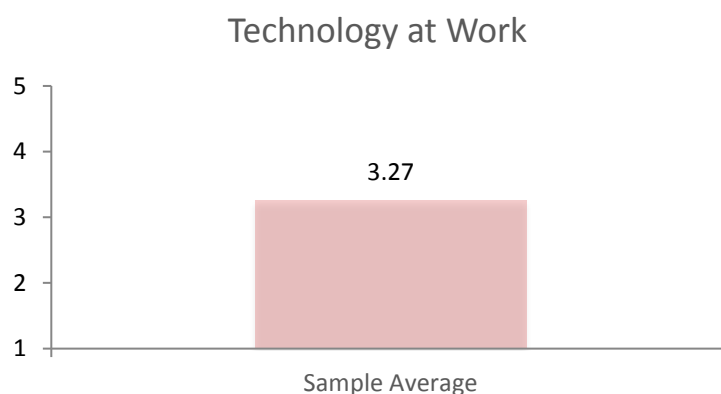
Key findings for the sample:

- Respondents reported moderately high scores for technology at work; this indicates that technology may be an additional job demand

Additional key findings:
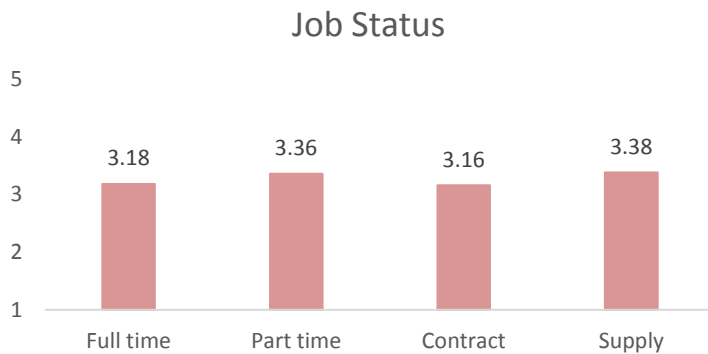
Teacher Career Stage
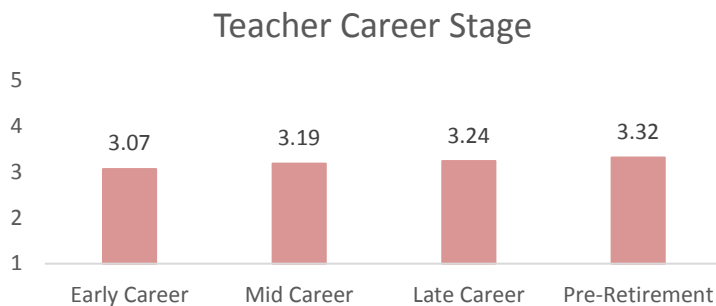
- Pre-retirement teachers reported slightly higher perceived demands of technology at work compared to teachers at other career stages, indicating higher perceptions of technology being a job demand
- Respondents at all career stages reported moderate perceptions of technology at work being a job demand

School Location

- Rural teachers reported slightly higher perceptions of technology at work compared to teachers at other school locations, indicating slightly higher perceptions of technology being a job demand
- Respondents in all types of locations reported moderate perceptions of technology at work being a job demand
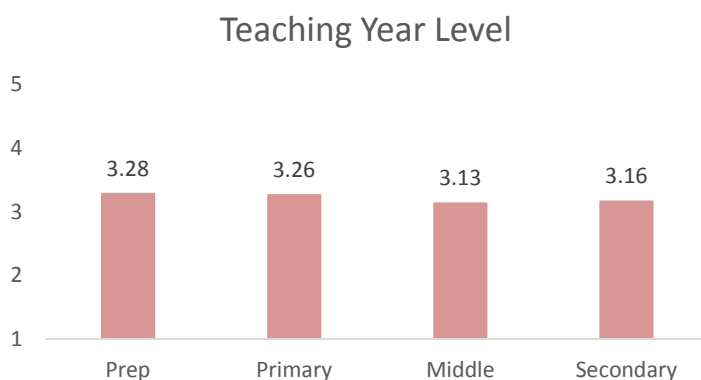
Teaching Year Level

- Prep teachers reported slightly higher perceptions of technology at work compared to teachers of other year levels, indicating slightly higher perceptions of technology as a job demand
- All respondents reported moderate perceptions of technology at work being a job demand

Job Status

- Supply teachers reported slightly higher perceptions of technology at work compared to teachers at other levels of job status, indicating slightly higher perceptions of technology being a job demand
- All respondents reported moderate perceptions of technology at work being a job demand

Bullying

According to the *Prevention of Workplace Harassment Code of Practice 2004*, bullying/harassment involves the perpetration of repeated unwelcome and unsolicited behaviours, which could be considered by a reasonable person to be offensive, humiliating, intimidating, or threatening. This does not, however, include reasonable management actions (e.g. performance management and disciplinary actions), unless they are primarily intended to offend or humiliate an individual, or create an environment that encourages bullying and harassment.

Bullying is a growing concern for both organisations and employees as it has been shown to cause detrimental outcomes such as burnout, strain, reduced performance and increased turnover of staff.

Respondents were asked to indicate their levels of experience of bullying (20 questions) in their occupational setting. Responses ranged from *0 (never)* to *4 (daily)*. Higher scores indicate greater experiences of bullying at work. The bullying sample average is presented in the graph below:
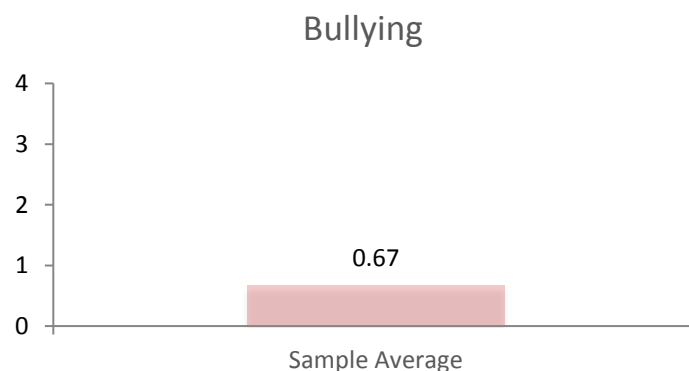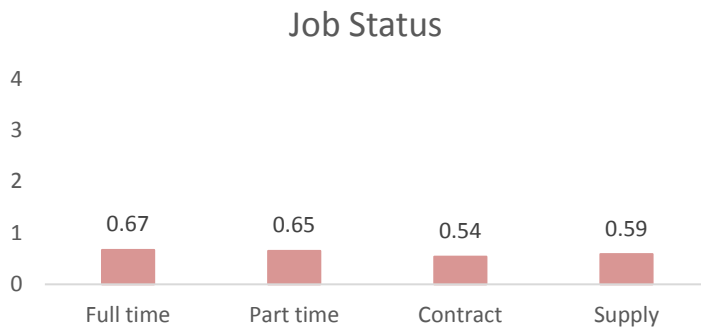
Bullying

Key findings for the sample:

- Respondents indicated extremely low scores for bullying, suggesting that bullying is a relatively uncommon experience

Additional key findings:

Teacher Career Stage

Early Career	Mid career	Late Career	Pre-Retirement
0.56	0.64	0.73	0.68
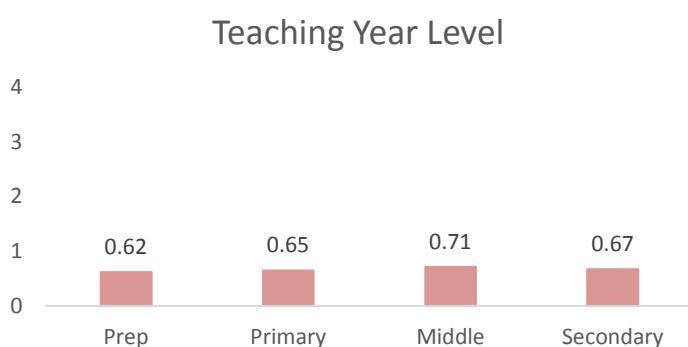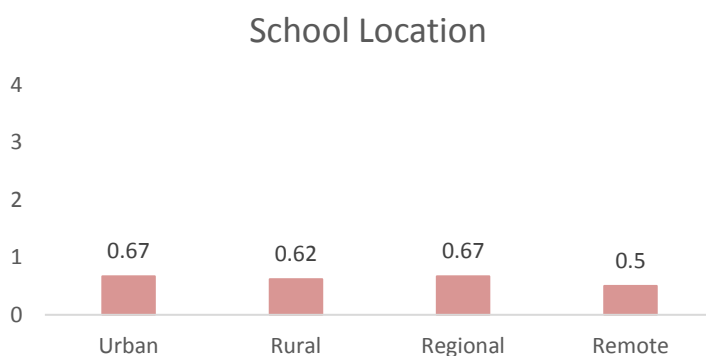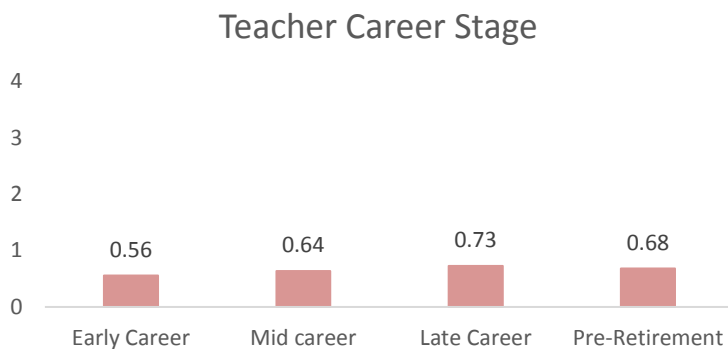
- Late career teachers reported the highest perceptions of bullying compared to teachers at other career stages, indicating they may experience more negative workplace behaviours
- All respondents reported relatively low bullying scores, indicating few experiences of bullying

School Location

Urban	Rural	Regional	Remote
0.67	0.62	0.67	0.5

- Urban and regional teachers reported slightly higher experiences of bullying compared to teachers at other school locations, indicating that they may experience more negative workplace behaviours
- All respondents reported relatively low bullying scores, indicating few experiences of bullying

Teaching Year Level

Prep	Primary	Middle	Secondary
0.62	0.65	0.71	0.67

- Middle school teachers reported slightly higher experiences of bullying compared to teachers of other year levels, indicating that they may experience slightly more negative workplace behaviours
- All respondents reported relatively low bullying scores, indicating few experiences of bullying

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Job Status

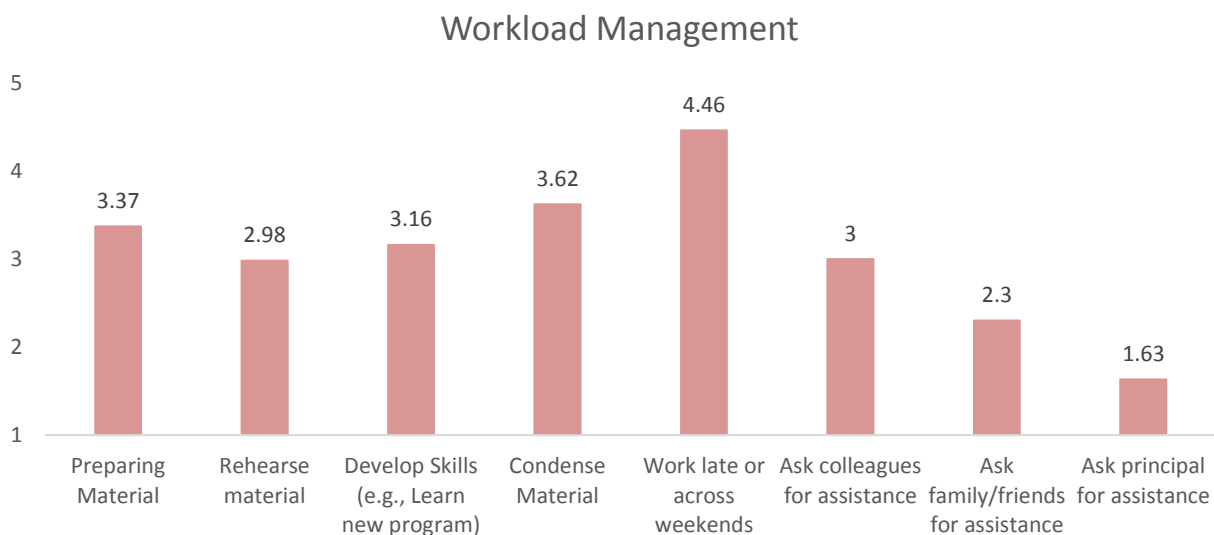| Full time	Part time	Contract	Supply
0.67	0.65	0.54	0.59

- Full time teachers reported slightly higher experiences of bullying compared to teachers in other job status types, indicating that they may experience slightly more negative workplace behaviours
- All respondents reported relatively low bullying scores, indicating few experiences of bullying

Workload Management

How an individual manages their workload is an important aspect of managing occupational demands. During interviews conducted for this project in July 2015, interviewees indicated that there were many techniques useful for managing workload. The interview results were compiled into a measure of workload management.

Survey respondents were asked to rate the frequency in which they engaged in particular workload management techniques (eight questions). Responses ranged from *1 (never)* to *5 (always)*. Higher scores indicate greater frequencies of technique use. The averages of the workload management techniques are presented below:

Workload Management

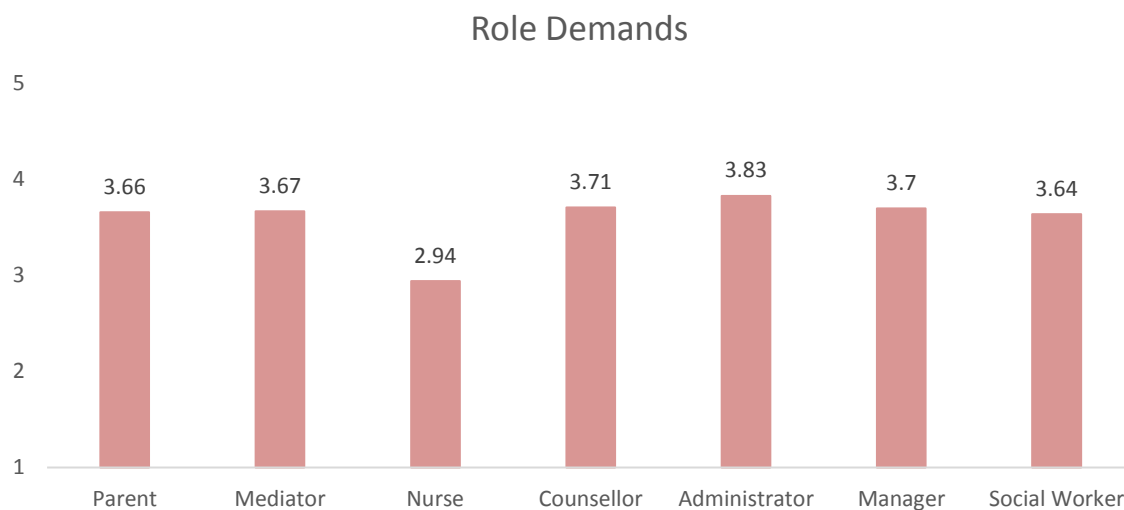| Preparing Material	Rehearse material	Develop Skills (e.g., Learn new program)	Condense Material	Work late or across weekends	Ask colleagues for assistance	Ask family/friends for assistance	Ask principal for assistance
3.37	2.98	3.16	3.62	4.46	3	2.3	1.63

Key findings for the sample:

- Working late or on weekends was the highest rated workload management technique for teachers, indicating that their workload may be intruding on non-work hours

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Role Demands

'Role demands' refers to the perception by employees of having to perform additional roles outside their traditional role requirements. In interviews conducted in July 2015, interviewees indicated that teachers were being required to perform multiple roles including that of a parent, nurse, administrator etc. The interview results were compiled into a measure of teacher role demands.

Survey respondents were asked to indicate the frequency with which they experience particular role demands (seven questions). Responses ranged from *1 (never)* to *5 (always)*. Higher scores indicate a greater frequency of particular role demands being performed. The averages of the role demands measure are presented below:

Role Demands

Parent	Mediator	Nurse	Counsellor	Administrator	Manager	Social Worker
3.66	3.67	2.94	3.71	3.83	3.7	3.64

Key findings for the sample:

- Respondents indicated that they perform administrator roles more frequently compared to other additional roles
- Respondents reported performing nurse roles least (this included attending to medical needs of students)

Social Support

'Social support' refers to the perception that one is cared for and loved by others (Cobb, 1976). Furthermore, social support has been widely shown to be a beneficial resource for employees as it increases positive employee outcomes.

Social support can be further broken down into various support networks. For teachers, three critical support networks have been identified, including work colleagues, supervisors at work and family/friend support.

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they received support from their various support networks (12 questions). Responses ranged from *1 (never)* to *6 (all the time)*. Higher scores indicate more frequent experiences of support. The sample average for social support is presented in the graph below:

Colleague Support

Colleague Support

```
6

5

4
                              3.31
3

2

1
                        Sample Average
```
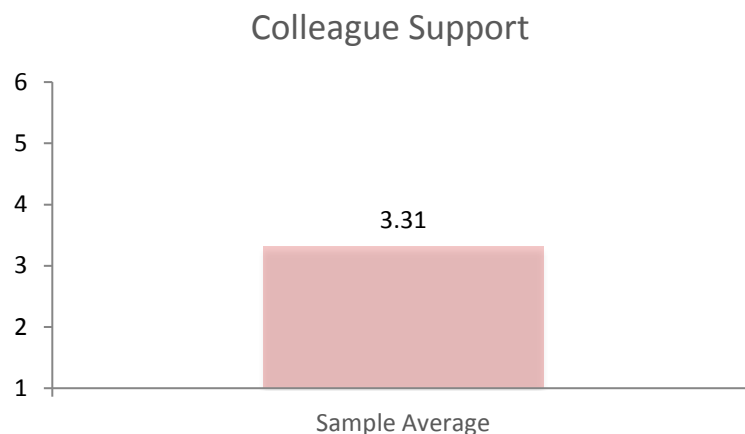
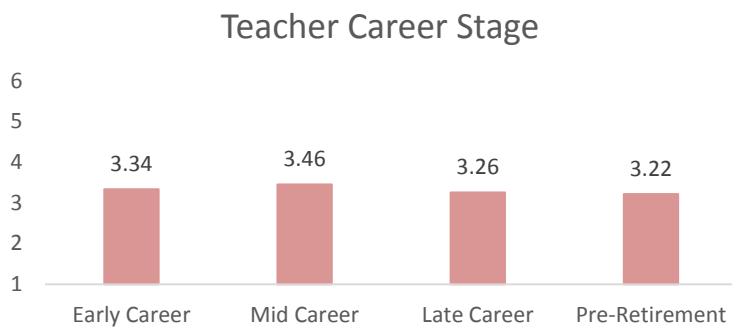## Key findings for the sample:

- Respondents reported moderate colleague support, suggesting greater or more positive experiences of colleague support

Additional key findings:

Teacher Career Stage

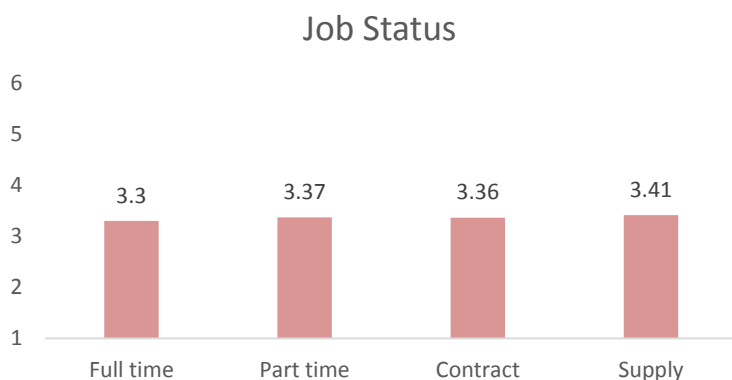|			
3.34	3.46	3.26	3.22
Early Career	Mid Career	Late Career	Pre-Retirement

- Mid-career teachers reported slightly higher perceptions of colleague support compared to teachers at other career stages
- Pre-retirement teachers reported the lowest perceptions of colleague support
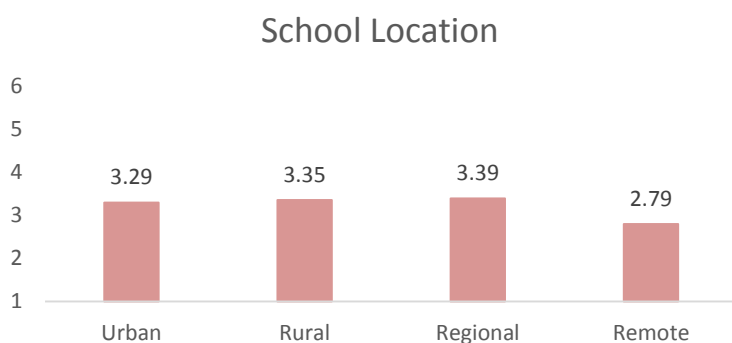
School Location

3.29	3.35	3.39	2.79
Urban	Rural	Regional	Remote

- Regional teachers reported slightly higher perceptions of colleague support compared to teachers at different school locations
- Remote teachers reported the lowest perceptions of colleague support (below scale average), indicating a possible area for improvement
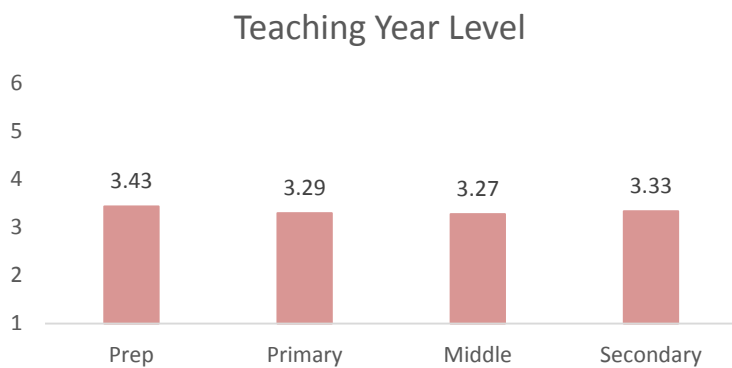
Teaching Year Level

|			
3.43	3.29	3.27	3.33
Prep	Primary	Middle	Secondary

- Prep teachers reported slightly higher perceptions of colleague support compared to teachers of other year levels
- Middle school teachers reported the lowest perceptions of colleague support

Job Status

3.3	3.37	3.36	3.41
Full time	Part time	Contract	Supply

- Supply teachers reported slightly higher perceptions of colleague support compared to teachers of other job status types
- Full time teachers reported slightly lower perceptions of colleague support
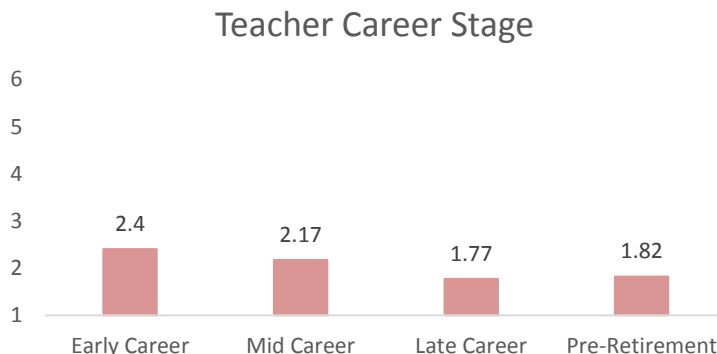
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22

Supervisor Support
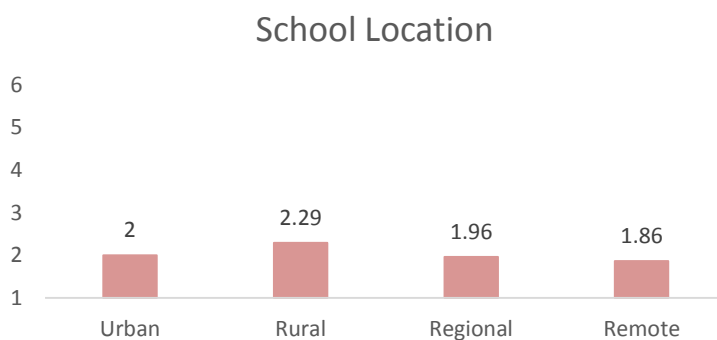
Supervisor Support
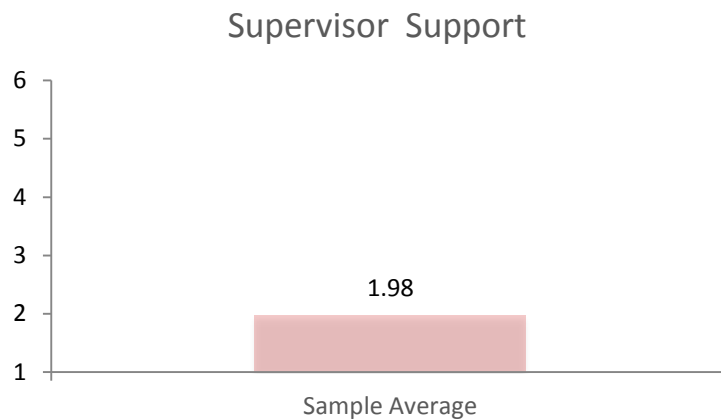
Key findings for the sample:

- Respondents reported relatively low supervisor support; this indicates low perceptions of support and suggests a potential area for intervention

Additional key findings:

Teacher Career Stage

- Early-career teachers reported the highest perceptions of supervisor support compared to teachers at other career stages
- Late-career teachers reported the lowest experience of supervisor support, indicating low perceptions of support

School Location

- Rural teachers reported the highest perceptions of supervisor support compared to teachers at other school locations
- Remote teachers reported the lowest experience of supervisor support, indicating an opportunity for improvement

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Teaching Year Level

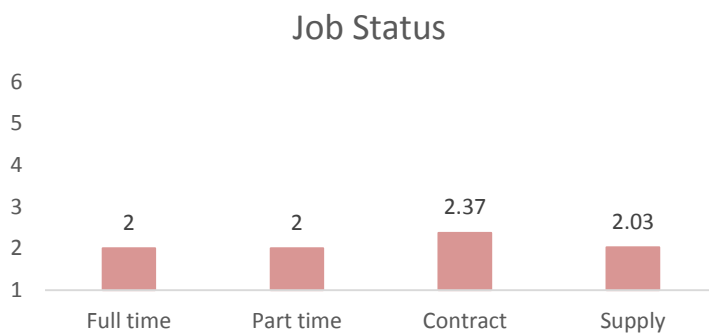|	
Prep	2
Primary	1.9
Middle	2.17
Secondary	2.08
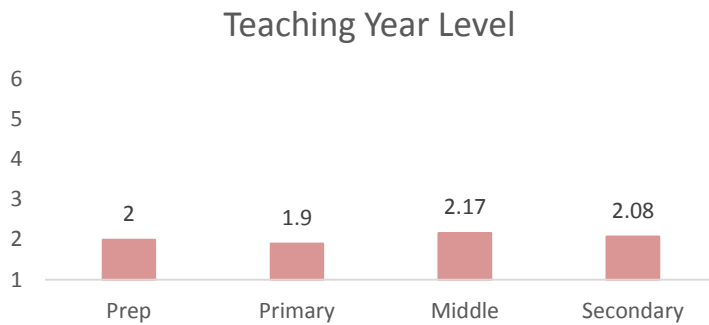
- Middle-school teachers reported the highest perceptions of supervisor support compared to teachers of other year levels
- Primary teachers reported the lowest experience of supervisor support, indicating an opportunity for improvement

Job Status

Full time	2
Part time	2
Contract	2.37
Supply	2.03

- Contract teachers reported the highest perceptions of supervisor support compared to teachers with other types of job status
- Both full time and part time teachers reported the lowest experience of supervisor support, indicating an opportunity for improvement

Family/Friend Support

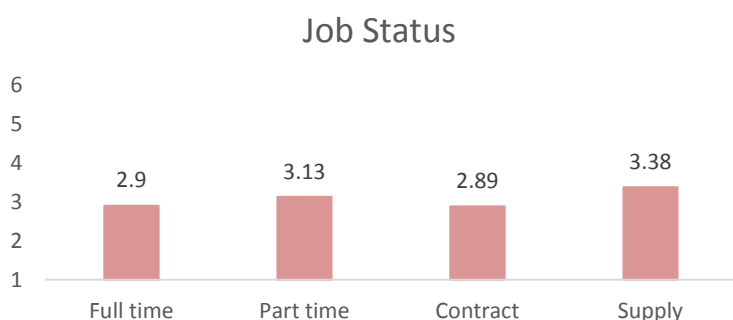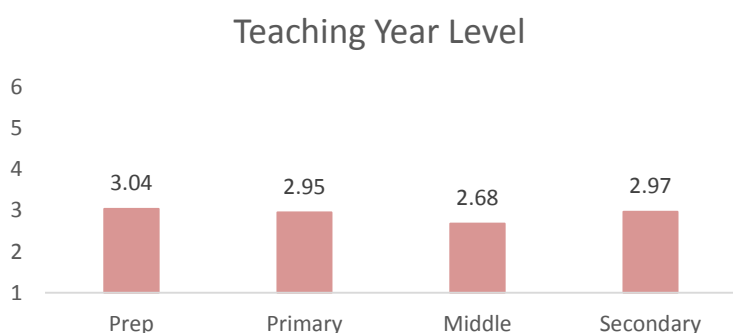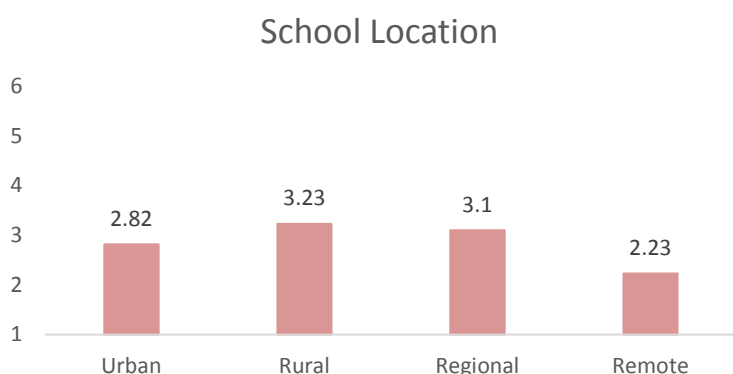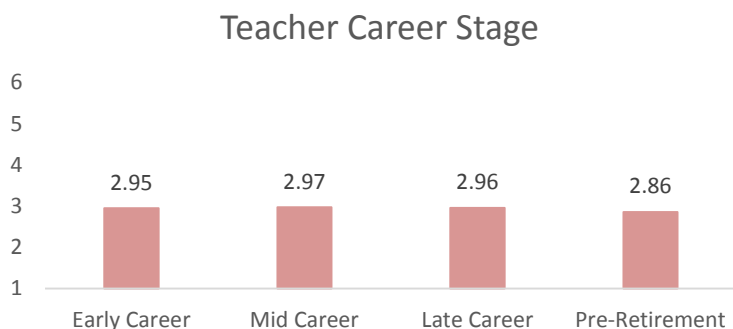## Family/Friend Support

Sample Average	2.95
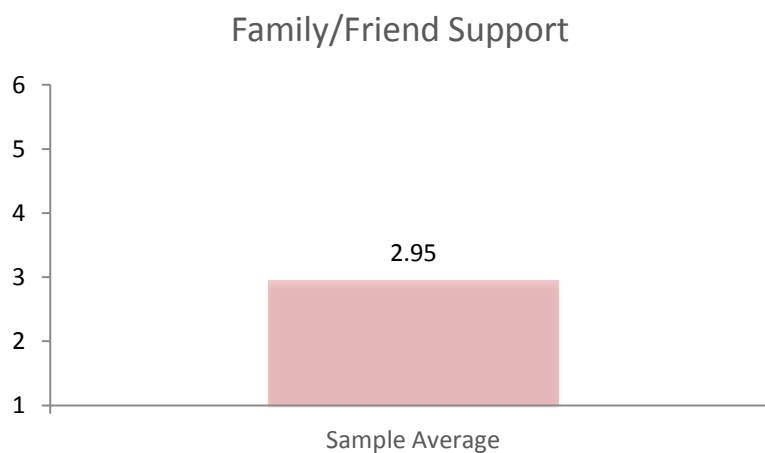
Key findings for the sample:

- Respondents reported moderate perceptions of family/friend support

Additional key findings:

Teacher Career Stage

Early Career	Mid Career	Late Career	Pre-Retirement
2.95	2.97	2.96	2.86

- Mid-career teachers reported slightly higher perceptions of family/friend support compared to teachers at different career stages
- All respondents indicated slightly low perceptions of family/friend support

School Location

Urban	Rural	Regional	Remote
2.82	3.23	3.1	2.23

- Rural teachers reported higher perceptions of family/friend support compared to teachers at different school locations
- Remote teachers indicated lower perceptions of family/friend support compared to teachers at different school locations

Teaching Year Level

Prep	Primary	Middle	Secondary
3.04	2.95	2.68	2.97

- Prep teachers reported slightly higher perceptions of family/friend support compared to teachers of different year levels
- Middle school teachers reported the lowest perceptions of family/friend support

Job Status

| Full time	Part time	Contract	Supply
2.9	3.13	2.89	3.38

- Supply teachers reported the highest perceptions of family/friend support compared to teachers at different levels of job status
- Contract teachers reported slightly lower perceptions of family/friend support

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Job Control

Job control refers to the extent individuals perceive themselves to have control over how they perform their job. Job control is important for employees as it may have stress-buffering effects and reduce the detrimental effects of job demands.

Job control includes aspects of employee decision making and planning during everyday job tasks. For the purposes of this research, job control has been reported as an overall measure.

Respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which they perceive themselves to have job control (10 questions). Responses ranged from *1 (not at all)* to *5 (a great deal)*. Higher scores indicate greater perceptions of job control. The sample average for job control is presented in the graph below:

Job Control

```
5

4              3.5

3

2

1
          Sample Average
```
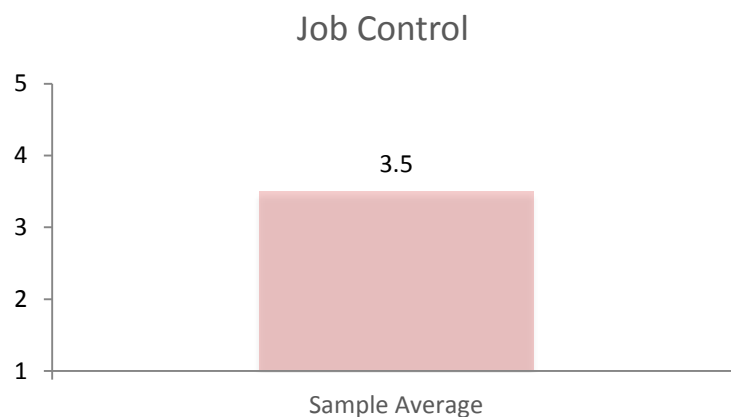
Key findings for this sample:

- Respondents reported moderately high job control, indicating generally good perceptions of job control within their role

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Additional key findings:

Teacher Career Stage

3.58	3.48	3.46	3.6
Early Career	Mid Career	Late Career	Pre-Retirement
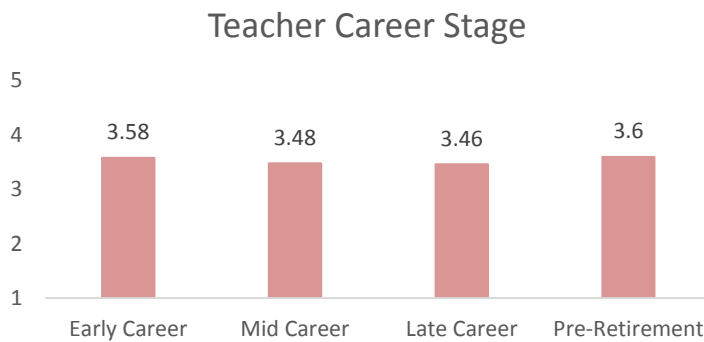
- Pre-retirement teachers reported slightly more perceptions of job control compared to teachers of other career stages
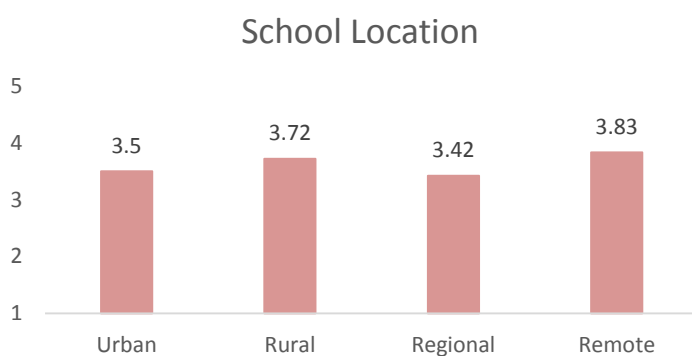- Respondents at all career stages reported high perceptions of job control

School Location

3.5	3.72	3.42	3.83
Urban	Rural	Regional	Remote

- Remote teachers reported high perceptions of job control compared to teachers at different school locations
- Respondents in all location categories reported high perceptions of job control

Teaching Year Level

3.45	3.5	3.49	3.54
Prep	Primary	Middle	Secondary
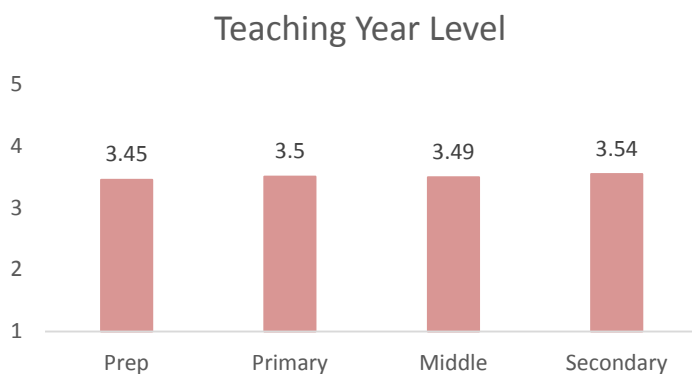
- Secondary school teachers reported the highest perception of job control compared to teachers of other year levels
- All respondents, regardless of year levels taught, reported high perceptions of job control
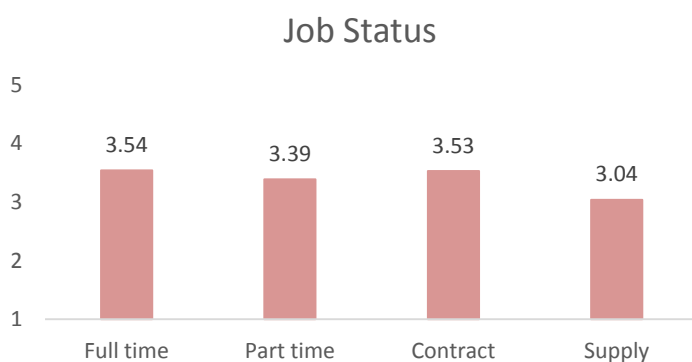
Job Status

|			
3.54	3.39	3.53	3.04
Full time	Part time	Contract	Supply

- Full time teachers reported slightly higher perceptions of job control compared to teachers with other types of job status
- All respondents reported high perceptions of job control

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Coping

Coping refers to an individual's attempt to master, reduce or tolerate work-related demands (Guppy et al., 2004). Coping is critical for employees to be able to overcome job demands and occupational stress experiences.

Many individuals utilise a range of coping methods including changing the situation, adjusting expectations, accommodating the situation, avoiding the problem or trying to reduce the effects of the problem or situation (e.g., relieving tension, letting off steam; Guppy et al., 2004).

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they performed different coping strategies (10 questions). Responses ranged from *1 (do not use at all)* to *5 (use very much)*. Higher scores indicate greater frequency of use of the coping strategy. The sample average for coping is reported in the graph below. Additionally, individual coping strategies are presented for the overall sample.
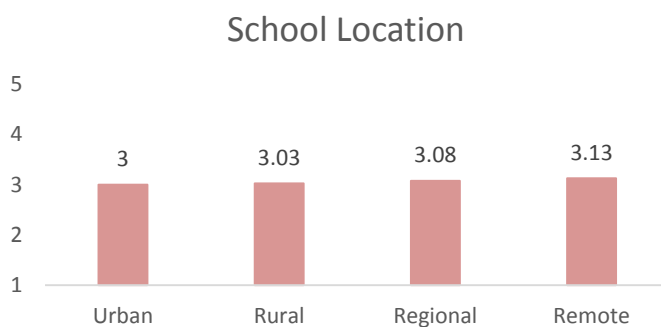
Coping
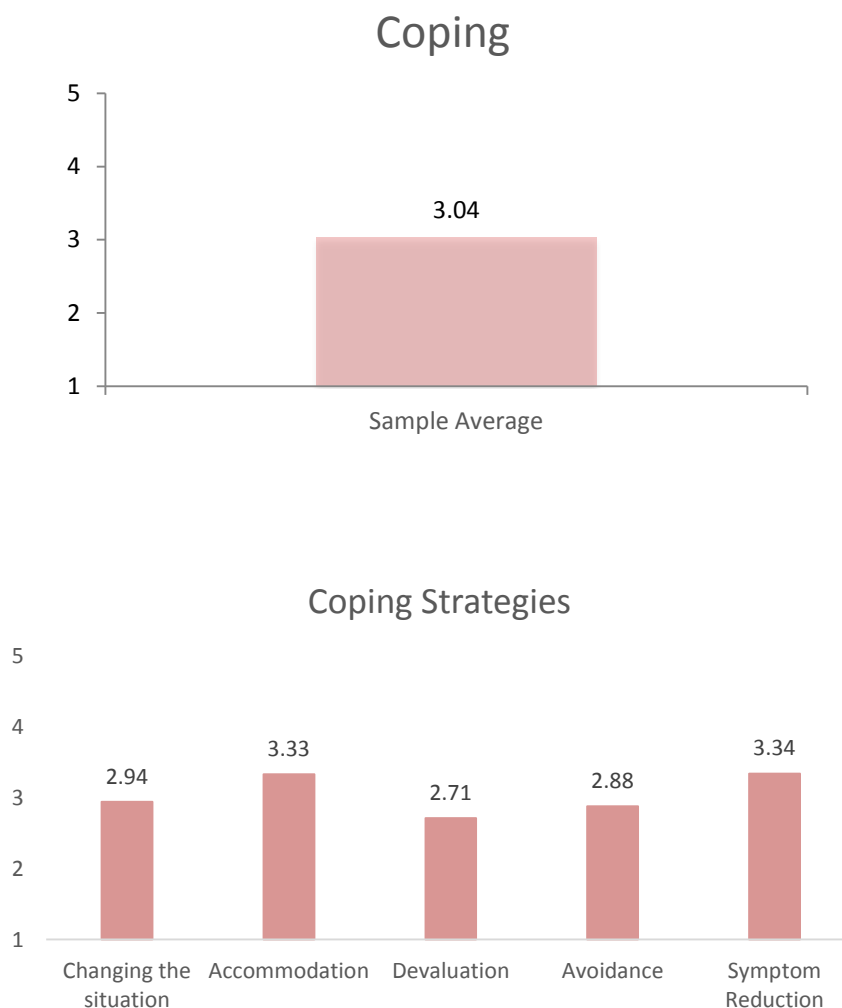
Coping Strategies

Key findings for the sample:

- Respondents reported moderate use of coping methods and strategies
- Respondents indicated that they perform symptom reduction strategies slightly more than accommodation strategies
- Respondents indicated that they utilise more proactive coping strategies as opposed to more maladaptive techniques such as avoidance

Additional key findings:
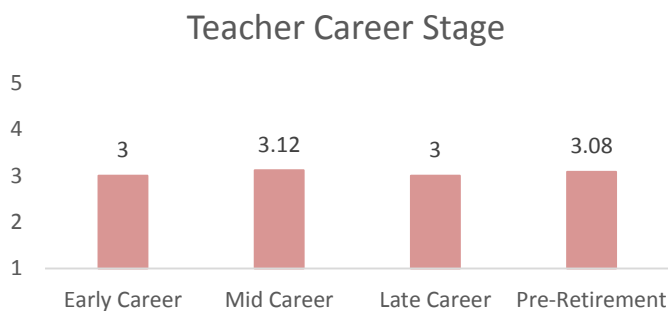
Teacher Career Stage

Early Career	Mid Career	Late Career	Pre-Retirement
3	3.12	3	3.08

- Mid-career teachers reported slightly higher use of coping strategies compared to teachers at other career stages
- All respondents, no matter at which career stage, indicated moderate use of coping strategies

School Location

Urban	Rural	Regional	Remote
3	3.03	3.08	3.13

- Remote teachers reported slightly higher use of coping strategies compared to teachers at other school locations
- All respondents, regardless of school location, indicated moderate use of coping strategies
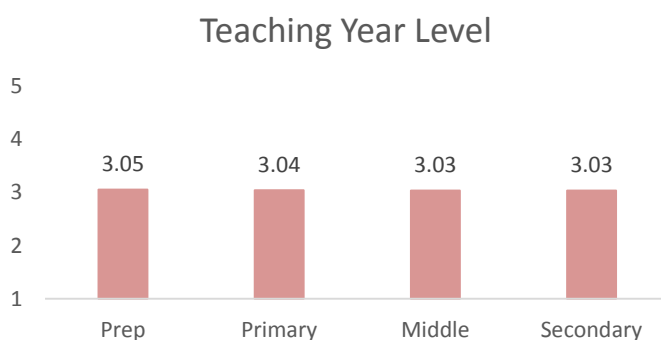
Teaching Year Level

Prep	Primary	Middle	Secondary
3.05	3.04	3.03	3.03

- Prep teachers reported slightly higher use of coping strategies compared to teachers of other year levels
- All respondents, regardless of year level taught, indicated moderate or regular use of coping strategies

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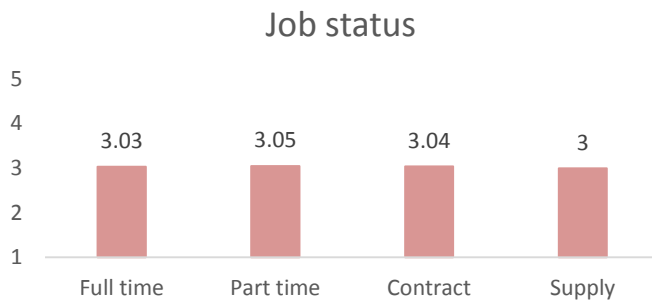
Job status

- Part time teachers reported slightly more use of coping strategies compared to teachers of other job status levels
- All respondents, regardless of job status, indicated moderate or regular use of coping strategies

Strain

Strain refers to the long-term sustained physical, mental and social requirements of work, in the absence of available personal resources (de Jonge & Dormann, 2006).

Strain is critical for organisations to consider as it often results in detrimental employee outcomes, including burnout, absenteeism, occupational stress and turnover. Strain is also an essential measure of general mental health and psychological functioning.

Respondents were asked to indicate their perceptions or experiences of general mental health over the past few weeks (12 questions). Responses ranged from *1 (more so than usual)* to *4 (much less than usual)* and from *1 (not at all)* to *4 (much less than usual)*. Higher scores indicate higher perceptions of strain. The sample average for strain is presented in the graph below:
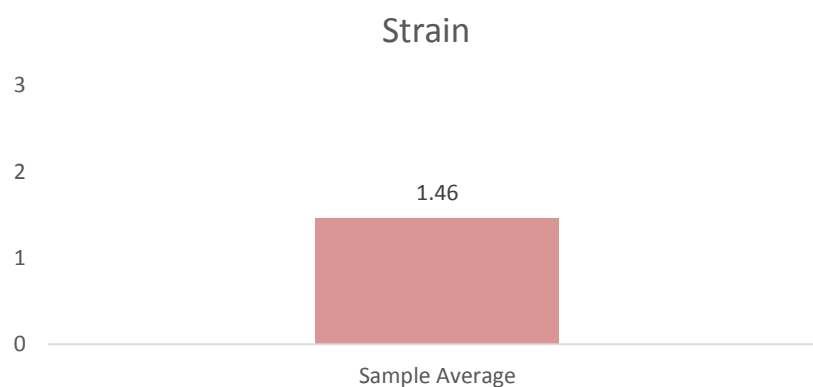
Strain

Key findings for the sample:

- Respondents reported moderate experiences of strain, suggesting potentially detrimental general health and psychological functioning

Additional key findings:

Teacher Career Stage

	Early Career	Mid Career	Late Career	Pre-Retirement
	1.44	1.49	1.49	1.4
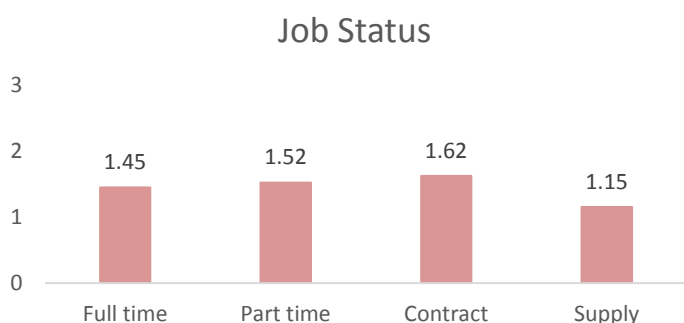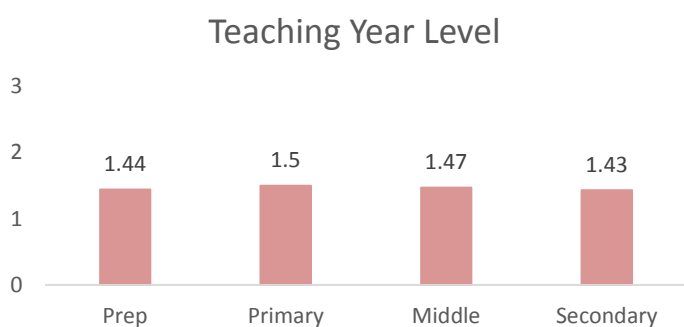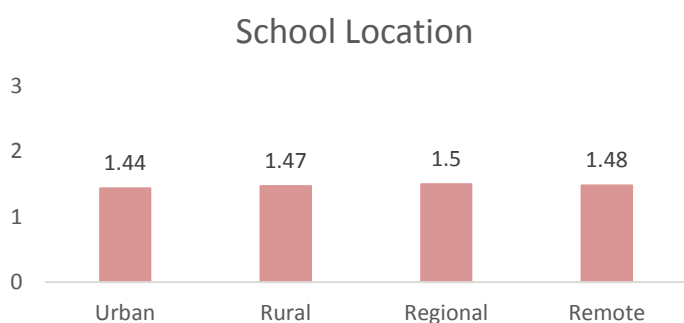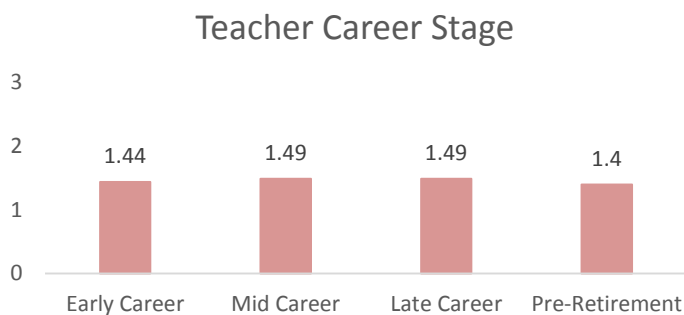
- Both mid-career and late-career teachers reported the highest strain compared to teachers at other career stages, indicating a potential area for intervention
- All career stages reported moderate strain, indicating potentially detrimental general health and psychological functioning

School Location

	Urban	Rural	Regional	Remote
	1.44	1.47	1.5	1.48

- Regional teachers reported the highest strain compared to teachers of other school locations, indicating a potential area for intervention
- Teachers at all school locations reported moderate strain, indicating potentially detrimental general health and psychological functioning

Teaching Year Level

	Prep	Primary	Middle	Secondary
	1.44	1.5	1.47	1.43

- Middle school teachers reported the highest strain compared to teachers of other year levels, indicating a potential area for intervention
- All respondents, regardless of year level taught, reported moderate strain, indicating potentially detrimental general health and psychological functioning

Job Status

	Full time	Part time	Contract	Supply
	1.45	1.52	1.62	1.15

- Contract teachers reported the highest strain compared to teachers with other job status types, indicating a potential area for intervention
- Supply teachers reported significantly lower strain compared to teachers with other job status types, indicating more positive general health
- Full-time and Part-time teachers reported moderate strain, indicating potentially detrimental general health and psychological functioning

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Turnover Intentions

'Turnover intentions' refers to an individual's estimated probability that they will leave the organisation in the near future (Brough & Frame, 2004). Turnover intentions are the individual's self-perceptions; however, they are recognised precursors to turnover itself (Brough & Frame, 2004).

Turnover intentions are influenced by many factors, including organisational factors, individual factors and external factors. It is important for organisations to consider employee turnover intentions so that management may intervene and prevent unnecessary costs of turnover, recruitment and re-training.

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they considered leaving their organisation in the past six months (three questions). Responses ranged from *1 (not at all)* to *5 (a great deal)*. Higher scores indicate greater turnover intentions. The sample average for turnover intentions is presented in the graph below:

Turnover Intentions

2.8

Sample Average
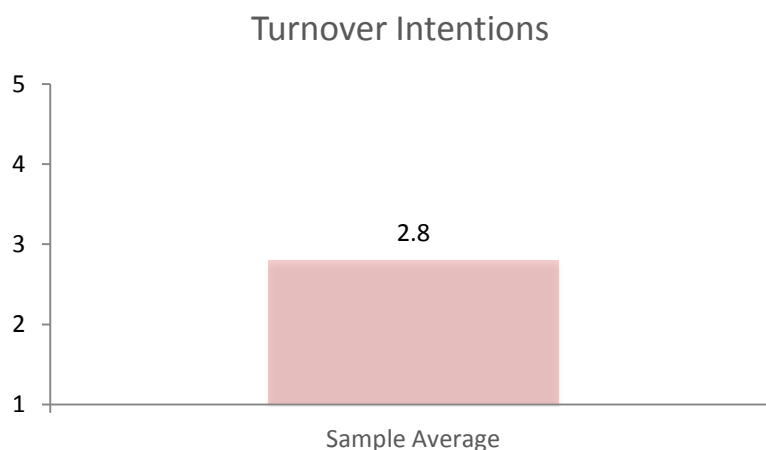
Key findings for the sample:

- Respondents reported moderate turnover intentions, indicating that they may leave their organisation within the near future

Additional key findings:
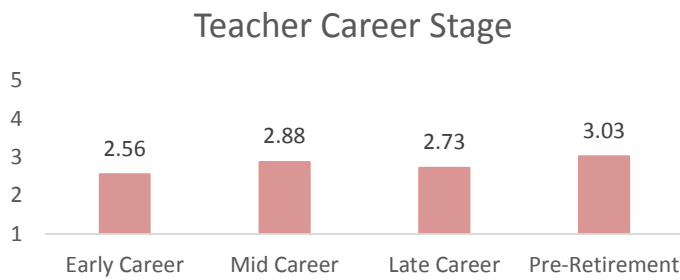
Teacher Career Stage

2.56	2.88	2.73	3.03
Early Career	Mid Career	Late Career	Pre-Retirement

- Pre-retirement teachers reported the highest turnover intentions compared to teachers at other career stages
- Respondents at all career stages indicated moderate turnover intentions

School Location

2.72	2.66	2.98	2.79
Urban	Rural	Regional	Remote

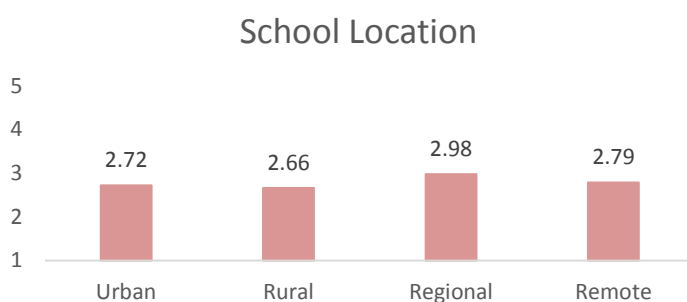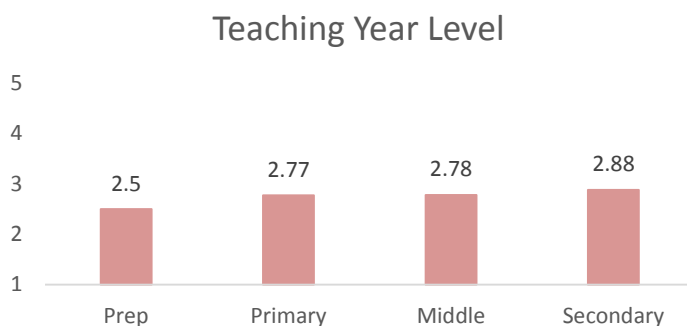- Regional teachers reported the highest turnover intentions compared to teachers at other school locations
- Respondents at all school locations indicated moderate turnover intentions

Teaching Year Level

2.5	2.77	2.78	2.88
Prep	Primary	Middle	Secondary

- Secondary school teachers reported the highest turnover intentions compared to teachers of other year levels
- All respondents, regardless of year level taught, indicated moderate turnover intentions

Job Status

2.73	2.97	2.96	3.25
Full time	Part time	Contract	Supply
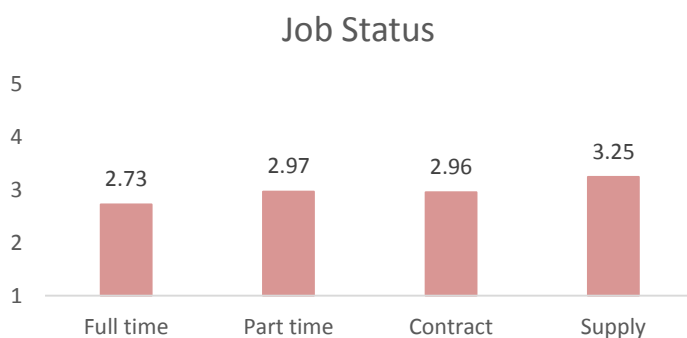
- Supply teachers reported the highest turnover intentions compared to teachers with other job status types
- Respondents in all job status types indicated moderate turnover intentions

Summary

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The current project sought to identify current work experiences of teachers within different career stages. The results of this project have informed the recommendations we present here for consideration by relevant employers and other teaching organisations.

The results of this project indicate that on average, teachers are generally satisfied with their jobs; report relatively few bullying experiences, high colleague support, and high job control; utilise more proactive coping strategies; and experience relatively low strain.

However, on average, teachers also reported poor work-life balance, high perceptions of task stress, excessive technological demands within the classroom, detrimental workload management techniques, relatively high role demands and low supervisor support.

Furthermore, the results of the survey support findings identified from interviews conducted in July 2015 and previous literature on teacher workload management and task stress (Timms et al., 2007). It is apparent that administrative duties (task stress) produce the most demands and often force teachers to utilise detrimental workload management techniques (working late or on weekends) to stay on top of paperwork and other administrative duties.

Additionally, as suggested by respondents, the use of detrimental workload management techniques may also be contributing to poor perceptions of work-life balance and of supervisor support. As a result, teachers have reported moderate strain and turnover intentions.

Lastly, as teachers also reported general job satisfaction, it may suggest they are intrinsically motivated by their career and job role (further supported by additional research findings, see Timms & Brough, 2013). Therefore, teachers may be inherently driven to perform their role and this may indicate that turnover intentions could be reduced by providing additional support in the required work areas.

Please see recommendations for improving support practices and teacher development opportunities below.

Recommendations of this Research

1. Improving work-life balance

Work-life balance was identified as an area for improvement for the overall sample. Teachers in mid-career, teachers in remote locations, prep teachers and full time teachers reported the lowest work-life balance. It is therefore recommended that employers of teachers encourage schools to support improved work-life balance policy and practices for their teachers.

This may include helping to disseminate information to teachers on training or workshops on how to effectively manage workload, and/or on looking after themselves in non-work hours (e.g., self-care training, fitness training or relaxation techniques).

Improving teacher work-life balance also provides opportunities for teachers to decrease experiences of task stress and detrimental workload management. Furthermore, an increase in perceived work-life balance may also decrease turnover intentions.

2. Increasing support for use of technology at work

Technology at work is an inevitable aspect of modern society and occupational settings. However, teachers indicated that they perceive the use of technology as an additional demand at work.

In particular, pre-retirement teachers, rural teachers, prep teachers and supply teachers reported the highest experiences of technology demands at work. Therefore, it is recommended that employers of teachers target support for teachers in coping with technology demands to these groups.

Identified areas where support may be improved include providing teachers with information about specialised training in classroom learning technologies (e.g., different programs, platforms), about teacher friendly technologies to reduce task stress (e.g., apps that reduce marking times, automatic reporting systems) and about incorporating technology more effectively into work schedules.

Improving how teachers use technology at work also allows additional support for reducing task stress and improving workload management. Additionally, if teachers have the skills to effectively utilise technology it may also improve their own well-being and subsequently improve overall student learning.

3. Improving how teachers experience multiple role demands

Educational settings are now seeing an expansion of teacher roles, where societal, organisational and parental expectations have produced additional role demands beyond the traditional teaching role.

Teachers are now experiencing an increase in the diversity of their occupational roles, where they reported performing additional roles such as parent (acting as disciplinarian), nurse (acting as medical caregiver) and administrator. In particular, administrator, counsellor and manager were the three highest-reported role demands.

It is recommended that employers of teachers consider providing support for teachers on how they perceive their role demands. This may include information on targeted training or workshops around managing competing roles.

Although teacher experiences of multiple role demands may never cease, occupational stress and turnover intentions may be reduced by improving how they are supported in their experiences.

4. Improving supervisor support

It is widely acknowledged that support has stress-buffering effects. However, although teachers reported high colleague and family/friend support, supervisor support was reported to be relatively low.

In particular, early-career, rural, middle-school and contract teachers reported the lowest perceptions of supervisor support. Therefore, it is recommended that employers of teachers target any actions to these groups. Employers of teachers could, for example, provide information to supervisors in such situations on how to better recognise and support teachers they supervise.

Support from supervisors is a critical component of work. Improving how such support is perceived by teachers may further increase their satisfaction and additionally reduce experiences of stress and turnover intentions.

The research team acknowledges that QCT only has a limited capacity to action the above recommendations within the teaching environment due to their statutory roles and functions. However, advocacy of the above recommendations will still have an impact on teachers and the overall teaching environment.

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Additional Comments

At the end of the survey, each respondent was given the option to provide additional, general comments about their experiences in the teaching profession. In total, 246 comments were made.

An analysis of these comments revealed five key themes, illustrated in the graph below. A sixth, miscellaneous, category was also identified, including comments that were survey-related (e.g., phrasing of questions) and as such will not be discussed in further detail in this report.

All comments provided by respondents have been de-identified and provided to QCT and QIEU in a separate document.

Frequency of themes in survey comments
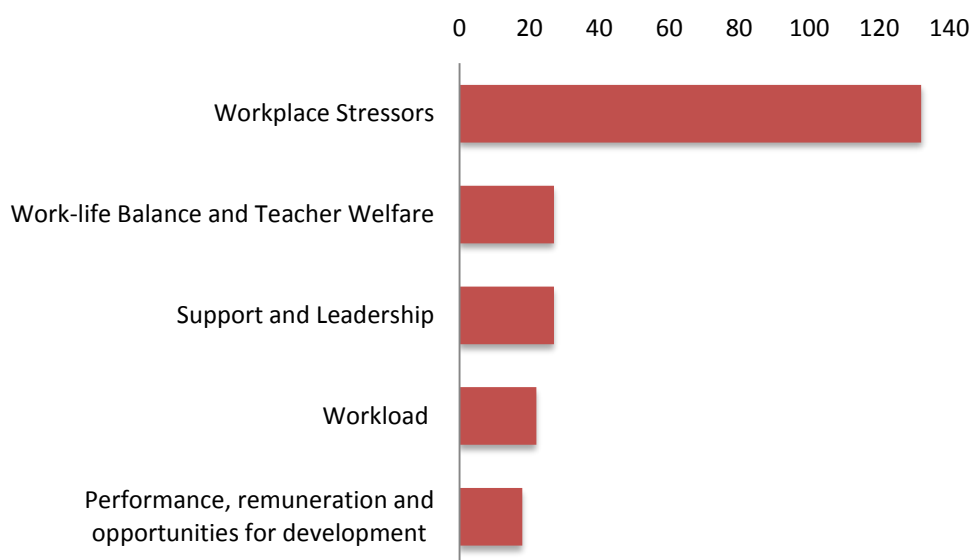
1. Workplace stressors

A total of 132 comments were provided by respondents that made reference to perceived stressors in the workplace. Some of the key stressors as identified in these comments were: additional work demands, administration, data collection and student behaviour. Some example comments include:

"The fact students are so widely varied in achievement levels and often have multiple learning needs is putting undue stress on the job."

"Teachers are being made to do jobs outside their teaching profession. This is eroding on curriculum time and creating stress."

"Too much admin not enough teaching."

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"I love teaching but way too much focus on collecting data. It is not useful data - just done for the sake of collecting data."

"Parents are becoming more and more demanding and have less and less respect for teachers."

"Student attitudes, behaviour and treatment of teachers are having a significant impact on enjoyment and satisfaction in this job."

"Teaching can be the best job in the world, if we could only concentrate on doing just that!"

2. Work-life balance and teacher welfare

A total of 27 comments highlighted concerns around work-life balance and welfare of teachers. Some example comments include:

"Technology places high time demands on teachers. It is more difficult to have a good work/life balance now as compared with 15 years ago."

"My current state of mental health is not related to stress at work. I find that work makes me feel worthwhile."

"I love teaching so much, it is my vocation! The stress levels and expectations on us seem to go up every year and I feel that my health is being affected due to the high stress levels experienced."

3. Support and leadership

The importance of support and positive leadership was highlighted in 27 comments, examples of which include:

"I see talented teachers question themselves about staying in the profession every day because of the unrelenting pressure and the failure of our principal to even conceive that it is time to do things differently and to listen to staff."

"All of my close colleagues and I hate the job, feeling under pressure from student behaviours, and unsupported by our superiors."

"With a supportive staff and colleagues that care, much more is achievable. It becomes a joint effort not a competition."

4. Workload

Concerns were raised around workload in 22 comments. Example comments include:

"It's the job that never ends."

"Work expectations are ever increasing."

"Mostly enjoyed as a very rewarding career, but it can be extremely disheartening when stress builds due to extremely high workload."

5. Performance, remuneration and opportunities for development

A total of 18 comments referred to concerns around teacher performance, perceptions of remuneration and opportunities for development. Example comments include:

"The union needs to stop protecting poor performing teachers. It places too much of a burden on colleagues having to pick up the slack."

"The promotional system seems to be favouring administrators (not leaders) who are more interested in appearances, spin, data and self-advancement rather than substance, quality or leadership."

"…I think it is very easy to say teachers are more stressed than other professions - but I think it is because the financial rewards for the job and the thanks and prestige people afford the teaching profession are terribly low. Society in general should value teachers a lot more than they do. I think teachers are often not seen as being professional which is a real shame."

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