

Anxiety and the return to school...

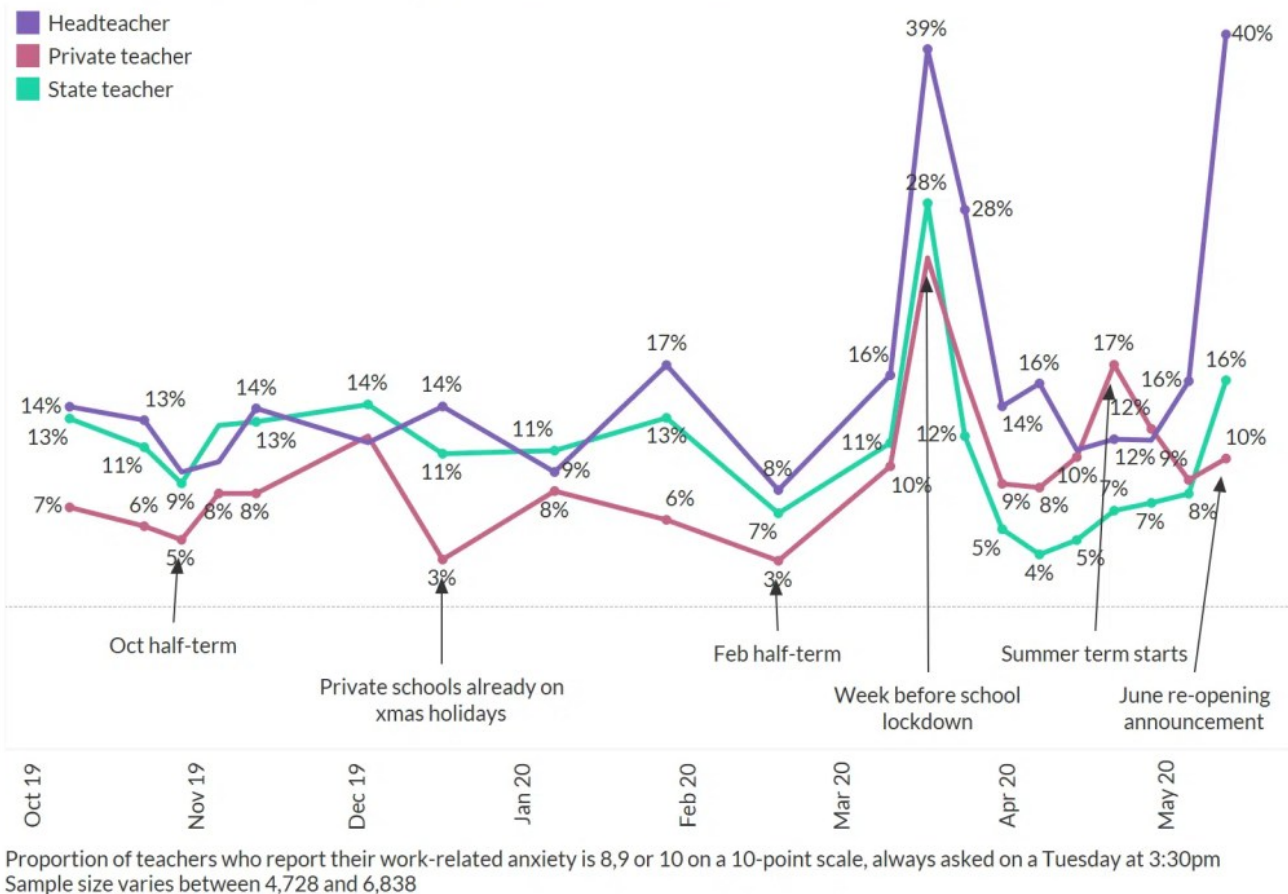
1. How have anxiety levels fluctuated during the crisis?

No metric better demonstrates the roller-coaster of school lock-down than anxiety. When we started asking you to score work-related anxiety on a scale of 0-10 last Autumn, we thought we would be able to see how anxiety varied for different teachers during a typical school year. This year has been anything but...!

However, collecting this data means we have a good sense of how anxiety changed since the start of the school year through into the Covid crisis period.

Using the data, we created a chart showing how the proportion of teachers reporting high work anxiety has changed over the academic year. The left-hand part of the chart shows what happened during 'normal times' - i.e. from October 2019 to February 2020. Typically, between 11-14% of teachers, whether classroom teachers or heads, would report they were highly anxious (i.e. 8 or above on the scale). The exception was private school teachers who tended to be less highly anxious (at 6-8%).

Teacher anxiety levels during lockdown have risen, fallen, and risen again



On the Tuesday before school closures, anxiety levels had risen for everyone, but particularly for heads - who are represented by the purple line. At that time 39% of heads and 28% of state school teachers (green line) were reporting high anxiety. You may remember that staff absences meant heads were struggling to stay open for all year groups, and around 1 in 3 classroom teachers had taken a class that week to cover for an absent colleague.

Once closure happened, anxiety levels fell very low for state school teachers who, as we know from other questions, were not generally expected to switch straight into giving live-streamed lessons all day. Headteacher anxiety also fell back towards typical levels. The same was not true for private school teachers, who began reporting higher anxiety than they typically had during a typical term. We know that private teachers were often delivering live-streamed lessons, with around 50% of private school teachers completing this form of activity on any given day compared to less than 5% of state schools.

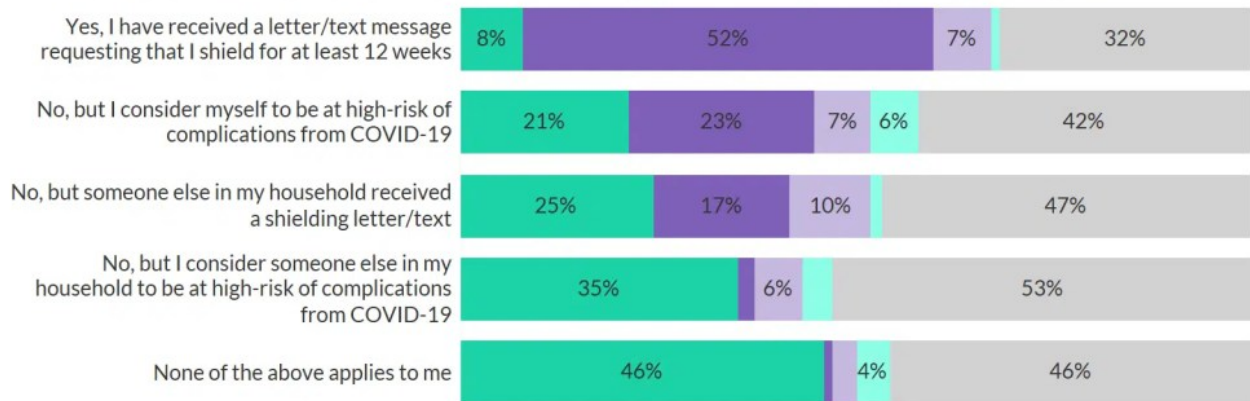
By last Tuesday, after the announcement that schools should start planning to re-open for select year groups from the start of June, headteachers were once again experiencing stress - with 40% highly anxious. State-school teacher anxiety also doubled, but only to 16%.

What will the next few weeks bring? We shall have to wait and see...

[2. What will you all be doing in June?](#)

Uncertainty causes anxiety. For those of you who are classroom teachers, almost half of you do not yet know whether you will be returning to teach in schools in June (if they re-open). There are also many of you who either have, or live in a household with someone who has, a high-risk of complications from COVID-19. And while most of you in those positions have not yet learnt whether you will be required to teach, some of you know you will be returning.

Many who live with someone at high-risk of complications from COVID-19 will be returning to teach in June

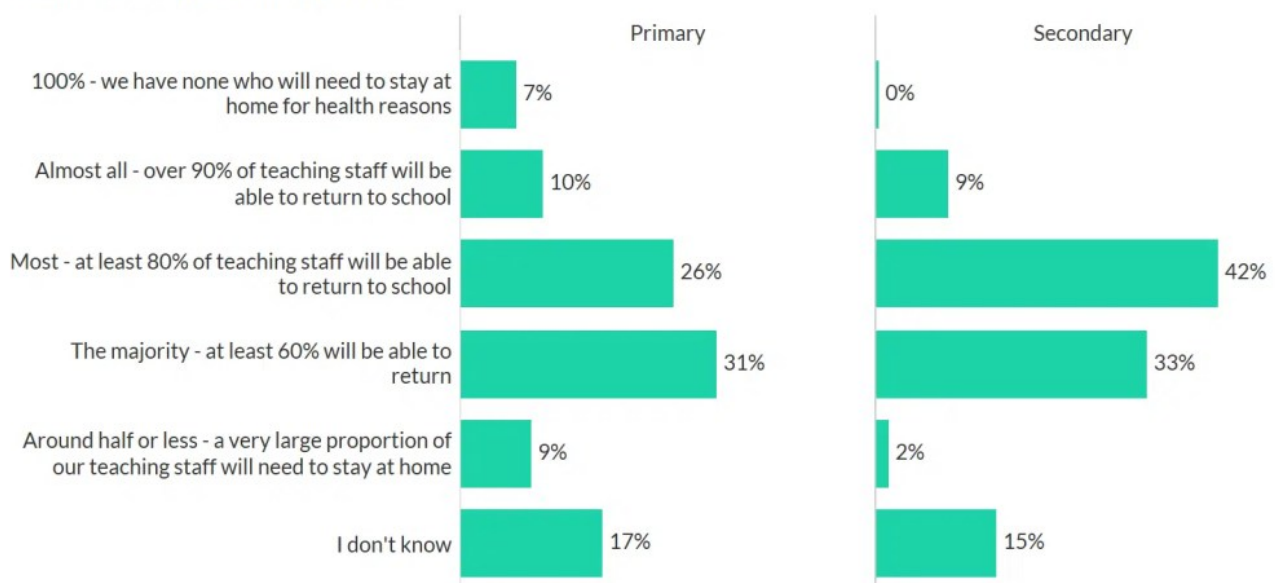


Question answered by 5,920 teachers on 12/05/2020 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

- Yes, I will regularly teach in school from June
- No, my manager/head has confirmed I will be able to shield at home for health reasons
- No, I will not teach for another reason
- No, I will not be needed to teach from June given limited return of students
- I don't know whether I will be teaching in school from June

Although it is still early in planning, we asked senior leaders what proportion of their teaching staff would be available to return to teach. This is a particularly pressing issue for primary schools, who are expected to get over 40% of their students back to school. 40% of primary leaders told us they will have to achieve this with only 60% (or less) of their teaching staff. Given they have been asked to limit class sizes to just 15 (and so need twice as many staff), it isn't entirely clear how this will be achieved.

What proportion of your school's teaching staff are available to teach from June (if schools re-open)? The response that most closely applies.



Question answered by 1,749 teachers on 16/05/2020 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

Of course, parents may choose not to send their children to school. Pupils with keyworker parents or who are in vulnerable categories have always had school places throughout the crisis period, and yet many parents chose not to use them. Some school leaders are therefore sceptical that even if their doors fully re-open in June to certain year groups, parents may still vote with their feet. 40% of primary leaders think at least half of their eligible pupils will stay at home. Secondary leaders are more confident that most students will turn up.

Assuming Yrs R,1,6,10 and 12 return in June (albeit in a limited way), what proportion of students do you believe will choose to stay entirely at home?



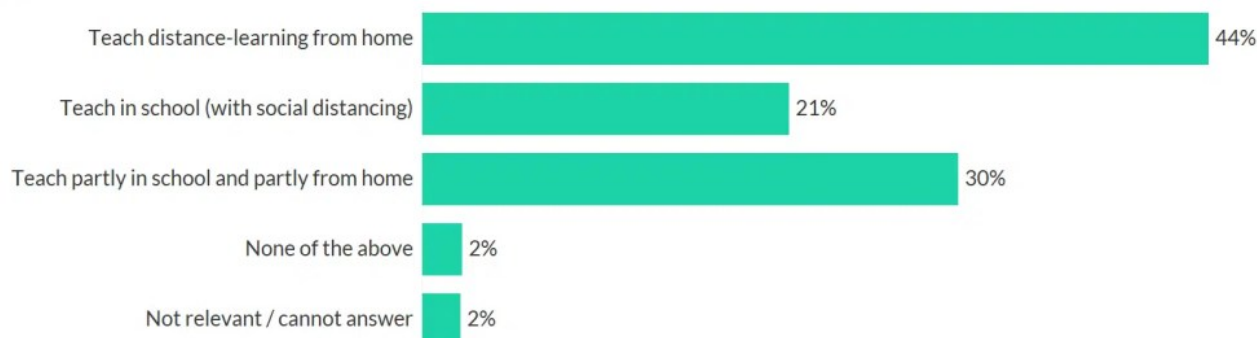
Question answered by 1,672 senior leaders on 17/05/2020 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

- 0% - I expect all our students to return
- I expect around 1-in-10 students to stay at home
- I expect around 1-in-5 students to stay at home
- I expect around 1-in-3 students to stay at home
- I expect about half our students to stay at home
- I expect about three-quarters of our students to stay at home
- I expect very few students to return to school
- I don't know

3. Confidence in government

A common trope in the media at the moment is that teachers don't want to go back into school. The underlying assumption seems to be that this is because they are lazy and workshy. Yet, there is a preference from 51% of teachers to be back in the classroom at least for some of the time - so it's not as straightforward as 'teachers don't want to go back'.

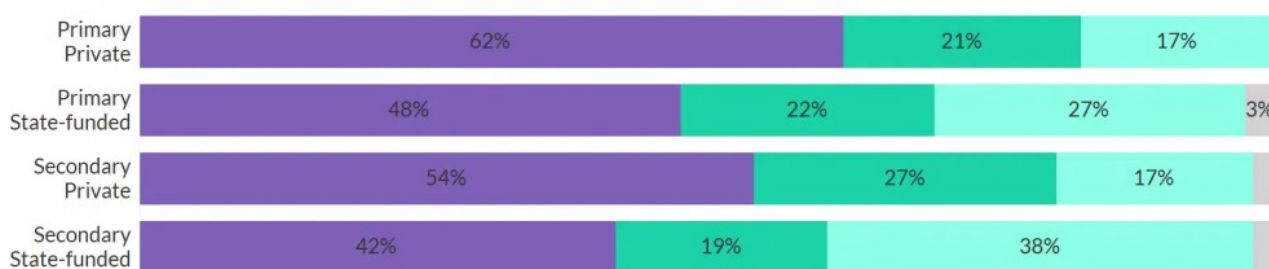
Given a free choice, and assuming the government says all options are safe, which would you prefer next half-term:



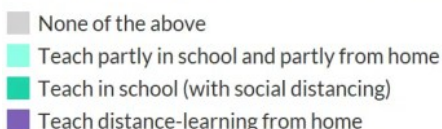
Question answered by 6,848 teachers on 14/05/2020 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

Furthermore, the idea that state school teachers are the ones with the least can-do attitude also doesn't seem to be the case. State school teachers were more likely to show a preference for going back into school than those in private schools (This is despite the fact that their anxiety is lower and they aren't doing the hours of live-streaming lessons of the private school).

Given a free choice, and assuming the government says all options are safe, which would you prefer next half-term:

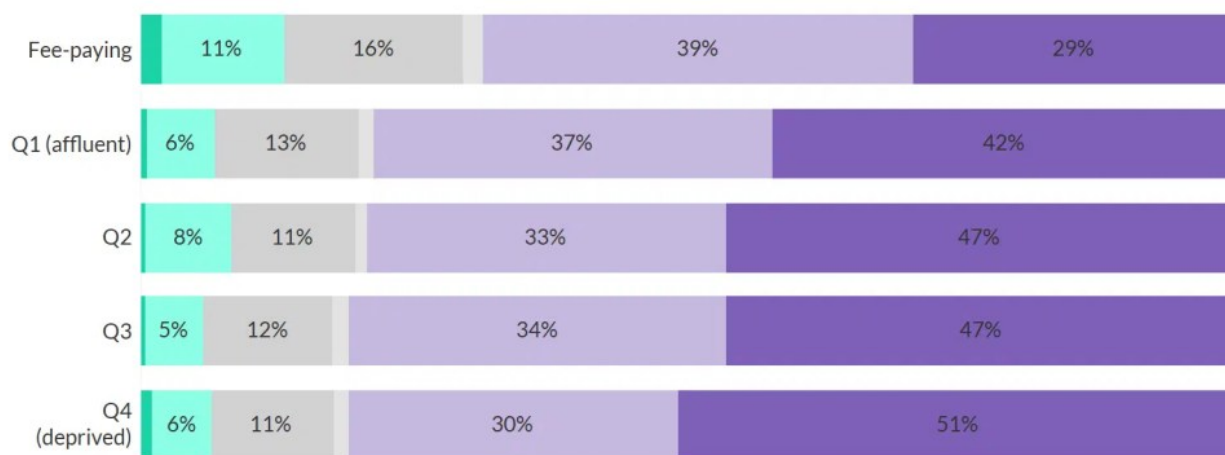


Question answered by 6,535 teachers on 14/05/2020 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)



What possibly does matter for anxiousness around a return is that teachers don't have confidence in the government's policy and support for schools - particularly when schools are located in the poorest areas:

In terms of schools policy and support, do you think that the government's response to COVID-19 has been...?

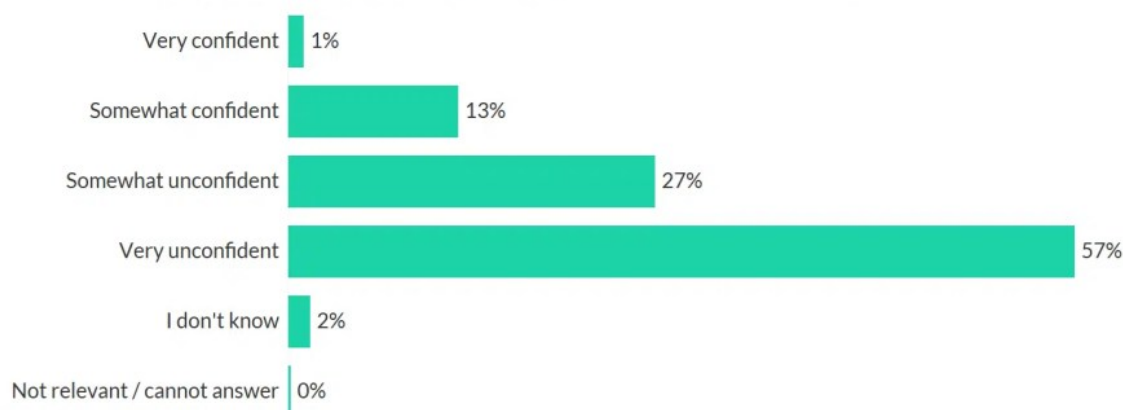


Question answered by 6,198 teachers on 12/05/2020 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)



Nor do teachers trust the government to use scientific evidence correctly. A gigantic 84% of you indicated you were not confident that the scientific advice suggesting schools are safe to open will be used correctly.

The Education Secretary has said schools will not re-open until scientific advice suggests that it is safe to do so. To what extent are you confident the government will use the advice correctly?

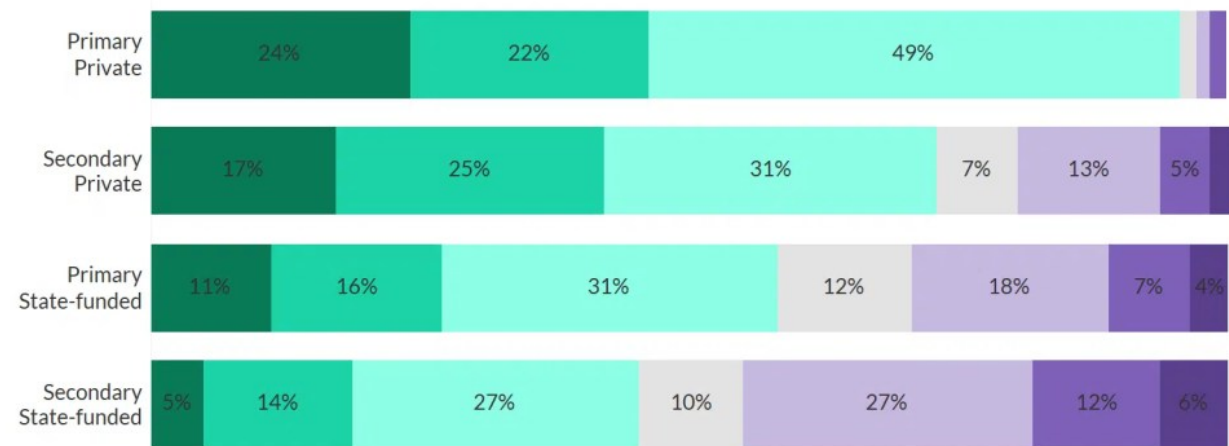


Question answered by 6,848 teachers on 14/05/2020 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

4. Will schools ever return to normal?

What does the future hold? Well, 9% of you felt 'absolutely certain' that your school would be offering full-time on-site schooling from September. Who are these hugely optimistic teachers?! It turns out that many of them teach in private schools, who may indeed manage to open full-time from September. The financial imperative for them to do so is very high, and they also have much smaller class sizes which makes social distancing easier.

How likely do you currently feel it is that your school will have returned to offering all students full-time schooling in September (i.e. circa 25 hours a week of classroom instruction)?



Question answered by 6,733 teachers on 15/05/2020 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

■ Almost certain ■ Quite likely ■ Quite unlikely ■ Almost impossible
■ Highly likely ■ I don't know ■ Very unlikely

It is the state secondary teachers who are the most pessimistic. Not only are they a long way away from planning for a full re-opening, they also have the dilemma of whether they need to radically alter their curriculum and timetable so that students do not walk around the school during the day.

Tips

- [Remote interviewing](#)
- [Supporting transition](#)
- [Reading text on computers and mobile phones](#)
- [Generating centre assessment grades](#)
- [Helping children return to school](#)
- [Using multiple choice questions to build understanding](#)