

Strikes! But also other things (inc. pastoral care & pigeon holes)

How did the strikes go for you? From our figures, we reckon more than 1 in 3 of you were striking on Wednesday. Only 43% of primary and 22% of secondary schools remained entirely physically open.

On the day, your voice was heard widely across the media. Teacher Tapp represented the views you'd shared with us in the print press (Times, Guardian, The Evening Standard) and broadcast. Co-Founder Laura even made an appearance alongside Lord Baker's endlessly ringing phone on Newsnight!

Because of the industrial action, many of last week's questions focused on strike practicalities. But we want to start this week with something central to the current school experience and mentioned a lot on the picket lines: pastoral concerns in schools...

Pastoral Problems

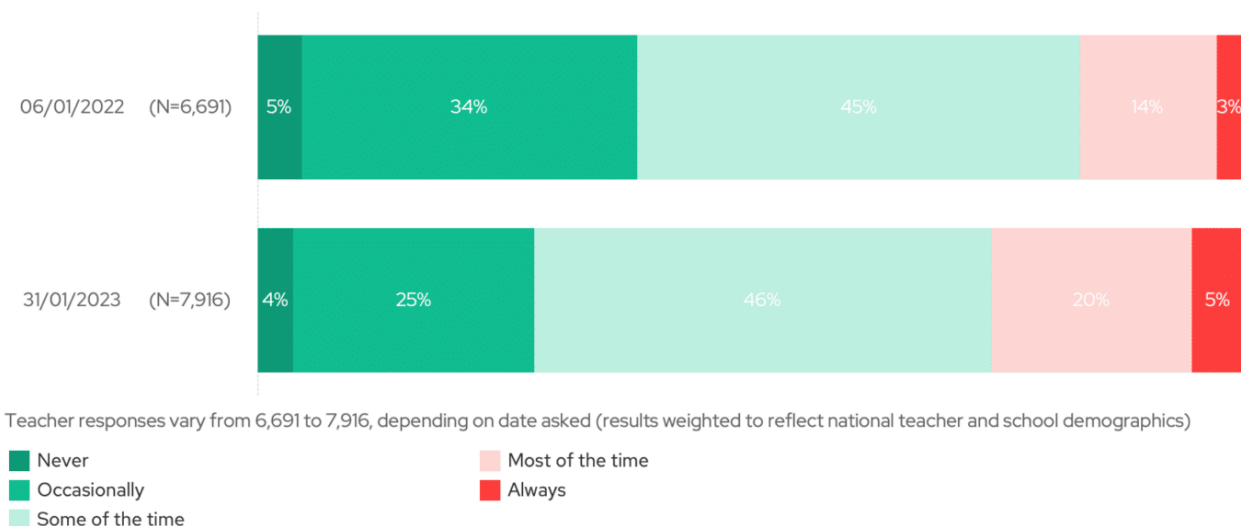
Teachers repeatedly said during the strikes that it wasn't only, or even mainly, about pay. They were concerned that resources are so low it means vulnerable pupils are missing out.

Are things really so much worse now than before? Responses this week would suggest so.

In January 2022 (when schools were already struggling in the aftermath of the pandemic) 17% of you almost always or always struggled to offer students the pastoral care they need.

Things are now remarkably worse. 25% of you now say you always or almost always struggled to give needed pastoral care. That's a 50% increase, in one year.

Do you struggle to offer students all the pastoral care they need?

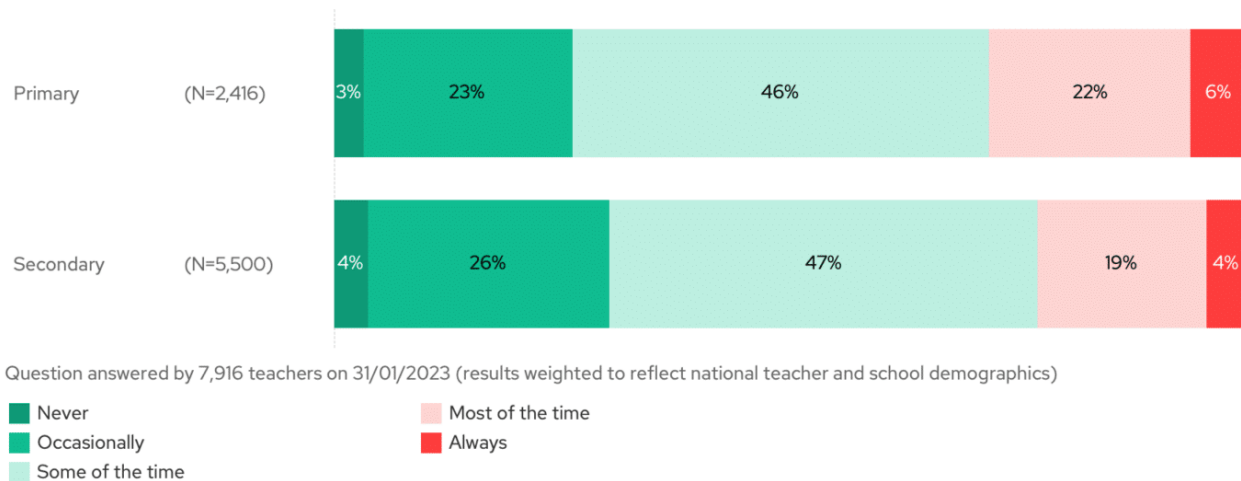


We have highlighted it this week to policymakers. A fair query was what is meant by pastoral care? Often it's envisaged as mental health support, especially given the state of CAMHS referrals. But our hunch is that it's broader than that. A raft of services were previously available to support pupils but are increasingly difficult to access, especially as local authority funding for school improvement is squeezed.

For those in secondary school areas with generous per pupil funding, there may be just enough to cover additional services. For the ~8,000 primary schools that are still under the watch of the local authority, or in small multi-academy trusts, things are getting more sparse. The numbers back up this story, too.

Far more primary teachers (28%) say they are struggling to offer pastoral care than secondary ones (23%).

Do you struggle to offer students all the pastoral care they need?



There isn't a simple way for unions to strike to get resources for other people. Rules around industrial action limit what it can be for, and pay is one of the simplest cases. But where there is more room for negotiation around school funding, the argument must be made that an envelope of cash for wider pastoral services is key.

What's more stressful: A pandemic or a strike?

Strikes are not a particularly pleasant time for anyone. The Education Secretary seemed much annoyed by union leaders recommending that teachers did not inform school leaders if they would be off on the strike day so as to maximise the disruption. But how stressful did the strikes turn out to be for school leaders? (And everyone else?)

We've been tracking work-related anxiety since before the pandemic and many of you will have seen these graphs before. On various Tuesdays since 2019 we've asked teachers to rate their anxiety out of 10 and we show the rate of people selecting 8 or more in the graph below.

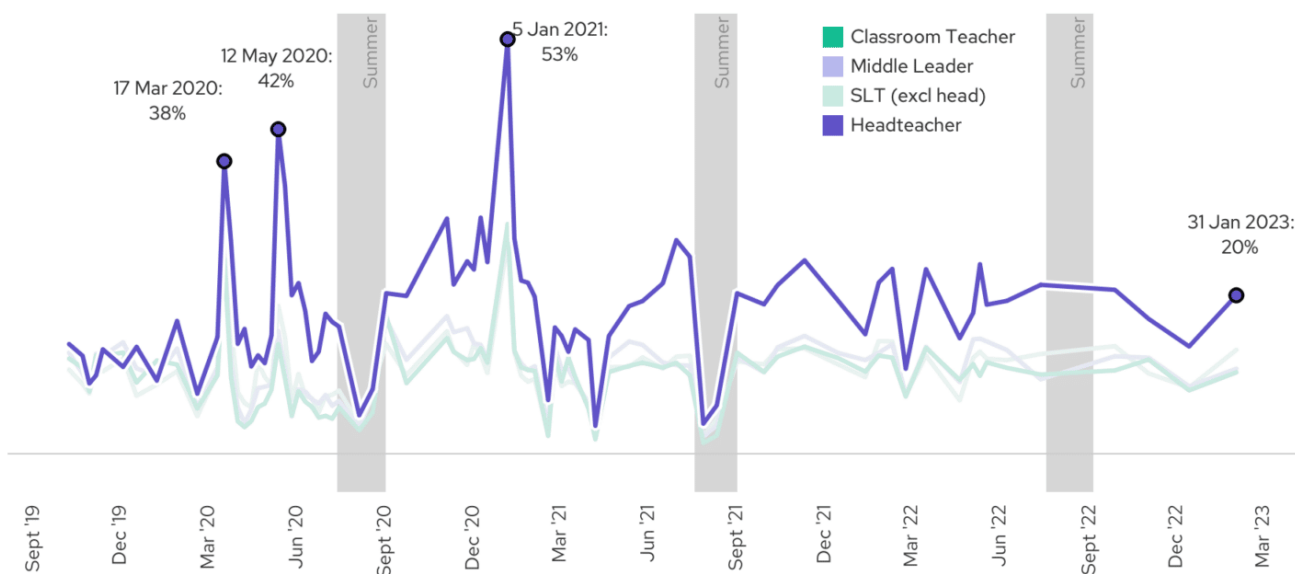
Before the pandemic, the rate was around 8-12% on a given Tuesday and heads and teachers were about the same. Since the pandemic, headteachers have run far ahead of the pack, and up until this September everyone was running 'slightly hot' - i.e. had slightly higher average anxiety compared to 2019.

How did the strikes go on our anxiety-ometer? The day before the strikes 20% of heads registered high levels of work-related anxiety. That compares to 38% the week before the first pandemic lock-down and 53% in the second. It is on par with much of 2022.

Hence, strikes are about as stressful as the entire year after a pandemic, but nowhere as stressful as the weeks before one!

Proportion reporting very high work-related anxiety on a Tuesday (i.e. score of 8 or above on a 10-point scale)

"On a scale where 0 is "not at all anxious" and 10 is "completely anxious", overall, how anxious did you feel about work today?"



How did schools manage the strikes?

The big question everyone in the media (and government) wanted to know on Wednesday was: 'How many schools are closed?', but the answer isn't simple.

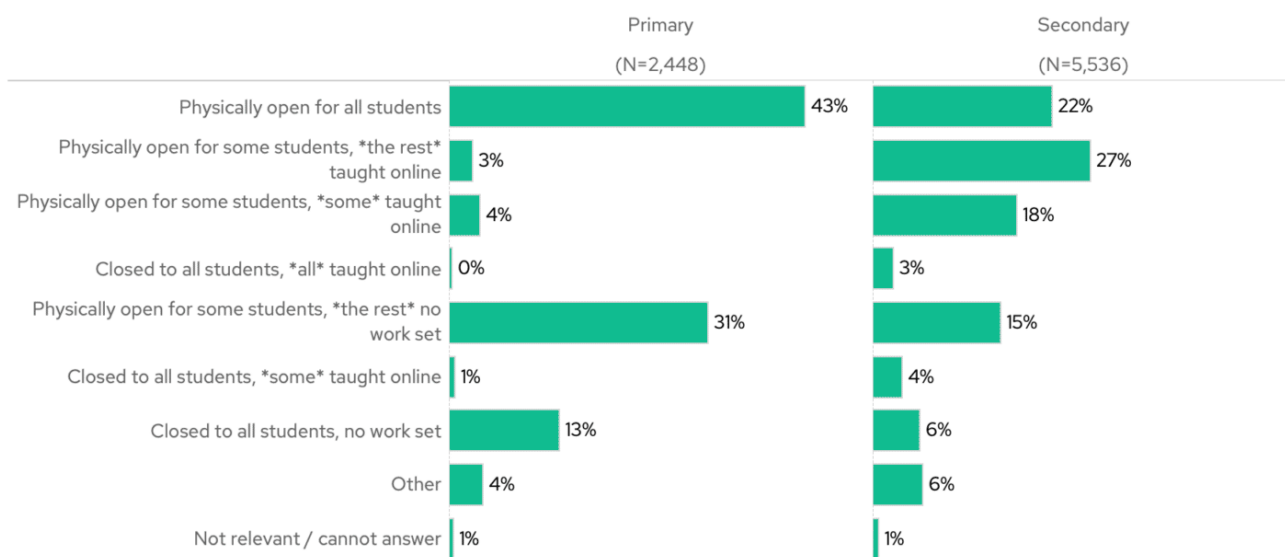
Our estimate is that 13% of primary schools and 6% of secondary schools closed completely with no work set for pupils.

Beyond that, primary schools typically took two routes: entirely open (43%) or open for some and the rest were off, without any work set (31%) .

Secondaries were more varied. The most popular response (27%) was to have some students in and the rest taught online, though 18% only had some taught online and 15% had those at home not doing any work.

Can we just check...

Yesterday (1st February), how did your school operate?



Question answered by 7,984 teachers on 02/02/2023 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

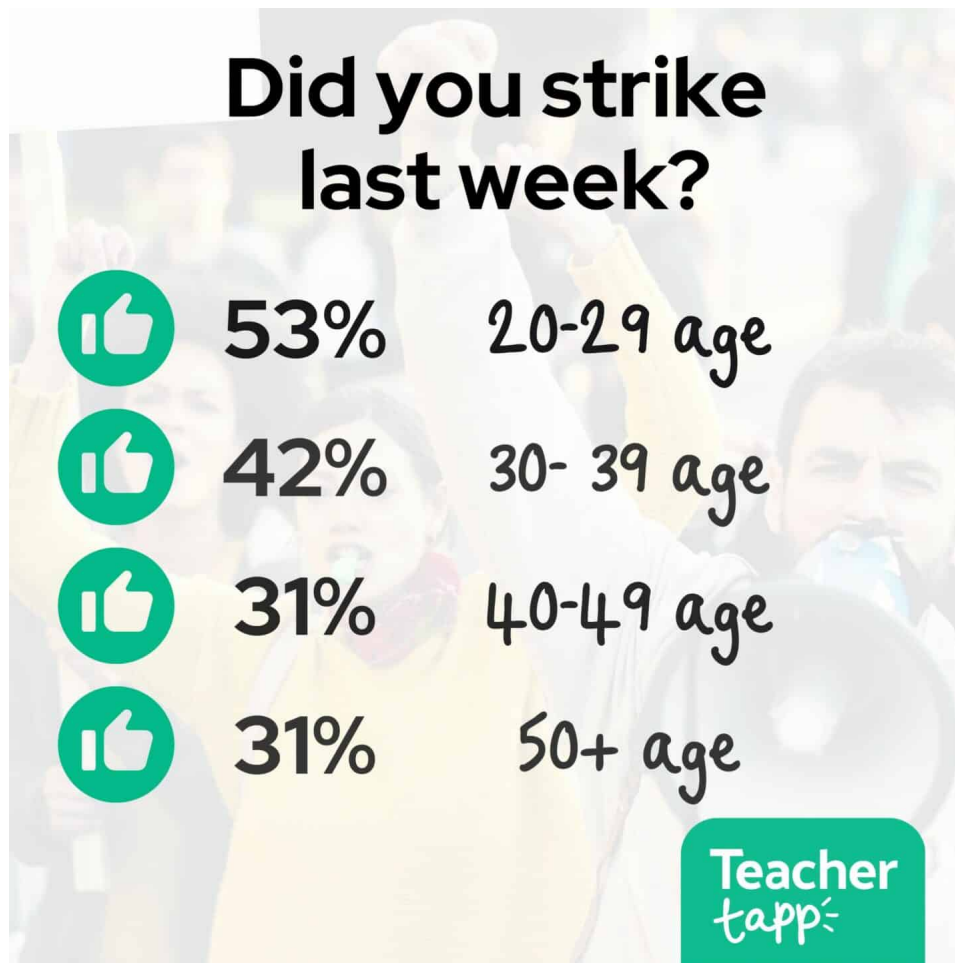
A reason why schools varied so much is that the number of striking teachers varied depending on which union people in the school were typically in.

[We knew last week](#) that London was likely to have the most closures and the highest number of striking teachers. But why?

It is all to do with age. Young teachers were the most likely to strike AND there are more young teachers in London. Hence, London schools were disproportionately affected.

And why are young people more likely to strike? They are more likely to be in NEU! Our rough estimate is that almost 3 in 10 of NEU's members are in their 20s, whereas NASUWT has a

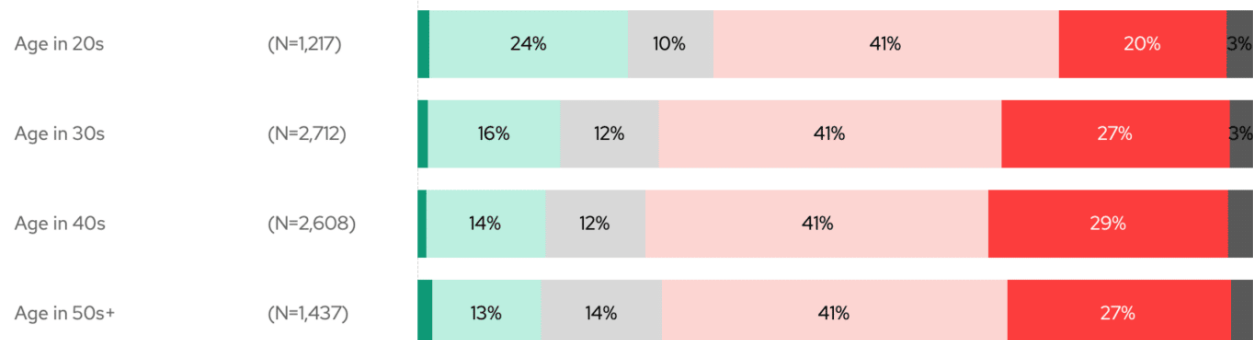
slightly older-skewed membership.



Strike perception (& the optimism of youth)

Speaking of younger teachers, we also found that they are the most optimistic about the strikes ending with a satisfactory resolution – although 1-in-5 strongly believe they won't!

To what extent do you believe the strikes will end with a satisfactory resolution?



Question answered by 7,974 teachers on 30/01/2023 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

Strongly believe Neither believe nor do not believe Strongly do not believe
Somewhat believe Somewhat do not believe Don't know

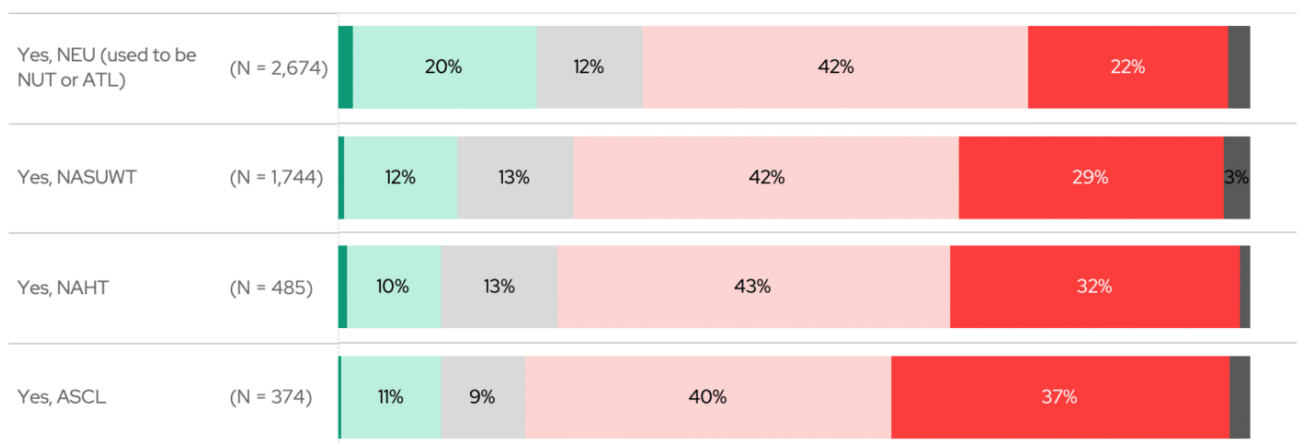
If you've been in teaching a long time, however, you were less optimistic: 45% of teachers who had more than 10 years of experience did not think any satisfactory resolution would be found.

Interestingly, school leaders in the ASCL union were the least likely to believe there would be a satisfactory resolution, while those in NEU were most optimistic - with 14% thinking a solution would be found by the end of March (or before).

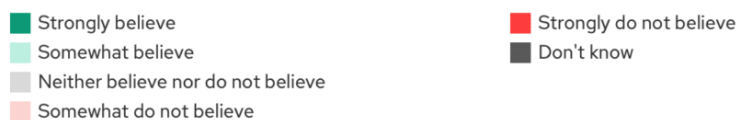
Those in NEU were also most likely to feel that the public was on the side of teachers (63% said they were). Headteacher union members were more subdued (~42% agreed), perhaps because they have to deal with the complaints from parents!

Given so many teachers don't believe there will be a solution, there is a question about what this means for teacher resolve as the strikes continue. It isn't a slam dunk either way. Disillusionment can make it harder to drag strikes out for long, but if teachers already felt a settlement wasn't likely and they still went on strike, then we wouldn't advise feeling sure that they'll back down!

**Are you a member of a trade union? (down) versus
To what extent do you believe the strikes will end with a satisfactory resolution? (across)**



Question answered by 5,183 teachers on 21/01/2023 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)



Pigeon Holes & Snacks

A few other on-the-ground findings from this week....

Wither the tray...

Once upon a time all teachers had a 'pigeon hole' – a small tray in the staffroom to receive the sorts of messages that now sit in email inboxes. (Not the ones of people looking for lanyards, the important ones...)

Since 2021, however, more schools have got rid of them and now, 1-in-5 schools are tray-less!

The king of snacks?

What snack are you most likely to buy from your school canteen? (If you have one!)

Results are in and the winners are....

1. Sausage Rolls
2. Flapjacks
3. Crisps

Somewhere there's a nutrition expert crying into their chia seeds!

And finally...

The most read blog post of the week was [key questions from an Ofsted Deep Dive](#)

Other posts last week were:

- [How anxiety can affect quality of teaching](#)
- [Should you publish your curriculum resources?](#)
- [How to know if your school is really doing well](#)
- [What is it like to be the least confident student in the class?](#)
- [What exactly is instructional coaching?](#)