



SC Teacher Exit Survey: Summary of Results for 2023–24

OCTOBER 2024

RESEARCH TEAM

Brian Cartiff, PhD

Svetlana Dmitrieva, PhD

Angela Starrett, PhD

In partnership with the Yvonne & Schuyler Moore Child
Development Research Center

SC TEACHER provides comprehensive research about South Carolina's educator workforce. We are expanding a robust statewide data network to report results that will inform policy and practice.

Suggested citation: Cartiff, B., Dmitrieva, S., & Starrett, A. (2024, October). *SC Teacher Exit Survey: Summary of results for 2023–24*. SC TEACHER. <https://sc-teacher.org/TES-summary-oct2024>

Table of Contents

1 HIGHLIGHTS

2 INTRODUCTION

5 Key Questions

6 Survey Administration

7 Data, Variables, and Analyses

12 KEY QUESTION 1:

What are the characteristics of South Carolina teachers leaving their current positions, and how can their movement best be described and classified?

15 Relationships Between South Carolina Exiting Teacher Profiles and Published Studies

16 KEY QUESTION 2:

What are the main reasons South Carolina teachers are leaving their positions? Are there meaningful differences among the motivating factors of those leaving to teach in other public schools (i.e., lateral movers) and those leaving public schools completely (i.e., leavers)?

19 Relationships Between South Carolina Teachers' Reasons for Mobility and Published Studies

20 KEY QUESTION 3:

What factors might influence teachers' decisions to return to public schools in South Carolina?

22 Relationships Between Teachers Returning to the Workforce and Published Studies

23 CONCLUSION

24 REFERENCES

29 TECHNICAL APPENDIX



SC Teacher Exit Survey Results

+ HIGHLIGHTS

Each year, SC TEACHER administers the SC Teacher Exit Survey to public K–12 classroom teachers who are not renewing their teaching contracts. The survey is designed to offer insights into how working conditions and other factors relate to teachers' decisions to either teach in another school district or leave the classroom. This report highlights the SC Teacher Exit Survey results for the 2023–24 academic year.

The SC Teacher Exit Survey is designed to categorize teachers into different types of mobility based on their professional choices and circumstances.

- **Retirees:** teachers who met the qualifications for retirement and chose to retire at the end of the academic year
- **Nonvoluntary leavers:** teachers whose contracts were not renewed due to various circumstances (e.g., position eliminated, school closure)
- **Role-changers:** teachers who remain in the education field but have transitioned to nonteaching roles, such as instructional coaching or administrative positions
- **Lateral movers:** teachers who will continue teaching but have moved to a different public school district
- **Leavers:** teachers who exited public education in South Carolina, either transitioning to a private or homeschool setting or leaving the profession entirely

Main Findings

- The percentage of nonvoluntary leavers dropped from 11% in 2022–23 to just over 4% in 2023–24. The percentage of retirees rose from about 18% in 2022–23 to just under 26% in 2023–24.
- In 2023–24, the percentage of lateral movers remained similar to results from 2022–23, indicating that about 2 out of every 5 teachers are leaving annually to teach in another district in South Carolina.
- For lateral movers changing positions, personal reasons and challenges around available job resources were more important factors in their decision to move. Leavers, on the other hand, emphasized the impact of job demands and state/district policies.
- The majority of teachers (68%) who were asked if they would consider a return to teaching in South Carolina public schools said they would. Of retirees, 70% indicated they would potentially return to teaching. Sixty-four percent of those leaving teaching in public schools and/or the profession said they might consider returning in the future.
- Smaller class sizes, salary increases, and protected planning time were the top three factors teachers indicated could influence their decision to return.

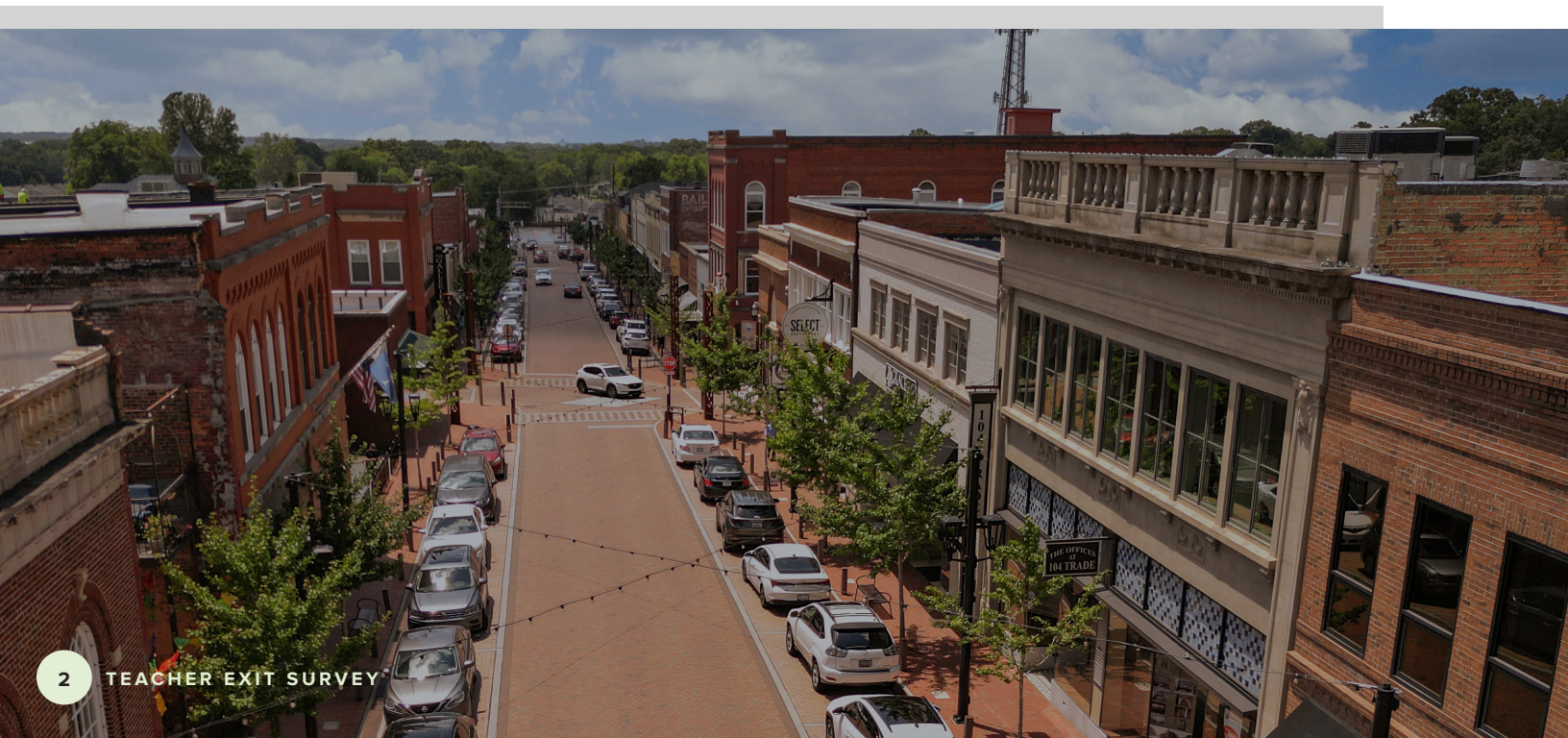
+ INTRODUCTION

Teachers contribute in innumerable ways to our schools and society. They cultivate their students' academic, social, and emotional growth. Teachers are the “backbone of our democracy – fostering curiosity and creativity, building skillful individuals, and strengthening informed citizens” (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). These contributions make the importance of finding and keeping high-quality educators difficult to overstate.

Despite their societal influence, there are major concerns around teacher shortages nationally and worldwide (e.g., Diliberti & Schwartz, 2023; Nguyen et al., 2022; UNESCO & International Task Force on Teachers for Education, 2024; Wiggan et al., 2021). The pandemic exacerbated preexisting issues in some schools and created new challenges in others (Darling-Hammond, 2022; Hamilton & Ercikan, 2022), contributing to increased teacher turnover at the end of the 2021–22 academic year (Camp et al., 2023; National Education Association, 2022). In South Carolina public schools, recent evidence seems to indicate that the heightened rate of attrition was a temporary phenomenon (Cartiff, Gao, & Starrett, 2024). However, districts still need to more clearly understand teacher movement in order to better inform plans for retaining teachers. This is especially true considering falling enrollment numbers in traditional teacher preparation programs (Partelow, 2019; Schaeffer, 2022).

Teacher retention and turnover can be challenging to study (Vagi & Pivovarova, 2017). Generally, teacher attrition has been found to be detrimental to student achievement (e.g., Guin, 2004; Ronfeldt et al., 2013) and school cohesion (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). However, as not all departing teachers are quitting the profession, overall effects on the teacher workforce may not be clear. For a more coherent picture of the educator labor market, it is critical to distinguish between teachers leaving their positions to teach at other public schools (i.e., lateral movers) and those leaving teaching completely for new careers outside of education (i.e., leavers) (Grissom et al., 2016).

In addition to these two primary mobility categories, teacher mobility can also refer to individuals who experience the following: (a) moving to a different position in education (e.g., school administration, district-level instructional coaching); (b) leaving to teach in private schools or homeschools; or (c) retiring. Research on teacher turnover needs to more precisely distinguish among mobility types to provide school leaders with more actionable feedback on how to better retain teachers, based on context. Additionally, research should delineate between teachers who choose to leave their positions and those not given the option to stay (i.e., nonvoluntary leavers; Palma-Vasquez et al., 2022). Many early studies on teacher turnover did not adequately address these nuances (Donaldson & Johnson, 2012; Sun et al., 2017).



Scholars have identified specific conditions associated with greater rates of attrition. Research has found that teachers are more likely to leave urban schools (e.g., Ingersoll, 2001; Papay et al., 2017), high-poverty schools (e.g., Djonko-Moore, 2016; Elfers et al., 2006; Guin, 2004), schools with lower-achieving students (e.g., Hanushek et al., 2004), and schools with greater percentages of under-served students (e.g., Guin, 2004; Scafidi et al., 2007). While these are important findings that should inform decision-making, they are not *reasons* teachers leave.

Other research has found various reasons motivating teachers to leave their positions. For some teachers, these are personal reasons, such as age (Whitener et al., 1997), health (Chambers Mack et al., 2019; Keogh & Roan, 2010; McFeely, 2018), and family responsibilities (Sun et al., 2017). Some teachers develop new career aspirations or decide that teaching is not the profession they envisioned (Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015). Others get frustrated with school systems offering few opportunities to advance or earn leadership roles (Brewer, 1996; McFeely, 2018). These teachers may switch careers or return to school to earn degrees in new fields (Luekens et al., 2004; McFeely, 2018).

Researchers have also found that systemic issues, such as working conditions, can influence teachers to quit their positions (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018; Tye & O'Brien, 2002).

Excessive demands, such as a high workload (Bryant et al., 2023; Tye & O'Brien, 2002) and frequent or severe student misbehavior (e.g., Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; McMahon et al., 2022), can factor into these decisions. Teachers also point to a lack of resources, such as administrative support (e.g., Boyd et al., 2011; Sun et al., 2017), positive collegial relationships (e.g., Allensworth et al., 2009; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004), or the autonomy to make meaningful decisions in their classrooms (e.g., Ingersoll, 2001; McConnell, 2017; Weiss, 1999), as reasons they leave their schools.





Additionally, state- and district-level policies can play a role in teachers' decisions to leave their positions (Gilliani et al., 2022). Teachers may feel disenfranchised by certain policies and practices, including those related to accountability (Ingersoll et al., 2016; Ryan et al., 2017). They may be frustrated by their inability to influence or contribute to decision-making at a state- and district-level (García et al., 2022; Podolosky et al., 2016). Teachers motivated to quit due to policy-related issues may see leaving as the last way to make their voices heard on these concerns (Santoro, 2017).

Most teachers choosing to leave their positions are likely motivated by several distinct factors. Certain groups of teachers may be influenced differentially by these factors and led to make different decisions. For instance, it is well established in the research literature that the age of teachers leaving their positions fits a U-shaped curve; that is, the youngest and oldest teachers have the highest rates of exiting (e.g., Grissmer & Kirby, 1987; Guarino et al., 2006). A key difference is younger teachers are likely more motivated to find better-fitting schools (i.e., lateral movers) or a new career (i.e., leavers), whereas older teachers are generally retiring (Grissom et al., 2016).

In this same vein, teachers making different mobility choices may be motivated by a variety of combinations of personal reasons, career considerations, working conditions, and policies. Hancock (2016), for example, found that teachers moving to new schools were more motivated by working conditions and a desire for a better fit with the school, while teachers leaving the profession were more motivated by personal reasons, college enrollment, and retirement.

As evidence shows that many teachers leaving their positions could be drawn back to public schools (Diliberti et al., 2021), it is critical to understand which factors are informing their mobility decisions (Glazer, 2021). As such, there has been an increasing number of calls from government agencies (e.g., Institute of Education Services; Wackwitz, 2020), states (e.g., California; Merod, 2022), school board members (LaGrone, 2024), and other entities and stakeholders (e.g., Loescher et al., 2021) to administer and use exit surveys for improving recruitment and retention within the teacher workforce.



As part of that effort, this report explores the feedback from the 2023–24 SC Teacher Exit Survey, including the type of moves teachers are making (e.g., to teach at a public school in another district, to retire) and the different reasons contributing to their decisions. The survey provided an opportunity for teachers to share how concerns around working conditions (i.e., demands and resources) and policies affected their decisions to leave their positions. The overall findings illustrate challenges faced by South Carolina teachers and how some are choosing to respond to those issues. The results can inform the work of local and state policymakers to foster changes that will benefit state schools and promote teacher retention.

Key Questions

This report addresses the following key questions regarding South Carolina teachers leaving their current positions at the end of the 2023–24 school year:

1. What are the characteristics of South Carolina teachers leaving their current positions, and how can their movement best be described and classified?
2. What are the main reasons South Carolina teachers are leaving their positions? Are there meaningful differences among the motivating factors of those leaving to teach in other public schools (i.e., lateral movers) and those leaving public schools completely (i.e., leavers)?
3. What factors might influence teachers' decisions to return to public schools in South Carolina?

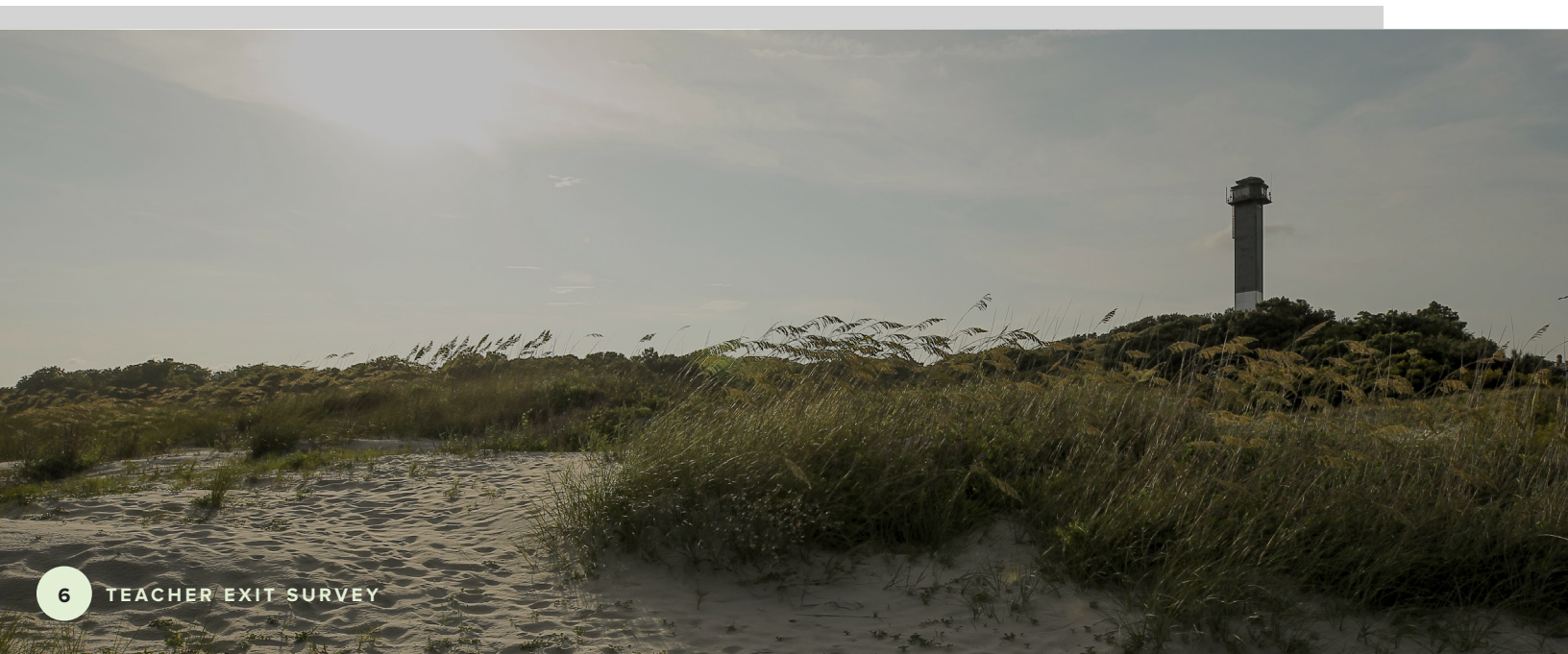
Survey Administration

A statewide exit survey was designed and pilot-tested during the 2020–21 and 2021–22 academic years. These pilot surveys were informed by the Former Teacher Questionnaire from the Schools and Staffing Survey Teacher Follow-Up Survey designed by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2012). The surveys were also developed with input from school district partners in South Carolina. The 2022–23 survey was largely similar to the 2021–22 pilot.

For 2023–24, the SC Teacher Exit Survey was modified to align with the job demands-resources (JD-R) model. The JD-R model frames working conditions as either resources that can support teachers or demands that serve as challenges. Resources (e.g., administrator support) can serve as buffers against increased demands (e.g., student behavior), and teachers can experience stress and burnout when there is an imbalance (i.e., high demands and low resources; Granziera et al., 2021). This experience can influence teachers to move schools (Sims, 2020) or quit the profession (Björk et al., 2019). More information about the JD-R model can be found in the 2023 South Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey report (Starrett et al., 2023).

This revision more firmly established the theoretical foundations of the exit survey and aligned it more completely with the SC Teacher Working Conditions Survey. The shift will help facilitate the integration of findings from both surveys, providing opportunities for more nuanced interpretations of the data collected.

In early April 2024, SC TEACHER emailed superintendents and personnel administrators from all public school districts (including charter districts and the six special schools), inviting them to participate in the SC Teacher Exit Survey. Of the 73 traditional districts, three charter districts, and six special schools, 30 districts provided emails for teachers who were not renewing their contracts. Depending on when we received information from participating districts, eligible teachers were emailed an initial invitation to the survey starting on May 15, 2024, and going through May 24, 2024. Once teachers received an initial invite to take the survey, they received reminder emails with the survey link until the survey closed on June 21, 2024.



Data, Variables, and Analyses

DATA

A total of 2,624 teachers exiting their current positions from 30 school districts across South Carolina were eligible to complete the survey. The final dataset consisted of responses from 1,019 teachers from 29 of the 30 participating school districts. Respondents with incomplete data were included in the analyses to reflect survey results as accurately as possible.

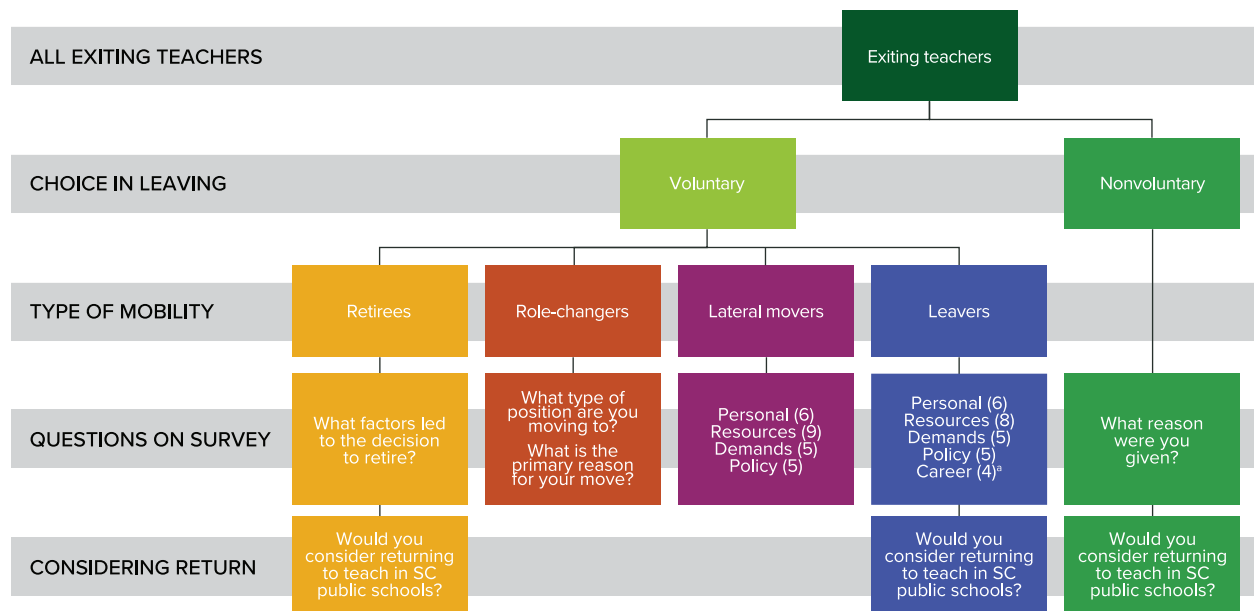
Survey data were supplemented with individual-level data for PK–12 teachers provided by the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE). These data were merged with exit survey teacher responses based on teacher certificate numbers to provide teacher demographic information. These population data were from the 2022–23 academic year.

VARIABLES

In the 2023–24 SC Teacher Exit Survey, teachers were asked several demographic questions, including total years teaching as a certified teacher and the number of years they had been at their current school. They were also asked to select all the subject certification areas they were actively teaching in the 2023–24 academic year.

One of the main purposes of this survey administration was to distinguish among the differing circumstances of teachers exiting their positions (e.g., retiring, moving to teach in a different district). To accomplish this, participants answered mobility questions, which were used to route them to different survey questions (Figure 1). For example, all participants answered a question about whether they were retiring. If they answered yes, they were sent down a branch of the survey in which they answered questions about factors contributing to their decision to retire and if they would consider returning to teaching in South Carolina public schools.

Figure 1. Survey Flow Diagram for Different Categories of Exiting Teachers



Note. The numbers in parentheses for lateral movers and leavers represent the number of items on the survey related to the factor shown.

^aLeavers who were moving to teach at private schools or homeschools did not answer career-related questions.



Teachers who indicated they were not retiring were sorted based on whether they were leaving voluntarily. Respondents who were not given a choice to stay in their positions (i.e., nonvoluntary leavers) were routed to a survey item that asked them to indicate the primary factor that led to their contract not being renewed (e.g., school closure, teaching position eliminated) and a following item about whether they might consider teaching in public schools in South Carolina in the future. This concluded the survey for nonvoluntary leavers.

Teachers who were voluntarily leaving their positions (not including retirees) then answered a couple of questions that sorted them into one of three groups: (a) those changing roles in public education (e.g., administration, instructional support), (b) those leaving to teach in a public school in another district (i.e., lateral movers), and (c) those leaving to teach in private schools or homeschools or completely leaving the field of education (i.e., leavers). We used this combined category for leavers because all of these participants were leaving public schools.

Teachers changing roles were asked several follow-up questions. First, they were asked to identify their new position (e.g., school administration, counseling). Second, they were asked to indicate the primary reason for moving into this role (e.g., higher salary, better career opportunities). Finally, they were asked whether they would be employed in the same district as their current teaching position, a different district in South Carolina, or another state or country.

Teachers in the other two groups (i.e., lateral movers and leavers) were routed to several sets of questions related to different factors that might have contributed to their choice to leave. These items were organized into four overarching categories: (a) personal reasons (e.g., a more convenient location), (b) job resources (e.g., insufficient administrative support), (c) job demands (e.g., frequency of student misbehavior), and (d) policy reasons (e.g., dissatisfaction with the mandated curriculum and/or standards). Respondents could indicate the relative importance of each reason using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *Not at all important*, 2 = *Slightly important*, 3 = *Somewhat important*, 4 = *Very important*, and 5 = *Extremely important*). Leavers who were completely exiting teaching (i.e., those not moving to homeschools or private schools) were also asked to indicate the importance of several factors related to a career change (e.g., “There were not enough opportunities for leadership roles or professional advancement at my school or district”).



Participants in these two groups were also asked to identify the specific item in each factor category that most heavily influenced their decision to leave their position. They were also allowed to write about other reasons for their leaving that were not included elsewhere in the survey. Additionally, leavers were asked if they would consider returning to teach in public schools in South Carolina and, if so, which factors would weigh most heavily in this consideration.

Additional details about all items, scales, variables, and factors can be found in the Technical Appendix.

ANALYSES

The report aims to provide information that can help public schools and districts in South Carolina address issues contributing to teacher attrition. Descriptive statistics were primarily used to address each key question. Statistical tests of mean differences were also conducted to address Key Question 2. For all three key questions, we summarize the relevant variables and compare these South Carolina results with findings from existing research literature and other published reports.

A woman with short, dark hair, wearing glasses, a black blazer, a black top, a gold chain necklace, and large hoop earrings, is looking down at a document. She is holding a pen in her right hand. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be a meeting or conference setting. The text "Our Key Questions" is overlaid in white on the image.

Our Key Questions



+ KEY QUESTION 1:

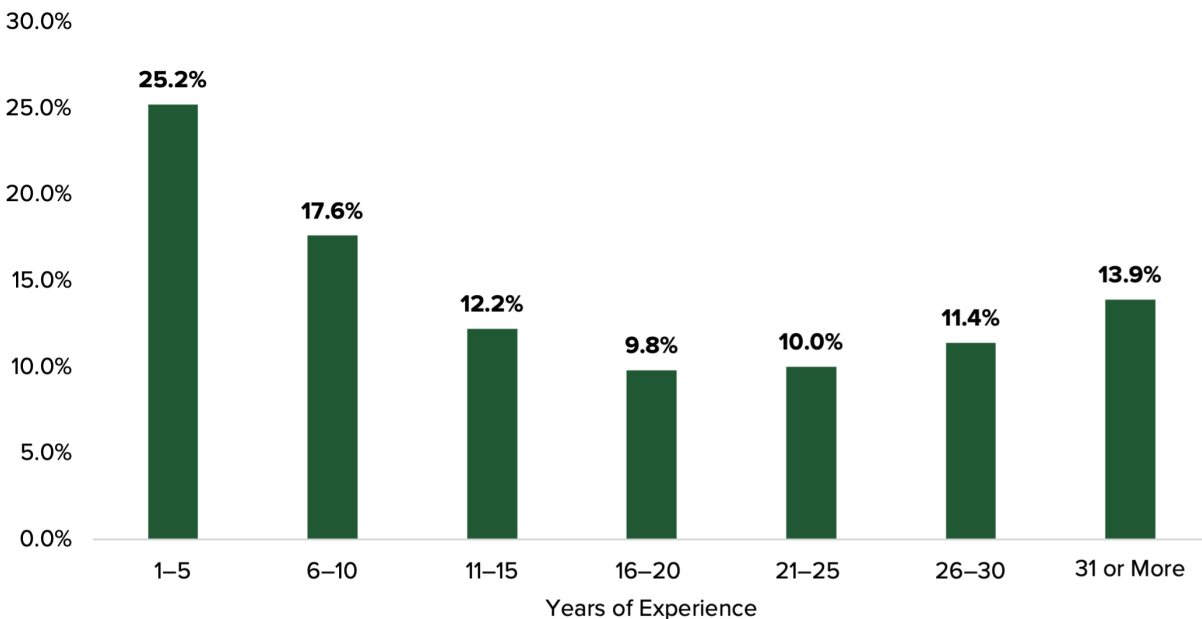
What are the characteristics of South Carolina teachers leaving their current positions, and how can their movement best be described and classified?

One goal of this report is to provide a picture of the teachers in South Carolina leaving their positions at the end of the 2023–24 academic year. This was done at a broad level, initially, by examining the basic demographics of teachers who responded to this exit survey and providing context around the greater population of public school teachers in the state. For example, 82.6% of the exiting teachers who responded to the survey were female, whereas only 79.4% of teachers in the state were female (Cartiff, Dmitrieva, & Starrett, 2024).

An examination of race and ethnicity revealed that 77.4% of teachers completing the survey identified as White, nearly matching the 77.0% percent of White teachers in the overall 2022–23 teacher population (Cartiff, Dmitrieva, & Starrett, 2024). This was also the case for the 15.2% of exiting teachers identifying as Black (i.e., 16.3% of the teacher population) and the 2.3% identifying as Hispanic (i.e., 2.4% of the population; Cartiff, Dmitrieva, & Starrett, 2024). Notably, the percentage of exiting teachers identifying as Asian (i.e., 4.2%) was more than double the 2.0% percent of the teacher population as a whole (Cartiff, Dmitrieva, & Starrett, 2024).

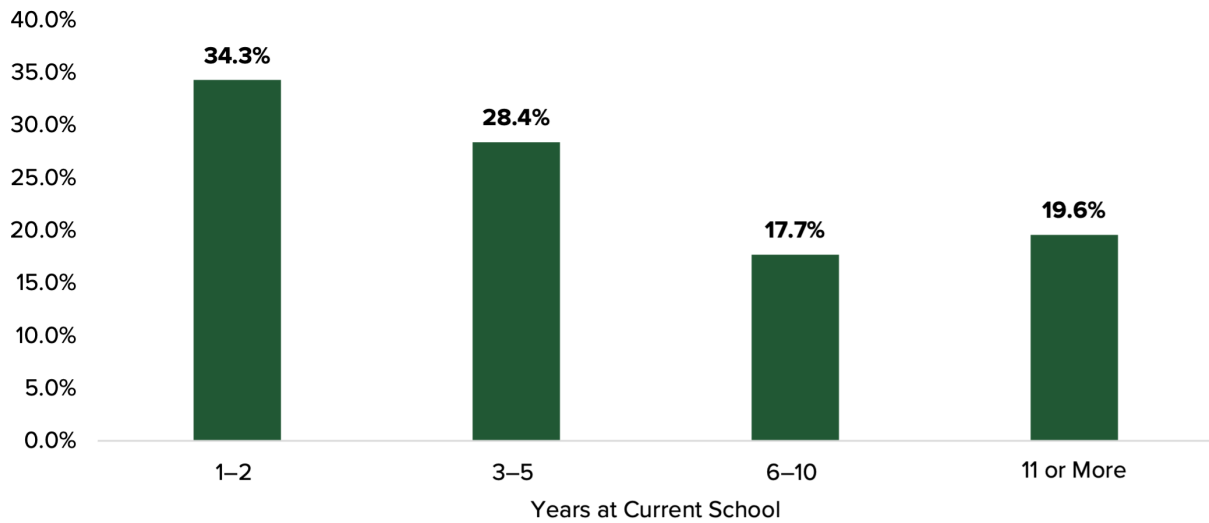
We also examined the total years of teaching experience for departing teachers. The average for all exiting teachers was 16.0 years of experience, ranging from 1 to 53 years. The distribution of exiting teachers by years of experience (Figure 2) indicated that beginning teachers (i.e., those with 1–5 years of experience) made up more than a quarter of the respondents (i.e., 25.2%). The next largest group was those with 6–10 years of experience (17.6%), followed by those with 31 or more years (13.9%). Teachers with 16–20 years of experience and with 21–25 years made up the smallest percentages of those leaving their positions (i.e., 9.8% and 10.0% respectively).

Figure 2. A Distribution of Exiting Teachers by Years of Experience



We also analyzed how long exiting teachers had been at their current school to examine a different metric of stability (Figure 3). More than half the departing teachers had been at their school for 5 or fewer years, with 34.3% only in their 1st or 2nd year.

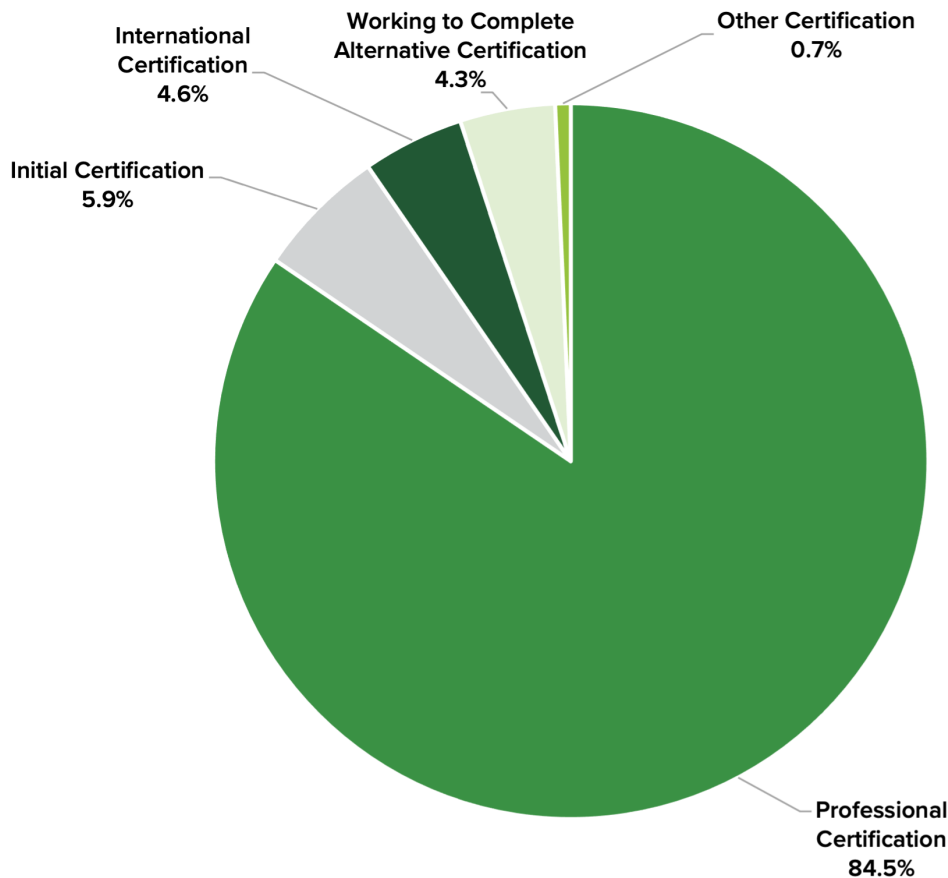
Figure 3. *Distribution of Exiting Teachers by Years at Current School*



We also examined the certification levels of exiting teachers. Most teachers (i.e., 84.5%) taking the survey held professional teaching certificates (Figure 4). Similar percentages of departing teachers held either initial certificates (i.e., 5.9%) or international certificates (i.e., 4.6%). However, it is important to note that many educators in the latter group were leaving due to the time limitations of their visas. Teachers who had yet to complete their alternative certification made up 4.3% of those leaving.

A more detailed examination of the largest group, those holding professional teaching certificates, revealed that 92.2% had completed traditional teacher preparation and 7.8% had completed an alternative certification pathway.

Figure 4. *Certification Levels of Exiting Teachers*

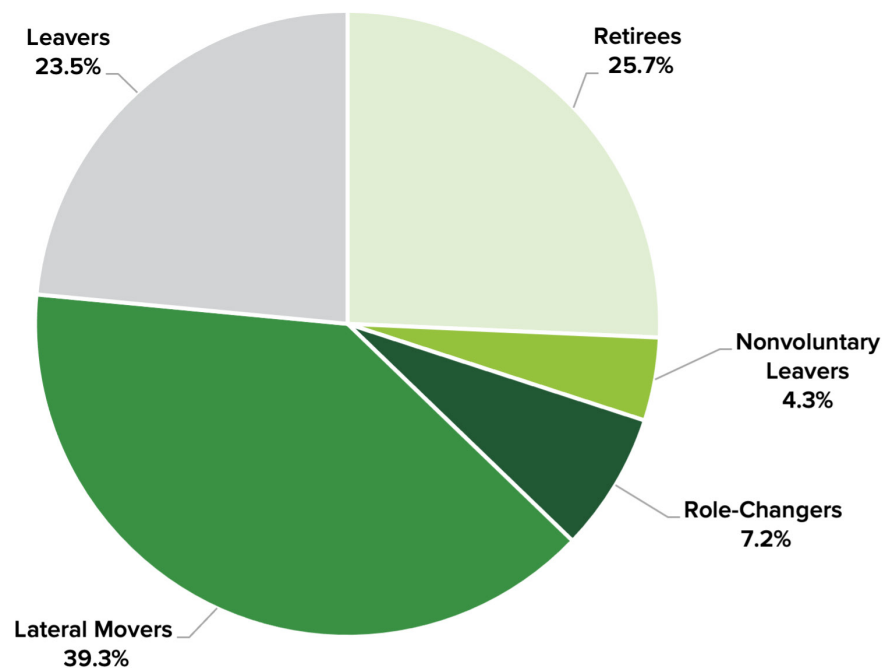


Teachers completing this exit survey were asked to indicate the subject area certification(s) they were responsible for in 2023–24. Since teachers were asked to list all their subject area certifications, the number of responses exceeded the number of survey participants who responded to this question. The percentages of elementary (15.4%), early childhood (11.1%), and special education teachers (9.3%) were the highest certification areas among educators leaving their positions. With this, it is important to recognize that 28.0% of all educators in the state were elementary school teachers, meaning that they were a smaller percentage of exiting teachers than would have been expected based on the total population. A similar result was observed for early childhood teachers, who represent 21.7% of the population of teachers in the state. In comparison, the percentage of special education teachers in the state (i.e., 10.8%) was similar to the percentage of teachers leaving (Cartiff, Dmitrieva, & Starrett, 2024).

Digging deeper, we also examined the percentages of leaving teachers by certification area across experience level. Regardless of years of experience, the same three groups of teachers (i.e., elementary, early childhood, and special education) made up the three highest categories of leavers. Elementary teachers made up the highest percentage of leavers regardless of years of experience.

This type of nuance is crucial to providing actionable information to schools and districts. It is likely even more important to distinguish among teachers making different mobility decisions (Figure 5). This analysis revealed that 39.3% of teachers responding to the survey were moving into teaching positions at other public schools (i.e., lateral movers). The next largest group of exiting teachers (i.e., 25.7%) included those choosing to retire. Teachers who were leaving public education (i.e., leavers) made up 23.5% of the respondents. A smaller percentage of teachers (i.e., 7.2%) were moving to different positions in public schools (e.g., administration, instructional coaching), classified as “role-changers.” Finally, 4.3% of exiting teachers indicated that they did not have a choice to stay in their positions. These nonvoluntary leavers did not have their contracts renewed by their districts.

Figure 5. Percentages of Exiting Teachers by Mobility Type



Relationships Between South Carolina Exiting Teacher Profiles and Published Studies

Many studies over the years have focused on teacher attrition and related teacher characteristics. Recently, however, scholars have noted many issues in historical research on the topic. Prior research did not always distinguish between teachers leaving their positions voluntarily and those who were not given the chance to stay (Donaldson & Johnson, 2010). Many prior studies also did not distinguish among different types of mobility, assuming “that the reasons for attrition are the same for all these groups,” leading to “one-size-fits-all policy solutions that may ultimately fail to boost retention for any one at all” (Cha & Cohen-Vogel, 2011, p. 373). Additionally, much of the literature largely equates teachers’ intention to leave with their actual leaving, measures that are not equivalent (Grant & Brantlinger, 2023). Because of these issues, comparisons between the findings presented in this report and published studies should be considered with caution.

Traditionally, the youngest and oldest teachers have had the highest rates of attrition (Guarino et al., 2006). Age was not available as a variable for analysis in this report, so years of teaching experience was examined as a related variable. The findings for South Carolina teachers (Figure 2) showed the same U-shaped pattern related to attrition rates and years of experience found in other studies (e.g., Boe et al., 2008; Grissmer & Kirby, 1997; Ingersoll, 2001). Many scholars have reasoned that this is largely because there is an experience threshold that teachers need to reach before they are settled into education as a career (Ingersoll, 2001).

The research on teacher attrition and certification type is limited, especially as certifications can vary across states. Some studies have indicated that teachers taking an alternative certification path to teaching have lower retention rates than traditionally prepared teachers (e.g., Nakai & Turley, 2003; Redding & Smith, 2016), but other studies have not found the same results (e.g., Gerson, 2002). The results from this exit survey indicated a slightly higher collective attrition rate for those either on an alternatively certified path (i.e., 4.3%) or who have completed alternative certification (i.e., 7.8%), as together they made up only 8.8% of the teacher population (Cartiff, Dmitrieva, & Starrett, 2024).

Findings on the type of teacher mobility have been reported more frequently in recent years, but there is still great variation in this reporting and even in definitions of attrition and mobility (Palma-Vasquez et al., 2022). For example, the NCES (2024) reported that, of those leaving their schools in 2021–22, 50% were leavers and 50% were lateral movers, but they did not distinguish leavers from retirees. The lateral movers in that study also did not have to be leaving the district, just the school. Lateral movers classified in this South Carolina study were moving to a different school in a different district. These differences in categorizations complicate comparisons. Based on fieldwork with nine large school districts, Education Resource Strategies (2024) reported 55.7% of exiting teachers left the district (perhaps leaving the profession or moving to another district), 33.9% moved to a new school in the district, and 10.4% moved into a nonteaching role in the same district. These categories also deviate from those presented in this report for South Carolina, making direct comparisons difficult.

+ KEY QUESTION 2:

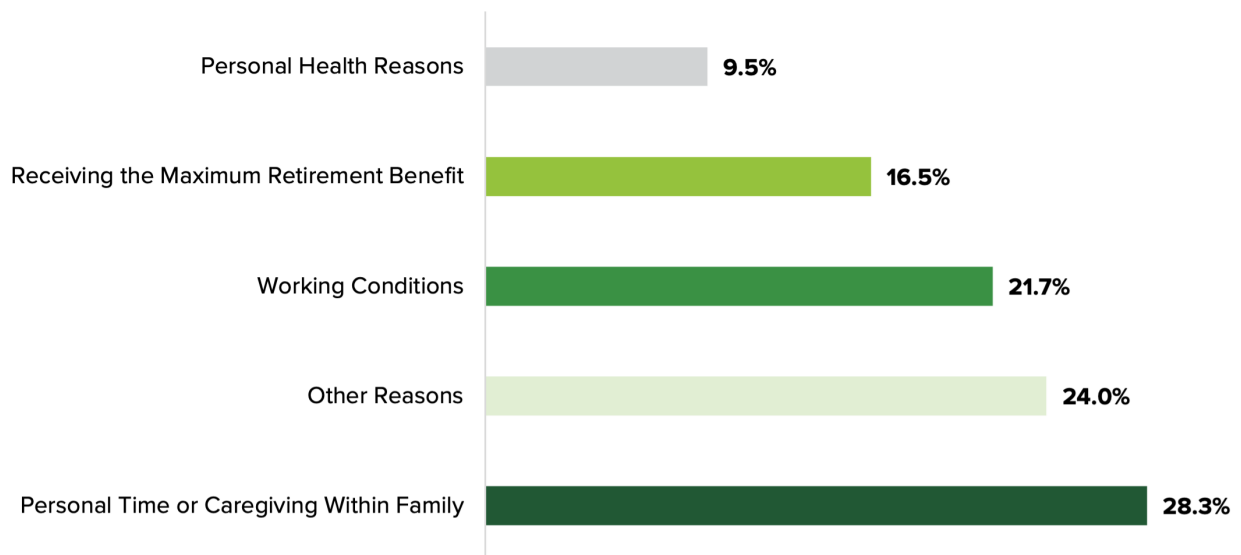
What are the main reasons South Carolina teachers are leaving their positions? Are there meaningful differences among the motivating factors of those leaving to teach in other public schools (i.e., lateral movers) and those leaving public schools completely (i.e., leavers)?

Based on their type of mobility, respondents to this exit survey answered different follow-up questions. The goal was to determine why teachers were making specific mobility choices and to see if the reasons motivating these choices could be differentiated by group. First, the reasons for leaving were examined for all five groups (i.e., nonvoluntary leavers, retirees, role-changers, lateral movers, and leavers). Then, the analysis focused specifically on meaningful differences between lateral movers and leavers.

Of respondents, 40 were nonvoluntary leavers. These teachers were not asked to indicate motivating reasons for leaving their positions. Instead, they were asked about the primary factor that led to their contracts not being renewed. Ten respondents indicated that their visa was ending and they had to return to their home country. Six others indicated that the teaching position was no longer available or needed. There were 13 who selected “other factors,” and follow-up answers were mostly unique or unclear (e.g., “uninvited,” “school”).

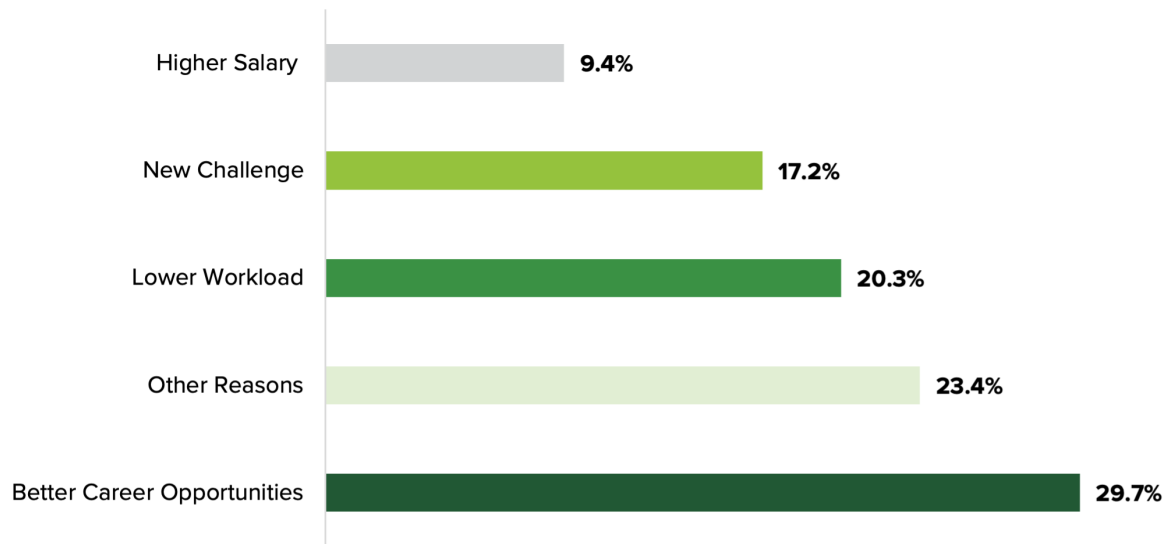
Retirees equaled 238 respondents. These teachers were allowed to indicate multiple reasons for their decision to retire. The analysis of their responses (Figure 6) shows that personal time or caregiving within their family was the most cited motivating factor (28.3%). Personal health reasons were the least endorsed reason for retirement (9.5%), though several respondents indicating “other” reasons wrote that they needed a rest after teaching for many years. Ten respondents who endorsed the “other” category indicated that they were planning or hoping to return to teaching.

Figure 6. Frequency of Influential Factors Endorsed by Retirees



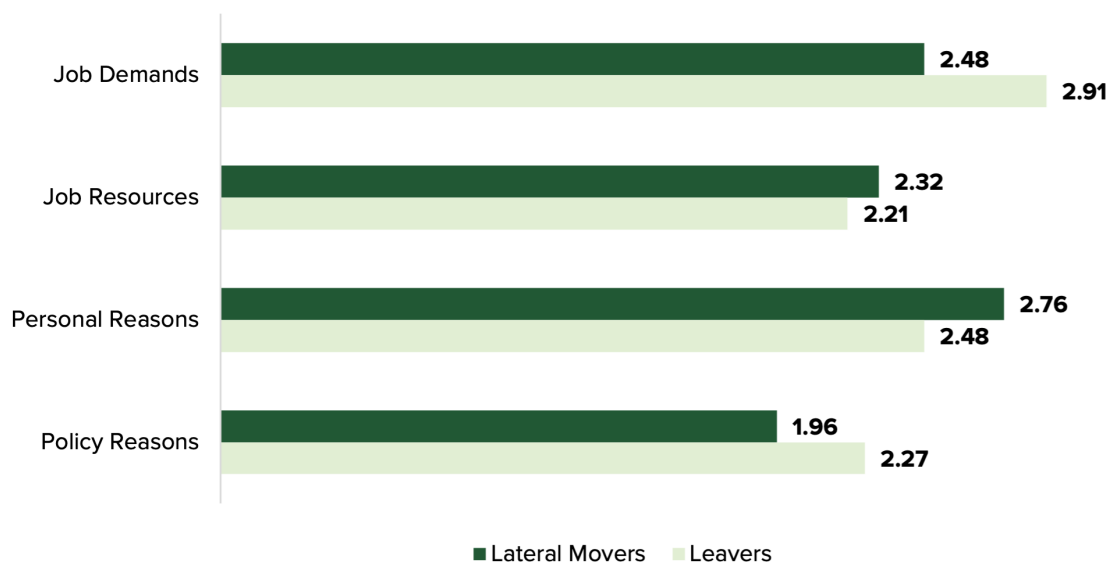
Of respondents, 67 were role-changers. Exiting teachers in this category were asked a single question regarding the main reason they were moving into a new position (i.e., they could select only one answer). The most frequently endorsed factor (i.e., 29.7%) was that the new role provided better career opportunities than teaching (Figure 7). Higher salary was the least frequently chosen reason for switching roles (i.e., 9.4%). “Other” reasons were selected, but there were few follow-up responses specifying the nature of these reasons. A few respondents indicated that the role change was because they had moved living locations or because the new position was less stressful.

Figure 7. Percentages of Primary Reasons for Role-Changers



In this research, a particular importance was determined for comparing the factors influencing lateral movers (i.e., those moving to teach at public schools in different districts) and leavers (i.e., those leaving public schools completely). There were 365 lateral movers and 218 leavers who responded to this exit survey. Both groups of teachers were asked to indicate the importance of personal reasons, working conditions (i.e., job resources and job demands), and policy reasons influencing their decision to leave their position. The averages for these categories are shown in Figure 8. Note that higher averages indicate a factor having held greater importance in teachers' decisions to exit their positions. On average, personal reasons and job resources were more important for teachers choosing to move to a new district and school. Job demands and policies were greater motivations for those leaving public schools. The averages for the two groups were significantly different for personal reasons, job demands, and policy reasons. Only the importance of job resources did not have a statistical difference.

Figure 8. Means of Importance for Categories of Reasons Between Leavers and Lateral Movers



Note. Respondents could indicate the relative importance of each reason using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Not at all important, 2 = Slightly important, 3 = Somewhat important, 4 = Very important, and 5 = Extremely important).

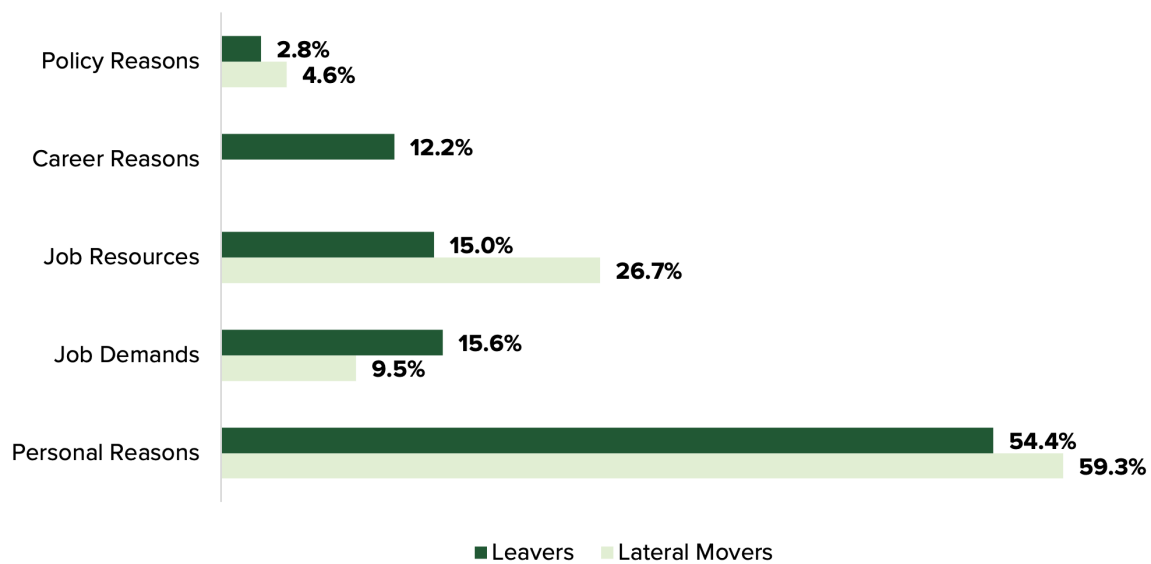
Participants in these two groups were also asked to indicate the specific reason in each category that weighed most in their decision to leave their position (Table 1). Both groups rated the same reasons as most important in the job resources (i.e., insufficient administrative support), job demands (i.e., student misbehavior), and policy reasons (i.e., salary schedule) categories. The highest rated personal reason was different between the groups, with lateral movers indicating they had moved or were planning to move and leavers indicating the need for a better work-life balance.

Table 1. Most Frequently Endorsed Items for Each Category Between Lateral Movers and Leavers

Factor	Most frequently endorsed item (percentage endorsing)	
	Lateral movers	Leavers
Personal reasons	I moved or am planning to move (30.9%)	I needed a better work-life balance (40.5%)
Job resources	Insufficient administrative support (49.0%)	Insufficient administrative support (45.1%)
Job demands	Frequency with which students misbehaved (42.1%)	Frequency with which students misbehaved (33.9%)
Policy reasons	Minimum salary schedule (53.6%)	Minimum salary schedule (58.4%)

From the most important items in each category, lateral movers and leavers were also asked to indicate the one specific reason overall that most contributed to their decision to leave their position. For both groups, the most endorsed item was a personal reason. For lateral movers, the second-most endorsed category was job resources, while leavers indicated that job demands played a larger role. Policy reasons were the least likely to be the largest contributing reason for both groups, though a notably higher rate of lateral movers endorsed a reason in this category. More than 10% of leavers indicated that a career reason weighed heaviest in their decision.

Figure 9. Percentages for the Most Important Factor in Leavers' and Lateral Movers' Decisions



Note. Lateral movers were not given questions regarding career reasons as they were not changing careers.

Relationships Between South Carolina Teachers' Reasons for Mobility and Published Studies

Taie and Lewis (2023) looked at national data from the NCES Teacher Follow-up Survey administrations from 2020–21 and 2021–22 and separated teachers into lateral movers and leavers. For lateral movers, the most important reason for leaving their positions was because they wanted a job more conveniently located or because they had moved, similar to South Carolina teachers. Leavers in this sample included both teachers retiring and those leaving the profession. Of this group, 16% indicated that their most important reason for leaving was to retire or receive retirement benefits. Of leavers in the national sample, 15% selected a personal reason as their major reason for leaving. The report by Taie and Lewis did not analyze working conditions as a reason for leaving or moving.

A recent international review of teacher mobility and attrition pointed out that there is significant research in the field and that different types of movement are increasingly being studied (Palma-Vasquez et al., 2022). However, the authors also noted that many existing studies did not include important contextual information (e.g., distinctions between voluntary and nonvoluntary leavers). They argued for the importance of differentiating among types of mobility because, as we have argued here, teachers making different choices may have distinct motivating factors. Identifying those different reasons may allow for more targeted and effective policies and practices to retain teachers.

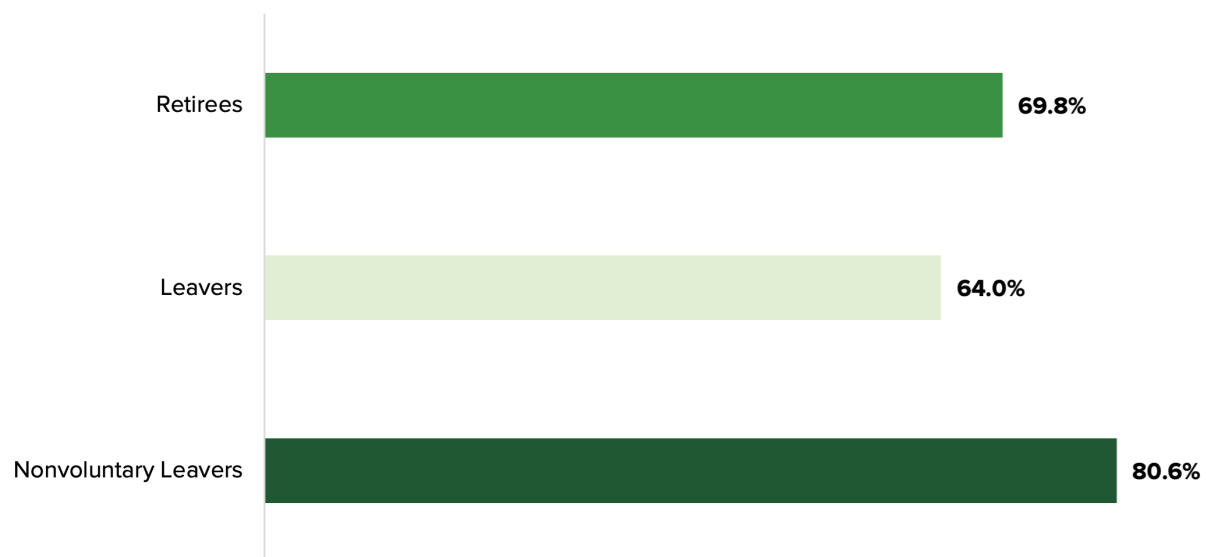
+ KEY QUESTION 3:

What factors might influence teachers' decisions to return to public schools in South Carolina?

One of the main reasons for conducting this annual exit survey is to better understand whether teachers leaving the public school education workforce in South Carolina would possibly return. To address this issue, retirees, leavers (i.e., those voluntarily leaving public education), and nonvoluntary leavers were asked whether they would consider returning. Retirees and leavers (but not nonvoluntary leavers) were also asked to indicate which factors might influence them most in making this decision.

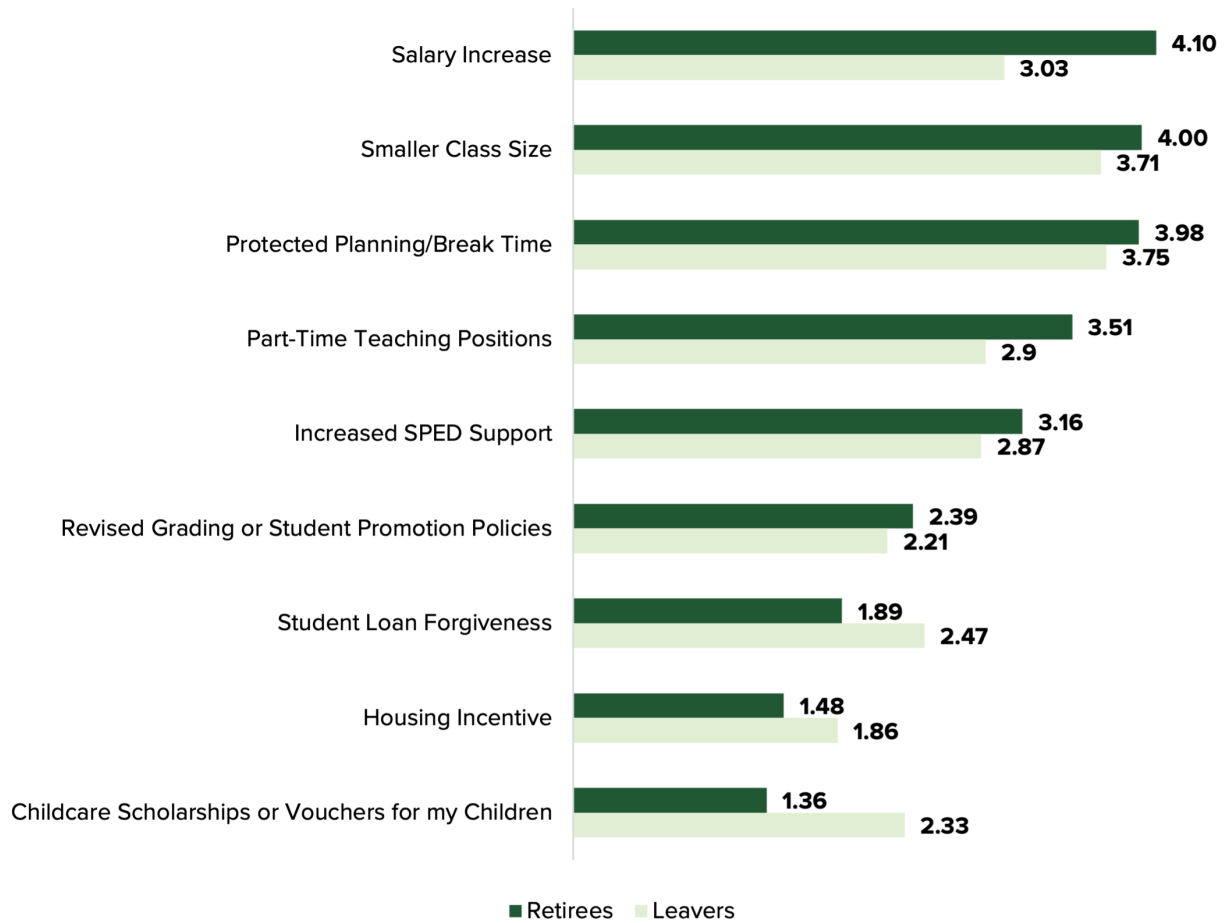
In all three groups, the majority of respondents indicated they would consider returning to teach in South Carolina public schools (Figure 10). Of nonvoluntary leavers, 80% indicated they would consider reentering the state's public school teacher workforce. Almost 70% of retirees also responded that they would consider returning to the classroom. This is important because retired teachers who return to teaching make up a small but growing portion of the teacher workforce in the state (Cartiff, Dmitrieva, & Starrett, 2024). Those leaving public education (i.e., leavers) had the lowest percentage of affirmative responses, but a notable 64.0% still said they might return to the workforce.

Figure 10. Percentages of Retirees, Leavers, and Nonvoluntary Leavers Who Would Consider Returning



Retirees and leavers were also asked to indicate the importance different factors might have in their decision to return to a teaching position in South Carolina public schools. The average responses indicated that the two groups largely identified the same factors as most important in their consideration to return. However, there were also notable differences in their responses (Figure 11).

Figure 11. A Comparison of the Means for the Importance of Factors for Returning to Teach for Leavers and Retirees



Retirees indicated that the primary factor that would influence their return would be a salary increase. They also indicated that smaller class sizes might help draw them back to the workforce, as could protected planning and break times and part-time teaching positions.

Leavers placed the highest importance on having protected planning and break times. They also felt that smaller class sizes could positively influence their decision to return. While a salary increase was the third most important factor, it was notably less significant to leavers than to retirees.

The lower-ranked items also seem to meaningfully distinguish the responses of the two groups. Though childcare scholarships or vouchers, student loan forgiveness, and housing incentives were less important factors for both groups, they were all notably more relevant for leavers. These differences are expected, as retirees are less likely than other teachers to have children in PK–12 schools or unpaid student loans. Focusing on nuances like this may guide districts in their attempts to draw back different groups of departing teachers.

Relationships Between Teachers Returning to the Workforce and Published Studies

There is significantly more research on policies or practices that lead to better retention than there is on incentives or policy changes that might entice teachers to return to public education (Palm, 2022). Several scholars (Dolton et al., 2003; Grissom & Reininger, 2012) found that some exiting teachers do not need enticements. They take breaks to have or raise children and plan to reenter the teaching profession later. In line with this, Grissom and Reininger (2012) suggested that districts or schools that could provide on-site childcare might successfully draw some of these teachers back to the classroom sooner.

Although some literature addresses strategies for teachers ready to reenter the profession (Buchanan, 2021), these approaches may differ from what departing teachers initially cite as factors that might bring them back. Exiting teachers may not fully anticipate the resources they will need when deciding to return. For example, those who have been out of the classroom for some time may find that strategies for rebuilding teaching confidence, such as training in technology and classroom management, become more important than they initially realized.

+ CONCLUSION

This annual SC Teacher Exit Survey reported general characteristics of teachers leaving their positions at the end of the 2023–24 academic year. The survey also provided information about teachers engaging in different types of mobility (e.g., retiring or leaving to teach at a school in another district), including data related to reasons that might be driving them.

Teachers with 5 or fewer years of experience made up a notable portion of leaving teachers. Teachers with a great deal of experience (i.e., 31 or more years) also represented a significant portion of teachers exiting their positions. These results were in line with findings in established research.

Teachers moving to teach at a school in another district (i.e., lateral movers) made up the largest group in terms of mobility (i.e., 39.3%). Retirees made up the next largest group (i.e., 25.7%). Teachers leaving public schools (i.e., leavers), either to teach in a homeschool or private school or to follow another career path, made up the third largest group (i.e., 23.5%). Teachers taking on different roles in public education (i.e., role-changers; 7.2%) and those not given the chance to stay in their positions (i.e., nonvoluntary leavers; 4.3%) made up the two smallest groups.

In this study, there was some evidence that lateral movers were influenced to leave their positions by different factors than leavers. Personal reasons seemed more important to lateral movers, whereas leavers more frequently highlighted job demands and policy issues. The majority of leavers, retirees, and nonvoluntary leavers indicated they would consider returning to teach in South Carolina public schools.

Data Application and Follow-Up Research

These findings can support districts in creating (or refining) additional practices and policies aimed at retention, as well as recruiting teachers who previously left. In addition to these state-level findings, districts that participate in the SC Teacher Exit Survey (and meet participation thresholds) receive reports with aggregated data specific to their district, helping to inform strategies for each unique context.

For a more comprehensive picture of recruitment and retention in South Carolina, results from the SC Teacher Exit Survey should be integrated with findings from other SC TEACHER resources, such as the annual retention report and the SC Teacher Working Conditions Survey. Districts that participate in both surveys can use the aligned content from these two sources for a better understanding of teacher experiences.

Further analysis of the results from this exit survey may also provide greater nuance in findings. For instance, research has indicated that novice teachers may have different reasons for leaving (e.g., workload) than more experienced teachers (e.g., limited career opportunities) (Amitai & Van Houtte, 2022; Kukla-Acevedo, 2009). Isolating factors related to teacher characteristics like this may give districts and schools further specific data for acting on strategies to enhance retention.

Conducting deeper analysis of teachers who stay, rather than focusing on those who leave, could also be helpful. Johnson and Birkeland (2003) looked specifically at “stayers,” distinguishing between “settled” and “unsettled” profiles based on their job satisfaction. Continued study of data from the SC Teacher Working Conditions Survey and other datasets could reveal more nuanced profiles of “stayers” based on teachers’ characteristics and their views of job demands and resources. This, too, could further assist districts in more effectively tailoring steps toward addressing retention.

With each iteration of the SC Teacher Exit Survey, participation rates have grown. As more teachers and districts continue to participate in the survey, we will continue to uncover new and growing data patterns relative to South Carolina’s educator pipeline. By investing in the survey, districts not only gain access to their own specific results, they further SC TEACHER’s comprehensive, SC-specific data, informing education policy and practice statewide.

+ REFERENCES

- Amitai, A., & Van Houtte, M. (2022). Being pushed out of the career: Former teachers' reasons for leaving the profession. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 110*, 103540. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2021.103540>
- Allensworth, E., Ponisciak, S., & Mazzeo, C. (2009). *The schools teachers leave: Teacher mobility in Chicago public schools*. Chicago Consortium for School Research. <https://consortium.uchicago.edu/publications/schools-teachers-leave-teacher-mobility-chicago-public-schools>
- Björk, L., Stengård, J., Söderberg, M., Andersson, E., & Wastensson, G. (2019). Beginning teachers' work satisfaction, self-efficacy and willingness to stay in the profession: A question of job demands-resources balance? *Teachers and Teaching, 25*(8), 955–971. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2019.1688288>
- Boe, E. E., Cook, L. H., & Sunderland, R. J. (2008). Teacher turnover: Examining exit attrition, teaching area transfer, and school migration. *Exceptional Children, 75*(1), 7–31. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001440290807500101>
- Boyd, D., Grossman, P., Ing, M., Lankford, H., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2011). The influence of school administrators on teacher retention decisions. *American Educational Research Journal, 48*(2), 303–333. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831210380788>
- Buchanan, J. (2012). Telling tales out of school: Exploring why former teachers are not returning to the classroom. *Australian Journal of Education, 56*(2), 205–220.
- Brewer, D. J. (1996). Career paths and quit decisions: Evidence from teaching. *Journal of Labor Economics, 14*(2), 313–339. <https://doi.org/10.1086/209813>
- Bryk, A., & Schneider, B. (2002). *Trust in schools: A core resource for improvement*. Russell Sage Foundation.
- Camp, A., Zamarro, G., & McGee, J. B. (2023). *Teacher turnover during the COVID-19 pandemic* (EDRE Working Paper 2023-02). Education Reform Faculty and Graduate Students Publications. <https://scholarworks.uark.edu/edrepub/143>
- Cartiff, B., Dmitrieva, S., & Starrett, A. (2024, September). *South Carolina teacher workforce profile for 2022–23*. SC TEACHER. <https://www.sc-teacher.org/EWP-teacher-workforce-sep2024>
- Cartiff, B., Gao, R., & Starrett, A. (2024, February). *South Carolina teacher retention report for 2022–23*. SC TEACHER. <https://sc-teacher.org/documents/22-23-educator-pipeline-report/>
- Cha, S.-H., & Cohen-Vogel, L. (2011). Why they quit: A focused look at teachers who leave for other occupations. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 22*(4), 371–392. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09243453.2011.587437>
- Chambers Mack, J., Johnson, A., Jones-Rincon, A., Tsatenawa, V., & Howard, K. (2019). Why do teachers leave? A comprehensive occupational health study evaluating intent-to-quit in public school teachers. *Journal of Applied Biobehavioral Research, 24*(1), Article e12160. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jabr.12160>
- Cohen J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences*. Routledge Academic.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2022). Breaking the legacy of teacher shortages. *Educational Leadership, 80*(2), 14–20. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1381686>
- Diliberti, M. K., & Schwartz, H. L. (2023). *Educator turnover has markedly increased, but districts have taken actions to boost teacher ranks: Selected findings from the sixth American school district panel survey*. RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA956-14.html

- Diliberti, M. K., Schwartz, H. L., & Grant, D. (2021). *Stress topped the reasons why public school teachers quit, even before COVID-19*. RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA1121-2.html
- Djonko-Moore, C. M. (2016). An exploration of teacher attrition and mobility in high poverty racially segregated schools. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 19*(5), 1063–1087. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2015.1013458>
- Dolton, P., Tremayne, A., Chung, T. P. (2003). *The economic cycle and teacher supply*. Education and Training Policy Division, OECD. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Peter-Dolton/publication/44833672_The_Economic_Cycle_and_Teacher_Supply/links/02e7e52779dd200d3c000000/The-Economic-Cycle-and-Teacher-Supply.pdf
- Donaldson, M. L., & Johnson, S. M. (2010). The price of misassignment: The role of teaching assignments in Teach for America teachers' exit from low-income schools and the teaching profession. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 32*(2), 299–323. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0162373710367680>
- Education Resource Strategies (ERS). (2024, March). *Examining school-level teacher turnover trends from 2021 to 2023: A new angle on a pervasive issue*. Education Resource Strategies. <https://www.erstrategies.org/tap/teacher-turnover-trends-analysis/>
- Elfers, A. M., Plecki, M. L., & Knapp, M. S. (2006). Teacher mobility: Looking more closely at “the movers” within a state system. *Peabody Journal of Education, 81*(3), 94–127. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327930pje8103_4
- García, E., Han, E. S., & Weiss, E. (2022). Determinants of teacher attrition: Evidence from district-teacher matched data. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 30*. <https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.30.6642>
- Geiger, T., & Pivovarova, M. (2018). The effects of working conditions on teacher retention. *Teachers and Teaching, 24*(6), 604–625. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2018.1457524>
- Gerson, K. G. (2002). *Alternative certification in Georgia: Does it work?* Georgia College and State University. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED472159.pdf>
- Gillani, A., Dierst-Davies, R., Lee, S., Robin, L., Li, J., Glover-Kudon, R., Baker, K., & Whitton, A. (2022). Teachers' dissatisfaction during the COVID-19 pandemic: Factors contributing to a desire to leave the profession. *Frontiers in Psychology, 13*, Article 940718. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.940718>
- Glazer, J. (2021). The well-worn path: Learning from teachers who moved from hard-to-staff to easy-to-staff schools. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 105*, Article 103399. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2021.103399>
- Grant, A. A., & Brantlinger, A. (2023). It's tough to make predictions, especially about the future: The difference between teachers' intended and actual retention. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 130*, 104156. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2023.104156>
- Granziera, H., Collie, R., & Martin, A. (2020). Understanding teacher wellbeing through job demands-resources theory. In C. F. Mansfield (Ed.), *Cultivating teacher resilience: International approaches, applications, and impact* (pp. 229–244). Springer.
- Grissmer, D. W., & Kirby, S. N. (1987). *Teacher attrition: The uphill climb to staff the Nation's schools*. RAND Corporation. <https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/reports/2007/R3512.pdf>
- Grissom, J. A., & Reininger, M. (2012). Who comes back? A longitudinal analysis of the reentry behavior of exiting teachers. *Education Finance and Policy, 7*(4), 425–454. https://doi.org/10.1162/EDFP_a_00075
- Grissom, J. A., Viano, S. L., & Selin, J. L. (2016). Understanding employee turnover in the public sector: Insights from research on teacher mobility. *Public Administration Review, 76*(2), 241–251. <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.12435>

- Guarino, C. M., Santibañez, L., & Daley, G. A. (2006). Teacher recruitment and retention: A review of the recent empirical literature. *Review of Educational Research, 76*(2), 173–208. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543076002173>
- Guin, K. (2004). Chronic teacher turnover in urban elementary schools. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 12*(42), 1–30. <https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.v12n42.2004>
- Hamilton, L. S., & Ercikan, K. (2022). COVID-19 and U.S. schools: Using data to understand and mitigate inequities in instruction and learning. In F. M. Reimers (Ed.), *Primary and secondary education during COVID-19: Disruptions to education opportunity during a pandemic* (pp. 327–350). Springer.
- Hancock, C. B. (2016). Is the grass greener? Current and former music teachers' perceptions a year after moving to a different school or leaving the classroom. *Journal of Research in Music Education, 63*(4), 421–438. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022429415612191>
- Hanushek, E. A., Kain, J. F., & Rivkin, S. G. (2004). Why public schools lose teachers. *The Journal of Human Resources, 39*(2), 326–354. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3559017>
- Howes, L. M., & Goodman-Delahunty, J. (2015). Teachers' career decisions: Perspectives on choosing teaching careers, and on staying or leaving. *Issues in Educational Research, 25*(1), 18–35. <https://www.iier.org.au/iier25/howes.pdf>
- Ingersoll, R. M. (2001). Teacher turnover and teacher shortages: An organizational analysis. *American Educational Research Journal, 38*(3), 499–534. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312038003499>
- Ingersoll, R., Merrill, L., & May, H. (2016). Do accountability policies push teachers out? *The Working Lives of Educators, 73*(8), 44–49. <https://www.gse.upenn.edu/system/files/Do-accountability-policies-push-teachers-out.pdf>
- Johnson, S. M., & Birkeland, S. E. (2003). Pursuing a “sense of success”: New teachers explain their career decisions. *American Educational Research Journal, 40*(3), 581–617. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312040003581>
- Keogh, M., & Roan, A. (2016). Exploring teachers' early-retirement decisions: A qualitative study. *Work, Aging and Retirement, 2*(4), 436–446. <https://doi.org/10.1093/workar/waw016>
- LaGrone, K. (2024, April 4). Florida school board member wants to formalize teacher exit interviews. *ABC Action News*. <https://www.abcactionnews.com/news/state/florida-school-board-member-wants-to-formalize-teacher-exit-interviews>
- Leukens, M. T., Lyter, D. M., Fox, E. E., & Chandler, K. (2005). *Teacher attrition and mobility: Results from the Teacher Follow-Up Survey, 2000–01*. National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2004/2004301.pdf>
- Loescher, J., Edwards, T., Hicks, D., Johnston, S. D., Mota, D., Penrod, L. J., & Urtubey, J. (2021). *Using exit survey data effectively: Recommendations from Teach Plus policy fellows on improving recruitment, retention, and diversification of Clark County's teaching force*. Teach Plus. <https://teachplus.org/resource/using-exit-survey-data-effectively-recommendations-from-teach-plus-policy-fellows-on-improving-recruitment-retention-and-diversification-of-clark-countys-teaching-force/>
- McConnell, J. R. (2017). A model for understanding teachers' intentions to remain in STEM education. *International Journal of STEM Education, 4*(1), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40594-017-0061-8>
- McFeely, S. (2018, March 27). *Why your best teachers are leaving and 4 ways to keep them*. Gallup. <https://www.gallup.com/education/237275/why-best-teachers-leaving-ways-keep.aspx?version=print>
- McMahon, S. D., Anderman, E. M., Astor, R. A., Espelage, D. L., Martinez, A., Reddy, L. A., & Worrell, F. C. (2022). *Violence against educators and school personnel: crisis during COVID*. Technical report. American Psychological Association. <https://www.apa.org/education-career/k12/violence-educators.pdf>

- Merod, A. (2022, October 6). *California to require teacher exit survey as focus on retention, recruitment grows*. K–12 Dive. <https://www.k12dive.com/news/california-to-require-teacher-exit-survey-as-focus-on-retention-recruitment/633493/>
- Nakai, D., & Turley, S. (2003). Going the alternate route: Perceptions from non-credentialed teachers. *Education*, 123(4), 831–846. <https://openurl.ebsco.com/EPDB%3Agcd%3A5%3A7650245/detailv2?sid=ebsco%3Aplink%3Ascholar&id=ebsco%3Agcd%3A9557331&crl=c>
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2012). *Schools and Staffing Survey, Teacher Follow-Up Survey, Questionnaire for Former Teachers*. National Center for Education Statistics, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, US Department of Education. <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass/pdf/1213/tfs-2.pdf>
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2024). Teacher turnover: Stayers, movers, and leavers. *Condition of Education*. Institute of Education Sciences, US Department of Education. <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/slc>
- National Education Association. (2022). *Poll results: Stress and burnout pose threat of educator shortages*. National Education Association. <https://www.nea.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/NEA%20Member%20COVID-19%20Survey%20Summary.pdf>
- Nguyen, T. D., Lam, C. B., and Bruno, P. (2022). *Is there a national teacher shortage? A systematic examination of reports of teacher shortages in the United States*. (EdWorkingPaper: 22–631). Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University. <https://doi.org/10.26300/76eq-hj32>
- Palm, A. (2022). A study investigating ways to entice teachers who have left the teaching profession to return. *The Independent Journal of Teaching and Learning*, 17(2), 159–168. https://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S2519-56702022000200010
- Palma-Vasquez, C., Carrasco, D., & Tapia-Ladino, M. (2022). Teacher mobility: What is it, how is it measured and what factors determine it? A scoping review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(4), Article 2313. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19042313>
- Papay, J. P., Bacher-Hicks, A., Page, L. C., & Marinell, W. H. (2017). The challenge of teacher retention in urban schools: Evidence of variation from a cross-site analysis. *Educational Research*, 46(8), 434–448. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X17735812>
- Partelow, L. (2019). *What to make of declining enrollment in teacher preparation programs*. Center for American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/make-declining-enrollment-teacher-preparation-programs/>
- Podolsky, A., Kini, T., Bishop, J., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2016). *Solving the teacher shortage: How to attract and retain excellent educators*. Learning Policy Institute. <https://doi.org/10.54300/262.960>
- Redding, C., & Smith, T. M. (2016). Easy in, easy out: Are alternatively certified teachers turning over at increased rates? *American Educational Research Journal*, 53(4), 1086–1125. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831216653206>
- Ronfeldt, M., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2013). How teacher turnover harms student achievement. *American Educational Research Journal*, 50(1), 4–36. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831212463813>
- Ryan, S. V., Von Der Embse, N. P., Pendergast, L. L., Saeki, E., Segool, N., & Schwing, S. (2017). Leaving the teaching profession: The role of teacher stress and educational accountability policies on turnover intent. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 66, 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2017.03.016>
- Santoro, D. A. (2017). Teachers' expressions of craft conscience: Upholding the integrity of a profession. *Teachers and Teaching*, 23(6), 750–761. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2016.1228627>

- Scafidi, B., Sjoquist, D. L., & Stinebrickner, T. R. (2007). Race, poverty, and teacher mobility. *Economics of Education Review*, 26(2), 145–159. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2005.08.006>
- Schaeffer, K. (2022, September). *A dwindling number of new U.S. college graduates have a degree in education*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/09/27/a-dwindling-number-of-new-u-s-college-graduates-have-a-degree-in-education/>
- Sims, S. (2020). Modelling the relationships between teacher working conditions, job satisfaction and workplace mobility. *British Educational Research Journal*, 46(2), 301–320. <https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3578>
- Smith, T. M., & Ingersoll, R. M. (2004). What are the effects of induction and mentoring on beginning teacher turnover? *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 26(3), 681–714. <https://doi.org/10.3102/01623737026003681>
- Starrett, A., Barth, S., Gao, R., DiStefano, C., Liu, J., & Go, J. (2023, June). *2023 South Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey*. SC TEACHER. <https://sc-teacher.org/documents/teacher-working-conditions/>
- Sun, M., Saultz, A., & Ye, Y. (2017). Federal policy and the teacher labor market: Exploring the effects of NCLB school accountability on teacher turnover. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 28(1), 102–122. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09243453.2016.1242506>
- Tye, B. B., & O'Brien, L. (2002). Why are experienced teachers leaving the profession? *Phi Delta Kappan*, 84(1), 24–32. <https://doi.org/10.1177/003172170208400108>
- UNESCO & International Task Force on Teachers for Education. (2024). *Global report on teachers: Addressing teacher shortages and transforming the profession*. UNESCO. <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/global-report-teachers-addressing-teacher-shortages-and-transforming-profession>
- U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.). *Elevating teaching*. U.S. Department of Education. <https://www.ed.gov/teaching>
- Vagi, R., & Pivovarov, M. (2017). “Theorizing teacher mobility”: A critical review of literature. *Teachers and Teaching*, 23(7), 781–793. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2016.1219714>
- Wackwitz, J. (2020). *Using teacher exit surveys to improve teacher retention*. Institute of Education Sciences, US Department of Education. <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/Products/Region/midwest/Blog/10026>
- Weiss, E. M. (1999). Perceived workplace conditions and first-year teachers’ morale, career choice commitment, and planned retention: A secondary analysis. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 15(8), 861–879. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0742-051x\(99\)00040-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0742-051x(99)00040-2)
- Whitener, S. D., Gruber, K. J., Lynch, H., Tingos, K., Perona, M., & Fodelier, S. (1997). *Characteristics of stayers, movers, and leavers: Results from the Teacher Follow-Up Survey: 1994–95*. National Center for Education Statistics, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, US Department of Education. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs97/97450.pdf>
- Wiggan, G., Smith, D., & Watson-Vandiver, M. J. (2021). The national teacher shortage, urban education and the cognitive sociology of labor. *The Urban Review*, 53(1), 43–75. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-020-00565-z>

+ TECHNICAL APPENDIX

DETAILED TECHNICAL ANALYSIS RESULTS

This appendix details the data analysis procedure for this study. All relevant statistical methods, measures, and results are addressed herein.

DATA SOURCES

In April 2024, SC TEACHER emailed superintendents and personnel administrators in all public school districts (including charter districts and the six special schools), inviting them to participate in the 2023–24 SC Teacher Exit Survey. Of the 73 traditional districts, three charter districts, and six special schools, 30 provided emails for teachers who were not renewing their contracts (or having their contracts renewed).

Within the 30 participating districts, the total number of eligible teachers was 2,624. Within the survey administration, 1,152 teachers submitted responses from 29 of the 30 participating school districts, constituting a 43.9% response rate. During the preliminary exploratory analysis, three teacher responses were removed from the data because their responses to open-ended questions indicated they were renewing their contracts. This brought the sample to 1,149 responses. Of these, 130 participants indicated they had not been a classroom teacher or special education teacher during the 2023–24 school year. This led to a final sample size of 1,019 exiting teachers. Some participants completed only part of the survey or responded only to a subset of questions. When presenting results, we provide totals to indicate the number of those who responded to each item.

Data from this exit survey were supplemented with individual-level data for PK–12 teachers provided by the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE). These data were merged with exit survey teacher responses based on teacher certificate numbers to provide teacher demographic information (e.g., ethnicity and race, certification pathway).

MEASURES

The current 2023–24 survey is a modification of the exit survey developed for the 2022–23 implementation. The major revisions included differentiating items for five groups of exiting teachers (i.e., retirees, nonvoluntary leavers, role-changers, lateral movers, and leavers) and aligning the survey more closely with the job demands-resources (JD-R) model. Measures in the current survey broadly fall into two categories: Reasons for Leaving Position and Potential Reasons for Considering a Return.

The Reasons for Leaving Position scale was used for lateral movers and leavers and included 30 items situated within the following five categories:

- career reasons (4 items) (e.g., I decided to pursue a position outside the field of education)
- personal reasons (6 items) (e.g., I moved or am planning to move)
- job resources (9 items) (e.g., Insufficient autonomy in my classroom)
- job demands (6 items) (e.g., Frequency with which students misbehaved)
- policy reasons (5 items) (e.g., Dissatisfied with the teacher evaluation procedures)

Lateral movers and leavers who indicated they were moving to private schools or homeschools did not respond to the career reasons section of this scale. Leavers and lateral movers rated the importance of each item using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *Not at all important*, 2 = *Slightly important*, 3 = *Somewhat important*, 4 = *Very important*, and 5 = *Extremely important*).

For retirees, role-changers, and nonvoluntary leavers, reasons for leaving were assessed using a single question tailored to each group. For instance, the question for retirees was worded as reasons for retiring, and these respondents were asked to select all applicable items (e.g., receiving maximum retirement benefit) among the four provided and/or write their own response specifying any other reason.

The Potential Reasons for Considering a Return scale comprises nine items relating to incentives or resources that may entice a return to the classroom (e.g., salary increase, smaller class sizes). Retirees and leavers were invited to respond to these items. The same 5-point Likert scale was used for this measure as for the Reasons for Leaving Position scale discussed above. Nonvoluntary leavers were asked if they might consider returning to teaching; however, these respondents did not answer questions regarding motivating reasons to return.

DATA ANALYSIS

For teachers completing this exit survey, we conducted a descriptive analysis to understand the sample of exiting teachers. In particular, we explored teachers' overall teaching experience, experience at the current school, gender, race/ethnicity, certification level and pathway, and subject area certification.

To understand the reasons behind teachers leaving their current teaching positions, we presented a detailed description of five types of mobility and examined descriptively the reasons given by each group of teachers. For the Reasons for Leaving Position measure, we calculated average scores for each category and compared the means of leavers and lateral movers. Then, we employed a series of independent sample t-tests to compare these two groups of survey participants on the four averages (i.e., personal reasons, job resources, job demands, and policy reasons). A Bonferroni adjustment was applied to maintain a family-wise Type I error rate of $\alpha_{w} = 0.05$. Before running the tests, we examined the assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance. Nonparametric tests were conducted when these assumptions were not met. We relied on Cohen's effect sizes to measure the magnitude of the difference between the two groups. Values of 0.2 or less are considered small differences, 0.5 are medium, and 0.8 or higher are large (Cohen, 1988).

Finally, to understand potential factors that retirees and leavers might consider for returning to teach, we did a descriptive analysis of the means of the nine items of the Potential Reasons for Considering a Return scale.

RESULTS

Teacher Demographic Data

First, we looked at overall teaching experience and years at the current school for teachers exiting their positions. Overall, teachers' experience ranged between a minimum of 1 year and a maximum of 53, with an average of 16.0 years. The distribution was bimodal, with the highest peak at 5 years of experience and the second, smaller peak at around 28 years of experience. This perhaps reflects two categories of teachers: those who left for retirement and those who left for some other reason. Excluding retirees, the mean for total teaching experience was 11.6 years. Slightly over 9% of all exiting teachers worked for 1–2 years, and 25.2% were in the 1–5 years of teaching experience group. The second largest group of exiting teachers was in the category for 6–10 years (17.6%).

Table A1. Overall Teaching Experience of Exiting Teachers

	Count	Percent
1–5 years	237	25.2%
6–10 years	166	17.6%
11–15 years	115	12.2%
16–20 years	92	9.8%
21–25 years	94	10.0%
26–30 years	107	11.4%
31 or more years	131	13.9%
Total	942	100%

As expected, the range for the years of teaching experience at the current school was smaller, between 1 and 45 years, with a mean of 6.9 years. Teachers who had taught only 1 or 2 years at their current school comprised 34.3% of respondents, while 62.7% had worked there for no more than 5 years. About 4 out of every 5 teachers (i.e., 80.4%) worked at their current schools for 10 or fewer years.

Table A2. Experience at the Current School for Exiting Teachers

	Experience at the current school	
	Count	Percent
1–2 years	322	34.3%
3–5 years	267	28.4%
6–10 years	166	17.7%
11 or more years	184	19.6%
Total	939	100%

Demographic data on gender and race/ethnicity were not available for all the survey participants. For gender, we had data for 77.1% of participating teachers; for race/ethnicity, we had data for 75.0% of participating teachers. For cases where data were available, 82.6% of leaving teachers were female. In terms of ethnicity/race, 77.4% of exiting teachers were White, 15.2% were Black, 4.2% were Asian, and 2.3% were Hispanic.

We also looked at teachers' certification levels and pathways. These data were available for 77.3% of the teachers who took the survey. The majority of respondents (84.5%) held a professional teaching certificate. Within this group, 7.8% were teachers who had completed alternative route certification and were working with a professional teaching certificate. The second largest group of respondents (5.9%) held an initial certificate, and the third largest group (4.6%) had international certification. Teachers still completing their alternative route certification constituted 4.3% of all the exiting teachers with available certification data.

Since teachers were asked to list all subject area certifications for which they were responsible for teaching in 2023–24, the number of responses ($n = 1,691$) exceeded the number of survey participants who responded to this question ($n = 932$). All the percentages were calculated based on the total number of responses. The three largest groups of responses for subject area certification were in elementary education (15.4%), early childhood (11.1%), and special education (9.3%).

Table A3 provides a more nuanced breakdown of percentages for teachers in different teaching experience categories for the most frequently chosen subject area certifications. In general, the descriptive results across years of experience categories show relative stability for most subject areas. However, for elementary education, early childhood education, social studies, and the middle-level certification areas, the percentages were higher among novice teachers than among more experienced teachers. The percentage of special education teachers in the 6 to 10 years of experience category is somewhat higher (10.9%) than for less experienced (9.3%) and more experienced teachers (8.5%).

Table A3. *Percent of Teachers Exiting by Top Subject Area Certification and Total Years of Experience*

	Total sample	1–5 years	6–10 years	11 or more years
Elementary education	15.4%	17.2%	15.4%	14.6%
Early childhood	11.1%	11.7%	10.7%	10.7%
Special education	9.3%	9.3%	10.9%	8.5%
Mathematics	8.5%	8.2%	8.3%	8.5%
Social studies	6.9%	7.1%	6.2%	6.8%
Middle level	6.7%	7.4%	4.1%	6.6%
English	6.6%	5.4%	7.4%	6.4%
Science	6.4%	5.7%	6.2%	6.6%
Other	29.1%	28.1%	30.8%	31.1%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Note. This table only covers the top eight largest subject area certifications captured in this data.

^aOther includes subject area certification areas that have less than 5% of exiting teachers

Types Of Teacher Mobility

Five types of teacher mobility were delineated based on the survey responses. Below, we provide definitions of each category. Table A4 summarizes the number and percentage of survey participants for each type of mobility. Retirees are defined as teachers who qualified for retirement and chose to retire at the end of the academic year. Nonvoluntary leavers are teachers whose contracts were not renewed due to various circumstances. Role-changers are teachers who've chosen to stay in education but in a nonteaching position, such as an administrative role, a counselor, or an instructional coach. Lateral movers are defined as teachers who will continue in their teaching position in another public school district. The last group, leavers, is comprised of teachers who are leaving public education in South Carolina. Leavers can be further subdivided into those moving to private or homeschools (20.2%) and teachers quitting education as a profession (79.8%). Role-changers, lateral movers, retirees, and leavers are all considered voluntary leavers.

Table A4. *Counts and Percentages for Different Types of Mobility*

	Count	Percentage
Lateral movers	365	39.3%
Retirees	238	25.7%
Leavers	218	23.5%
Role-changers	67	7.2%
Nonvoluntary leavers	40	4.3%
Total	928	100%

Note. Of responses, 191 could not be categorized due to missing data.

Lateral movers ($n = 365$) represented the largest group among exiting teachers, which suggests that many teachers prefer to stay in the profession. In fact, if we consider the proportion of lateral movers among nonretiring teachers, 52.9% of exiting teachers fall into this category. In other words, 1 out of every 2 nonretiring teachers who left their position chose to stay in a teaching position but work in a different school district. In a sample without retirees, there was more movement between districts than out of the public education teaching profession.

Reasons For Leaving

Depending on the type of mobility, teachers received different sets of questions regarding their reasons for leaving. Here we present the descriptive results for each of the five groups. We also compare the motivating factors for leaving given by lateral movers and leavers.

Retirees were asked to select one or more factors motivating their decision to retire from a list of five reasons, including an “other” option and the ability to write in a response. All the teachers who indicated they were retiring ($n = 238$) responded to the question. Since they could choose more than one reason, the total number of responses ($n = 346$) exceeded the number of respondents. Table A5 summarizes the count and percentages of each reason based on the total number of responses. The most frequent reason selected by retirees was “retiring for personal time or caregiving within family” (28.3%), while the least frequent was “personal health reasons” (9.5%). Approximately 20% of responses from retirees mentioned “working conditions” as one of the reasons to retire, and 8.4% mentioned “working conditions” as the only motivating factor for their retirement.

Table A5. *Counts and Percentages for Reasons to Retire*

	Count	Percentage
Personal time or caregiving within family	98	28.3%
Other	83	24.0%
Working conditions	75	21.7%
Receiving the maximum retirement benefit	57	16.5%
Personal health reasons	33	9.5%
Total responses	346	100%

Nonvoluntary leavers ($n = 40$) were asked to select one primary factor for their contracts not being renewed. In this group, 90% of teachers responded to the question. Few teachers reported failure to obtain teacher certification ($n = 2$) or evaluation system factors ($n = 3$) as the reason for nonrenewal. The most frequent responses were “other factors” ($n = 13$), “J-1/J-2 visa ending, or another visa-related factor” ($n = 10$), and “teaching position was no longer needed or eliminated” ($n = 6$).

Teachers who planned to change roles within education ($n = 67$) were asked a single question on their primary motivating factor for moving into the new position. More than 95% responded to the question. Most frequently, teachers changing roles were doing so for “better career opportunities” (29.7%). This reason was followed by “other reasons” (23.4%), “lower workload” (20.3%), and the need for “new challenge” (17.2%). Of factors in role-changers’ decision to move into a new position, “higher salary” was the least frequent primary factor (9.4%) for this group of survey respondents.

Lateral movers ($n = 365$) and leavers ($n = 218$) were presented with extended sets of questions to delve into regarding their reasons for leaving their current teaching positions. For leavers, the survey included the following five factors: career reasons, personal reasons, job resources, job demands, and policy reasons. Lateral movers were asked to respond to the same items, except the career reason set was not included. Teachers in these two groups were also asked to select the single most important item for each category and the single most important category overall (i.e., career [for leavers only], personal, job resources, job demands, or policy) in their decision to leave their current position.

Table A6 provides averages for reasons to leave with lateral movers and leavers grouped separately. Overall, none of the averages for leavers and lateral movers reached the 3.0 value (*Somewhat important*). On average, lateral movers expressed the highest agreement with the importance of personal reasons ($M = 2.76$) in their decision to leave. Policy reasons had the lowest average ($M = 1.96$) of importance for this category of teachers. It was also the only reason with an average less than the value of 2.0.

The averages looked notably different for leavers. These teachers ascribed the highest agreement to reasons related to job demands ($M = 2.91$). This was the highest overall average among all the reasons for either group of teachers. However, it should be mentioned that, for leavers, this category also had the highest standard deviation, showing variability in teachers' responses to items within the job demands factor. Interestingly, job resources had the lowest average ($M = 2.21$), indicating perhaps that insufficient resources were not the driving factor in leavers' decision to exit.

Table A6. Average Scores for Reasons to Leave Their Current Position for Lateral Movers and Leavers

	Lateral movers		Leavers	
	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>n</i>
Career reasons	n/a ^a	n/a ^a	2.18 (0.87)	165 ^b
Personal reasons	2.76 (0.87)	351	2.48 (0.75)	208
Job resources	2.32 (0.99)	346	2.21 (0.98)	206
Job demands	2.48 (1.11)	345	2.91 (1.16)	203
Policy reasons	1.96 (0.88)	345	2.27 (1.01)	203

^an/a stands for not applicable. Lateral movers were not asked to respond to career-related questions.

^bLeavers moving to private schools and homeschools did not respond to career questions.

Independent samples *t*-tests were conducted based on average scores for personal reasons, job resources, job demands, and policy reasons to compare responses from lateral movers and leavers. Before running the tests, all variables of interest were examined for the normality and homogeneity of variance assumptions. The homogeneity of variance assumption was tested using Levene's test statistic for the equality of variances between the groups. This assumption was not met for personal and policy-related reasons. Therefore, we conducted an independent samples *t*-test assuming unequal variances in these two cases. Full results are presented in Table A7.

The differences in means between lateral movers and leavers were statistically significant for personal reasons, job demands, and policy reasons. On average, as compared to leavers, lateral movers ascribed higher importance to personal reasons ($p < .001$, $d = .34$). At the same time, leavers gave higher importance to reasons pertaining to job demands ($p < .001$, $d = .38$) and policy ($p < .001$, $d = .33$). Thus, based on these *t*-test group comparisons, we could conclude that lateral movers were primarily motivated by personal reasons in their decisions to leave their current positions. Leavers, in contrast, appear more motivated by two categories of reasons associated with schools (i.e., job demands and policy issues).

Table A7. Results Comparing Lateral Movers' and Leavers' Reasons for Leaving

	Lateral movers		Leavers		<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>				
Personal reasons	2.76	0.87	2.48	0.75	484.2 ^a	4.04	< .001	.34
Job resources	2.32	0.99	2.21	0.98	550	1.25	.21	.11
Job demands	2.48	1.11	2.91	1.16	546	-4.29	< .001	.38
Policy reasons	1.96	0.88	2.27	1.01	379.6 ^a	-3.57	< .001	.33

^a*df* were calculated based on Satterthwaite's approximation formula due to unequal variances.

For lateral movers and leavers, we also descriptively compared the most frequently selected items within each category of reasons (excluding career reasons, as they were rated only by leavers). Among personal reasons, the most frequently endorsed reason for lateral movers was "I moved or am planning to move" (30.9%). Another location-related reason, "I wanted to take a job more conveniently located to where I live," was endorsed by 18.5% of lateral movers and came in third in their ranking. For leavers, however, these two reasons were in fourth and last places respectively (out of six), with only 16.5% of leavers choosing these two personal reasons. For leavers, the most frequently endorsed reasons were "I needed a better work-life balance" (40.5%) and "I was influenced by other personal life reasons" (23.4%).

Among resource-related reasons, the most frequently endorsed reason for both groups was “insufficient administrative support.” It was endorsed by 49.0% of lateral movers and 45.1% of leavers. For lateral movers, the second most frequent resource-related reason was “insufficient support from colleagues” (12.4%), followed by “insufficient communication with principal” (11.8%). For leavers, the other two reasons in the top three were “insufficient influence over school policy” (11.3%) and “insufficient support from colleagues” (8.5%).

On the job demands side, the same reasons appeared in the top three most frequently chosen for both groups. “Frequency with which students misbehaved” was the most frequent for lateral movers (42.1%) and leavers (33.9%). “Extensive administrative tasks” was endorsed by 18.6% of lateral movers and 25.7% of leavers. “Insufficient time for lesson planning and preparation” was chosen by 18.6% of lateral movers and 20.2% of leavers.

Both groups chose the same three reasons most frequently for policy reasons, as well. Dissatisfaction with the minimum salary schedule was the top reason for 53.6% of lateral movers and 58.4% of leavers. The second most frequently chosen reason by lateral movers concerned dissatisfaction with student grading and promotion policies (21.8%), and the third was dissatisfaction with the mandated curriculum and standards (18.2%). These two reasons were reversed for the leaver group, with student grading policies receiving 10.4% of responses and mandated curriculum and standards chosen by 15.6%.

Finally, leavers and lateral movers were asked to choose one category among personal, resources, demands, policy, and career reasons as the single most influential factor in their decision to leave their current teaching position. Again, the career category reason was given as an option only for leavers. Table A8 provides the counts and proportions of teachers who choose each category as the most important factor. For both groups, the most frequently endorsed category was personal reasons. Compared to leavers, a higher proportion of lateral movers chose resources as the single most important factor. Among lateral movers, resources (26.7%) were chosen considerably more frequently than demands (9.5%). For leavers, the proportion of those choosing resources (15.0%) and demands (15.6%) was almost the same.

Table A8. *Counts and Percentages for the Most Important Factor for Leaving Between Lateral Movers and Leavers*

	Lateral movers		Leavers	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Personal reasons	182	59.3%	98	54.4%
Job resources	82	26.7%	27	15.0%
Job demands	29	9.5%	28	15.6%
Policy reasons	14	4.6%	5	2.8%
Career reasons	n/a ^a	n/a	22	12.2%
Total	307	100%	180	100%

^an/a stands for not applicable. Lateral movers were not asked to respond to career-related questions.

Teachers exiting their positions voluntarily could also provide other major reasons around their decision to leave. These open-ended responses were inductively coded to determine common themes. Most of the emergent themes matched reasons captured by existing closed-ended items in the survey (e.g., lack of administrative support, student behavior). A relatively small number of these responses touched on additional reasons, such as scheduling issues and concerns about class sizes. A few newer teachers indicated dissatisfaction with mentorship. Other reasons given were generally specific to a single respondent.

Returning To Teaching

Retirees, leavers, and nonvoluntary leavers were also asked if they would consider returning to teach in South Carolina public schools. Among nonvoluntary leavers, 80.6% indicated that they might consider returning. A slightly greater proportion of retirees (69.8%) responded positively as compared to the proportion of leavers (64.0%).

Table A9 summarizes descriptive statistics (averages and standard deviations) for responses regarding the nine options teachers were given as factors that might influence them in considering a return to public education. Nonvoluntary leavers were not offered this question. Leavers ascribed the highest level of importance to “smaller class size” ($M = 3.71$) and “protected planning/break time” ($M = 3.75$). For retirees, the items that solicited the most agreement were “salary increase” ($M = 4.10$) and a “smaller class size” ($M = 4.00$).

Table A9. Averages for Factors That Could Influence Considering Returning to Teach

	Retirees		Leavers	
	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>n</i>
Salary increase	4.10 (1.07)	163	3.03 (1.24)	129
Smaller class size	4.00 (1.15)	163	3.71 (1.31)	129
Part-time teaching positions	3.51 (1.52)	162	2.90 (1.58)	128
Housing incentive	1.48 (1.06)	160	1.86 (1.34)	129
Student loan forgiveness	1.89 (1.52)	160	2.47 (1.65)	129
Revised grading or student promotion policies	2.39 (1.36)	160	2.21 (1.33)	128
Increased SPED support	3.16 (1.45)	161	2.87 (1.46)	129
Protected planning/break time	3.98 (1.15)	161	3.75 (1.34)	130
Childcare scholarships or vouchers for my children	1.36 (0.95)	160	2.33 (1.60)	129

When asked to choose the single most important reason to return to teaching, retirees most frequently chose “salary increase” (40.4%), “part-time teaching positions” (32.1%), and “smaller class size” (15.4%). The same three reasons appeared on the list for leavers. For that group, the most frequently chosen reason was “salary increase” (41.2%), followed by “smaller class size” (16.3%) and availability of “part-time teaching positions” (15.5%). For both retirees and leavers, each of the remaining six reasons was chosen by less than 10% of teachers. The “housing incentive” reason was the least frequently chosen for both retirees (0.6%) and leavers (1.6%).



TEACHER EXIT SURVEY

