unesco
Institute for Statistics

International
Task Force on Teachers
for Education 2030



# Standing with teachers

# 60 years of protecting the profession, advancing its status and shaping our futures

**World Teachers' Day 2026**

## Fact sheet

World Teachers' Day 2026 marks 60 years since the adoption of the ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers. This fact sheet examines what it means to stand with teachers today: recognizing their contribution to society, respecting their professional expertise, and ensuring fair salaries and decent working conditions. Drawing on new data on teacher pay, qualifications and attrition, it highlights the challenges facing the profession and offers policy recommendations to strengthen teacher status and support recruitment and retention.

Education 2030

# Key messages

- **Sixty years on, the commitment to teachers must be renewed.** The revision of the 1966 ILO/UNESCO Recommendation offers an opportunity to address today's challenges while strengthening teachers' status and protecting their rights.
- **Teacher status is shaped by three interconnected factors.** Social standing, professional recognition and material conditions together influence the attractiveness, effectiveness and sustainability of the profession.
- **Teacher salaries remain below those of comparable professionals in many countries.** In two out of five countries analysed, teachers earn less than professionals requiring comparable qualifications.
- **Teacher shortages are also a retention challenge.** An estimated 50 million additional teachers are needed by 2030, and 58% of teacher demand by 2030 is expected to result from replacing those who leave the profession.
- **Feeling valued matters for retention.** TALIS 2024 findings show that teachers who feel valued by society are over 10% less likely to consider leaving the profession within five years.
- **Professional support must continue throughout teachers' careers.** Preparation, mentoring, professional development, supportive leadership and career pathways can strengthen teachers' professional growth and help retain their expertise.
- **Teachers must have a voice in decisions that affect their work.** Participation in education policymaking, including through social dialogue and consultations, recognizes teachers' expertise and can improve the relevance of reforms.
- **Decent working conditions support a sustainable profession.** Competitive salaries, manageable workloads, adequate resources and safe, supportive schools help attract and retain teachers.

# Introduction

Teachers are at the heart of every education system and of efforts to build more inclusive, resilient and sustainable societies. Yet the profession is approaching a critical juncture. Persistent shortages, rising attrition and declining attractiveness in many contexts are making it increasingly difficult to recruit and retain teachers, even as expectations of the profession continue to expand. With an estimated **50 million additional teachers needed by 2030 to achieve SDG 4**, strengthening teacher status and support has become an urgent policy priority. This year marks the **60th anniversary of the ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers**, and its ongoing revision comes at a time when teachers are navigating profound transformations driven by artificial intelligence, climate change, inclusion and gender equality, migration, displacement, and different types of crises and emergencies.

As education systems respond to rapid social, technological and environmental change, teachers' ability to fulfil their role depends not only on investment in education, but also on the recognition, support and conditions that shape the attractiveness and status of the profession. The way teachers are perceived by governments, the media and society, and the extent to which this recognition is translated into policy action, have profound implications for their daily work. Research shows that education systems with strong teacher retention and higher student outcomes are often those where teachers are valued as skilled professionals and nation-builders, both in public discourse and policy commitments (TTF & UNESCO, 2024; Arnold & Rahimi, 2024; OECD, 2025).

With 107 million teachers worldwide, determining solutions to improve teachers' status is imperative to guarantee well-educated citizens of tomorrow (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2026). Building on the vision of the 1966 ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers, this fact sheet examines the three interrelated dimensions of teacher status: their symbolic status, the recognition and valorization of teaching; their professional status, shaped by autonomy, support and voice in policymaking; and their material status, including salaries, workloads and working environments that enable teachers to fully exercise their role.

# Global teacher policy timeline

## 1958-1964

UNESCO and ILO convene three meetings comprised of educational experts to assess the working conditions of teachers.

UNESCO, along with international organizations of teachers, conducts surveys on the "academic, professional, social and economic status of teachers".




## 1966

A special intergovernmental conference is convened by UNESCO to consider and adopt an international recommendation on the status of teachers.

The 1966 Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers is then adopted to establish the rights and responsibilities of teachers, the international standards for teacher preparation and further education, recruitment, employment, and teaching and learning conditions, as well as strategies for governments and other stakeholders in the elaboration and improvement of national laws and policies on teachers.

## 1967

The Joint ILO/UNESCO Committee of Experts on the Application of the Recommendations Concerning Teaching Personnel (CEART) is established to globally monitor the application of the 1966 Recommendation.

## 1968

CEART holds its first session on the status of teachers in Geneva, Switzerland on 16-20 September 1968.

## 1990

The World Declaration on Education for All and the Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs are adopted by the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand. Within Education for All, Article 7, Strengthening partnerships, attention is focused on the "special role of teachers" where "the terms and conditions of the service of teachers and their status constitutes a determining factor in the implementation of education for all".


DG/94/35
Original français/anglais/espagnol

ORGANISATION DES NATIONS UNIES
POUR L'EDUCATION, LA SCIENCE ET LA CULTURE

Discours
de
M. Federico Mayor

Directeur général
de
l'Organisation des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation, la science et la culture
(UNESCO)

à l'ouverture de la 44e session
de la Conférence internationale de l'éducation

Genève, 5 octobre 1994

## 1994

UNESCO creates World Teachers' Day to internationally celebrate the vital role teachers have in shaping education and society.


United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
Organisation des Nations Unies pour l'éducation, la science et la culture
Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura
Организация Объединенных Наций по вопросам образования, науки и культуры
منظمة الأمم المتحدة للتربية والعلم والثقافة
联合国教育、科学及文化组织

Recommendation
concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel
adopted by the General Conference at its 29th session
Paris, 21 October - 12 November 1997

Recommandation
concernant la condition du personnel enseignant de l'enseignement supérieur
adoptée par la Conférence générale à sa 29e session
Paris, 21 octobre - 12 novembre 1997

Recomendación
relativa a la condición del personal docente de la enseñanza superior
aprobada por la Conferencia General en su 29ª reunión
París, 21 de octubre - 12 de noviembre de 1997

Рекомендация
о статусе преподавательских кадров высших учебных заведений,
принятая Генеральной конференцией на ее 29-й сессии
Париж, 21 октября - 12 ноября 1997 г.

توصية
بشأن أوضاع هيئات التدريس في التعليم العالي
اعتمدها المؤتمر العام في دورته التاسعة والعشرين
باريس، ٢١ أكتوبر/تشرين الأول - ١٢ نوفمبر/تشرين الثاني ١٩٩٧

大会第二十九届会议通过的《关于高等教育教学人员地位的建议》
巴黎，1997 年 10 月 21 日 – 11 月 12 日

## 1997

1997 Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel is adopted. CEART's permanent committee of experts expand their monitoring to include both the 1966 and 1997 recommendations.

## 2000

The Dakar World Education Forum creates the Education for All (EFA) programme to address Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 2 to Achieve Universal Primary Education. Goals for this program include improving the quality of education and elevating the role of teachers, their professionalism and status as a means of achieving this MDG.

## 2008

Global action addressing the Education for All goal of universal primary education results in an influx of students at the primary level, which does not match teacher recruitment rates. This worldwide teacher shortage results in the formation of the Teacher Task Force (TTF) during the Oslo Education for All High-Level Group meeting.

## 2010

The first Teacher Policy Dialogue Forum organized by the TTF is held as a flagship event to bring education actors and teacher stakeholders together to exchange knowledge and experiences, build alliances for advocacy and resource mobilization.

## 2015

Building upon the MDGs, and developed by the Open Working Group (OWG) of the UN General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development commits to "providing inclusive and equitable quality education at all levels – early childhood, primary, secondary, tertiary, technical and vocational training". More specifically, SDG 4 aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all", while target 4.c sets the objective by 2030 to "substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers".

## 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic, which affected over 1.5 billion students and 63 million teachers who faced school closures across 191 countries, highlighted teachers' ability to adapt rapidly to unprecedented disruption.

UNITED NATIONS TRANSFORMING EDUCATION SUMMIT 2022

## 2022

The first United Nations Transforming Education Summit is held to elevate education to the top of the global agenda and mobilize countries in the aftermath of the pandemic to transform education in a rapidly changing world. Thematic action track 3 focuses on Teachers, teaching and the teaching profession.

## 2023

United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession supported by ILO and UNESCO is established to create a clear action plan on how to elevate and support teachers in the context of the growing global teacher shortage and to reach the targets of SDG 4.




## 2024

First edition of the Global Report on Teachers is published by UNESCO and the TTF focusing on the global shortage of qualified teachers. The Panel recommended updating the 1966 Recommendation to encompass the evolving role of teachers while reaffirming the significance and value teachers bring to education systems.




## 2025

The Santiago Consensus is adopted at the World Summit on Teachers in Chile to address teacher shortages and support the teaching profession worldwide.

## 2026

**60th** anniversary and beginning of the revision of the 1966 Recommendation.

# The three dimensions of status

## Key focus

Since 1968, the joint ILO/UNESCO Committee of Experts on the Application of the Recommendations concerning Teaching Personnel (CEART) has produced trend analysis reports on the challenges facing the global teaching profession, repeatedly identifying the declining status of teachers as the epicentre of the profession's problems (Chatila & Vavrus, 2023). Over almost six decades, CEART reports have documented both enduring and emerging challenges associated with declining teacher status.

Key factors contributing to teacher deprofessionalization include:

- The increased use of contract teachers
- Limited engagement of policymakers with teachers
- Shrinking public investment in education, teacher education and professional development
- The declining attractiveness of the teaching profession
- Increasingly negative public perceptions of teachers' training, expertise, and contribution to quality education

These economic and social factors affect the retention of experienced teachers, recruitment of skilled novice teachers and the quality of education students are receiving (Chatila & Vavrus, 2023; Arnold & Rahimi, 2024; Yip et al., 2025). Evidence from the 2024 Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) further shows that teachers who feel valued by society are over 10% less likely to consider leaving the profession within five years (OECD, 2025).

Strengthening teacher status is therefore not only a matter of professional recognition, but also a strategic response to persistent challenges related to teacher recruitment, retention and wellbeing. This fact sheet examines the status of teachers at regional and global levels and highlights the importance of strengthening the recognition, support and conditions that enable teachers to thrive.

## The notion of status behind the 1966 Recommendation

Teacher status is shaped by a range of interconnected factors that influence how teachers are perceived, supported and rewarded. These factors can be grouped into three mutually reinforcing dimensions: social standing, professional recognition and material conditions, each of which shapes the attractiveness, effectiveness and sustainability of the profession.

## Social standing

The social status of teachers reflects the degree of public trust, recognition and esteem accorded to the profession. As teaching is a profession strongly associated with public service and social responsibility, societal perceptions influence teachers' motivation, professional commitment and willingness to remain in the profession (Mackenzie, 2007; Lim, 2021).

Evidence suggests that low social recognition remains a challenge in many education systems. TALIS data show that in three quarters of participating countries, fewer than 40% of teachers believe that their profession is valued by society (OECD, 2025). Perceptions of status matter because they influence recruitment, retention and the overall attractiveness of the profession. Teachers who feel valued by society are significantly less likely to consider leaving the profession.




Strengthening the social standing of teaching is therefore an important policy lever for addressing teacher shortages. Globally, 58% of the demand for teachers by 2030 is expected to result from replacing teachers who leave the profession (UNESCO & TTF, 2024).

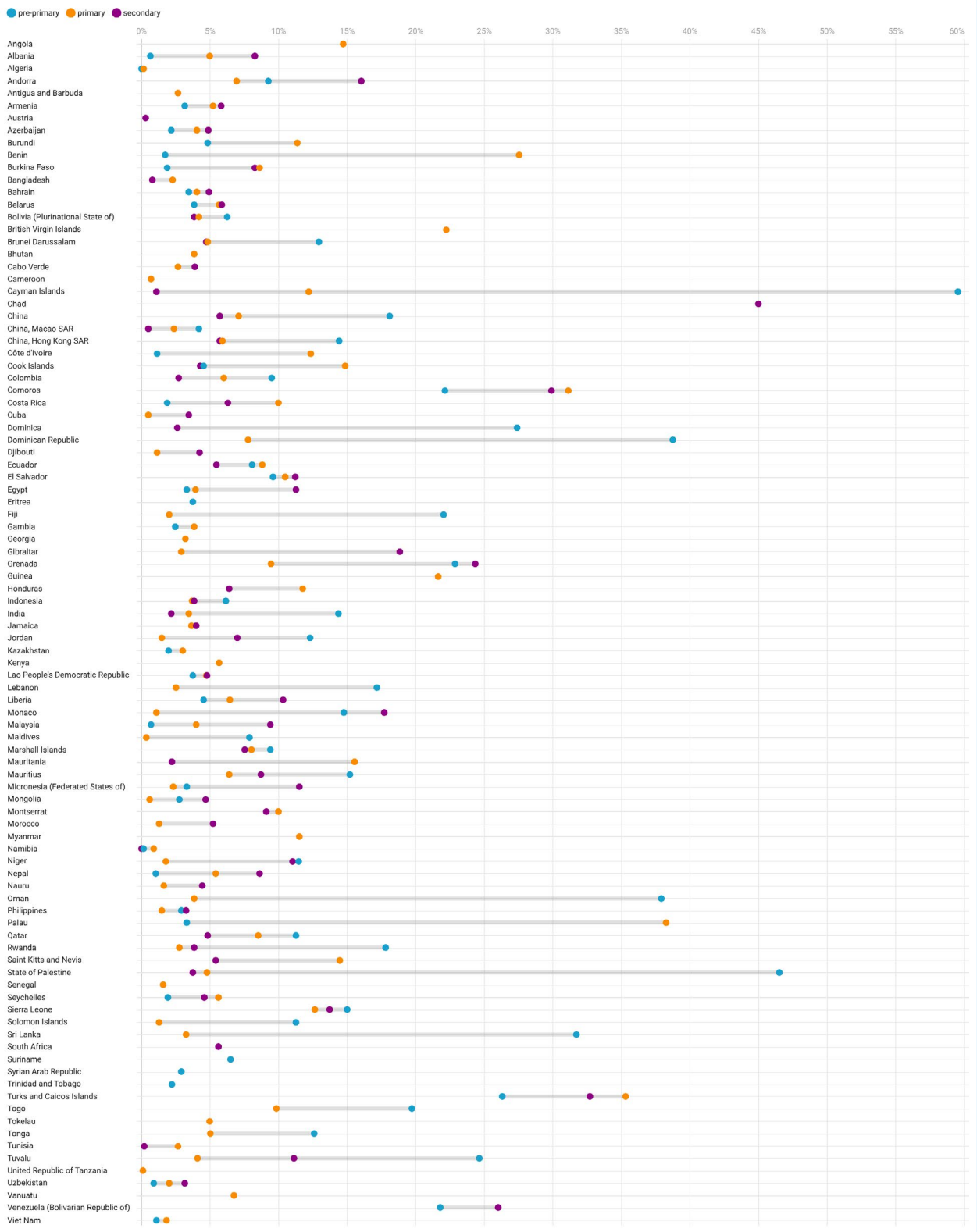
Retaining experienced teachers is particularly important, as research shows that teacher effectiveness continues to improve with experience and contributes to stronger student achievement, attendance and classroom outcomes (Ladd & Sorensen, 2017; Podolsky et al., 2019). Policies that enhance the public recognition and status of teachers can therefore support not only teacher retention, but also the quality and stability of education systems.

## Retaining expertise in the teaching workforce

Teacher attrition affects not only workforce numbers but also the stock of professional expertise within education systems. Recent UIS data (2026) based on 96 countries' media attrition rates from 2015 to 2025 indicate that median attrition rates are highest in pre-primary education (7.2%), followed by secondary (5.4%) and primary education (4.7%) (Figure 1). Although methodological differences limit direct comparisons across countries, these findings highlight the importance of policies that support teacher retention.

The importance of retention extends beyond addressing teacher shortages. Longitudinal studies suggest that teacher effectiveness continues to develop well beyond the first decade of practice (Ladd & Sorensen, 2017; Podolsky et al., 2019). Experienced teachers contribute to stronger student learning outcomes, more effective classroom management and lower student absenteeism, while also mentoring newer colleagues and sharing professional knowledge. High attrition can therefore result in the loss of valuable expertise accumulated over the course of a teaching career. Strengthening the attractiveness, recognition and status of the profession can help education systems retain this expertise and support both the quality and sustainability of teaching and learning.

## Figure 1. Teacher attrition rates by country and education level, latest available year, 2015–2025




*Note*: The latest available year varies by country (2015–2025).
*Source*: UIS database (February 2026 release)

## Teachers as expert education actors in the media and policymaking

Teachers' social status is influenced by how they are depicted in society. Media narratives, public discourse and government engagement can all shape how the profession is viewed. Positive portrayals that highlight teachers' expertise and contribution to society can strengthen public trust and respect, while negative rhetoric or the exclusion of teachers from educational debates can undermine the profession's standing (UNESCO & TTF, 2024; OECD, 2025; Alhamdan et al., 2014; Yip et al., 2025; Mackenzie, 2007).

Teachers themselves often report concerns about how the profession is represented. Almost 60% of teacher unions globally cite the media as being critical of teachers, with only half saying the media's representation of teachers is positive (Arnold & Rahimi, 2024). Beyond public representation, meaningful engagement of teachers in education policymaking can also strengthen their status. Engaging with teachers through social dialogue and participatory policymaking not only repositions them in the public eye but also captures their voices and pedagogical knowledge to enrich and validate policies for stronger implementation in the classroom.

Several countries have demonstrated the benefits of such approaches. In Tamil Nadu, India, teachers have been closely engaged throughout the design and implementation of the Activity Based Learning reform, strengthening ownership of the reform and facilitating its successful adoption and subsequent scale-up. In Colombia, regional consultations with teachers have been used to inform reforms related to teacher education, professional development and teacher support, ensuring that policy priorities are grounded in classroom realities (UNESCO & TTF, 2024). In Malta, the Educators as Policy Makers policy institutionalizes teacher participation across the policy cycle, promoting the systematic and direct involvement of educators in the policy development cycle and recognizing educators as essential stakeholders in shaping education policy (Government of Malta, 2025).

## Trust and respect shape relationships with learners and communities

Evidence suggests that teachers are often regarded as important contributors to society, yet many feel that this recognition does not translate into adequate professional respect. Drawing on responses from 204 teacher unions across 121 countries, Education International's Global Status of Teachers report found that, on average, 73% believed citizens view teachers as playing an important role in society, while 69% reported that teachers remain undervalued as a profession (Arnold & Rahimi, 2024). Across four of the five global regions surveyed, respect for teachers was identified as one of the most significant challenges facing the profession.

Levels of trust and respect have implications beyond public perceptions alone. Research suggests that when teachers are respected by students, parents and the wider community, relationships within school communities tend to be stronger, student engagement improves and behavioural issues are less frequent. These conditions can contribute to more positive working environments and higher levels of teacher job satisfaction (McMahon et al., 2020; Yip et al., 2025; Alhamdan et al., 2014; Mackenzie, 2007). Strengthening trust and respect for teachers can therefore support both teacher wellbeing and effective teaching and learning.

# Recommendations

## Strengthen teacher voice in policymaking

Provide structured opportunities for teachers to contribute to education policy through social dialogue, consultations, feedback mechanisms and school visits. Recognizing teachers as partners in policymaking can strengthen teacher-government relations, elevate the status of the profession and improve the relevance and implementation of reforms.

## Invest in public awareness and advocacy

Support communication campaigns that highlight teachers' expertise, contributions and impact on learners and communities. Media campaigns, public recognition initiatives and digital advocacy can help strengthen public trust in teachers and reinforce the value of the profession to society (see Global Status of Teachers 2024 Recommendation 3, TALIS 2024 p. 241, and TTF Teacher Advocacy Campaigns).
















## Promote recognition of teachers' contributions and innovation

Support awards, prizes and public recognition initiatives that showcase teachers' contributions to learning, innovation and community development.

Such initiatives can strengthen the public image of the profession while reinforcing teachers' sense of value, motivation and professional pride. (Førland & Roxå, 2023; Lim, 2021; Mackenzie, 2007).

### International Teachers Awards and Prizes (a sample)

| Prize | Frequency | Scale | Focus |
|---|---|---|---|
| UNESCO-Hamdan Prize for Teacher Development | Every two years | Projects (3 laureates) | Improving education by enhancing teaching practice, quality of teaching and learning, including the potential for adaptation and mutual policy/ programmatic learning |
| Varkey Foundation: Global Teacher Prize | Annually | 1 laureate | Recognizing an exceptional teacher, honouring contributions to their students, community and society |
| Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) Teacher Award | Annually | (multiple recipients) | Recognizing excellence in education for sustainable development |
| Pearson International School Teacher Awards | Annually | Individuals (multiple recipients) | Recognizing and celebrating outstanding educators in international schools worldwide |
| International Teachers Association (ITA) International Teachers Award | Annually | (multiple recipients) | Honouring and celebrating the dedication and excellence of educators around the globe |
| Cambridge Dedicated Teacher Awards | Annually | Individual (1 laureate) | Global competition celebrating current primary and secondary teachers |
| African Union Commission (AUC) Continental Teachers' Award | Annually | Individuals (multiple laureates across 5 AU regions) | Recognizing outstanding teachers at early learning, primary and secondary levels across the five geographic regions of the African Union |
| European Innovative Teaching Award (EITA) (European Commission) | Annually | Projects (multiple laureates) | Recognizing teachers, trainers and educators (and their organizations) that make an exceptional contribution to the profession |

## Professional recognition

Professional recognition reflects the extent to which teaching is regarded as a profession requiring specialized knowledge, professional autonomy, ethical responsibility and opportunities for continuous development. Strengthening the professional status of teaching can enhance the attractiveness of the profession, encouraging more young people to consider teaching as a career and helping education systems attract and retain qualified candidates.

However, attracting new entrants to the profession remains a challenge in many contexts. Data from the Education International's Global Status of Teachers 2024 report indicate that only 27% of young people in Africa and 30% in Europe aspire to become teachers (Arnold & Rahimi, 2024). Evidence also suggests that professional status influences interest in teaching careers, enrolment in teacher education programmes and the willingness of qualified graduates to enter and remain in the profession (UNESCO & TTF, 2024; OECD, 2025).

Teaching is more likely to attract candidates when it is recognized as a respected profession with clear standards, meaningful professional responsibilities and opportunities for growth and development. This can help position teaching as a first-choice career rather than

a fallback option. Findings from TALIS 2024 show that novice teachers whose first career choice was teaching are 40% less likely to leave the profession within five years (OECD, 2025, p. 243). These findings highlight the importance of strengthening the professional recognition of teaching as part of broader efforts to address teacher shortages and improve retention.

## Professional development strengthens teacher agency and professionalism

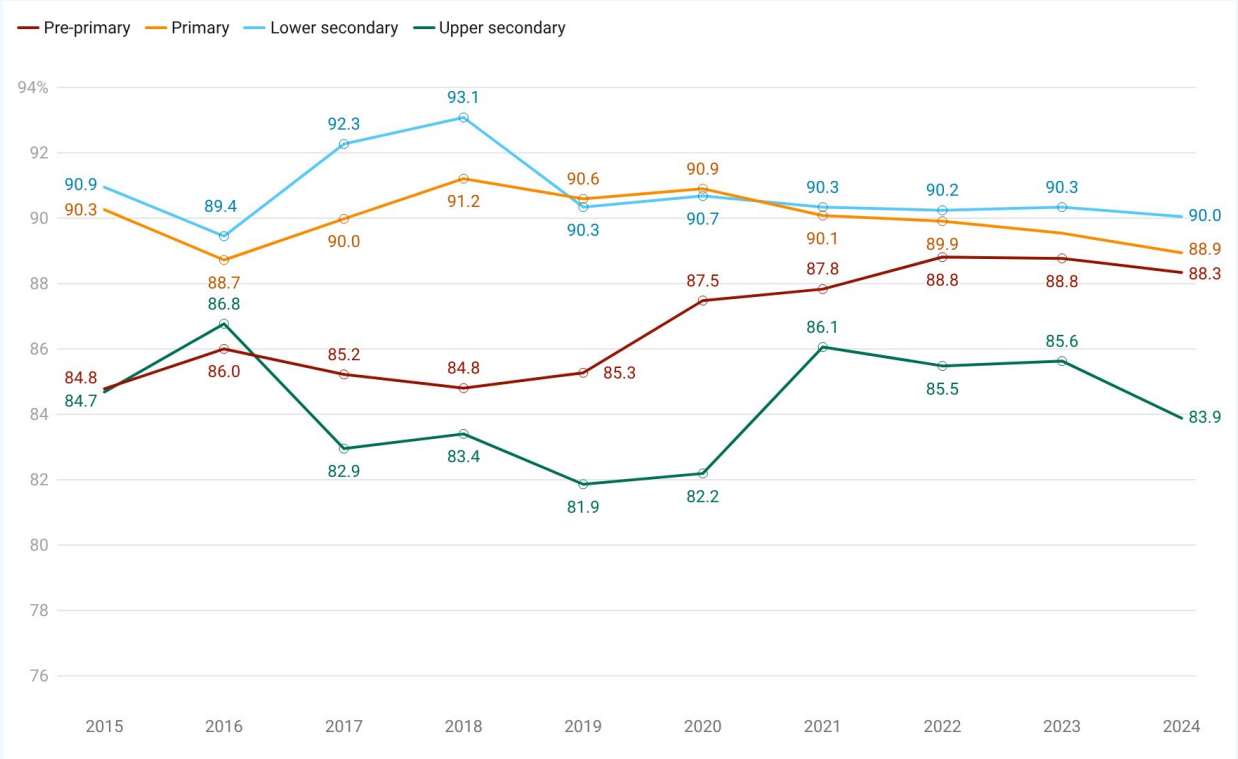
Access to meaningful professional development is an important component of professional recognition. When teachers can engage in learning opportunities that respond to their professional needs and interests, they are more likely to develop a sense of autonomy, ownership and professional agency. Research suggests that accessible, relevant and teacher-centred professional development can strengthen instructional practice and contribute to improved teaching quality (Oddone, 2022; Rizvi, 2023; Yip et al., 2025). Collaboration with peers, mentors and educational experts through conferences, workshops and professional networks helps teachers deepen their expertise, refine their practice and strengthen their professional identity (Coppe, 2024). Initiatives such as European Schoolnet programmes, including iTEC, inGenious, Scientix and the Learning Resource Exchange, as well as the Erasmus+ Teacher Academies, support collaborative professional learning and knowledge-sharing across education systems. By investing in continuous professional learning opportunities, education systems can strengthen teacher professionalism, reinforce the status of the profession and enhance the attractiveness of teaching as a career.

## Teaching standards and professional development requirements enhance professional reputation

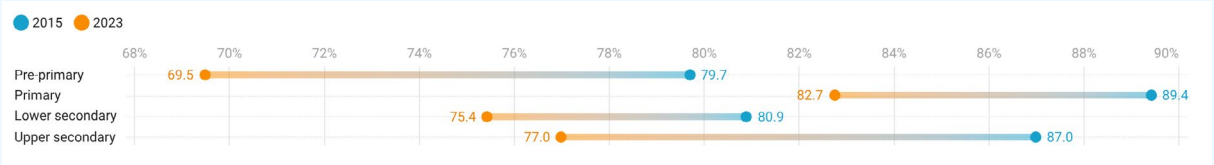
Professional standards, qualification requirements and opportunities for continuous professional development are important components of teacher professionalization. When designed effectively, they support teachers' professional judgement, strengthen accountability and reinforce recognition of teaching as a profession requiring specialized expertise (Rizvi, 2023; Lim, 2021). However, research also suggests that overly prescriptive approaches can limit professional autonomy and contribute to the deprofessionalization of teaching, highlighting the importance of balancing accountability with professional trust (Chatila & Vavrus, 2023; UNESCO & TTF, 2024; Yip et al., 2025).

Based on available data worldwide, around 90% of teachers meet national minimum qualification requirements in pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education. At upper secondary education, the figure falls to around 80%, the lowest proportion across all education levels (Figure 2). These global averages mask important disparities. In least developed countries, the proportion of qualified teachers declined at all levels of education between 2015 and 2023. The largest decreases were observed in pre-primary and upper secondary education, where the share of qualified teachers fell by approximately 10 percentage points over the period (Figure 3). These trends highlight the challenges many education systems face in maintaining professional qualification standards while expanding and sustaining the teaching workforce.

## Figure 2. Proportion of teachers qualified according to national standards by education level, world, 2015-2024




## Figure 3. Proportion of teachers qualified according to national standards by education level in least developed countries, 2015 and 2023




*Source*: UIS database (February 2026 release)

## Career pathways support professional growth and retention

Opportunities for career progression are an important component of professional recognition. Limited prospects for advancement have been identified as a key concern among teachers in Europe, North America and the Caribbean and have been linked to challenges in attracting and retaining teachers (Arnold & Rahimi, 2024). Well-designed career structures that provide opportunities for professional growth, increased responsibilities and recognition can strengthen teachers' commitment to the profession and support long-term retention (Yip et al., 2025; OECD, 2025).

Retaining experienced teachers is particularly important for education systems. Beyond workforce stability, experienced teachers contribute valuable pedagogical knowledge, professional expertise and mentoring capacity that support both colleagues and learners (UNESCO & TTF, 2024). When career pathways are limited, education systems risk losing this accumulated expertise through attrition.

Evidence also highlights the important role of school leadership in supporting teachers' professional growth. A recent meta-analysis found that teacher retention is higher in schools where leaders actively support teacher autonomy, professional development and participation in decision-making, strengthening teachers' wellbeing, professional commitment and sense of value within the profession (Nguyen et al., 2024).

# Recommendations

## Strengthen mentoring and professional collaboration

Support mentoring and peer-learning opportunities that strengthen relationships among teachers and facilitate the transfer of professional knowledge and expertise. Well-designed mentoring programmes can support novice teachers, strengthen professional identity and contribute to teacher retention, while also benefiting teaching and learning (Papay et al., 2020; UNESCO & TTF, 2024).

## Develop clear and rewarding career pathways

Establish career frameworks that provide opportunities for professional growth, increased responsibilities and progression throughout a teacher's career. Career pathways should be complemented by supportive leadership and incentives for continuous professional development to reinforce the status and attractiveness of the profession.

## Establish and uphold professional teaching standards

Adopt clear professional standards that define expectations across different career stages while supporting teacher autonomy and professional judgement. Professional standards can be supported through accreditation and regulatory mechanisms, such as professional teaching councils. Examples include the Global Framework of Professional Teaching Standards developed by UNESCO and Education International and the African Teacher Qualification Framework developed by the African Union Commission (UNESCO & TTF, 2024; African Union, 2019). Upholding professional standards can help ensure the longevity of a quality teaching profession. Education systems such as Ghana, Ireland, New Zealand, Scotland, Singapore and South Africa have independent regulatory teaching councils that help uphold professional standards through accreditation and regulation.

## Invest in school leadership

Ensure that school leaders receive appropriate preparation, mentoring and continuous professional development. Effective school leadership supports teacher autonomy, professional learning and participation in decision-making, contributing to teacher effectiveness, positive school climate, job satisfaction and retention.

# Material conditions

Material conditions refer to the structural and economic factors that shape teachers' work and professional wellbeing. These include salaries and employment security, workload and working time, collegial and institutional support, and access to the resources, infrastructure and student support services needed to teach effectively.

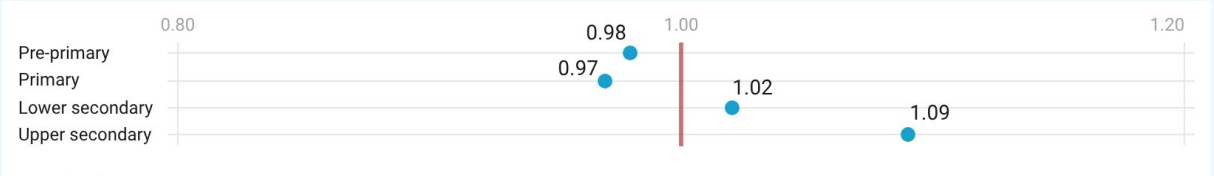
## Teacher salaries and benefits influence recruitment and retention

Salaries, benefits and employment conditions are among the most important factors shaping the attractiveness of the teaching profession and influencing whether teachers enter, remain in or leave the profession (Yip et al., 2025; Walker, 2024; Shaoan et al., 2025). As the most visible expression of how society values the work of teachers, remuneration has implications not only for teachers' living standards but also for the status and attractiveness of the profession relative to other careers requiring comparable qualifications (Chatila & Vavrus, 2023; Arnold & Rahimi, 2024). Evidence from TALIS 2024 shows that teachers who are satisfied with their salaries are more than three times as likely to report that teachers' views are valued by policymakers (OECD, 2025, p. 239).

Salary competitiveness remains a challenge in many education systems. When teaching salaries fall behind those of other professions requiring similar qualifications, education systems may struggle to attract and retain qualified candidates (UNESCO & TTF, 2024). Analysis of UIS data from 2017 to 2023 shows that pre-primary and primary teachers earn slightly less than comparable professionals, with salary ratios of 0.98 and 0.97 respectively, while lower and upper secondary teachers earn salaries broadly comparable to, or slightly above, those of similarly qualified professionals (Figure 4). These findings suggest that teaching at the pre-primary and primary levels may be comparatively less attractive from a financial perspective.

Important differences also exist across countries and levels of education. Most countries analysed allocate higher remuneration to secondary teachers than to primary teachers, with Argentina representing a notable exception. While salary levels vary considerably within and between countries, recent data show that in two out of five countries analysed, teachers earn less than professionals with comparable qualifications, undermining efforts to attract and retain talent in the profession (Figure 5). This highlights the continued importance of competitive remuneration as a component of teacher status and workforce sustainability.

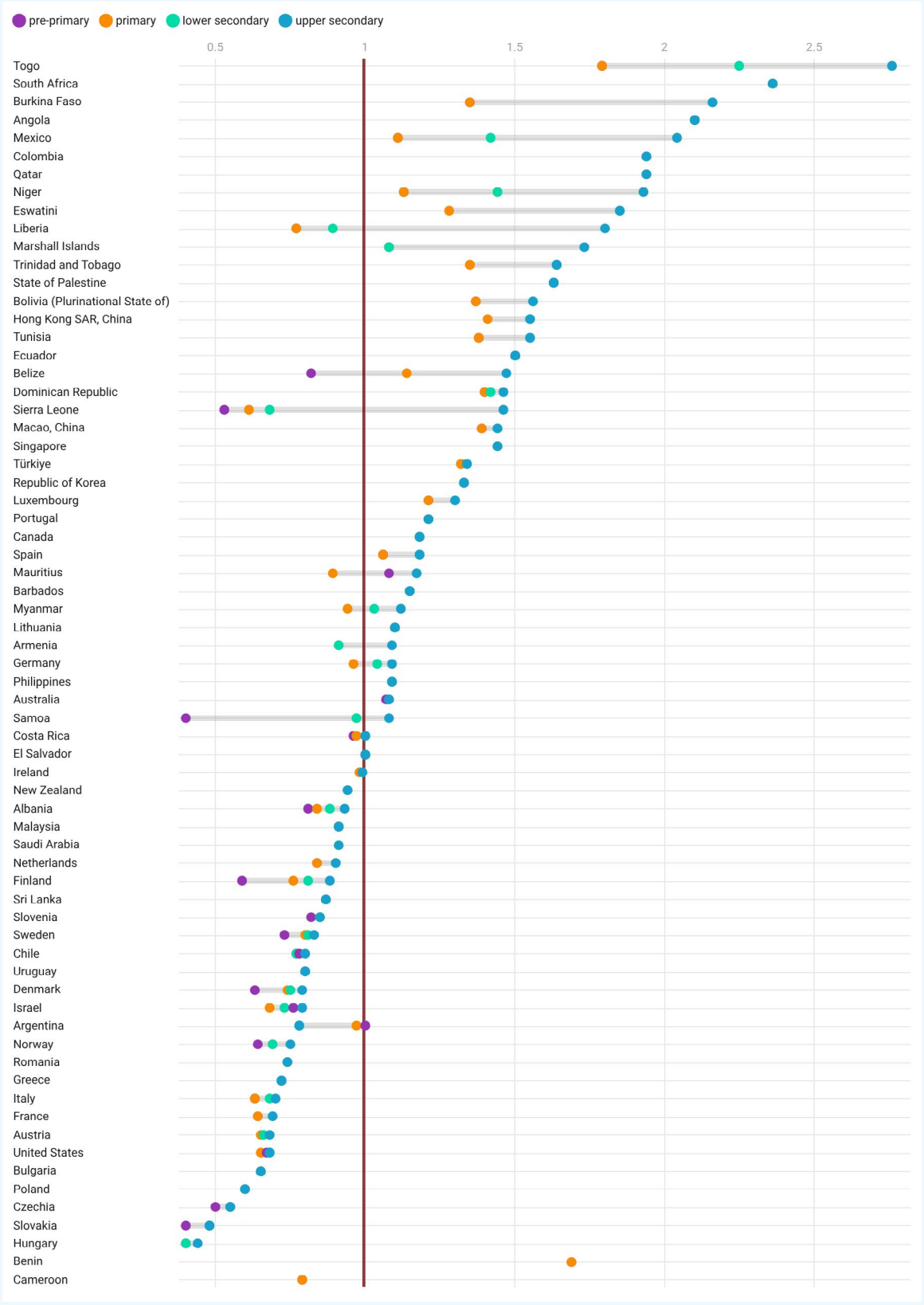
### Figure 4. Median teacher salary relative to other professions requiring comparable qualifications, by level of education, world




*Source*: UIS database (February 2026 release)

*Note*: A ratio of 1 indicates that teachers earn, on average, the same as professionals with comparable qualification requirements, while values below 1 indicate lower relative teacher salaries. As the latest available year varies across countries from 2017 to 2023, the figures represent the most recent country observations rather than comparisons for a single reference year.

## Figure 5. Average teacher salary relative to other professions requiring a comparable level of qualification, by country and level of education, latest year available




*Source*: UIS database (February 2026 release)

*Note*: The latest available year varies by country (2017–2023). Countries are ranked according to the values for upper secondary education, from highest to lowest. Where values are identical across education levels, points overlap and may appear as a single marker (e.g., Angola, Colombia and Qatar).

## Work-life balance and wellbeing affect teacher retention

Workload and work-life balance are among the most persistent challenges facing the teaching profession worldwide. Across regions, teachers consistently identify excessive workload as a major source of stress and a barrier to professional wellbeing (Arnold & Rahimi, 2024). This concern is echoed by teacher organizations globally, with 60% of 128 teacher unions across 94 countries reporting that achieving a healthy work-life balance is not feasible for many teachers (UNESCO & TTF, 2024). Similar findings emerge at the national level. In England and Wales, 83% of teachers report that reducing workload would have the greatest positive impact on their wellbeing (NEU, 2024).

Together, these findings highlight the central role that manageable workloads and work-life balance play in supporting teacher wellbeing, job satisfaction and retention. Although teaching is often perceived as comprising the majority of teachers' workload, much of their working time is in fact devoted to preparation, follow-up and administrative tasks. Teachers average around 19 hours of direct instruction per week, yet their total working week can reach approximately 60 hours, with much of the additional workload undertaken as unpaid overtime (Walker, 2023; 2024; BBC, 2014; Green, 2021; OECD, 2022; UNESCO & TTF, 2024).

Excessive workloads and limited flexibility can make it difficult for teachers to balance professional and personal responsibilities. For example, 47% of teachers responding to the State of the Teacher survey in the United States reported difficulties taking time off for medical appointments, family responsibilities or personal administrative matters (Bowser et al., 2026). Research links these pressures to higher levels of stress, burnout and reduced job satisfaction. Addressing these challenges requires systemic responses that go beyond individual coping strategies. Policies that reduce unnecessary administrative burdens, protect time for preparation and professional learning, and promote healthy working conditions can strengthen teacher wellbeing and contribute to the attractiveness and sustainability of the profession.

## Supportive school environments strengthen teacher wellbeing

The resources and support available to teachers have a direct impact on their effectiveness, wellbeing and job satisfaction. Access to learning materials, teaching aids, infrastructure and student support services enables teachers to respond more effectively to learners' needs, while resource shortages can increase workloads and constrain learning outcomes (Chatila & Vavrus, 2023; Arnold & Rahimi, 2024). Reflecting these concerns, only around half of teacher unions globally believe that governments adequately address issues related to the equitable distribution of educational resources, class sizes and protection against work-related violence (Arnold & Rahimi, 2024).

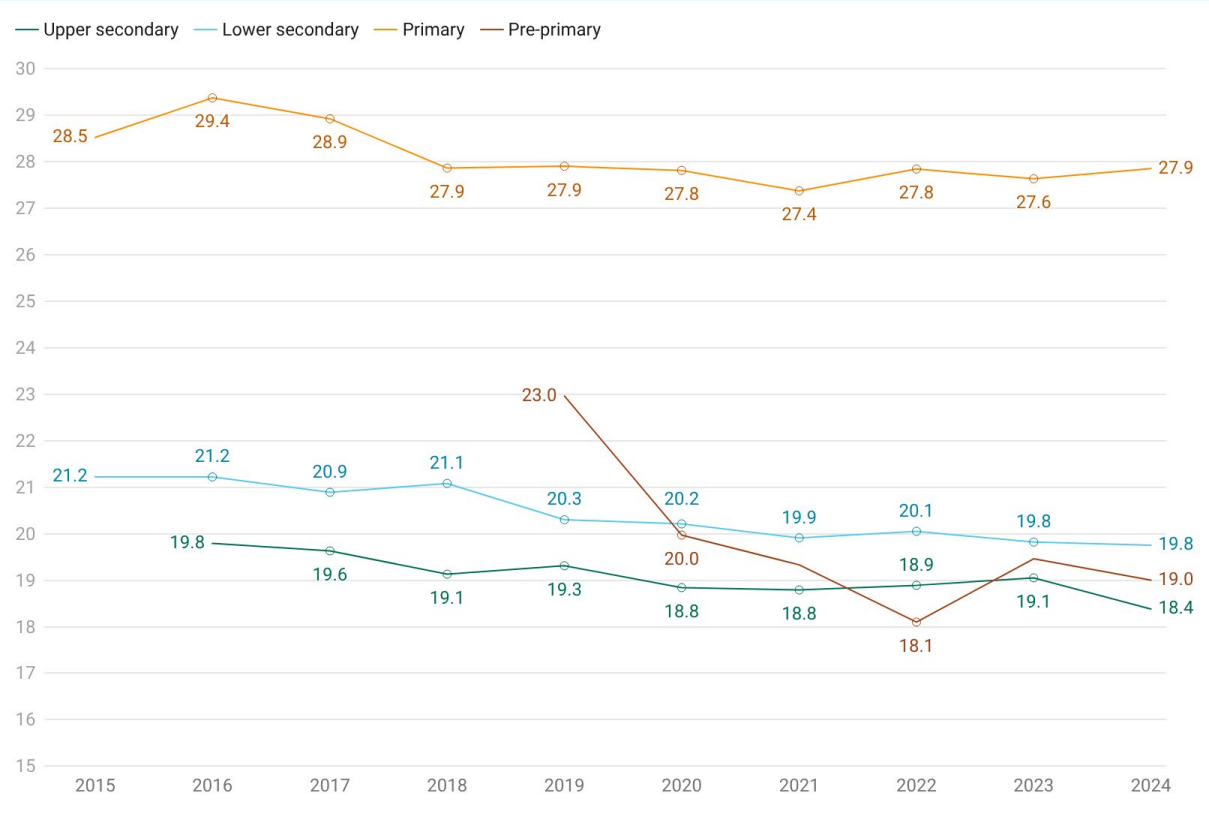
The availability of psychologists, counsellors, therapists and behavioural support staff can also contribute to safer and more supportive school environments for both students and teachers (McMahon et al., 2020; OECD, 2025; UNESCO & TTF, 2024). Evidence from TALIS 2024 suggests that teachers who experience discipline and behavioural problems are, on average, twice as likely to consider leaving the profession within the next five years (OECD, 2025). Teachers themselves frequently identify these conditions as affecting their wellbeing. The National Education Union's 2024 survey of more than 8,000 teachers in England and Wales found that 95% cited poor work-life balance as a source of stress (NEU, 2024). Creating supportive school environments is therefore important not only for student wellbeing but also for teacher wellbeing, job satisfaction and retention.

## Class size and staffing shape teaching conditions

Class size and teacher availability are important determinants of teachers' working conditions. Larger classes can increase workload, reduce opportunities for individualized support and make classroom management more challenging. According to UIS data, primary education continues to have the highest average pupil-trained teacher ratio globally at 28:1, while pre-primary education recorded the largest improvement, declining from 23 to 19 pupils per teacher between 2019 and 2024 (Figure 6).

Over the same period, gross enrolment increased at both primary and secondary levels, with the largest increase occurring in upper secondary education, where enrolment rose from 66.6% to 69.9%. These trends underline the importance of ensuring that investments in teacher supply keep pace with growing participation in education so that teaching and learning conditions remain conducive to quality education.

**Figure 6. Pupil-teacher ratio by level of education, world (headcount basis, 2015–2024)**




*Source*: UIS database (February 2026 release)

# Recommendations

## Ensure competitive salaries and benefits.

Provide salaries and benefits that are competitive with other professions requiring similar qualifications. Competitive remuneration supports teacher recruitment and retention while signalling the value that societies place on teaching as a profession (Arnold & Rahimi, 2024).

## Improve working conditions through targeted retention and incentive measures.

Education systems can strengthen teacher attraction and retention by combining financial incentives with improved working conditions, particularly in hard-to-staff schools and regions. Examples from recent UNESCO case studies illustrate a range of approaches. In France, primary teachers working in disadvantaged schools, including those within the Réseau d'éducation prioritaire renforcé (REP+) network, receive retention bonuses, location-based incentives, reduced workloads and additional release time for professional activities. France has also introduced job profiling mechanisms to support more flexible teacher deployment and better align teachers' skills with school needs. In Peru, teachers working in hard-to-staff schools may receive financial incentives of up to 30% of their base salary, a measure that significantly increased applications to positions in underserved locations. These examples demonstrate how targeted incentives can improve recruitment and retention while supporting more equitable teacher distribution.

## Promote safe and supportive school environments.

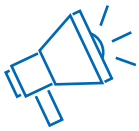
Invest in psychologists, counsellors, behavioural support specialists and violence-prevention measures to create safer and more supportive learning environments. Reducing behavioural challenges and violence in schools can strengthen teacher wellbeing, improve working conditions and support teacher retention.

## Reduce unnecessary workload and administrative burden.

Protect dedicated time for lesson preparation, assessment, collaboration and professional learning. Resource-sharing platforms, collaborative planning initiatives and streamlined administrative processes can help reduce workload pressures while supporting teacher effectiveness, wellbeing and professional development.

**Box 1: Looking ahead**

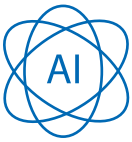
**Emerging issues shaping the future of the teaching profession**



Elevating teacher voice in education policy and reform



Investing in teachers as a foundation for quality education




Teaching in the age of artificial intelligence



Addressing learning, literacy and critical-thinking challenges



Building a more diverse and gender-balanced teaching profession



Preparing teachers for climate change, crises and uncertainty

# Closing message

Sixty years after the adoption of the ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers, its core vision remains as relevant as ever: quality education depends on a respected, qualified, and supported teaching profession. Evidence from across regions demonstrates that teacher status is shaped by interconnected social, professional, and material factors that influence recruitment, retention, motivation, and effectiveness. While progress has been made in expanding access to education and strengthening teacher preparation, persistent shortages, rising attrition, and evolving professional demands highlight the need for renewed commitment. Elevating teacher status is not only a matter of supporting educators, but a prerequisite for building resilient education systems and achieving quality learning for all.

As the international community commemorates the sixtieth anniversary of the Recommendation, World Teachers' Day 2026 presents a timely opportunity to renew the promise made to teachers around the world and to advance it through a new chapter of global commitment and action. UNESCO and the ILO have launched a joint revision of the 1966 Recommendation, convening an Independent Expert Group to guide the process through mid-2027, with the adoption of the revised text anticipated at an Intergovernmental Conference. Early technical discussions are currently centred on the issues of today's classrooms: equity, inclusion and gender equality, the rise of digital technologies, and the protection of teacher autonomy and academic freedom. The challenges facing the profession have changed, but the principles remain constant: teachers deserve recognition, professional trust, meaningful participation, and conditions that enable them to thrive. Strengthening the status of teachers is one of the most effective investments governments and societies can make in the future of education. As the Recommendation enters a new phase, its revision offers an opportunity to build on sixty years of progress while ensuring that teaching remains an attractive, valued, and sustainable profession for generations to come.

# Bibliography

Alexander, C., Wyatt-Smith, C., & A. Du Plessis. (2020) The role of motivations and perceptions on the retention of inservice teachers. Teaching and Teacher Education. (96) 103186. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2020.103186

Alhamdan, B., Al-Saadi, K., Baroutsis, A., Du Plessis, A., Hamid, O., & E. Honan. (2014). Media representation of teachers across five countries. Comparative Education. (50) 4: 490-505. https://doi.org/10.1080/03050068.2013.853476

Arnold, B. & Rahimi, M. (2024). Global Status of Teachers 2024. Brussels: Education International (EI).

BBC. (2014) "What hours do teachers really work?" https://www.bbc.com/news/education-27087942

Bowser, K., Stiner, E., & S. Doan. (2026) " Good for teachers, good for students: Improving teacher work-life balance, well-being, and benefits". National Council on Teacher Quality. https://www.nctq.org/research-insights/good-for-teachers-good-for-students-improving-teacher-work-life-balance-well-being-and-benefits/

Chatila, S. & F. Vavrus. (2023). Challenges and Opportunities for the Teaching Profession: A Trend Analysis of the Triennial Reports of the Committee of Experts on the Application of the Recommendations concerning Teaching Personnel (CEART). University of Minnesota: Education International.

Coppe, T. (2024) Teacher networks: From a catalyst for enactment of professional development to a source of professional development, Teachers and Teaching, 30:3, 380-393, DOI: 10.1080/13540602.2023.2263734

Cottle, Simon. 2009. "Journalism and Globalization." In The Handbook of Journalism Studies, edited by K. Wahl-Jorgensen, and T. Hanitzsch, 341-356. New York: Routledge

Førland, O., & Roxå, T. (2023). Establishing reward systems for excellence in teaching – the experience of academics pioneering a reward system. European Journal of Higher Education, 14(3), 451–469. https://doi.org/10.1080/21568235.2023.2214713

Green, F. (2021) British Teachers' Declining Job Quality: Evidence from the Skills and Employment Survey. Oxford Review of Education. (47) 3: 386-403. https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2020.1847719

Ladd, H.F. and Sorensen, L.C. (2017) Returns to Teacher Experience: Student Achievement and Motivation in Middle School. Education Finance and Policy 12(2), pp. 241–279. doi: 10.1162/EDFP_a_00194.

Lim, J. (2021) Strengthening teachers' morale through awards and recognition approach. International Journal of Research Studies in Education. (10) 9: 15-22.

Mackenzie, N. (2007) Teacher morale: more complex than we think? The Australian Educational Researcher. (34) 1: 89-104

McMahon, S., Peist, E., Davis, J., McConnell, E., Reaves, S., Reddy, L., Anderman, E., & D. Espelage. (2020) Addressing Violence Against Teachers: A Social-Ecological Analysis of Teachers' Perspectives. Wiley: Psychol Schs. 57:1040–1056. https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.22382

Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation. (2025). Educators as Policy Makers. Government of Malta. https://education.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Education-Policy-Educators-as-Policy-Makers.pdf

National Education Union (NEU). (2024) State of education: workload and wellbeing. https://neu.org.uk/latest/press-releases/state-education-workload-and-wellbeing

Noddings, Nel. 1997. "Must We Motivate?" In Teaching and its Discontents, edited by N. Burbules, and D. Hansen, 29-44. Boulder: Westview Press.

Nguyen et al. (2024) Leadership for teacher retention: Exploring the evidence base on why and how to support teacher autonomy, development, and voice. Oxford Review of Education. https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2024.2432635

Oddone, K. (2022) The nature of teachers' professional learning through a personal learning network: Individual, social and digitally connected. Teaching and Teacher Education: Leadership and Professional Development. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tatelp.2022.100001

OECD (2022), Education at a Glance 2022: OECD Indicators, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/3197152b-en

OECD (2025). Results from TALIS 2024: The State of Teaching, TALIS, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/90df6235-en.

Papay, John P., Eric S. Taylor, John H. Tyler, and Mary E. Laski. (2020). Learning Job Skills from Colleagues at Work: Evidence from a Field Experiment Using Teacher Performance Data. American Economic Journal: Economic Policy 12 (1): 359–88. DOI: 10.1257/pol.20170709

Podolsky, A., Kini, T. and Darling-Hammond, L. (2019). Does teaching experience increase teacher effectiveness? A review of US research. Journal of Professional Capital and Community 4(4), pp. 286–308. doi: 10.1108/JPCC-12-2018-0032.

Rizvi, M. (2023). Juxtaposition of being professional and becoming professional: lessons from a nationwide study on teachers' conceptions of their professional status. Front. Educ. 8:1201627. doi: 10.3389/feduc.2023.1201627

Shaoan, M., Namanyane, T., Feng, M., & M. Arif. (2025) A systematic literature review on the importance of teacher recruitment and retention in global educational reform. Frontiers in Education. 9: 1447752. doi: 10.3389/feduc.2024.1447752

UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2026) UIS February 2026 Database.

UNESCO. (2026) Planning for an attractive, competent, diverse and sustainable teaching profession in Ireland. Paris: UNESCO.

UNESCO & International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030. (2024). Global Report on Teachers: Addressing teacher shortages and transforming the profession. Paris: UNESCO.

Walker, T. (2023) "Survey: Teachers Work More Hours Per Week Than Other Working Adults". NEA News. https://www.nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/survey-teachers-work-more-hours-week-other-working-adults

Walker, T. (2024) " How Teachers View Their Pay and Benefits". NEA News. https://www.nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/how-teachers-view-their-pay-and-benefits

Yip, S., Jiang, J., Peng Y. & S. Zeng. (2025) Making teaching more attractive: a synthesis of global research on teacher status. Globalisation, Societies and Education, DOI: 10.1080/14767724.2025.2509290

**UNESCO – a global leader in education**

Education is UNESCO's top priority because it is a basic human right and the foundation for peace and sustainable development. UNESCO is the United Nations' specialized agency for education, providing global and regional leadership to drive progress, strengthening the resilience and capacity of national systems to serve all learners. UNESCO also leads efforts to respond to contemporary global challenges through transformative learning, with special focus on gender equality and Africa across all actions.

**The Global Education 2030 Agenda**

UNESCO, as the United Nations' specialized agency for education, is entrusted to lead and coordinate the Education 2030 Agenda, which is part of a global movement to eradicate poverty through 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Education, essential to achieve all of these goals, has its own dedicated Goal 4, which aims to ***"ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all."*** The Education 2030 Framework for Action provides guidance for the implementation of this ambitious goal and commitments.

unesco
United Nations
Educational, Scientific
and Cultural Organization

Education 2030

ED-2025/WS/

## Stay in touch

**teacherstaskforce@unesco.org**

**www.unesco.org/en/teachers**
**www.teachertaskforce.org/**

**Follow @UNESCO on social media**

4 QUALITY EDUCATION

Sustainable Development Goals