

General Health

The majority of respondents (82.9%) rated their general health as good, very good or excellent. This is significantly higher than in other comparable studies.

82.0% of respondents stated that they had suffered or currently suffer from one of the conditions listed. Of those who had suffered from at least one condition the most commonly reported medical conditions were some form of back trouble (36.0%) and laryngitis/other throat problems (29.5%). 14.8% of respondents reported that had never suffered from any of the conditions listed. Of those who had, or currently suffer from any of these conditions, the average number of conditions suffered from was 2.88.

Teachers reported being absent from schools due to ill health on average for 7 days per year. This consisted of an average of 2.3 days in the first term, 2.9 days in the second term and 1.8 days in the third term.

Teaching Principals report higher levels of poorer health than any other teaching grade. 23.3% of Teaching Principals reported that their general health was fair or poor compared to 11.2% of teachers without management allowances.



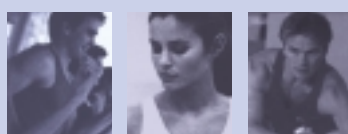
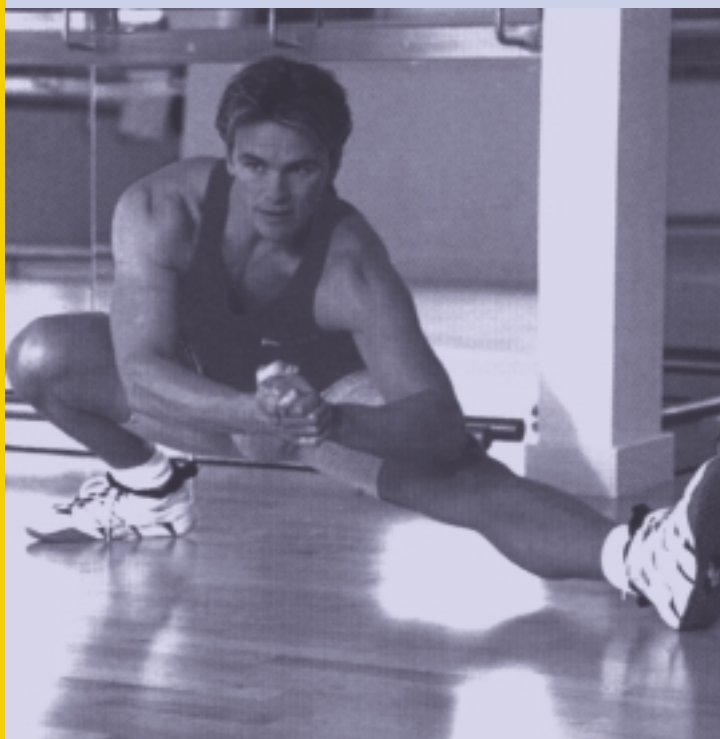
Health Awareness Issues

A higher proportion of all teachers were aware of steps which can be taken to reduce the risk of Lung Cancer (87.3%), Coronary Heart Disease (85.9%) and Skin Cancer (87.4%). There were lower levels of awareness among teachers of the steps which can be taken to reduce the risks of High Blood Pressure (69.7%) and Bowel Cancer (65.2%).

Among females, the level of awareness about early detection of breast (80.8%) and cervical cancers (68.9%) was much higher than that among males for testicular (52.1%) and prostate cancers (36.6%).

“ The majority of teachers (82.9%) rated their general health as good, very good or excellent ”

“ Teaching Principals report higher levels of poorer health than other teaching grades ”



Exercise

Only one eighth (12.5%) of teachers reported that they do not exercise for at least 20 minutes once a week. This is much lower compared to the general population.

Almost one-fifth (18.8%) indicated that they participated in strenuous exercise at least once a week for more than 20 minutes. Just over one-third participated in moderate exercise for more than 20 minutes once a week while a further third (32.4%) took part in mild exercise at least once a week.

Diet and Weight

Eight out of ten teachers (80.4%) believed that they had a healthy, well balanced diet. A higher proportion of females (82.2%) perceived their diet to be healthy compared to males (75.3%).

Teachers on average consumed 2.3 portions of fruit per day and 1.9 portions of vegetables. Hence, on average they consumed 4.2 portions of fruit and vegetables each day, which is lower than the recommended daily intake. Less than one in ten (9.1%) consumed the recommended daily intake of 5 or more portions of fruit and vegetables each day.

Just over one-third of teachers (37.6%) perceived that they weighed just about the right amount in relation to their height with 44.4% perceiving that they weigh just a little more than they should. Only 13.5% perceived that they weighed much more than they should.

The average self-reported weight for male teachers was 82.8 kilos (12.7 stones) and for female teachers was 64.9 kilos (9.9 stones).

Using the Body Mass Index (BMI) 47.0% were classed as having the desirable weight in relation to their height and 4.5% were classed as being underweight. (36.5%) were classed as being overweight and 11.6% were classed as being obese. However, only 0.6% were classed as being severely obese.

Almost two-thirds of respondents (63.1%) reported that they would like to lose weight while almost 31.0% were content with their weight. Only a small proportion (2.2%) would like to gain weight.

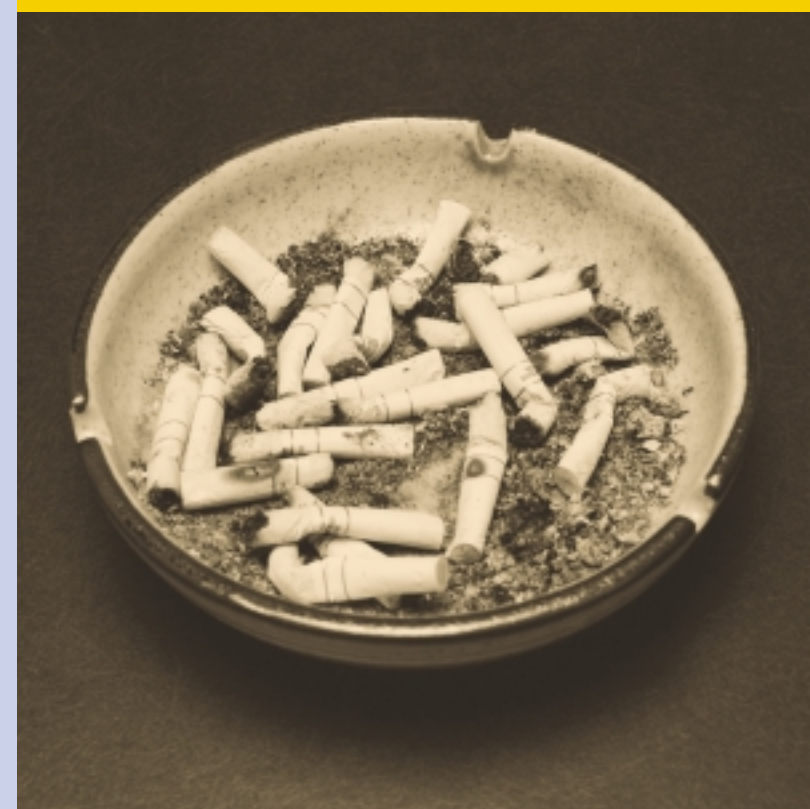
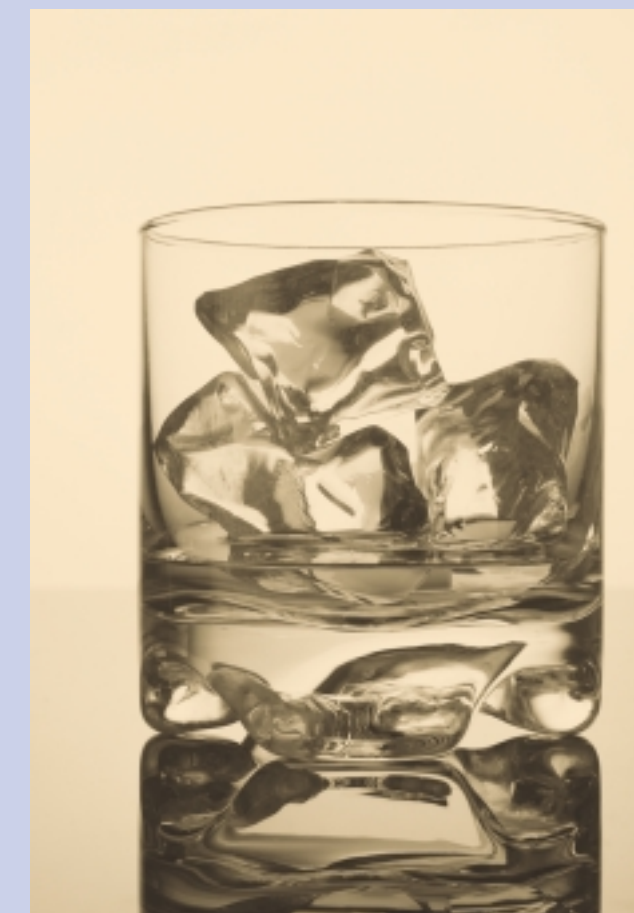
Four out of ten (40.9%) of all teachers stated that they would like to learn more about healthy eating.

Alcohol

79.7% of teachers reported that they drank alcohol, even if only occasionally.

On average, drinkers consumed 8.3 units of alcohol per week. The average alcohol consumption for males was 12.8 units, almost twice that of females (6.6 units).

49.9% of those teachers who drank admitted that they consumed large quantities of alcohol in a single session. This was more common amongst males (67.1%) than females (43.6%). (Large quantities were defined as 7 units or more for a female and 10 units or more for a male). However, on average, overall consumption of alcohol by teachers is lower than other surveyed populations.



Smoking

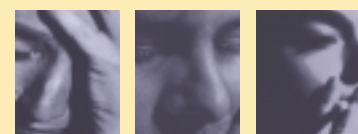
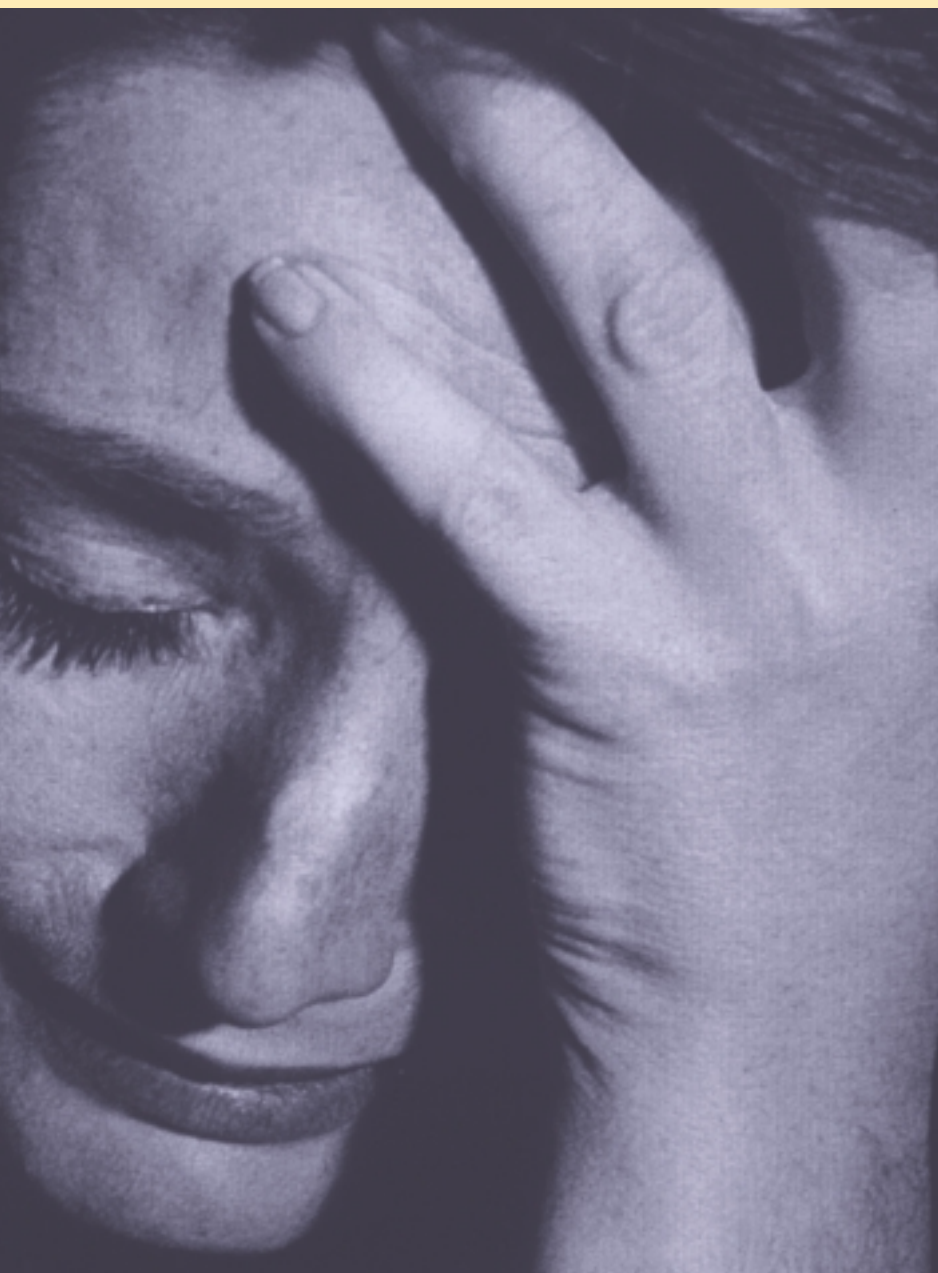
Just over one in ten of all teachers (11.8%) currently smoke.

Of those who did smoke seven out of ten indicated that they would like to give up smoking. More females who smoked wanted to stop (71.4%) than males (67.7%).

10.1% of teachers reported that they were bothered by passive smoking, which mainly occurred in the staff room or staff toilets.

“ seven out of ten indicated that they would like to give up smoking ”

“ The average alcohol consumption for males was 12.8 units, almost twice that of females (6.6 units). ”



“ The main causes of job related stress reported were ‘having too much work to do’ and ‘too much administration/paperwork’. ”

“ The most common methods of coping with stress were to seek help from family/friends (55.4%), physical exercise (44.5%) and prayer/church (41.0%) ”

Stress

49.7% of teachers indicated that they found their job very or extremely stressful.

27.5% of Teaching Principals reported that they found their job extremely stressful.

The main causes of job-related stress reported were “having too much work to do” and “too much administration/paperwork”. 61.5% of respondents also reported that “lack of time to prepare lessons” was a cause of unwanted stress.

39.1% agreed that they were able to cope with the stresses of the job while 26.7% felt that they could not.

65.9% stated that job-related stress impacted on their lives outside work to some or a large extent. 17% reported that non-job related stress impacted on their work to some or a large extent.

The vast majority of teachers stated that stress was not a contributor to absenteeism. 15.1% of teachers were absent from school in the last year due to job related stress and 11.6% were absent due to non work related stress. On average teachers who were absent due to job related stress were absent for 14 days in the last year due to stress. Of those who were absent due to non-job related the average number of days absent was 9.5 days. The average of those absent due to stress (either job or non job related) is increased due to the 1% who were absent for more than 50 days.

5.1% of teachers reported that they were very or extremely stressed outside work.

The greatest causes of stress outside work were reported as illness (family member/friend) and caring for children or relatives.

The most common methods of coping with stress were to seek help from family/friends (55.4%), physical exercise (44.5%) and prayer/church (41.0%).

Females were more likely to employ a range of coping mechanisms than males.

Job Satisfaction

57.7% of teachers were satisfied or very satisfied with their job while 22.2% were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

A lower proportion of Teaching Principals (55.0%) were satisfied with their job compared to all other teaching grades.

Those who reported that they found their job very or extremely stressful also reported lower levels of job satisfaction and felt less able to cope with the stress of the job.

43.3% of teachers reported that at some time they had thought of leaving the teaching profession to the extent that they had actually looked for alternative employment.

18.6% of all teachers reported that in five years from now they would be retired, 4.4% expected to be medically retired and 6.1% expected to be in a different profession 5 years from now.

The vast majority of teachers 91.7% reported that they received no training/information on personal development during initial teacher training, while three-quarters (75.4%) reported they had received no training/information on personal development during in-service training.



“ 57.7% of teachers were satisfied or very satisfied with their job. ”

The Workplace

16.9% of teachers reported that they had been threatened with physical violence and 37.5% had experienced verbal abuse in the course of their careers.

Principals were more likely to have ever been threatened with either physical violence (37.2%) or experienced verbal abuse (56.3%) compared to any other teacher. 9.0% of teachers had ever actually been physically assaulted at work and the main perpetrators were pupils and parents.

Incidents of physical assault are higher in special schools and second level schools with teachers reporting actual assault at some time of 35.0% and 13.2% respectively.

Almost half (48.5%) of teachers considered that their physical environment was good while one third (32.0%) thought that the physical working environment needed to be improved.

Of those who thought that their physical working environment could be improved almost two-thirds (62.7%) would like the ability to change the internal working temperature and almost two-thirds (62.7%) would also improve the sanitary conveniences to create a healthier work environment.

Small schools (less than 106 pupils) would like to improve the room dimensions and space to create a healthier working environment.

Interventions to Promote a Healthier Work Environment

Of the five potential solutions offered to teachers to help with stress reduction and promotion of a healthier working environment the majority indicated that they would find stress reduction/lifestyle courses (63.9%) and an annual review of overall health and wellbeing (57.7%) useful to them. However, there also was support for a teachers’ telephone help line (36.8%), an internet site to assist in reducing administrative work (44.8%) and occupational health and welfare services (47.0%).

Northern Ireland Teachers’ Health and Wellbeing Survey

Summary of Main Findings December 2002

Contents

General Health	page 2
Health Awareness	page 2
Exercise	page 3
Diet and Weight	page 3
Alcohol Smoking	page 4
Stress	page 5
Job Satisfaction	page 6
The Workplace	page 6
Interventions to Promote a Healthier Working Environment	page 6

Introduction

The Education Employers, in partnership with the Department of Education and the Teachers’ Unions, commissioned PricewaterhouseCoopers to undertake a confidential Health and Wellbeing Survey of all teachers in Northern Ireland. The Survey was carried out by questionnaire between November 2001 and January 2002. The purpose of the research was to gather empirical information on the current health and wellbeing of teachers and to recommend strategies leading to healthier working practices for the teaching profession. This Summary, which is being sent to every school for issue to all teachers, reports the main findings of the Survey. If you are interested in reading the full report you will find it on the Department of Education’s website at www.deni.gov.uk.

Over 23,000 teachers were invited to complete the questionnaire and 11,787 replied, a response rate of over 50%. The findings indicate that the general health of teachers is very good and significantly better than the general population in other comparable surveys. There is a high level of health awareness and a high percentage of teachers take regular exercise. Teachers also report high levels of job satisfaction, although many also report their jobs to be very stressful.

Thank you to everyone who took the time and trouble to contribute to this Survey which is the first of its kind amongst teachers in Northern Ireland. As a result of the Survey, a top level Strategy Group has been established, representing the Employers, the Department of Education, the Teachers’ Unions and Workplace Health professionals who will take forward the recommendations contained in the Report. Your reply has been invaluable and will inform the discussions of the Strategy Group and the development of the action plan which will help improve your health and wellbeing.

