



Department  
for Education

# **The Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2018**

**Research Brief**

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**Social Science in Government**

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## Introduction

The Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), run by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), provides new information on the views and practices of teachers and headteachers, and how these vary across countries. The survey was conducted in England between March and May in 2018. This was the second time lower-secondary school (key stage 3) teachers in England participated in the TALIS study (the first time was in 2013), and the first time for primary teachers. In total, 48 countries or economies participated in the lower-secondary school survey, with 15 participating in the primary school survey. The Department for Education (DfE) commissioned FFT Education and UCL Institute of Education to conduct the TALIS 2018 study in England.

The OECD is releasing data from the TALIS 2018 survey as part of 2 international reports: the first in June 2019 and the second in 2020. This report, which is focused upon England, is published simultaneously with the OECD's first volume. It complements the OECD's international report by (i) providing a more focused comparison of results in England with other countries and (ii) analysing differences within England across school and teacher characteristics. For the full TALIS 2018 England report please see The Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2018 research report. Findings relating to teacher retention and the well-being of teachers and headteachers in England will be released in spring 2020, to coincide with the release of the OECD's second volume.

For lower-secondary teachers and headteachers, results for England are compared with the average across OECD members. Comparisons are also made to a group of countries or economies with high-performing education systems (as defined by results from PISA - Programme for International Student Assessment): Japan, Korea, Singapore, Chinese Taipei, Shanghai (China), Finland, Estonia and Alberta (Canada).. Given the more limited number of participants in the TALIS primary school study, England is typically compared with all the available countries that met the TALIS technical standards<sup>1</sup>. Similarly, as England only participated in the lower-secondary component of TALIS in 2013, comparisons over time are only possible for lower-secondary (and not primary teachers) in England.

The analysis of differences within England includes two types of information not available in the international data. First, it includes the answers to additional TALIS questions asked only in England. Second, it includes data linked from other sources

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix B of main report for a full outline of how high and low performing countries are defined.

such as school Ofsted rating and the percentage of pupils receiving Free School Meals (FSM).

## TALIS Data

The 2018 lower-secondary school survey, covering schools with pupils in key stage 3, had response rates of 82% for schools, 82% for headteachers and 84% for teachers. This yielded a final sample of 149 lower-secondary schools and 2,376 teachers. At the primary level, the response rates were 86% for schools, 90% for headteachers and 85% for teachers. This yielded a total sample size of 152 primary schools and 2,009 primary teachers. These are good response rates by the standards of previous school and teacher surveys in England. Nevertheless, the modestly sized sample of schools and headteachers means that some findings that relate to the variation between schools or headteachers, as opposed to teachers, need to be treated with caution<sup>2</sup>.

The results refer to the spring of 2018, when TALIS was conducted, and should not necessarily be taken as a good indication of the situation at the present time. It should also be noted that the analysis uncovers correlations but does not establish causal relationships. Additionally, TALIS gathers information directly from teachers and headteachers. It is therefore based upon self-reported data, which may not always be consistent with information drawn from alternative sources.

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix A in the main report for a full description of the sample design and survey response.

## Key Findings

The remainder of the brief provides a summary of key findings under each of the key themes (reflecting the sequence of chapters in the main report).

### The characteristics of teachers, headteachers and schools

Primary and lower-secondary teachers in England had fewer years of experience, on average, than most other participating jurisdictions. For example, lower-secondary teachers in England had 13 years of teaching experience on average, compared to an OECD average of around 17 years.

Similarly, headteachers in England had fewer years of experience, on average, than headteachers in other countries, though this was compensated for by greater experience in other school management roles. For instance, the average lower-secondary headteacher in England had spent 6.3 years working as a head (OECD average 9.7 years) and 13.2 years working in other school management roles (OECD average 5.3 years).

Primary teachers in England were more likely to report having been trained in teaching mixed-ability and multicultural classes as part of their initial teacher training (ITT) than primary teachers in the other participating countries. For instance, around 91% of primary teachers in England reported that they received training in teaching in mixed ability settings, compared to an average of around 73% across all participating countries. The equivalent figures for teaching in multicultural settings were 72% for England's primary teachers compared to around 40% or less in most of the other TALIS participating countries. Primary teachers in England also reported feeling more prepared for teaching in such situations by the end of their training. In contrast, primary teachers in England felt less prepared in subject-specific content (England = 64%; TALIS average = 77%) and pedagogy (England = 65%; TALIS average = 74%) than those in other participating countries.

Around 40% of primary and lower-secondary teachers in England said that the reliable income of teaching was of high importance to their decision to enter the teaching profession, while only around 15% said this was of little or no importance. For more than 90% of primary and lower-secondary teachers in England, the chance to contribute to society and to aid the development of pupils were also key reasons why they chose to enter the teaching profession. Lower-secondary teachers in England were more likely to say that job security and the reliable income were what attracted them to teaching than lower-secondary teachers in other countries. For instance, 86% of lower-secondary teachers in England said that the reliable income provided by teaching was of moderate or high importance to their career decision, compared to an OECD average of 67%.

Teaching was the first-choice profession of 59% of lower-secondary teachers in England. This was below the OECD average (67%) and was some distance behind the levels observed in the high-performing East Asian economies of South Korea, Japan, Chinese Taipei and Shanghai (where more than 80% of teachers reported working in their first-choice career). For primary teachers in England, 72% said that teaching was their first-choice career.

## Workload and flexible working

In 2013, full-time lower-secondary teachers in England reported working, on average, 48.2 hours per week. The equivalent figure in England in 2018 was 49.3 hours per week, which was above the OECD average (around 41 hours per week). Full-time primary teachers in England reported working somewhat longer hours each week (52.1 hours), which was more than in any other participating country except Japan (56 hours).

Teachers were asked about the amount of time they spent upon different tasks in a different survey question, producing a slightly higher figure for total working hours. Full-time primary teachers in England reported spending, on average, 24 hours per week upon teaching and around 31.9 hours upon non-teaching tasks (including, but not exclusive to, marking, preparation, administration, management). The equivalent figures for full-time lower-secondary teachers were 20.5 hours (teaching) and 32.7 hours (non-teaching tasks). While the amount of time full-time lower-secondary teachers spent upon teaching was similar to the OECD average (around 21.5 hours per week), the amount of time spent upon non-teaching tasks was higher in England than across the OECD (26 hours per week). The total amount of time full-time lower-secondary teachers spent upon non-teaching tasks was similar in 2013 (32.5 hours per week) and 2018 (32.7 hours per week).

In total, 53% of primary and 57% of lower-secondary teachers in England felt that their workload was unmanageable. The figure for lower-secondary teachers increased between 2013 (51%) and 2018 (57%). More than half of primary and lower-secondary teachers in England reported that they spent too long upon marking and administrative work. In contrast, 35% of primary and 45% of lower-secondary teachers felt that they spent too little time upon continuing professional development (CPD).

In 2018, the average primary headteacher in England worked around 57 hours per week, compared to around 62 hours for the average lower-secondary headteacher. Lower-secondary headteachers in England spent a slightly smaller proportion of their time on administrative duties (25% versus 30%) but more on leadership tasks (27% versus 21%) than the average across OECD countries. A similar proportion of lower-

secondary headteachers in England reported their workload was unmanageable in 2018 (43%) as did in 2013 (36%).

Around two-thirds of all primary and lower-secondary teachers in England felt that working part-time reduces career opportunities, with around a third indicating that they would not feel comfortable requesting part-time or flexible working. Despite this, most headteachers reported that school management were supportive of flexible working; 88% of primary and 93% of lower-secondary headteachers agreed or strongly agreed.

## The views of teachers in England

Lower-secondary teachers in England were less satisfied with their pay in 2018 than in 2013. In total, 89% of primary and 87% of lower-secondary teachers felt that teachers were underpaid compared to similarly qualified professionals. The equivalent figure in 2013 for lower-secondary teachers was 73%. However, lower-secondary teachers in England were somewhat more likely to indicate that they were satisfied with their salary than lower-secondary teachers in other OECD countries (54% in England versus an OECD average of 39%). Fewer lower-secondary teachers in England (53%) than across the OECD (64%) felt that there was an urgent need for additional funding to be spent upon a pay rise. England (49%) was around the international average (47%) in terms of how satisfied primary teachers were with their pay. It is important to note that the TALIS 2018 survey was conducted before it was announced that the main pay range would be uplifted by 3.5%, the upper pay range by 2% and the leadership pay range by 1.5% the following academic year.

Around 30% of primary and lower-secondary teachers in England felt that the teaching profession was valued by society, around 20% valued by the media and 10% valued by policymakers. Similar figures were observed within most other developed countries. For instance, across the OECD, 19% of lower-secondary teachers felt their views were valued by the media (16% in England) and 14% that their views were valued by policymakers (11% in England). There was a decline between 2013 and 2018 in the percentage of lower-secondary teachers who felt the teaching profession was valued by society (from 35% in 2013 to 29% in 2018).

There was a decline in overall levels of job satisfaction amongst lower-secondary school teachers between 2013 and 2018. In 2018, more lower-secondary teachers wondered whether it would have been better to have chosen a different profession (35% in 2013 compared to 52% in 2018) and expressed regret at choosing to become a teacher (8% in 2013 compared to 13% in 2018). This change in sentiment was observed across the lower-secondary workforce and was not confined to any single demographic group or those working in any single type of school.

Overall, job satisfaction amongst lower-secondary teachers in England was low compared to other countries participating in TALIS. For instance, around half of lower-secondary teachers in England wondered whether they should have picked another profession, compared to around one-third of lower-secondary teachers across the OECD. Despite this, 72% of lower-secondary and 79% of primary teachers in England agreed that the advantages of being a teacher clearly outweighed the disadvantages.

## Professional development

Most primary (98%) and lower-secondary (97%) teachers in England completed some form of CPD in the year prior to the TALIS survey. Lower secondary teachers in England were less likely to say there was no relevant CPD available than the OECD average (27% in England versus an OECD average of 38%).

Lower-secondary teachers in England were more likely to engage in peer observation than their OECD counterparts (71% versus 44%) but less likely to attend education conferences (34% versus 49%).

TALIS asked teachers about their level of need for additional CPD across several areas. Across all of these areas, teachers in England were less likely to report a high need for additional CPD than most other participating countries. For instance, 3% of lower-secondary teachers in England said they had a high need for CPD in classroom management skills, compared to the OECD average of 14%.

The areas in which teachers in England reported the greatest need for further CPD was in teaching pupils with Special Educational Needs (37% reported moderate or high need at primary; 37% lower-secondary), English as an additional language (30% primary; 29% lower-secondary) and assessment practice (23% primary; 29% lower-secondary)

Between 2013 and 2018, there was an increase in the proportion of lower-secondary teachers who reported a moderate or need for additional training in knowledge of the curriculum (14% to 23%); pupil assessment practises (22% to 29%) and knowledge and understanding of their subject field (12% to 18%).

Lower-secondary teachers in England were increasingly concerned about the cost associated with their CPD activities. For example, whereas 44% agreed or strongly agreed that expense was a barrier to their CPD activities in 2013, this increased to 56% in 2018. The 2018 figure was above the OECD average (45%), with this and conflicts with work schedules (65%) identified as the key reasons why lower-secondary teachers in England reported not completing more CPD.



Headteachers in England were generally less likely to say that they had a high need for further CPD than headteachers from other parts of the world. For instance, just 2% of headteachers in England said that they had a high need for CPD in using data to improve the quality of their school, compared to an OECD average of 24%.

There were 3 areas in which headteachers in England felt they had a need for further CPD. The first was in the use of academic research evidence to improve teaching within their school; 37% of primary headteachers said that they had a moderate or high need in this area, along with 34% of lower-secondary headteachers. The second area was human resource management; this was deemed to be of a moderate or high need amongst 40% of primary and 31% of lower-secondary headteachers. Finally, just over a third of primary and lower-secondary headteachers said that they had a moderate or high need for further training in financial management.

## **The school and classroom environment**

England was very much in line with other OECD countries in terms of the reported behaviour of pupils within classrooms. For instance, the amount of lesson time lost to disruption in lower secondary schools was similar to the OECD average (13%). There was no evidence that pupil behaviour in lower-secondary school classes had substantially changed between 2013 and 2018: in 2018, 23% of lower-secondary teachers in England said that there was a lot of disruptive noise in their classroom, which was very similar to the figure in 2013 (22%).

Compared to other countries, a greater proportion of headteachers in England reported frequent occurrences of hurtful information being posted on the internet and unwanted electronic contact amongst pupils in their school. For instance, 14% of headteachers in lower secondary schools in England said that parents or pupils reported hurtful information being posted online about pupils at least weekly, compared to the OECD average of 2%. A similar result occurred for unwanted electronic contact, with England (27%) above the OECD average (3%). This result should be interpreted cautiously, however, as it could reflect headteachers in England simply being more aware or focused on this problem than those in other countries. Alternatively, it could be driven by differences in views of what constitutes hurtful information and unwanted electronic contact in different cultural settings. More headteachers in lower secondary schools also reported bullying to be occurring at least monthly in 2018 (41%) than was the case in 2013 (26%).

England was around the international average in terms of teachers' perceptions of how open their colleagues were to change. For instance, 82% of lower-secondary teachers in England said that their colleagues strove to develop new ideas,

compared to the OECD average of 79%. Additionally, 76% of lower-secondary teachers said that their colleagues were open to change, compared to 74% across the OECD. Primary teachers in England were somewhat more likely to believe that their colleagues strived to develop new ideas for teaching and learning than lower-secondary teachers (88% primary; 82% lower-secondary).

## Views on school resources

If extra funding became available, reducing class sizes by recruiting more staff would be a high priority amongst most primary (65%) and lower-secondary (73%) teachers in England. In addition, 64% of primary and 66% of lower-secondary teachers in England thought recruiting more support staff to reduce teachers' administration load should be a high priority. Investing in ICT and supporting pupils from disadvantaged or migrant backgrounds were considered lower priorities.

England was below the OECD average in terms of the percentage of lower-secondary teachers who rated increasing teacher pay (53% versus 64%) and offering high-quality CPD (46% versus 55%) as high funding priorities. Further funding for support staff (66% in England versus an OECD average of 55%) and reducing class sizes (73% versus 65%) were priorities lower-secondary teachers in England placed higher in importance than the OECD average.

Just over a third (38%) of lower-secondary headteachers in England reported that a shortage of qualified teachers was hindering the quality of instruction provided by their school quite a bit or a lot. This was above the OECD (21%) average and was also higher than in many of the high-performing PISA countries. The proportion of lower-secondary headteachers who reported that shortages of teachers was hindering them 'a lot' increased from 6% in 2013 to 22% in 2018. England's primary headteachers were somewhat more favourable about the human resources that they had available; just 12% reported that teacher shortages were hindering instruction within their school (lower than in most other participating countries).

Most headteachers in England did not believe that a lack of learning materials or digital/physical infrastructure was limiting their school's capacity to provide effective instruction. For instance, only 7% of primary and 13% of lower-secondary headteachers in England felt that they had inadequate access to instructional materials. These figures were similar to international averages.

In 2013, 54% of lower-secondary headteachers in England said insufficient internet access was having at least some impact upon the quality of instruction provided by their school. This had fallen to 32% in 2018 and compared favourably to many other countries participating in TALIS.



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