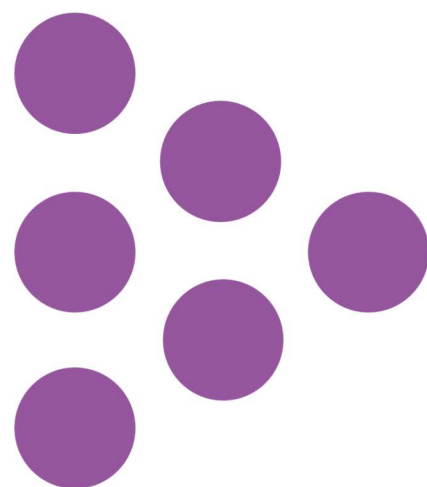


## Technical Report

# Teacher Labour Market in England: Annual Report 2025

## Methodology appendix

**National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER)**



# **Teacher Labour Market in England: Annual Report 2025 – Methodology appendix**

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Published in March 2025

By the National Foundation for Educational Research,  
The Mere, Upton Park, Slough, Berkshire SL1 2DQ

<https://www.nfer.ac.uk/>

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Registered Charity No. 313392

ISBN: 978-1-916567-26-9

How to cite this publication:

McLean, D. and Worth, J. (2025). Teacher Labour Market in England: Annual Report 2025 – Methodology appendix. Slough: NFER.

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## 1. Introduction

This methodology appendix explains the data we used and the analysis we undertook to produce our findings in the 2025 Teacher Labour Market in England Annual Report. Section 2 lists all of the secondary data sources we used in the analysis. The remaining sections then each cover methodological detail relevant to the analysis in each section of the main report.

Section 3 explains how we used data from the School Workforce Census (SWC), initial teacher training (ITT) census and DfE Apply data to report on the ITT recruitment and teacher retention figures. This section also includes detail on how we used ITT application statistics to forecast this year's ITT recruitment. It also outlines how we summarised data from the Teacher Regulation Agency (TRA) and the Home Office to analyse trends in qualified teacher status (QTS) recognition and visa applications from foreign teachers.

Section 4 discusses how we used data from the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD) and from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) to show how teacher pay has become less competitive over time.

Finally, Section 5 shows how we used the Labour Force Survey (LFS) to measure teachers' working hours and perceptions of their workload along with the prevalence of flexible working in the graduate labour force. This section explains key variable definitions, provides sample sizes and outlines our methodology for identifying teachers and similar graduates in the LFS data.

## 2. Data sources

The following data sources were used to inform this research report:

- Initial Teacher Training: Trainee Number Census. Available: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-teacher-training>
- Monthly initial teacher training applications. Available: <https://www.apply-for-teacher-training.service.gov.uk/publications/monthly-statistics>
- Postgraduate initial teacher training targets. Available: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/postgraduate-initial-teacher-training-targets>
- School Workforce in England. Available: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-school-workforce>
- Further education workforce. Available: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/further-education-workforce>
- Schools, pupils and their characteristics. Available: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>
- LFS. Available from UK Data Service. More information: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/methodologies/labourforcesurveyuserguidance>
- ASHE. Available from the Office for National Statistics (ONS). More information: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/surveys/informationforbusinesses/businesssurveys/annualsurveyofhoursandearningsashe>
- Working lives of teachers and leaders: wave 2 summary report. Available: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-lives-of-teachers-and-leaders-wave-2/working-lives-of-teachers-and-leaders-wave-2-summary-report>
- Working lives of teachers and leaders: wave 3. Available: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-lives-of-teachers-and-leaders-wave-3>
- Teaching Regulation Agency annual reports. Most recent report available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teaching-regulation-agency-annual-report-and-accounts-2023-to-2024>
- Home Office immigration system statistics data tables. Available: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/immigration-system-statistics-data-tables>

## 3. Teacher recruitment and retention analysis

### 3.1. Recruitment in the 2024/25 cycle

Our reporting on overall initial teacher training (ITT) recruitment relative to target was based on figures collected in the Department for Education's (DfE) ITT Census, for the 2024/25 cycle. This data provides a time series of how overall postgraduate ITT recruitment compared to target, from 2015/16 to 2024/25. The data also provides breakdowns by numerous characteristics, including subject and nationality of the trainee, which we used for our reporting.

### 3.2. Forecast of recruitment for the 2025/26 cycle

Our forecast of ITT recruitment in 2025/26 was based on monthly ITT applications data, made up to February 2025. The data is collected by the DfE Apply platform through which all applications for postgraduate ITT in England have been made since 2022/23 (except for applications to Teach First and those that are made directly to providers).

We forecast end-of-cycle recruitment based on placed applicants in primary and secondary subjects. We used placed applicants rather than total applicants as there is more confidence that placed applicants are likely to be reflective of the actual number of trainees that enrol in an ITT course.

For primary and all secondary subjects, we made the forecast based on how many placed applicants there were in February 2024 and how this compared to end-of-cycle recruitment in the ITT Census for 2024/25. We then analysed how the number of placed applicants in February 2025 compared to the previous year and what this implies about the end of the current cycle, assuming recruitment trends are similar to the previous year.

We then compared these forecasts to DfE's recruitment targets for the 2024/25 cycle.<sup>1</sup> We divided the total forecast recruitment in primary and each secondary subject by its recruitment target to determine what proportion of the target is forecast to be met by recruitment this year.

We estimated uncertainty in the forecast by comparing how forecasts compared to actual recruitment in previous years. We used the under- and over-predictions from previous years' forecasts to generate an estimate of the confidence interval in the current year's forecast.

Overall, the forecast performs well. ITT forecasts for the 2024/25 cycle were generally within the margin of error for most subjects. The forecasts also tend to be more informative than a naïve estimate of recruitment based simply on last year's recruitment (Jack Worth [[@JackWorthNFER](#)], 2023).

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<sup>1</sup> We used the previous year's targets in our forecast because targets for 2025/26 were not yet published at the time of analysis.

### **3.3. Analysis of international ITT recruitment and recognition of foreign qualifications**

Our findings on international ITT recruitment were based on analysis of data from the DfE's Apply for Teacher Training system. To identify the countries which were the biggest sources of international applications to ITT, we relied on individual application-level data provided to us by the DfE (covering the years 2021-2023). For this analysis, we focussed just on the applications that were made by applicants domiciled outside of the UK. We then tabulated the number of applicants domiciled in each non-UK country and chose the top four countries for reporting. We chose to report only the top four countries because they accounted for around three-quarters of non-UK-domiciled applicants.

To calculate the proportion of applications by subject made by non-domiciled applicants, we relied on the monthly DfE Apply data summaries published publicly online. We used the monthly summaries, rather than the individual application-level data, as it was already clean data and also provides more recent summaries (up to February 2025). We tabulated the total number of applicants who applied to an ITT course in physics, modern foreign languages (MFL) and all other subjects and calculated the proportion of these applications who were domiciled outside of the UK (i.e. either in the European Economic Area (EEA) or in another country in the 'Rest of the World').

The data also reports the number of applicants in each subject and domicile group who have their applications accepted and rejected. We therefore calculate rejection rates by dividing the total number of rejected applicants by the total number of applicants. Rejection is not the only outcome an applicant can receive for their ITT application (it can be withdrawn, deferred or provisionally accepted, for instance). However, ITT providers must make an active decision to reject an application, so rejection rates are likely to be the best reflection of the number of candidates who fail to meet the minimum criteria for entry onto a course.

For our analysis of QTS recognitions, we rely on data published directly in the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) annual reports. We used reports from 2019/20 to 2023/24 for tabulations of the number of QTS recognitions awarded within each of these years, while the 2018/19 report contained data back to 2012/13.

We sourced statistics on visas granted to foreign teachers from the Home Office Immigration System Statistics. For this analysis, we focussed on the number of Skilled Workers Visas granted under the 'Teaching Professionals' minor occupational group. While foreign teachers may be able to obtain visas to enter the UK via other channels, the Skilled Workers Visa is likely to be the most common.

The statistics on visa grants are reported quarterly (based on calendar years). We calculated the total number of visa grants approximating the academic year. For instance, for the 2021/22 academic year, we calculated the total number of visa grants as the sum of Q4 2021 plus Q1-Q3 2022.

### **3.4. Analysis of retention rates**

Our analysis of teacher retention was based on published figures from the School Workforce Census (SWC). The SWC reports the proportion of the full-time equivalent (FTE) workforce lost due to deaths, retirements and teachers leaving service. Our reporting was based on the total proportion lost due to any reason (which the DfE refers to as ‘wastage’).

Our analysis of retention rates for first-year early career teachers (ECTs) was based on DfE’s ‘retention grid’, which shows teacher leaving rates within the first few years of a teacher’s career, split by entry cohort. For our analysis, we focussed only on retention one and two years after qualifying, for those who qualified between 2010/11 and 2022/23.

### **3.5. Analysis of vacancy rates, class sizes and the number of unqualified and subject specialist teachers**

Our overall analysis of how vacancy rates and the number of unqualified and non-specialist teachers has changed over time was also based on published figures from the SWC. The SWC reports a time series of school vacancy rates (reported as of November each academic year) and the proportion of teaching staff who are unqualified (i.e. do not hold QTS).

For vacancy rates, we reported the total vacancy plus temporarily-filled vacancy rate in our reporting. This was for consistency between the overall vacancy rate statistics and our analysis of vacancy rates by the deprivation of schools’ intakes. For the proportion of teaching staff who were unqualified, we took the number of unqualified teachers (adjusted to full-time equivalents (FTE)) and divided this by the number of FTE-adjusted teachers in primary and secondary schools.

To calculate what proportion of teachers were subject specialists, we used the published data from the SWC. Specifically, for each secondary subject, we observed what proportion of teachers held ‘any relevant post A-level qualification’ in that subject. This was to capture teachers who may not necessarily have a degree qualification in their teaching subject but who nonetheless trained in that subject during ITT (and therefore should be considered a subject specialist).

For class sizes, we relied on statistics published by the DfE as part of its *Schools, pupils and their characteristics* data release. This data release reports the average class size, split by phase, across the education system, which we used for our reporting. We calculated the proportion of pupils in ‘large’ classes by taking the total number of pupils in classes of 30 pupils or more and dividing this by the total number of primary and secondary pupils each year.

Finally, our analysis of these characteristics across deprivation levels of a schools’ intake is taken from NFER analysis of record-level SWC data undertaken as part of our updated data dashboard. For specific details on how the measures are defined, please see the dashboard webpage (NFER, 2025).



## 4. Analysis of the competitiveness of teacher pay over time

### 4.1. Growth in real-terms pay by scale point

We calculated how pay has changed at each pay scale point primarily by using data (from 2010/11 to 2024/25) on teacher pay at each scale point as published in the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD). We use the Rest of England pay scales, which differ to the Inner London, Outer London and London Fringe pay scales in pay level, but are similar in trend over time relative to 2010/11 level. To show how pay has fallen in real terms, we adjusted for inflation using the Consumer Price Index with Housing (CPI-H), averaged over the four quarters of each fiscal year.<sup>2</sup> As a final step, we calculated growth since 2010/11 by dividing pay at each scale point in each year (after adjusting for inflation) by what it was in 2010/11.

Our forecast of future real earnings growth was based on the Office for Budget Responsibility's (OBR) October 2024 projections. We used these projections (which are based on fiscal years), combined with the OBR's forecast of fiscal-year CPI inflation<sup>3</sup> to estimate real earnings growth from 2025/26 to 2029/30.

### 4.2. The position teachers hold in the income distribution of full-time workers in England

To analyse how teachers' position in the income distribution in England has changed over time, we used data from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) for 2011 to 2024 (the last year of available data at time of publication). Since the ASHE is collected in April of each year, we re-aligned the data so that the 2011 ASHE represented the 2010/11 academic year while 2024 represented the 2023/24 academic year.

Our sample consisted of individuals in the ASHE working full-time in one 'main job'. For those working in a 'main job' and an 'additional job', we discarded the 'additional job'. For those working in multiple part-time jobs or multiple full-time jobs, we discarded their records altogether. We also discarded anyone not on a permanent employment contract, anyone with missing earnings records or occupation / industry codes, anyone working a junior pay rate or who were on an apprenticeship and anyone whose earnings were affected by leave.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> That is, we averaged over the CPI-H for Q2 to Q1 for each year. While the fiscal year does not align with the academic year, using the fiscal year CPI-H greatly simplified the real earnings growth forecasting we performed as part of the analysis. CPI-H data is not yet available for fiscal year 2024/25, so we used the OBR CPI forecast for this year.

<sup>3</sup> OBR projections forecast future changes in CPI inflation, not CPI-H inflation. However, the two series are similar and projections of CPI inflation are a reasonable approximation of CPI-H inflation.

<sup>4</sup> We included in the analysis those who were put on furlough during the Covid-19 pandemic but who were still paid at their full rate of pay. We excluded those who were put on furlough where it impacted their earnings. Due to small sample sizes in 2020 (when the collection of the ASHE was impacted by the

The ASHE has some known limitations, such as non-coverage of those in self-employment, relatively high non-response rates and non-sampling bias (since the ASHE only samples jobs registered on a pay as you earn (PAYE) scheme). To minimise the impact of these limitations, we applied the ASHE calibration weight to our analysis. This helped to ensure that our estimates were weighted to be representative of the entire labour force in England, as per the Labour Force Survey (LFS). The total sample size of individuals in our main analysis sample each year is provided in Table 1.

Using our full sample of full-time teachers and non-teachers, for each year from 2010/11 to 2023/24, we estimated each percentile of the income distribution (i.e. we estimated 100 percentiles so that each represented one per cent of the income distribution). Using historical data from the STPCD, we then determined in which percentile each pay point sat in each year. For instance starting salaries in 2010/11 were £21,588. This was in the 38<sup>th</sup> percentile as the 38<sup>th</sup> percentile was just lower than this amount, while the 39<sup>th</sup> percentile was just higher. We did not adjust the estimated percentiles for inflation as each calculation involved nominal-terms comparisons of pay scales and percentiles of the income distribution within the same year.

**Table 1: Sample sizes for ASHE analysis**

Year	Total in-sample full-time workers in England
2011	112,647
2012	108,029
2013	108,491
2014	110,130
2015	108,752
2016	105,990
2017	107,177
2018	107,162
2019	104,746
2020	69,969
2021	76,547
2022	83,632

pandemic), excluding all workers on furlough would have dramatically reduced sample sizes and likely also had implications for the occupational composition of the sample.

2023	93,793
2024	99,540

Source: NFER analysis of ASHE data for 2011 to 2024

## 5. Analysis of teachers' perceptions of their workload compared to similar graduates

Our analysis of teachers' workload and perceptions of their workload primarily used data from the LFS. The advantage of using the LFS data, compared to other sources of information such as the Working Lives of Teachers and Leaders (WLTL) survey was two-fold. First, the LFS data enabled us to measure how working hours and workload perceptions have changed over time (particularly since the pandemic). Secondly, it also enabled us to compare how working hours and workload perceptions compare to those in other occupations (and how this difference has changed over time).

The analysis involved several key steps, including identifying teachers and a suitable comparison group in the data, ensuring comparability in the two groups, and defining the key indicators for reporting.

### 5.1. Identifying teachers and a suitable comparison group

In the LFS data, we defined our sample of teachers as those employed in England's state-funded primary, secondary and special schools. We used standard occupational codes (SOC) and standard industrial classifications (SIC) to identify teachers in our primary sample. Specifically, we defined our sample as:

- Industry (SIC) = 'Primary education' or 'General secondary education'
- Occupation (SOC) = 'Primary and nursery education teaching professionals' or 'Secondary education teaching professionals' or 'Special needs education teaching professionals' or 'Senior professionals of educational establishments'
- Country of work = 'England'
- Sector = 'Public'.

We specifically excluded from our definition the following occupations:

- 'Teaching and Educational Professionals not elsewhere classified', which includes adult education tutors, education consultants and private tutors
- 'Education advisers and school inspectors'
- 'Higher education teaching professionals'
- 'Further education teaching professionals'.

For our comparison group, we included all those in the LFS with at least an undergraduate degree who were working in any private or public sector occupation outside of teaching. We identified graduates across all years using the *HIQUAL* variable, which records the highest level of education achieved by the respondent. We used graduates as our comparison group (rather than professionals) because NFER research has shown that a significant proportion of teachers who leave teaching leave for other, non-professional occupations (Worth and McLean, 2022).

Therefore, comparing teachers to a wider group of graduates likely includes all the graduate-level occupations that teachers may be more likely to actually consider transitioning into.

Comparing teachers to all graduate employees in a meaningful way is challenging because the two groups are likely to differ in a number of important ways. For example, they may be different because people with different characteristics or motivations select to go into different occupations. No comparison of different occupations should therefore be interpreted as the effect of entering that profession, although working conditions, and employees' perceptions of them, can be influenced by entering that occupation rather than another.

We aimed to improve the comparability of our analysis as much as we could. Instead of comparing all teachers to all graduate employees, we analysed a group of graduates with similar characteristics to teachers. We did so by re-weighting the graduates group to improve comparability in the underlying personal characteristics between the teacher and graduates groups. This ensured that the distribution of gender, age and region was the same among the teachers and the group of graduates. We used a technique called entropy balancing to re-weight the graduates group within each survey wave and derive a 'similar graduates' group (Hainmueller, 2012). This re-weighting approach did not remove all the underlying differences in characteristics and motivations between teachers and 'other graduates'. However, it minimised the risk that any observed differences in working conditions were driven by differences in the distribution of gender, age and region between the two groups.

## **5.2. Sample sizes and analytical approach**

We conducted the analysis using an approximation to an academic year, combining the four quarterly LFS datasets from the beginning of October to the end of the following September. For the analysis, we used the cross-sectional analysis weights provided in the data set, ensuring the analysis was representative of UK households, and therefore, of English teachers in the state sector.

The sample sizes in the LFS analysis are shown in Table 2. Sample sizes for each individual measure differed, depending on the extent of missing data for each measure. The sample sizes of both teachers and other graduates have generally been falling slightly over time, which is due to falling response rates to the LFS across the whole population (Office for National Statistics, 2024b).

In the main report we presented the results from a simple average of each measure for teachers and similar graduates, split by year. We used a weighted average, with the weight reflecting the cross-sectional survey weight of the respondent and the entropy balancing weight. Where we compared our key measures over time and between teachers and similar graduates, we tested whether any differences were statistically significant by conducting a t-test that the difference was statistically significantly different from zero.

**Table 2: Sample sizes for LFS analysis**

Year	Number of teachers	Number of similar graduates
2010/11	3,721	31,074
2011/12	4,097	36,782
2012/13	3,861	37,566
2013/14	4,028	40,293
2014/15	3,790	39,489
2015/16	3,681	38,487
2016/17	3,367	39,620
2017/18	3,334	40,881
2018/19	3,110	39,553
2019/20	3,000	38,209
2020/21	3,275	42,253
2021/22	2,976	38,536
2022/23	1,844	29,189
2023/24	1,415	22,966

Source: NFER analysis of Labour Force Survey data for 2010/11 to 2023/24

### 5.3. Variables used in the analysis

The questions in the LFS survey which we reported on are as follows:

#### Full-time working hours in the reference week

*Source:* LFS. Average (mean) response to ‘Thinking now about the seven days ending Sunday the [last week], how many hours did you actually work in your (main) job/business – please exclude meal breaks?’ Only includes respondents who reported being scheduled to work on every day from Monday-Friday in the reference week and did not have any days off in the reference week due to being sick/injured. Only includes respondents working full-time. Excludes respondents where working hours during the week are zero.

### **Proportion full-time wanting to work fewer hours**

*Source:* LFS. The measure is derived from a combination of responses and routed questions - see LFS user guide for details. Proportion of respondents: 'Would you rather work shorter hours than in your present job?' Full-time teachers and similar graduates only.

### **Proportion who usually work evenings**

*Source:* LFS. The average proportion who responded 'during the evening' to the question: 'Within your regular pattern of work is it usual for you to work:

- during the day
- during the evening
- at night?

### **Proportion who mainly work from home**

*Source:* LFS. The proportion who responded with either 'In your own home', 'In the same grounds or buildings as your home' or 'In different places using home as a base' to the question 'In your main job do you work mainly:'

- In your own home
- In the same grounds or buildings as your home
- In different places using home as a base
- Or somewhere quite separate from home

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**NFER ref.** NUTR

ISBN. 978-1-916567-26-9

