

Teacher well-being

Teachers were asked to indicate how frequently they experienced specific challenges regarding their own well-being in their role. They could respond with 'Never', 'Rarely', 'Sometimes', or 'Often'.

The responses in the sections below are from teachers who reported experiencing the challenges either 'Sometimes' or 'Often'.

Students with teachers experiencing well-being challenges

The results in Table TT2.11 show the percentage of students who have a teacher who is either 'Sometimes' or 'Often' experiencing well-being challenges in their role.

In Tonga, on average, 68% of students had teachers who 'Often' or 'Sometimes' experienced stress in their role, while 60% had teachers who 'Often' or 'Sometimes' felt overwhelmed by their role. Across the PILNA countries, the proportions of students with teachers who 'Often' or 'Sometimes' experienced stress ranged between 52% and 100%. Most teachers in Tonga are experiencing work-related stress and feelings of being overwhelmed due to their role and these feelings are relatively frequent.

Nearly one out of three students have a teacher who believes their job is having an adverse effect on their mental health (29%), and their physical health (30%).

Beyond these key findings, half or more students in Tonga have a teacher who has difficulty sleeping because they think about work-related issues (66%) and who reported they do not have time for their personal life (63%), to eat healthily (47%), or to exercise (62%) because of their job.

Table TT2.11

Percentage of students whose teachers frequently experience issues related to well-being

Issues	Students	
I experience stress in my work		68 % (3.9)
My job negatively impacts my mental health		29 % (3.9)
My job negatively impacts my physical health		30 % (5.1)
I have difficulty sleeping because I think about work-related issues		66 % (4.2)
I don't have time for my personal life because of my job		63 % (4.8)
I don't have time to eat healthily because of my job		47 % (4.2)
I don't have time to exercise because of my job		62 % (4.1)
I feel overwhelmed by my job		60 % (4.1)

Percentage of students whose teachers frequently experienced issues related to well-being, Tonga, PILNA 2021

() Standard errors appear in parentheses.

Teacher well-being and teacher characteristics

From the responses to the eight sentences about challenges to teacher well-being, a regional scale was formed. The more teachers agree with the statements that form the scale, the higher their scale scores and the lower their levels of well-being.

The PILNA scale for teacher well-being has an average of 200 and a standard deviation of 40. Most scores are expected to be within 40 points of 200 (160–240). This scale was formed using statistical analysis of all eight answers to questions that teachers were asked about their well-being.

Each teacher's scores on this scale were compared with several demographic factors and other qualities to see if any differences existed. These factors were gender (male or female), age group (either 20–35 or over 35 years old), teaching experience (either less than 10 years' experience or more than 10 years' experience), and their highest qualification (either below degree level or degree level and higher).

There were no well-being score differences between teachers with degree level or higher qualifications and teachers with below degree level qualifications, nor between female teachers and male teachers.

There were, however, significant differences found in the age group and teaching experience comparisons. Teachers over 35 years of age and teachers with more than ten years' teaching experience had higher well-being scores than teachers below 35 years of age and less than ten years' teaching experience.

What does this mean?

The results are worrying for teacher well-being. A high proportion of students in Tonga have teachers who are experiencing stress in their job and feeling overwhelmed by their job. About half the students have teachers who reported not having enough time for managing their well-being through their personal life – eating healthily and exercising – due to their job. Further, one in three students have teachers who believe their job is having an adverse effect on their physical and mental health. High proportions of students in Tonga are being taught by teachers who are experiencing well-being challenges in their job. It is important that the reasons for this are understood and that the appropriate support mechanisms are put in place to increase teacher well-being.

Some demographic factors may also be associated with teacher well-being. Older teachers and teachers with more teaching experience tended to have lower levels of well-being than younger, less experienced teachers. The reasons for this are unclear but it may suggest that newer teachers may have higher levels of resilience in coping with the stresses of the occupation than their more experienced counterparts.