UCL Centre for Education Policy & Equalising Opportunities

CEPEO Working Paper No. 26-04

Why do so many people train to teach but then not enter teaching? Assessing the role of preferences and shock using unique longitudinal survey data

Sam Sims
UCL

Clare Routledge
UCL

Teacher shortages are a persistent challenge across many countries, yet a substantial minority of newly qualified teachers never enter employment. Why do people invest time and money gaining a qualification but then choose not to teach? Two leading explanations are (1) that those who leave entered training with job preferences less suited to teaching than those who stay, and (2) that those who leave experience more "reality shock" during training, finding teaching less aligned with expectations than anticipated. This research uses two-wave longitudinal survey data from 409 trainee teachers in England (2024–2026), measuring job preferences via a conjoint experiment and reality shock via expectation-experience comparisons towards the end of training, alongside employment outcomes the following year. We find little evidence that leavers differ from stayers in their preferences. Trainees report both negative and positive shocks, and negative shock is associated with lower intentions to enter teaching, but does not predict actual entry. Our findings suggest that the search for explanations should look beyond preferences and shock, including in other countries where the same qualification-to-employment gap has been observed.

VERSION: May 2026

Suggested citation: Sims, S. & Routledge, C. (2026). *Why do so many people train to teach but never teach? Assessing the role of preferences and shock using longitudinal survey data.* (CEPEO Working Paper No. 26-04). UCL Centre for Education Policy and Equalising Opportunities.

Disclaimer

Any opinions expressed here are those of the author(s) and not those of UCL. Research published in this series may include views on policy, but the university itself takes no institutional policy positions.

CEPEO Working Papers often represent preliminary work and are circulated to encourage discussion. Citation of such a paper should account for its provisional character. A revised version may be available directly from the author.

Highlights

- This is the first study to use longitudinal data to test why qualified trainees do not enter teaching, tracking over 400 trainees from three large initial teacher education providers in England from the middle of their training year into the following autumn.
- Trainees who did not go on to teach had essentially the same job preferences as those who did, providing little support for the explanation that those who leave have preferences that are systematically less suited to teaching than those of trainees who stay.
- Trainees did report being shocked by some aspects of training, finding administrative work and lesson planning worse than expected and their relationships with pupils better than expected, but these mismatches between expectations and experiences did not predict whether trainees actually entered the profession.
- Among trainees who had intended to teach but ultimately did not, the reasons were strikingly idiosyncratic, including serious illness, bereavement, housing instability, and visa or right-to-work issues, with several reporting that they planned to enter teaching a year later instead.
- Neither of the two prominent explanations in the literature accounts well for why qualified trainees do not enter teaching, and our findings suggest that future research and policy attention should focus on the period between qualifying and starting work, when life events can disrupt entry.

Why does this matter?

Many countries face teacher shortages, yet a substantial share of those who train as teachers never enter the profession. Our findings suggest the most prominent explanations for this gap do not hold, and that the answer may lie in life events that disrupt the transition between qualifying and starting work.

Why do so many people train to teach but then not enter teaching? Assessing the role of preferences and shock using unique longitudinal survey data

Sam Sims and Clare Routledge

UCL Centre for Education Policy and Equalising Opportunities

Author Note

Sam Sims https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5585-8202

Clare Routledge https://orcid.org/0009-0009-2458-4569

This research was generously supported by the Gatsby Foundation. Thanks to all the students who took part in the survey for this project. Thanks in particular to Nicola Brestcher and Piers Saunders for their generous assistance.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Sam Sims, UCL Centre for Education Policy and Equalising Opportunities, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AL, United Kingdom. s.sims@ucl.ac.uk

Abstract

Teacher shortages are a persistent challenge across many countries, yet a substantial minority of newly qualified teachers never enter employment. Why do people invest time and money gaining a qualification but then choose not to teach? Two leading explanations are (1) that those who leave entered training with job preferences less suited to teaching than those who stay, and (2) that those who leave experience more "reality shock" during training, finding teaching less aligned with expectations than anticipated. This research uses two-wave longitudinal survey data from 409 trainee teachers in England (2024–2026), measuring job preferences via a conjoint experiment and reality shock via expectation-experience comparisons towards the end of training, alongside employment outcomes the following year. We find little evidence that leavers differ from stayers in their preferences. Trainees report both negative and positive shocks, and negative shock is associated with lower intentions to enter teaching, but does not predict actual entry. Our findings suggest that the search for explanations should look beyond preferences and shock, including in other countries where the same qualification-to-employment gap has been observed.

Keywords: teacher attrition, reality shock, job preferences, conjoint analysis, teacher training, teacher recruitment, initial teacher education

Why do so many people train to teach but then not enter teaching? Assessing the role of preferences and shock using unique longitudinal survey data

Many developed countries face shortages of qualified teachers. Across OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries, 24% of lower secondary teachers work in schools where the principal reports that a shortage of qualified teachers hinders the quality of instruction. This figure is as high as 35% in the USA, 42% in Australia, and 50% in Latvia.[1] These shortages are becoming more acute. The majority of OECD countries have seen the situation worsen between 2018 and 2024, with the proportion of lower secondary teachers working in shortage schools more than doubling in countries such as Austria, Canada, Finland, the Netherlands and Norway.[2] Addressing these shortages is an increasingly urgent policy priority.

While there is now considerable research exploring the reasons why in-service teachers leave the profession, we still know relatively little about the earliest stages of the teaching pipeline (Bruno, 2025). This is important because the earliest stages of the pipeline are the leakiest. For example, in England (the setting for this research) fewer than three quarters of those who achieve qualified teacher status in each trainee cohort go on to enter employment in a state-funded school the following year.[3] This dropout rate of around 25% is more than double the one-year attrition rate for first-year teachers (11%).[4]

The dominant route into teaching in England is a postgraduate one. Most trainees first complete an undergraduate degree in another subject, then undertake a one-year initial teacher education (ITE) programme that combines university-based study with school placements (or, in some routes, is delivered primarily in schools), before entering employment as an Early Career Teacher (Department for Education, 2025). Other countries structure entry to teaching differently, for example through undergraduate education degrees in which students commit to teaching at age 18, longer two-stage systems combining academic study with an extended paid in-school induction, or shorter alternative-certification routes for career changers. Studying the

[1] TALIS 2025 online table 1.18

[2] TALIS 2025 online table 1.18

[3] https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/73d54d6d-c598-4535-ac64-08de58cb0688

[4] https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/85104449-797d-4630-cb5b-08de6eccf22d

qualification-to-employment gap in the English context offers a clear vantage point on the structural transition from training into a first teaching post. The broader question this raises is what shapes whether qualified teachers actually take up teaching posts, and it applies wherever training and employment are distinct steps in the pipeline. What predicts entry at this transition is therefore a question of broader relevance.

Why do some newly qualified teachers invest considerable money, time and energy training but then, only a year or so later, choose not to enter employment as a teacher? What changed in the intervening period? While many different explanations have been put forward, these tend to cluster around two main themes. It may be that those who left realised during their training year that their preferences or motives were better aligned with a non-teaching job (Jungert et al., 2014; Rots et al., 2014). In these cases, what changed was the trainees' understanding of what they want from work (preferences). Alternatively, it may be that those who left were shocked by some aspects of teaching, as experienced during their training year (Hong, 2010; Veenman, 1984). Here, what changed was the trainees' understanding of teaching, rather than their understanding of their job preferences. These hypotheses are not mutually exclusive in that both may be true, even for an individual teacher. Our study tests each explanation in turn using longitudinal data, examining whether preferences and shock each independently predict entry into teaching.

Understanding whether one or both of these explanations are accurate is important for addressing early-career attrition from the profession. If preferences are an important reason why trainees choose to leave immediately after training, this suggests that better careers advice or deliberation may help people choose a more appropriate career path from the outset. If, on the other hand, trainees were surprised by the realities of teaching, then different solutions may be appropriate. For example, work experience prior to training or realistic job previews (RJPs) may help trainees develop more accurate expectations of what teaching involves before committing to the profession (Klassen et al., 2023). If the shock relates to specific aspects of teaching, such as behaviour management challenges, then teacher preparation programmes might need to place greater emphasis on developing trainees' skills to respond to these specific challenges (Dicke et al., 2015).

Existing literature and theory

Do leavers have different preferences?

Various theories emphasise the role of preferences, motives and values in shaping occupational choice. For example, public management scholars have theorised that public service motivation, an individual's predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations, affects occupational choice (Holt, 2018; Perry & Wise, 1990; Ritz et al., 2016). Education researchers have also developed frameworks for understanding entry to teaching in particular. For example, the FIT-Choice framework categorises various motivations for becoming a teacher, such as the personal benefits and the social influences (Watt & Richardson, 2007). Other frameworks differentiate types of *values* that might influence the choice to teach, such as altruism (Heinz, 2015).

Empirically, studies have shown that values differ between those who go on to be teachers and those who do not (Holt, 2022). Several studies have documented systematic differences in motivations and work-related values between trainee teachers who intend to remain in teaching and those who plan to leave. For example, Wilhelm et al. (2000) found that leavers placed relatively less weight on intrinsic and altruistic motivations and relatively greater weight on extrinsic rewards, workload considerations, and work-life balance. In a more recent study, Rots et al. (2014) found that stayers were more likely to have student-centred values. Related work has highlighted variation in tolerance for the demands of teaching. For example, studies comparing first- and second-career teachers have shown that career switchers tend to appraise professional challenges as less threatening and report lower intentions to leave, despite facing similar workplace demands (Troesch & Bauer, 2020).

Are leavers more shocked by the reality of teaching?

An alternative, though potentially complementary, explanation emphasises "reality shock" during the transition from training into teaching. This literature argues that prospective teachers often enter training with incomplete or idealised understandings of the realities of classroom practice, including workload intensity, behaviour management challenges, and the emotional demands of the job (Kyriacou & Kunc, 2007; Veenman, 1984). When these expectations turn out

to be inaccurate during training or early employment, some individuals reassess their commitment to the profession. Empirical evidence suggests that the mismatch between expectations and reality is a strong predictor of early attrition. Kyriacou and Kunc (2007) showed that many new teachers underestimate the extent of administrative work and behaviour management difficulties, with larger expectation gaps associated with lower job satisfaction. Similarly, Wilhelm et al. (2000) found that teachers who leave the profession frequently cite stressors that were either unanticipated or more severe than expected, particularly time pressure and emotional exhaustion. Using data from South Korea, Kim and Cho (2014) showed that pre-service teachers who anticipate greater reality shock report lower teaching self-efficacy and weaker commitment to the profession. These patterns appear across multiple national contexts, suggesting that the preferences-vs-shock debate is one of international rather than purely local relevance.

These patterns are consistent with a broader theoretical framework commonly used to understand why occupational misfit leads to exit: person-environment (P-E) fit theory. This holds that individuals experience more positive outcomes when their personal characteristics, including their values, needs, abilities, and interests, are compatible with the characteristics of their work environment (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Parsons, 1909). Within this broad framework, person-vocation (P-V) fit is the most directly relevant sub-theory for understanding occupational entry and early exit decisions (Holland, 1997). P-V fit refers to the degree of correspondence between an individual's vocational interests and personality and the demands and rewards characteristic of a given occupation (Holland, 1997). Holland's influential typology proposes that people are most likely to be satisfied and to persist in occupations that are congruent with their vocational personalities, and conversely, that poor person-vocation fit predicts dissatisfaction and withdrawal. Meta-analytic evidence supports this view: poor fit between individuals and their work environment is consistently associated with lower job satisfaction, reduced commitment, and greater withdrawal behaviour, including turnover (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Applied to early-career teacher attrition, reality shock can be understood in P-V fit terms: the experience of discovering that one's understanding of the occupation was inaccurate triggers downward revisions of perceived fit, and in turn, reduced commitment to entering or remaining in the profession.

A key implication of this literature is that negative experiences alone are insufficient to

explain early exit; rather, it is the discrepancy between expectations and experiences that appears to matter. Teachers who enter with accurate expectations are better positioned to assess whether the demands of the profession match their own characteristics and tolerances. This insight connects closely to P-E and P-V fit theory: when pre-entry expectations are inaccurate, a person cannot accurately assess whether their characteristics are well matched to the occupation before committing to it. Poor person-vocation fit that goes unrecognised prior to entry will only become apparent after the trainee has already invested time and resources in the training year. It is this logic that has motivated growing interest in realistic job previews (RJPs) as an intervention (Kim & Cho, 2014; Klassen et al., 2023). Drawing explicitly on P-V fit theory, Klassen et al. (2023) argue that providing prospective teachers with accurate information about the demands and rewards of teaching, prior to entering training, enables them to make more informed assessments of fit, allowing those whose characteristics are poorly matched to the profession to self-select out before costly training begins (Phillips, 1998). On this account, RJPs do not merely lower expectations; rather, they are intended to enable better-calibrated fit assessments, filtering the pipeline in favour of those who are likely to persist in the profession.

The Current Study

While several studies have addressed the 'preference' and 'shock' hypotheses separately, there has been very little research testing them simultaneously or using longitudinal data. We address this gap in the literature through collecting and analysing a two-wave longitudinal survey. Wave 1 measured trainee teachers' preferences and shock towards the end of their training year and Wave 2 captured whether or not they were teaching in the following year. As well as providing the first longitudinal assessment of the two hypotheses, our study advances the literature by using more modern measurement techniques. Almost all existing research relies on simple Likert-style measures of preferences, which are subject to ceiling effects and may reflect social desirability bias, the tendency for respondents to give answers they perceive as socially acceptable rather than answers that reflect their actual views. Instead, we measure preferences using a full factorial job-choice survey experiment, which helps mitigate both issues (Horiuchi et al., 2022).

Methods

Survey

We collected a two-wave longitudinal survey with new teachers in England during the 2024–25 and 2025–26 academic years. At the time of Wave 1 data collection (March–May 2025), participants had completed two school-based teaching placements, a standard component of ITE in England. During these placements, trainees typically spend several weeks in schools teaching lessons under supervision, engaging with pupils, collaborating with colleagues, and experiencing the full range of classroom and administrative responsibilities. Our Wave 1 questionnaire included a job-choice survey experiment (see Measures below) to measure preferences and a set of items designed to measure shock. At the time of Wave 2 data collection (October 2025–January 2026), participants were either in their first or second (potential) term of employment as teachers. Our Wave 2 questionnaire captured whether participants were employed as teachers at the time.

We recruited survey participants via three large ITE providers in England: (1) a university-based programme in a large city in the South East, (2) a university-based programme in a large city in the East Midlands, and (3) a school-centred programme in a large city in the South East. These institutions were chosen because the research team had contacts there and, while they are reasonably diverse, our data should therefore be considered a convenience sample. Our assessment of the representativeness of our sample against national ITE population data is shown in Table 1. Recruitment of individual participants occurred through two main channels. First, members of the research team visited participating ITE institutions and delivered live presentations to trainee cohorts, with 83.1% of respondents completing the survey in person during these sessions. Second, we asked course leaders at several university-based and school-centred ITE providers to forward email invitations to their trainees, with 16.9% of respondents completing the survey in this way. All participants received a £5 voucher for responding to the Wave 1 questionnaire. In total, 409 people responded.

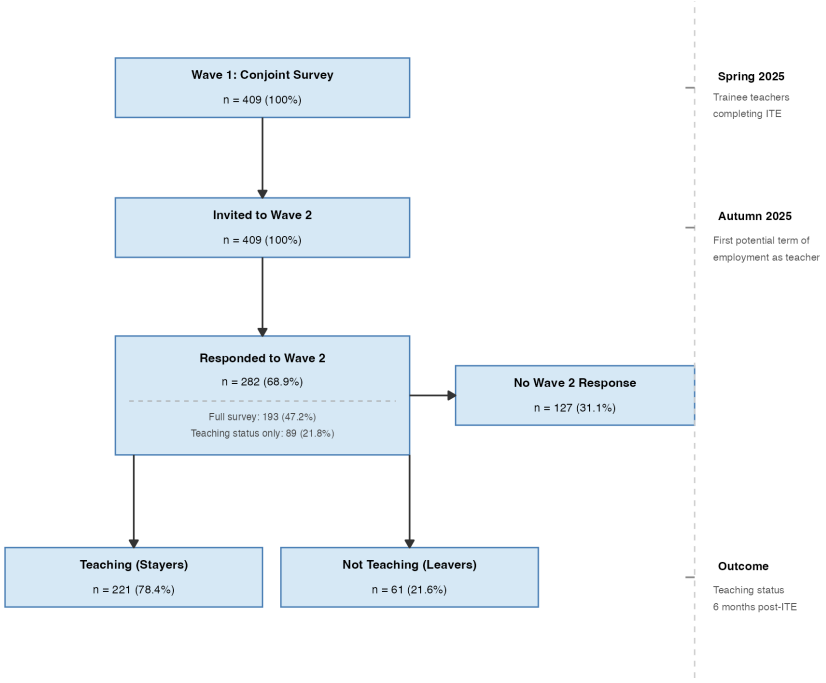
All Wave 1 respondents were invited to complete Wave 2. To maximise response rates, we used two contact methods. First, we sent email invitations with a link to a comprehensive online questionnaire. Second, for participants who had not yet responded to Wave 2, we sent SMS messages asking only whether participants were currently employed as a teacher. For participants

who responded via both methods, we retained the more comprehensive email response. All participants received a £10 voucher for responding to the Wave 2 questionnaire. In total, 282 participants (68.9% of Wave 1) responded at Wave 2: 193 via the full survey and 89 via SMS only.

Figure 1 shows participant flow through the study. Table 1 shows participant demographics for both waves. The typical respondent was a 24 year old, white, female, secondary school trainee. Table 1 shows that our sample was broadly comparable to the national ITE population in terms of gender, age, and training route. Our sample is more ethnically diverse than national averages for the ITE population, probably reflecting the concentration of recruitment activities in ethnically diverse urban settings. Table 2 shows that 85% of those who responded at both waves were planning to teach in the year after their training and 78% reported they were in fact teaching at Wave 2.

Figure 1

Participant Flow Through the Study



Note. Wave 1 collected during Spring 2025. Wave 2 collected Autumn 2025–January 2026. Full survey respondents completed comprehensive questionnaire via email; SMS respondents provided teaching status only.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

	Wave 1	Wave 2	National[a]
Age, median	24	25	24
Gender			
Female (%)	70.4	72.0	69
Male (%)	27.4	25.9	31
Non-binary/other (%)	2.2	2.1	—
Ethnicity			
White (%)	50.6	53.2	69
Global Majority Heritage (%)	39.6	40.1	31[b]
Prefer not to say (%)	9.8	6.7	—
Teaching Phase			
Primary (%)	34.7	33.3	36
Secondary - STEM (%)	39.9	38.7	25
Secondary - non-STEM (%)	21.3	22.7	39
Early Years (%)	4.2	5.3	—[c]
Undergraduate Degree Subject			
Social Sciences, Humanities, or Law (%)	34.5	34.0	—
Biological or Life Sciences (%)	16.9	18.8	—
Education or Teaching Studies (%)	13.2	11.7	—
Creative Arts or Media (%)	10.3	11.7	—
Mathematics (%)	10.0	9.6	—
Other Physical Sciences (%)	5.9	6.0	—
Physics, Engineering (%)	5.4	5.0	—
Computer Science (%)	3.9	3.2	—
Teaching Status at Wave 2			
Employed as teacher (%)	—	78.4	—
Planned to teach at Wave 1 (%)[d]	86.8	85.5	—
Sample Size (N)	409	282	—

[a] National statistics from ITT Census 2025/26 (Department for Education, 2025). [b] Combines Asian (16%), Black (8%), Mixed (4%), and Other (3%). [c] Early Years ITT is a separate route.

[d] Intention to seek teaching employment.

Table 2

Wave 1 Teaching Intentions and Wave 2 Teaching Outcomes

	Wave 2 Outcome		
Wave 1 Intention	Teaching	Not Teaching	**Total**
Intending to teach	209 (87.1%)	31 (12.9%)	240
Not intending to teach	11 (26.8%)	30 (73.2%)	41
Total	220 (78.3%)	61 (21.7%)	281

Note. Row percentages shown in parentheses. Wave 1 intentions measured during ITT (Spring 2025); Wave 2 outcomes measured in Autumn 2025. "Intending to teach" includes trainees who had already accepted a teaching position or were actively looking for one. One Wave 2 respondent could not be matched to Wave 1 intention data and is excluded from this table ($n = 281$).

Measures

Job Preferences

We measured job preference using a full factorial, paired profile, job-choice conjoint experiment. This involved presenting respondents with pairs of hypothetical jobs and asking them to indicate which was most attractive. Each job was represented as a bundle of attributes (e.g., salary, working hours), and each attribute could take on a discrete number of values. By separately randomising the value of each attribute in each job profile, we could isolate respondents' intensity of preferences for each attribute (Hainmueller et al., 2015). This approach has two important advantages for understanding career decisions. First, it reduces social desirability bias by requiring respondents to choose between options that both contain socially desirable and undesirable features (Horiuchi et al., 2022). Second, research has demonstrated that preferences revealed in job-choice experiments successfully predict actual job choices in a range of international contexts (Maestas et al., 2023; Viano et al., 2021; Wiswall & Zafar, 2018), making this a valuable tool for understanding teacher job decisions.

Each participant was asked to complete ten paired-choice tasks. Each task presented two hypothetical jobs in tabular form, with the jobs shown in the columns and the ten job attributes in the rows. Using the same attributes as Sims and Routledge (2025) allowed us to measure preferences in a way that was directly comparable to those of undergraduates in the UK and US. The ten attributes are grounded in the Cassar and Meier (2018) framework, which provides a comprehensive interdisciplinary account of the determinants of occupational choice. Crucially, the values for each attribute were calibrated to reflect realistic differences between teaching and other graduate jobs in England. This was important for our research questions: testing whether trainees' preferences are misaligned with teaching requires choice tasks that reflect the actual trade-offs trainees face when deciding whether to enter the profession, rather than abstract or idealised job comparisons.

The 'cost' attributes captured what workers must give up to perform a job, including demands on time, flexibility, and working patterns. The 'meaning' attributes captured intrinsic motivation, such as whether the job uses one's degree knowledge, involves working with young people, or provides social impact. The 'income' attributes captured extrinsic rewards, including

starting salary, pension contributions, and a year-two retention bonus. Figure 2 shows an example choice task. Table 3 summarises the attributes and their possible values.

Figure 2

Example Conjoint Choice Task from the General Job Experiment

	Option 1	**Option 2**
One-off bonus paid after two years	£7,500	£3,000
Typical working hours per week	48 hours per week	48 hours per week
Paid leave per year	13 weeks per year	17 weeks per year
Days worked from home per week	5 days from home	2 days from home
Flexibility over working hours	Fixed working hours	Complete flexibility, within demands of the role
Uses knowledge from undergraduate degree	Never	Daily
Frequency of working with young people	Never	Daily
Level of social or community impact	Moderate impact	No impact
Employer pension contribution each month	Equivalent to 14% of salary	Equivalent to 5% of salary
Starting salary per year (before tax)	£28,500	£40,000
	○	○

Note. Respondents were presented with 10 choice tasks. For each task, attribute values were randomly assigned to Option 1 and Option 2, ensuring no systematic relationship between attribute values.

Survey experiments involve random assignment, which makes it important to consider statistical power. Our final sample contains 409 respondents and our attributes have up to four possible values each. This implies that the study has 80% power to detect effects (average marginal component effects) of 0.045. This is less than the median effect size typically observed in conjoint studies (AMCE ≈ 0.05; Schuessler and Freitag, 2020).

Table 3

Attributes and Possible Attribute Values for the General Job Conjoint

C&M[a]	Attribute	Value 1	Value 2	Value 3	Value 4
Costs	Typical working hours per week	40	48	52	60
	Paid leave per year	6 weeks	13 weeks	17 weeks	–
	Days worked from home per week	0	2	4	5
	Flexibility over working hours	Fixed working hours	Ability to shift start/end times by one hour	Complete flexibility within demands of the role	–
Meaning	Uses knowledge from undergraduate degree	Never	Weekly	Daily	–
	Frequency of working with young people	Never	Weekly	Daily	–
	Level of social or community impact you can make	No impact	Small impact	Moderate impact	Significant impact
Income	Starting salary per year (before tax)	£28,500	£31,650	£40,000	£49,000
	Monthly employer contribution to pension (additional to salary)	5%	10%	14%	–
	One-off bonus paid after two years	£0	£3,000	£5,000	£7,500

[a] C&M refers to the categories from the Cassar and Meier (2018) framework.

Note. Each hypothetical job presented to respondents in the choice tasks comprised the ten attributes listed above. For each hypothetical job, the value for each attribute was randomly selected from the values shown in the columns.

Shock

In addition to measuring job preferences, we measured trainees' experience of shock. Shock involves a mismatch between expectations and reality. We therefore asked participants to rate how their placement experiences compared to their prior expectations across ten dimensions of teaching work: pupil behaviour, interactions with parents, marking workload, administrative tasks, working day length, lesson planning time, leadership support, impact on pupils, mentor support, and relationships with pupils. Response options ranged from "much worse than expected" to "much better than expected" on a five-point scale. Figure 3 shows the full question wording.

The ten dimensions were selected to cover the aspects of teaching work most commonly identified in the reality shock literature as sources of mismatch between expectation and experience (Kyriacou & Kunc, 2007; Veenman, 1984; Wilhelm et al., 2000). These span workload-related aspects (marking, administrative tasks, working day length, lesson planning), relational aspects (interactions with parents, leadership support, mentor support, relationships with pupils), and outcome-related aspects (pupil behaviour, impact on pupils). Capturing this breadth was important for our research question: if reality shock drives trainees away from the profession, we needed to measure it across the full range of areas where mismatch is most likely to occur, rather than relying on a single dimension or composite.

Figure 3

Wave 1 Question: Teaching Experiences Compared to Expectations

How has your experience of teaching so far compared to your expectations?					
	Much worse than expected	**Somewhat worse than expected**	**In line with expectations**	**Somewhat better than expected**	**Much better than expected**
Pupil behaviour	○	○	○	○	○
Interactions with parents	○	○	○	○	○
Amount of time marking	○	○	○	○	○
Amount of time doing administrative tasks	○	○	○	○	○
Length of working day	○	○	○	○	○
Amount of time doing lesson planning	○	○	○	○	○
Support from school leadership	○	○	○	○	○
My impact on pupils	○	○	○	○	○
Support from in-school mentors	○	○	○	○	○
My relationship with pupils	○	○	○	○	○

Note. This question was asked at Wave 1 after participants had completed two school-based teaching placements during their initial teacher training.

Teaching status

At Wave 1, we asked respondents about career plans for September 2025 – the beginning of the academic year immediately following completion of their training. Participants selected from seven options including: having already accepted a full-time teaching position, actively looking for one, planning to work in education but not as a full-time teacher, planning to work outside teaching, not planning employment, being unsure, or other. We classified participants as

"intending to teach" if they reported having already accepted a teaching position or actively looking for one, and "not intending to teach" otherwise. At Wave 2, we collected information on participants' employment status. Participants selected from options including employed as a classroom teacher, working in a school in a non-teaching role (e.g., teaching assistant, cover supervisor), working outside education, further study, taking a gap year or career break, or other. Participants were classified as "teaching" only if they were employed as a classroom teacher in a school.

Analysis

To quantify the preferences of trainee teachers, we estimated marginal means for each attribute value. Marginal means capture the probability that a job profile is chosen when it contains a given attribute value. For example, among all profiles offering £40,000 salary, how often was that profile selected? Since attribute values were independently randomised, differences in marginal means isolate the intensity of preferences for a particular value of a particular attribute. We compared marginal means across subgroups to examine whether job preferences differed by teaching intentions (Wave 1) and actual teaching status (Wave 2). Marginal means were calculated in R using the cregg package for conjoint analysis (Leeper et al., 2020), which accounts for clustering of standard errors at the respondent level. We plotted marginal means with error bars showing ±1 standard error, such that non-overlapping error bars suggested statistically significant differences between groups at approximately the 95% confidence level.

To test the importance of shock, we compared mean shock ratings across the ten dimensions between groups using independent samples t-tests. We conducted this comparison twice: first examining whether shock ratings differed between those who intended to teach and those who did not (Wave 1), and second examining whether shock ratings differed between those who were teaching and those who were not (Wave 2). If shock drives pipeline attrition, we would expect those who left to report more negative shock ratings than those who stayed.

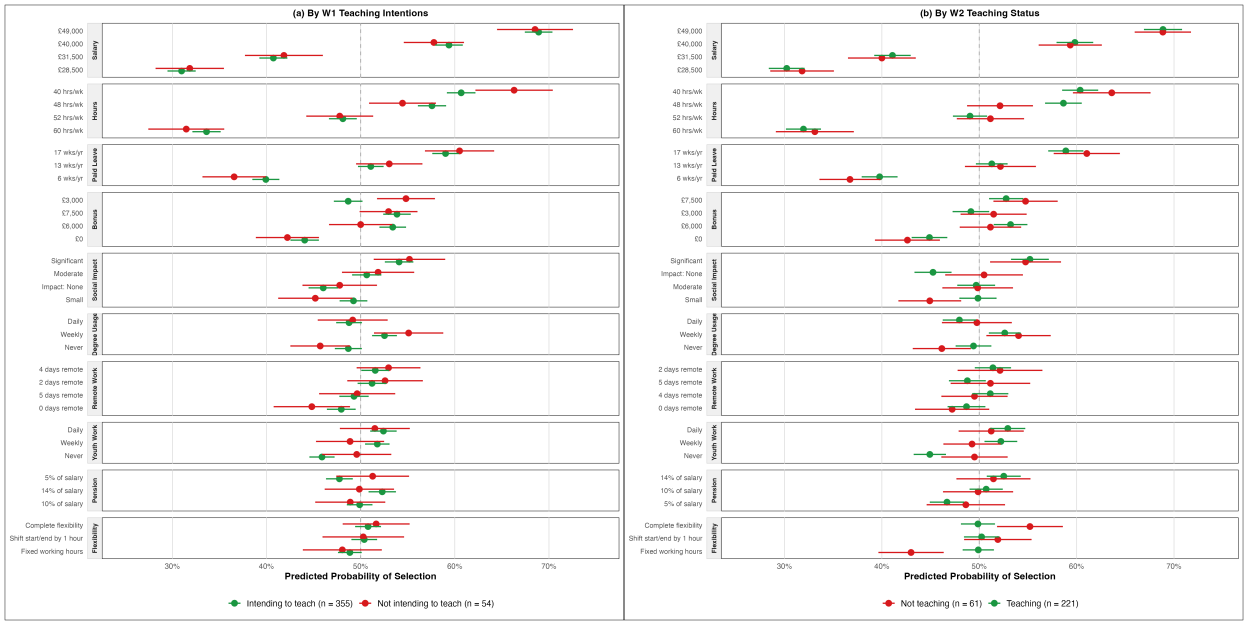
Results

Preferences

Figure 4 shows the preferences of respondents. The horizontal axis shows the marginal mean, which is the probability of a profile being chosen if it contains each of the attribute values. The attribute values are arrayed on the vertical axis. Points further to the right on the graph indicate stronger preferences. In the left-hand panel, green points represent respondents who intend to teach the following year and red circles represent those who do not. In the right-hand panel, green circles represent respondents who were actually teaching in the following year and red circles those who were not. The horizontal bars represent ±1 standard error. Comparing the position of the red and green circles shows that there is very little difference in the preferences of the two groups. Indeed, across the 70 pairwise comparisons in Figure 4, only two are clearly different. First, those not intending to teach in the subsequent years (left panel) had slightly stronger preferences for a shorter (40 hour) working week. Second, those not teaching at Wave 2 (right panel) had a slight preference for fixed (inflexible) working hours. However, these two exceptions aside, preferences were strikingly similar across groups.

Figure 4

Do Job Preferences Differ by Teaching Intentions and Outcomes?

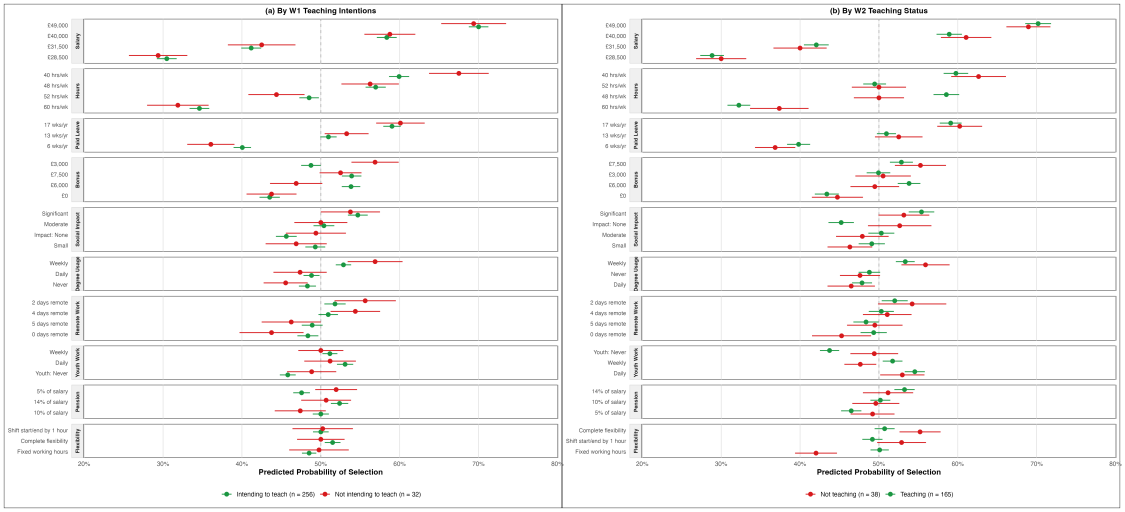


Note. Wave 1 conjoint preferences measured during ITT (n = 409). Error bars show ±1 standard error, clustered at respondent level. Panel (a) compares those who planned to teach in September vs. those who did not [intentions measured at Wave 1]. Panel (b) compares those teaching in autumn term vs. not teaching [outcomes measured at Wave 2, n = 282]. Non-overlapping error bars suggest significant differences between groups at approximately the 95% confidence level.

It is possible that the lack of overall difference in preferences in Figure 4 is concealing differences among particular subgroups. Figure 5 reproduces Figure 4 but only for the subgroup of respondents who are female. Again, comparing the position of the red and green circles shows that there is very little difference in the preferences of the two groups. Figure 6 shows the same for the subgroup of respondents with a STEM (science, technology, engineering, maths) undergraduate degree. Again, there is very little difference in the preferences of the two groups. Taken together, these subgroup analyses provide no evidence that preference differences explain variation in teaching outcomes for any of the groups examined.

Figure 5

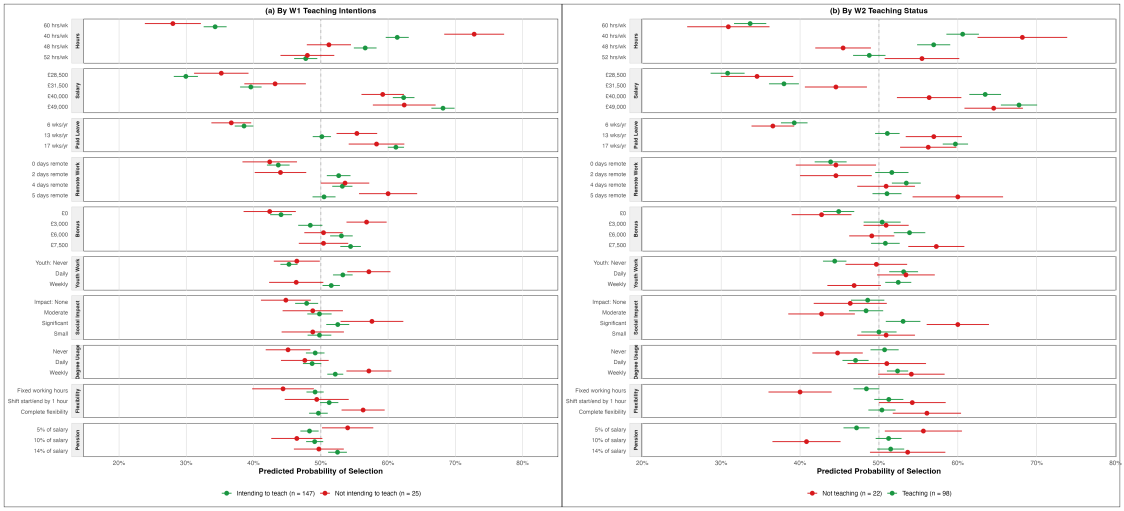
Do Job Preferences Differ by Gender? (Female Participants)



Note. Wave 1 conjoint preferences measured during ITT. Error bars show ±1 standard error, clustered at respondent level. Analysis restricted to female participants (n = 288); male participants (n = 112) and those identifying as non-binary or other (n = 9) excluded. Panel (a) compares female trainees who planned to teach in September vs. those who did not [intentions measured at Wave 1]. Panel (b) compares those teaching in autumn term vs. not teaching [outcomes measured at Wave 2]. Non-overlapping error bars suggest significant differences between groups at approximately the 95% confidence level.

Figure 6

Do Job Preferences Differ by Undergraduate Degree Type?



Note. Wave 1 conjoint preferences measured during ITT. Error bars show ±1 standard error, clustered at respondent level. STEM includes participants with undergraduate degrees in mathematics, physics, engineering, computer science, biological sciences, and other physical sciences; non-STEM includes all other degree subjects. Panel (a) compares STEM and non-STEM trainees who planned to teach in September vs. those who did not [intentions measured at Wave 1]. Panel (b) compares those teaching in autumn term vs. not teaching [outcomes measured at Wave 2, n = 282]. Non-overlapping error bars suggest significant differences between groups at approximately the 95% confidence level.

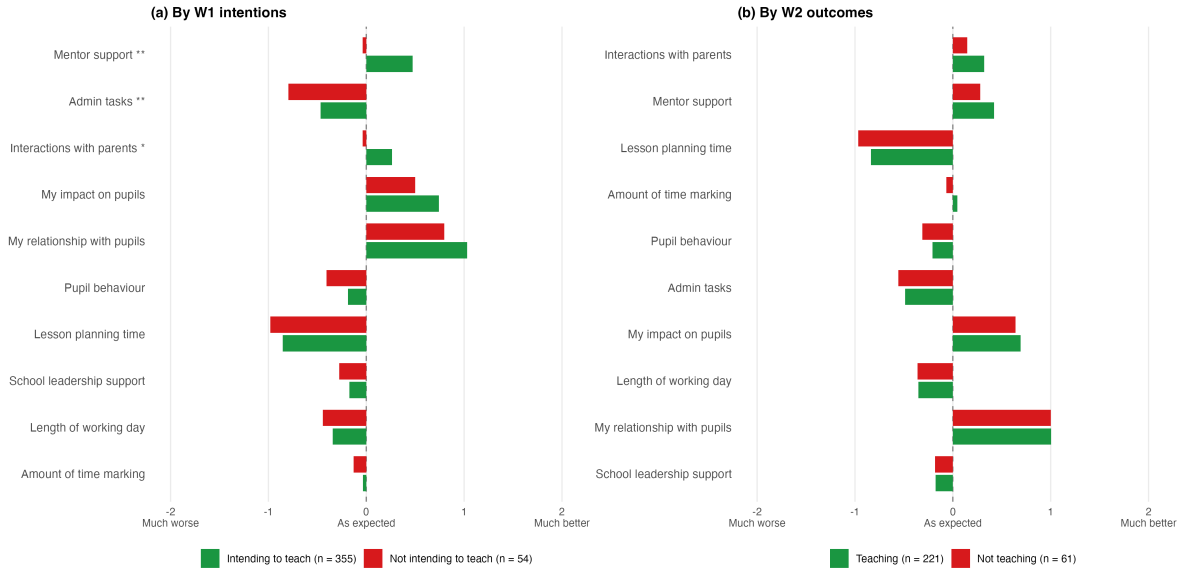
Shock

Figure 7 shows the extent to which respondents were shocked by various aspects of teaching, arrayed along the vertical axis. Bars to the right of the dashed vertical line indicate that teaching is better than expected and bars to the left worse than expected. The new teachers were shocked by various aspects of teaching, including the amount of administrative tasks and the amount of lesson planning (both worse than expected) and their relationships with and impact on pupils (both better than expected). Green and red have the same meaning as in the graphs above. Asterisks indicate statistically significant differences between the green and red bars. In the left-hand panel, those who intended to remain in teaching were more positively shocked by mentor support and interactions with parents than those who intended to leave. Those who intended to stay were also less negatively shocked by the amount of administrative tasks. However, these differences disappear when we compare those who were actually teaching at Wave

2 with those who were not (right-hand panel). The gaps between the green and red bars shrank considerably and were no longer statistically significant.

Figure 7

Did Trainees' Experiences of Teaching Match Their Expectations?



Note. Mean shock ratings by (a) Wave 1 intentions and (b) Wave 2 outcomes. Shock measured on a 5-point scale from −2 (much worse than expected) to +2 (much better than expected), with 0 indicating experience was in line with expectations. Panel (a): Intending to teach (n = 355) vs Not intending (n = 54). Panel (b): Teaching (n = 221) vs Not teaching (n = 61). Items ordered by size of difference between groups. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$ (independent samples t-test).

Why do shock findings differ between Wave 1 and Wave 2

What explains the discrepancy between the left and right-hand panels of Figure 7? One possible explanation is that teachers' intentions to teach are only weakly related to whether they actually teach. Shock could therefore be related to the former but not the latter. However, Table 2 shows that, of those who reported intending to teach in Wave 1 and also responded in Wave 2, 87% were indeed teaching at Wave 2. Likewise, of those who report not intending to teach in Wave 1 and also responded at Wave 2, 73% were indeed not teaching at Wave 2. Broadly speaking then, intentions to teach and actual teaching were reasonably well aligned across waves.

A second possible explanation is that the discrepancy is driven by differential non-response across waves. If the relationship between shock and intention is largely driven by

teachers who responded at Wave 1 but not Wave 2, then the relationship at Wave 1 could disappear in Wave 2. Appendix D shows the results when we restricted the sample only to those who responded in both waves. The relationships between shock (mentor support and interactions with parents) and intention to teach remained visible at Wave 1 but were again smaller and not statistically significant at Wave 2. Moreover, Table 1 suggests that respondents at Wave 2 did not differ on observable characteristics from those at Wave 1. This suggests that differential non-response does not adequately explain the discrepancy.

A third possible explanation for the discrepancy is that the Wave 1 relationship could be due to common source bias (Favero & Bullock, 2015). At Wave 1, teachers who are feeling particularly negative general sentiment about teaching may provide an exaggerated response about both the extent to which they have been shocked and about their intentions not to teach. This would exaggerate the relationship between the two variables. At Wave 2, by contrast, feeling generally negative is unlikely to influence teachers' self-reports of whether they are in fact teaching or not, since this is just a fact. Thus general sentiment seems unlikely to increase the correlation at Wave 2 in the way it might in Wave 1. To test this, Appendix F restricts the sample to trainees whose average shock rating across all 10 items was positive i.e., those whose overall ITT experience was in line with or better than expectations (n=236). The relationship with shock (mentor support and relationships with parents) is of a similar magnitude, albeit no longer significant due to the smaller sample size. Taken together, these three checks suggest that the discrepancy between Wave 1 and Wave 2 findings is unlikely to be a methodological artefact.

In an attempt to shed further light on this discrepancy, we reviewed the open text box responses on our Wave 2 survey. Some of the 31 respondents who had intended to teach at Wave 1 but were not teaching at Wave 2 had used this to tell us why they had not entered teaching. In participants' own words, this seemed to reflect a range of idiosyncratic unexpected personal events, including serious illnesses, bereavement, house fires, and visa problems or right to work issues. While there is only so much that can be learned from brief, unprompted and unstructured responses, this suggests that personal life events were one important reason that trainees had not entered the workforce. A number of participants also reported that they planned to enter teaching a year later.

Discussion

Many economically advanced countries are experiencing growing teacher shortages. Yet, each year people invest considerable time, money, and effort to qualify as teachers, only to never take up a post in a school. What changed between their decision to train as a teacher and their subsequent decision not to enter the profession? While the existing research base on this question is limited, we investigated two prominent explanations for newly qualified teachers not entering teaching: people changing their understanding of what they want from work (preferences) and people changing their understanding of what is involved in teaching (shock).

We found little evidence for the preferences explanation. The only possible exception to this is that those who intended to leave after their training year had stronger preferences for a shorter (40 hour) working week. However, this difference is small in magnitude and did not hold when we compared those who were teaching against those who were not teaching in the subsequent academic year. This finding is in tension with a small number of empirical papers that found, using cross-sectional surveys, that those who leave teaching have different preferences or values to those who stay (Rots et al., 2010; Wilhelm et al., 2000). Methodologically, our paper differs from these in that we measured preferences prospectively (rather than after teachers had left) which helps mitigate against respondents post-rationalising their decisions by reporting preferences that align with their past decisions. In addition, we used conjoint methods that are likely to mitigate social desirability bias in responses (Horiuchi et al., 2022).

We found that trainee teachers were indeed negatively shocked by some aspects of teaching. In particular, they reported that administrative tasks, workload including lesson planning, and pupil behaviour, are worse than they expected them to be. This aligns with a range of studies finding that new teachers were shocked by the reality of teaching (Kyriacou & Kunc, 2007; Veenman, 1984; Wilhelm et al., 2000). Nevertheless, trainees also reported positive shocks in some areas, such as mentor support and their relationships with, and impact on, pupils. Shocks were therefore both negative and positive. We also found that those who reported not intending to teach after their training year were more likely to have found teaching worse than expected during their placements. In particular, they were more likely to report that mentor support, administrative burden and interactions with parents were worse than they expected. However,

once again, we found that shock measured towards the end of the training year was unrelated to whether respondents were actually teaching early in the subsequent academic year. This discrepancy between our results based on intentions to teach (Wave 1) and observed teaching (Wave 2) cannot easily be explained by teachers not following through on their stated intentions, differential non-response across survey waves, or common source bias. Instead, it seems to partly reflect a range of idiosyncratic and unexpected personal events that stopped those who had intended to teach at Wave 1 entering teaching at Wave 2. Events of this kind, such as illness, bereavement, housing instability, and visa issues, are not specific to any one national context.

Limitations and implications

Regardless of what explains the difference in findings across waves, ours is the first study on this topic to show that differences in shock do not appear to explain why some newly qualified teachers do not enter employment as teachers.

That said, our study also has limitations. Foremost among these is that our findings are based on a convenience sample of 409 trainee teachers from three initial teacher education providers in England, recruited primarily through in-person sessions in urban settings. As a result, our sample is more ethnically diverse than the national ITE population and may not be representative of trainees in rural or non-university-based settings, or of trainees in other national contexts. Our data also covers only one academic year, limiting what we can say about year-on-year variation in the factors driving non-entry.

These limitations notwithstanding, our findings do suggest that two prominent explanations for why newly qualified teachers do not enter teaching, preferences and shock, are not well supported by empirical evidence. The field therefore needs new hypotheses, and observational or qualitative work is likely to be particularly valuable in generating them. Because the underlying transition, from training into a first teaching post, exists wherever training and employment are distinct steps, this is a research agenda we hope to see taken up across initial teacher education systems.

Our findings also have indirect implications for the theoretical rationale underlying the use of realistic job previews (RJPs) in teacher recruitment. RJPs are typically advocated on the basis of P-V fit theory: by providing prospective teachers with accurate information about the

profession before they commit to training, RJPs are intended to enable better-calibrated assessments of person-vocation fit and to allow those who are poorly suited to the profession to self-select out early (Klassen et al., 2023; Phillips, 1998). Our results, however, cast doubt on this mechanism, at least over the first year or two of the teaching pipeline. If shock-driven reassessments of fit were the primary mechanism driving early exit, we would expect shock to predict actual non-entry. The absence of this relationship in our data suggests either that poor fit is not the primary driver of non-entry at this stage of the pipeline, or that trainees who discover poor fit during training do not act on it in the immediate year following qualification. Of course, this does not necessarily mean that RJPs are ineffective. They may operate through other mechanisms such as coping preparation or enhancing perceived organisational honesty (Earnest et al., 2011). However, the specific claim that they reduce post-training non-entry by filtering out poorly fitting candidates is not well supported by the evidence presented here.

Conclusion

In sum, two of the most prominent theoretical explanations for early teacher pipeline attrition, preference misalignment and reality shock, do not appear to be supported by the evidence. Taken together with the limited prior empirical work on this question, this suggests that the field's current theoretical toolkit may be insufficient to account for what happens between the decision to train as a teacher and the decision not to enter the profession. Making progress on this question will require both the development of new theoretical frameworks and the collection of new empirical evidence capable of testing them. Why so many people complete a teaching qualification but never take up a post in a school remains a puzzle.

References

Bruno, P. (2025). Teacher supply and turnover. *Live handbook of education policy research. Association for Education Finance and Policy. https://livehandbook.org/k-12-education/workforce-teachers/teacher-supply-and-turnover.*

Cassar, L., & Meier, S. (2018). Nonmonetary incentives and the implications of work as a source of meaning. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, *32*(3), 215–238.

Department for Education. (2025). Initial teacher training census: Academic year 2025/26 [Published 4 December 2025. Accessed January 2026]. https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/initial-teacher-training-census/2025-26

Dicke, T., Elling, J., Schmeck, A., & Leutner, D. (2015). Reducing reality shock: The effects of classroom management skills training on beginning teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *48*, 1–12.

Earnest, D. R., Allen, D. G., & Landis, R. S. (2011). Mechanisms linking realistic job previews with turnover: A meta-analytic path analysis. *Personnel Psychology*, *64*(4), 865–897. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.2011.01230.x

Favero, N., & Bullock, J. B. (2015). How (not) to solve the problem: An evaluation of scholarly responses to common source bias. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, *25*(1), 285–308.

Hainmueller, J., Hangartner, D., & Yamamoto, T. (2015). Validating vignette and conjoint survey experiments against real-world behavior. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, *112*(8), 2395–2400.

Heinz, M. (2015). Why choose teaching? an international review of empirical studies exploring student teachers' career motivations and levels of commitment to teaching. *Educational Research and Evaluation*, *21*(3), 258–297.

Holland, J. L. (1997). *Making vocational choices: A theory of vocational personalities and work environments* (3rd). Psychological Assessment Resources.

Holt, S. B. (2018). For those who care: The effect of public service motivation on sector selection. *Public Administration Review*, *78*(3), 457–471.

Holt, S. B. (2022). For the children? teachers motivation and systems for recruitment, retention, and evaluation. In *Research handbook on motivation in public administration* (pp. 264–283). Edward Elgar Publishing.

Hong, J. Y. (2010). Pre-service and beginning teachers' professional identity and its relation to dropping out of the profession. *Teaching and teacher Education*, *26*(8), 1530–1543.

Horiuchi, Y., Markovich, Z., & Yamamoto, T. (2022). Does conjoint analysis mitigate social desirability bias? *Political Analysis*, *30*(4), 535–549.

Jungert, T., Alm, F., & Thornberg, R. (2014). Motives for becoming a teacher and their relations to academic engagement and dropout among student teachers. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, *40*(2), 173–185.

Kim, H., & Cho, Y. J. (2014). Pre-service teachers' motivation, sense of teaching efficacy, and expectation of reality shock. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, *42*(1), 67–81.

Klassen, R. M., Granger, H., & Bardach, L. (2023). Attracting prospective STEM teachers using realistic job previews: A mixed methods study. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, *46*(3), 533–555.

Kristof-Brown, A. L., Zimmerman, R. D., & Johnson, E. C. (2005). Consequences of individuals' fit at work: A meta-analysis of person–job, person–organization, person–group, and person–supervisor fit. *Personnel Psychology*, *58*(2), 281–342. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.2005.00672.x

Kyriacou, C., & Kunc, R. (2007). Beginning teachers' expectations of teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *23*(8), 1246–1257.

Leeper, T. J., Hobolt, S. B., & Tilley, J. (2020). Measuring subgroup preferences in conjoint experiments. *Political Analysis*, *28*(2), 207–221.

Maestas, N., Mullen, K. J., Powell, D., Von Wachter, T., & Wenger, J. B. (2023). The value of working conditions in the united states and implications for the structure of wages. *American Economic Review*, *113*(7), 2007–2047.

Parsons, F. (1909). *Choosing a vocation*. Houghton Mifflin.

Perry, J. L., & Wise, L. R. (1990). The motivational bases of public service. *Public administration review*, 367–373.

Phillips, J. M. (1998). Effects of realistic job previews on multiple organizational outcomes: A meta-analysis. *Academy of Management Journal*, *41*(6), 673–690. https://doi.org/10.5465/256964

Ritz, A., Brewer, G. A., & Neumann, O. (2016). Public service motivation: A systematic literature review and outlook. *Public administration review*, *76*(3), 414–426.

Rots, I., Aelterman, A., & Devos, G. (2014). Teacher education graduates' choice (not) to enter the teaching profession: Does teacher education matter? *European Journal of Teacher Education*, *37*(3), 279–294.

Rots, I., Aelterman, A., Devos, G., & Vlerick, P. (2010). Teacher education and the choice to enter the teaching profession: A prospective study. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *26*(8), 1619–1629.

Schuessler, J., & Freitag, M. (2020). Power analysis for conjoint experiments. *SocArXiv*.

Sims, S., & Routledge, C. (2025). *Understanding the decision (not) to become a teacher: Evidence from survey experiments with undergraduates in the UK and US* (CEPEO Working Paper No. 25-15). UCL Centre for Education Policy and Equalising Opportunities.

Troesch, L. M., & Bauer, C. E. (2020). Is teaching less challenging for career switchers? first and second career teachers' appraisal of professional challenges and their intention to leave teaching. *Frontiers in psychology*, *10*, 3067.

Veenman, S. (1984). Perceived problems of beginning teachers. *Review of Educational Research*, *54*(2), 143–178.

Viano, S., Pham, L. D., Henry, G. T., Kho, A., & Zimmer, R. (2021). What teachers want: School factors predicting teachers' decisions to work in low-performing schools. *American Educational Research Journal*, *58*(1), 201–233.

Watt, H. M., & Richardson, P. W. (2007). Motivational factors influencing teaching as a career choice: Development and validation of the fit-choice scale. *The Journal of experimental education*, *75*(3), 167–202.

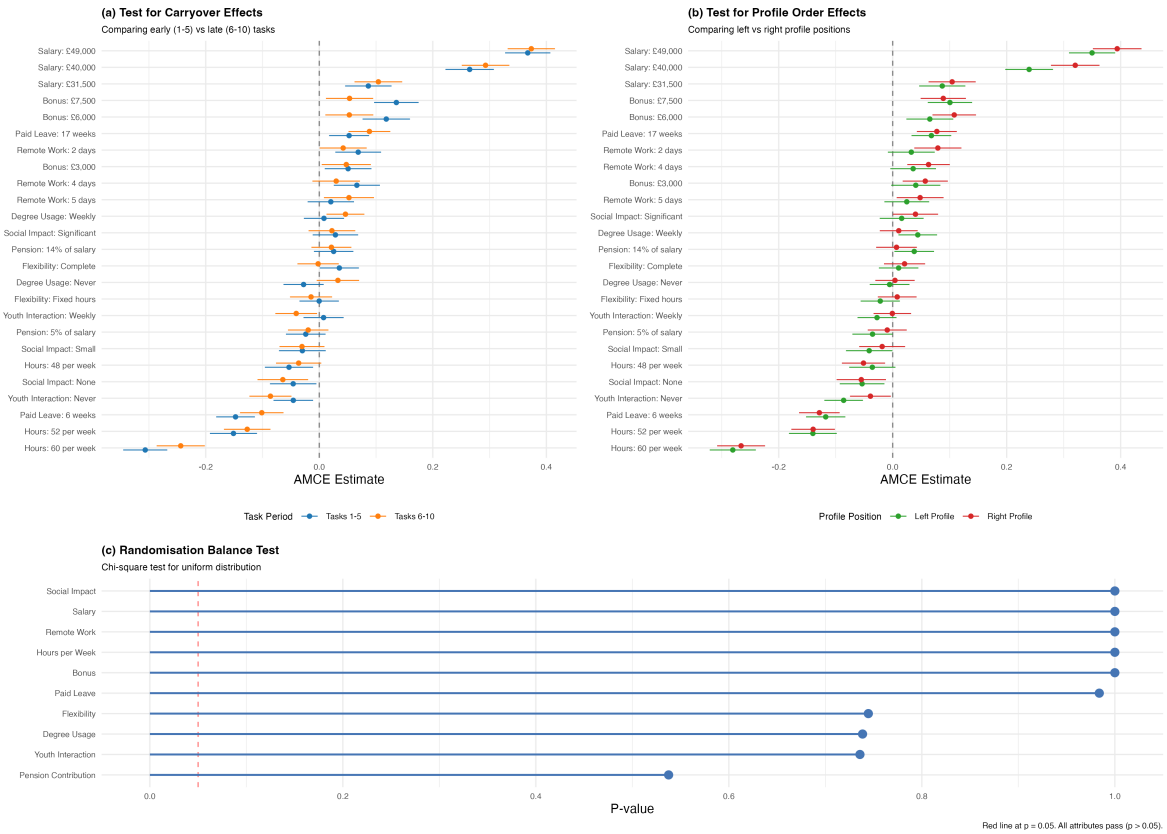
Wilhelm, K., Dewhurst-Savellis, J., & Parker, G. (2000). Teacher stress? *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, *6*(3), 291–304.

Wiswall, M., & Zafar, B. (2018). Preference for the workplace, investment in human capital, and gender. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, *133*(1), 457–507.

Appendix A

Robustness checks for the generic job conjoint experiment.

To assess the robustness of our conjoint estimates, we conducted three diagnostic tests examining potential threats to validity: carryover effects across tasks, profile order effects, and randomisation balance.

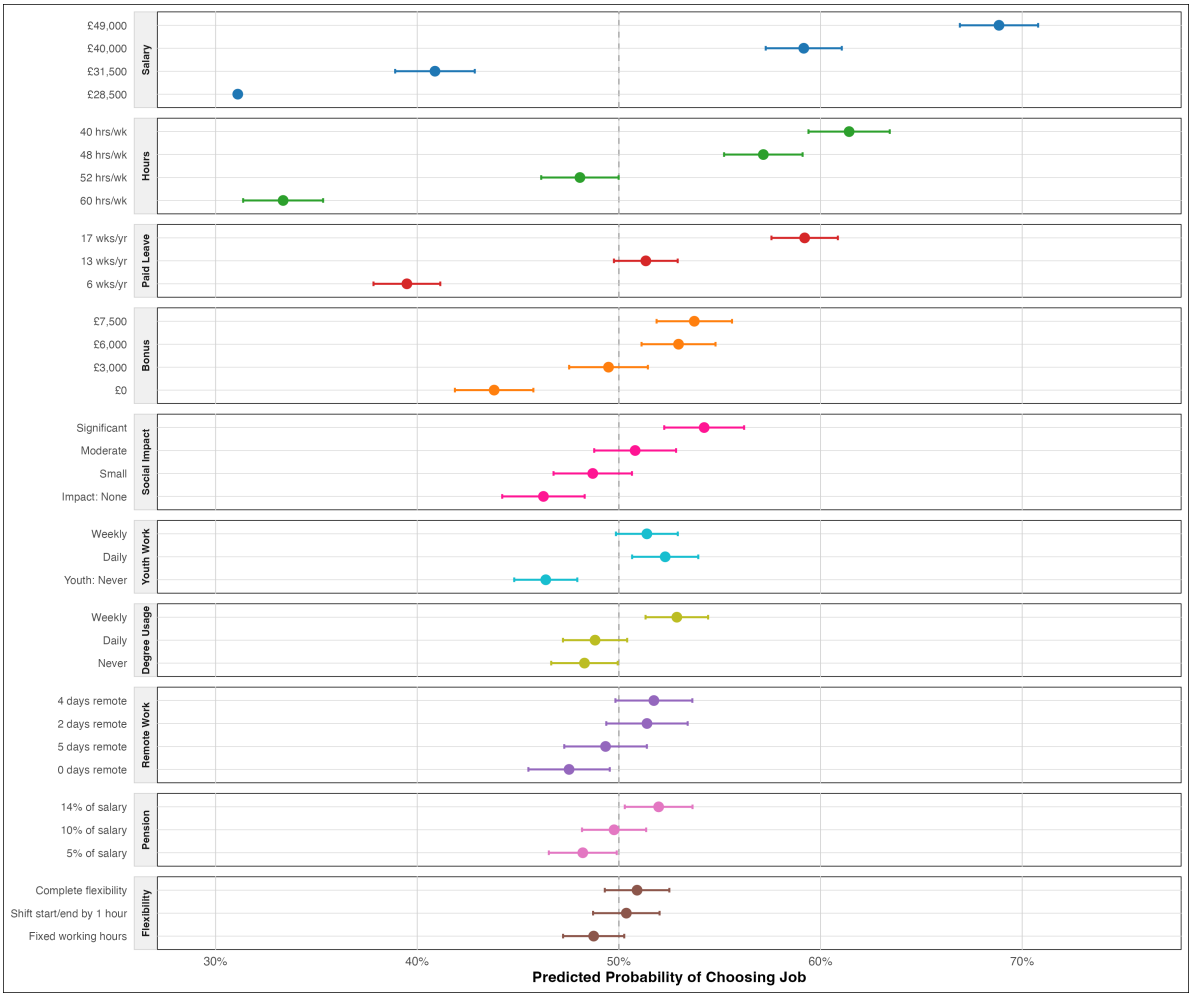


Note. Trainee teachers in ITE programs (n = 409). Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals with standard errors clustered at respondent level. Panel (a) examines carryover effects by comparing AMCE estimates from early tasks (1-5) versus late tasks (6-10). Panel (b) tests for profile order effects by comparing estimates when jobs appear in left versus right positions. Panel (c) validates randomisation balance through chi-square tests examining whether each attribute level appears with expected frequency across all choice tasks.

Appendix B

Which job characteristics are most attractive to trainee teachers? (MM)

The full marginal means for all job attributes from the general job conjoint experiment are presented below, showing which characteristics are most attractive to trainee teachers overall.

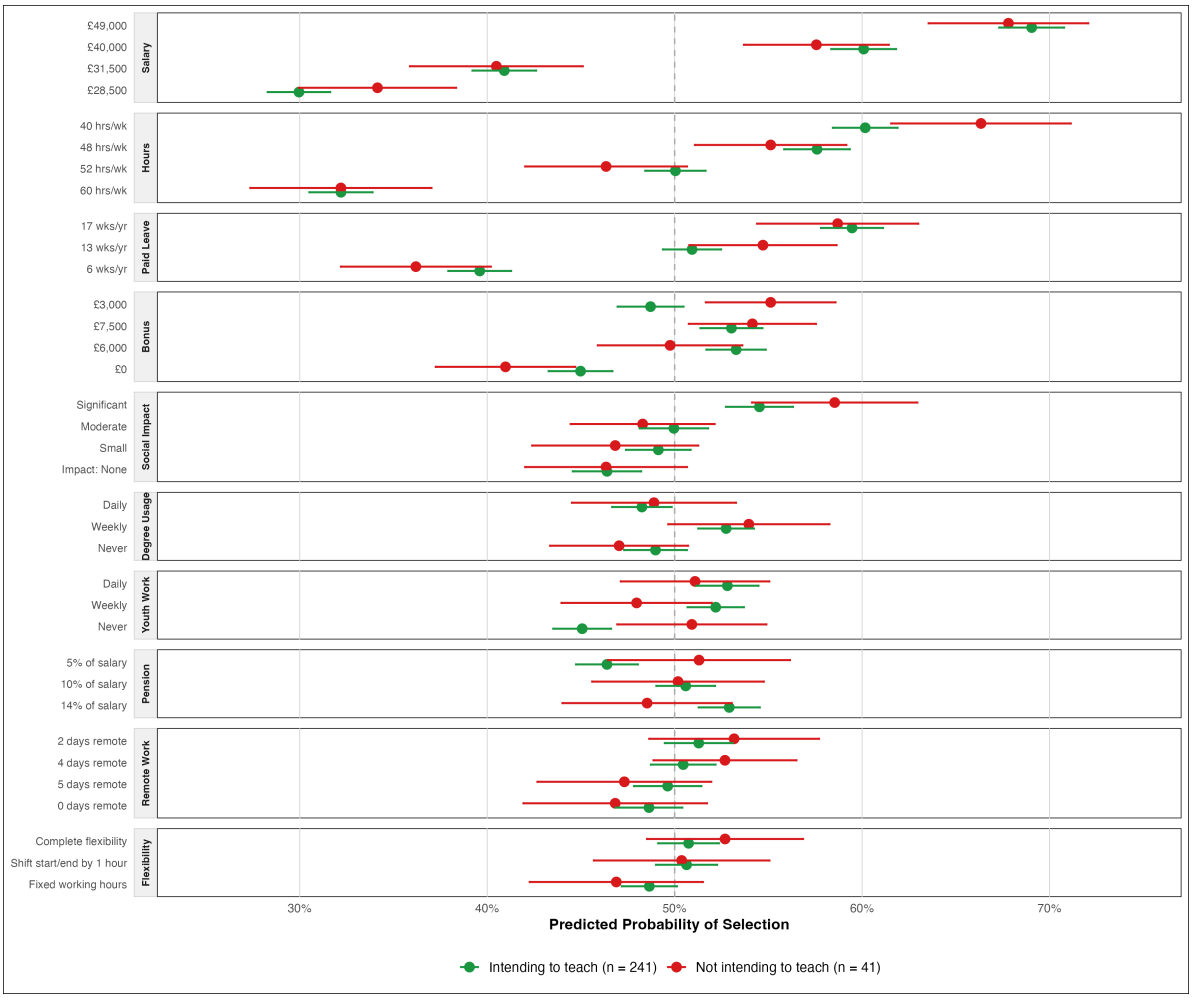


Note. Coefficients are marginal means. Vertical line at 50% indicates indifference. Horizontal lines show 95% confidence intervals with standard errors clustered at respondent level. N = 409 unique respondents, each responding to 10 paired profile choice tasks.

Appendix C

Checking for differential non-response bias (Preferences)

To assess whether Wave 2 non-response introduced systematic bias, we compared job preferences by Wave 1 teaching intentions for Wave 2 respondents only (n = 282) with the full sample (n = 409) shown in Figure 2. Similar patterns across samples would suggest minimal differential non-response bias.

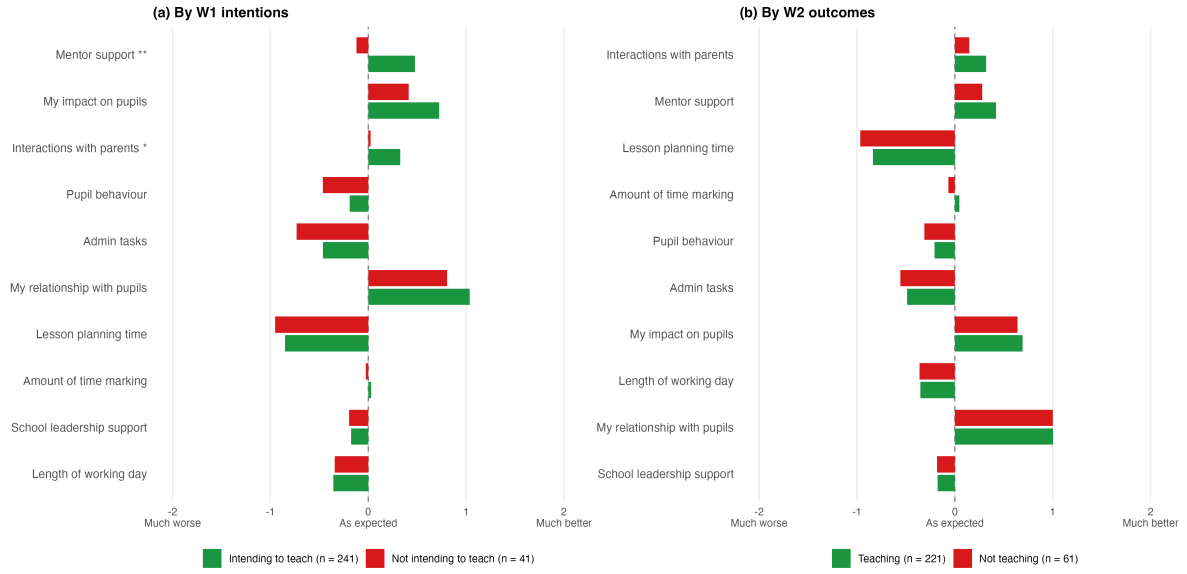


Note. Wave 1 conjoint preferences for participants who also responded at Wave 2 (n = 282). Error bars show ±1 standard deviation with standard errors clustered at respondent level. Intending to teach (n = 241) includes those who had already accepted a teaching position or were actively looking for one at Wave 1. Not intending to teach (n = 41). Comparison with Figure 2 panel (a) shows similar preference patterns, suggesting minimal differential non-response bias.

Appendix D

Checking for differential non-response bias (Shock)

To assess whether Wave 2 non-response introduced systematic bias in our shock analysis, we compared shock ratings by Wave 1 teaching intentions and Wave 2 outcomes for Wave 2 respondents only (n = 282) with the full sample shown in Figure 7. Similar patterns across samples would suggest minimal differential non-response bias.



Note. Mean shock ratings by (a) Wave 1 intentions and (b) Wave 2 outcomes, restricted to participants who responded at Wave 2 (n = 282). Shock measured on a 5-point scale from −2 (much worse than expected) to +2 (much better than expected), with 0 indicating experience was in line with expectations. Panel (a): Intending to teach (n = 241) vs Not intending (n = 41). Panel (b): Teaching (n = 221) vs Not teaching (n = 61). Items ordered by size of difference between groups. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$ (independent samples t-test). Comparison with Figure 7 shows similar patterns, suggesting minimal differential non-response bias.

Appendix E

Common source bias (Preferences)

A potential concern is common source bias, where negative mood during ITT might simultaneously drive both lower teaching intentions and particular job preferences, creating spurious correlations. To assess this, we measured trainees' ITT experience using 10 items comparing expectations to reality across different aspects of training (scored from -2 = much worse than expected to $+2$ = much better than expected).

Table E1 shows the relationship between ITT experience and teaching intentions. The majority of trainees not intending to teach (32 of 54, 59%) reported negative ITT experiences, suggesting some association between experience and intentions.

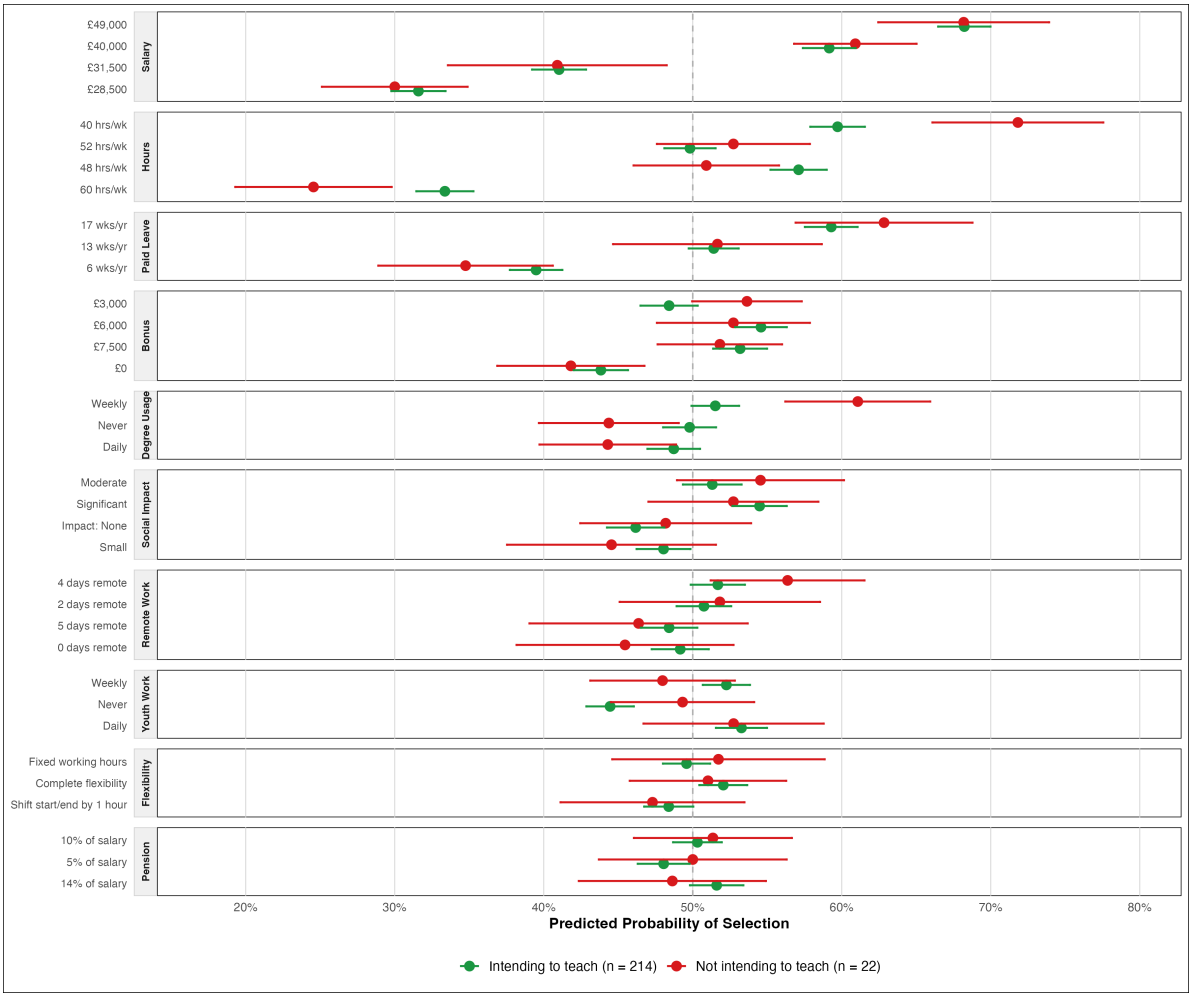
Table E1

ITT Experience and Teaching Intentions

	W1 Teaching Intention		
ITT Experience	Intending to teach	Not intending	**Total**
Negative (avg score < 0)	141	32	173
Neutral/positive (avg score ≥ 0)	214	22	236
Total	355	54	409

Note. ITT experience measured as average of 10 items comparing expectations to reality. Negative experience defined as average score below zero.

To test whether preference differences persist when excluding trainees with negative ITT experiences, we re-estimated marginal means by teaching intention for only those with neutral or positive ITT experiences (n = 236). Results are shown below.

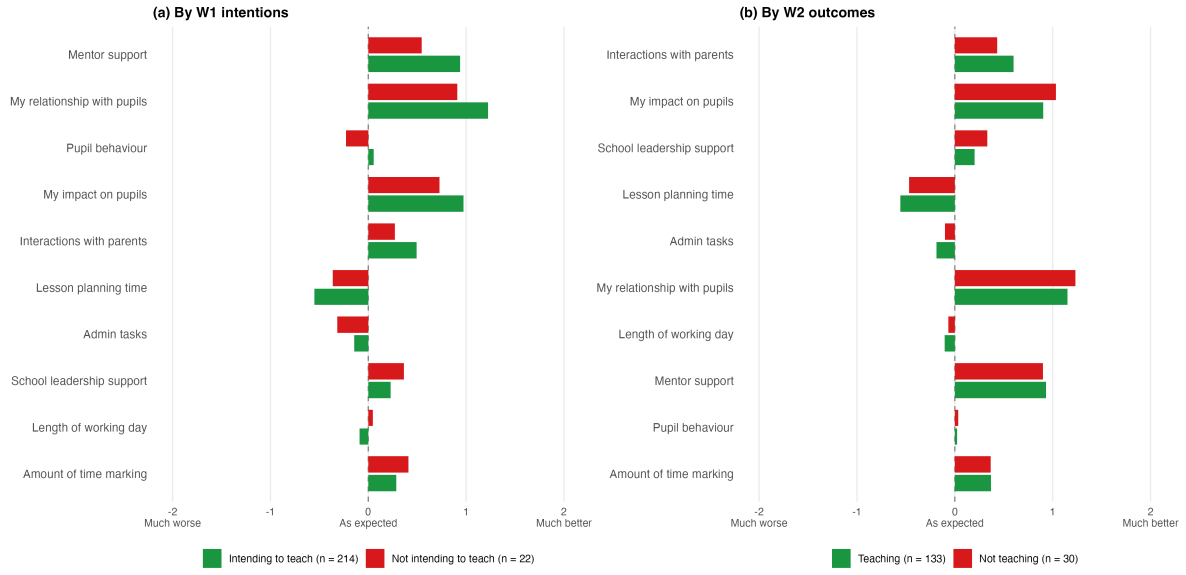


Note. Wave 1 conjoint preferences excluding trainees whose ITT experience was worse than expected (n = 173 excluded). Analysis restricted to trainees with neutral or positive experience (average score ≥ 0, n = 236): intending to teach (n = 214) versus not intending (n = 22). Error bars show ± 1 standard deviation with standard errors clustered at respondent level. Small sample size for non-intenders (n = 22) results in wider confidence intervals.

Appendix F

Common source bias (shock)

To test whether the relationship between shock and teaching intentions is driven by common source bias (where negative mood drives both lower intentions and negative shock ratings), we re-estimated shock ratings by teaching intention and outcomes for only those with neutral or positive ITT experiences (n = 236).



Note. Mean shock ratings by (a) Wave 1 intentions and (b) Wave 2 outcomes, excluding trainees whose ITT experience was worse than expected (n = 173 excluded). Analysis restricted to trainees with neutral or positive experience (average score ≥ 0, n = 236). Shock measured on a 5-point scale from −2 (much worse than expected) to +2 (much better than expected), with 0 indicating experience was in line with expectations. Panel (a): Intending to teach (n = 214) vs Not intending (n = 22). Panel (b) restricted to Wave 2 respondents within this subsample: Teaching vs Not teaching. Small sample size for non-intenders results in wider confidence intervals. Items ordered by size of difference between groups. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$ (independent samples t-test).

ucl.ac.uk/ioe/cepeo