

Why Are Teachers Working For So Many Hours?

Over the past fortnight, we asked lots of question about teacher's daily routines. Why? Because we want to use the power of Teacher Tapp to build a picture of what teachers really do with their day so that we can find out if certain working habits are making teachers more unhappy and whether long hours are the only way to achieve high educational standards at schools. For example, are people who travel a long way to work more likely to leave at the end of the year? We may believe that's likely to be true. But is it? One thing we have noticed over the past few weeks is that:

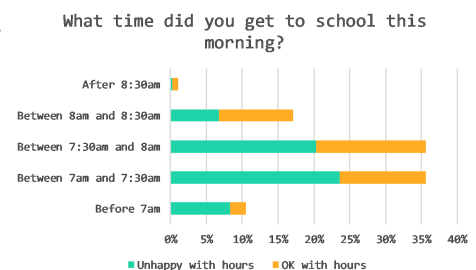
- Around 40% of teachers get to work before 7.30am
- Around 40% spend over an hour commuting each day
- Around 40% mark in front of the television during an evening

We also know that on the specific day we asked:

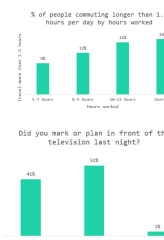
- Almost 70% of teachers said they worked more than 10 hours
- Around 22% said they had worked more than 12 hours

Okay, this is interesting, but why does it matter?

We've shown this graph before, but it's worth showing again.



First, the people who get to work super early are the least happy with their working hours. One of the reasons why teachers get to school so early is that teaching is a job where you cannot be late. There is no nudge time. Year 6 are going to be at the door at 8.45am whether you are there or not. And you have to be there. Commutes go wrong, however. Motorways block. Trains delay. Hence, teachers often leave very early so they can be sure they are in school on-time. However, this appears to add to the length of the day in a way that affects how people feel about their hours. Commute times are also worth pondering. The percentage of people who said they travelled for more than 45 minutes in each direction (1.5 hours per day) was highest in the category who said they worked for more than 12 hours per day. This could be because teachers who work further away happen to work longer hours, or it could be that teachers are adding their commuting time into their "hours worked".



Finally, we asked how many teachers marked or planned in front of the television:

Given the specificity of the question – i.e. in front of the television – this is a substantial percentage. Marking in front of the television is definitely more enjoyable than doing it in silence in a study, but it is also a less efficient way to mark. This creates difficulties when we ask how many hours you work each day – if you include 3 hours marking in front of the television, should we count this as 3 hours or as less?

We are starting to build up this picture of a group of teachers who are getting to work early, are reporting they work over 12 hours, they have a very long commute, and are marking in front of the television.

In these cases, we think the 12 hour plus working days probably includes some of the 1.5 hours commuting time simply because it is sandwiched between their school hours and evening preparation. And we know it is being stretched out by marking in front of the television.

So what now? Well, teachers can't always control the geography of their job, but working days like this aren't sustainable over a long career. What can you do to help yourself, or your staff, to change them?

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