

# **BCTF Research Report**

Part of the BCTF Information Handbook

SECTION II  
2001-WLC-05

## **Demographic overview: Teacher workload issues and stress survey, Spring 2001**

[www.bctf.ca/ResearchReports/2001wlc05](http://www.bctf.ca/ResearchReports/2001wlc05)

by Anne C. (Anny) Schaefer  
December 2001

© British Columbia Teachers' Federation, 2001. All rights reserved.

RT01-0058  
December 2001

**B.C. Teachers' Federation, 100 – 550 West 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Vancouver, BC V5Z 4P2  
604-871-2283 • 1-800-663-9163 • Fax 604-871-2294 • [www.bctf.ca](http://www.bctf.ca)**



## Executive Summary

This report examines the demographic information collected on BCTF Research's **Workload Issues and Stress** questionnaire in Spring 2001. The results indicate that our sample does generally reflect the population of B.C. teachers quite well. This information is intended to be used in conjunction with other reports on workload issues and stress from the BCTF Research worklife of teachers study.

### Response rate

Of 1,500 questionnaires mailed to teachers selected randomly from the BCTF membership database, 644 were completed and returned, for a response rate of 43%.

### Gender

In terms of gender, the sample is an accurate reflection of the actual population of teachers in B.C., although female teachers are slightly overrepresented (+1.6%).

### Age

The sample generally represents B.C. teachers in terms of age distribution; however, teachers 55 and older are slightly overrepresented while those 45-54 are somewhat underrepresented.

### Years of teaching experience

Teachers with less than 10 years of experience were somewhat underrepresented in our sample while those with 20 or more years of experience were overrepresented. Thus, **our results may underestimate some of the burden on new teachers**, who typically must spend more time on teaching preparation, marking, and so forth, and therefore may not have time to spare to complete a survey such as this one.

### Grade level taught

About 61% of our survey respondents had at least some elementary responsibility, compared to 59% of all educators in the B.C. teaching force. Our sample reflects the population well on this parameter.

### Work arrangements

Of all the teachers we surveyed, 77% worked full-time and 15% worked part-time, while 8% worked only as teachers on call (TOCs). We cannot compare these figures to the population of teachers, as the Ministry of Education does not collect information on TOCs. We can, however, compare part-time versus full-time teachers: 18.4% of contract teachers sampled worked part-time compared to 23.5% of all educators, so the sample may underrepresent part-time teachers.

B.C. has a higher proportion of part-time teachers than any other province. Data from this survey allow us to assess, for the first time, **why our members are working part-time:**

- More than half of the teachers working part-time had chosen to do so (55.5%).
- **Approximately 1 in 5 (21.1%) worked part-time involuntarily** and would prefer a larger assignment.
- **Almost 1 in 10 teachers (9.4%) worked part-time because of workload.**
- **Another 6.3% worked part-time because of illness/disability or Accommodation/Rehabilitative employment.**

## **Geographical distribution**

Generally, the sample conformed well to the distribution of teachers throughout the province. Teachers in southwestern B.C. were somewhat underrepresented in the sample, while Vancouver Island North, Okanagan, Kootenay, and North Coast teachers were slightly overrepresented.

## **Teachers on Call**

The average Teacher on Call (TOC) who replied to our survey worked 63.6 days between September and the end of March.

## **Type of contract**

Just over three-quarters of teachers in our sample worked primarily as classroom teachers, while 17% were non-enrolling teachers (e.g., counsellors, teacher-librarians and ESL specialists), 2% were itinerant teachers, and 4% fit into other categories. This is consistent with staffing data collected by the Ministry of Education.

## **Leave**

One in nine members (11.3%) was on leave at the time of our survey. The most frequently cited reasons were parenthood (29%) and illness or disability (35.5%).

## **Subject/work areas**

Three-quarters of elementary teachers (74.1%) teach their students the majority of their subjects, compared to 12.5% of secondary teachers. Learning Assistance, Music/Drama/Fine Arts, ESL, and French Immersion/Programme Cadre were the next most commonly cited areas of responsibility for elementary teachers, and Alternative Education was the second most common for secondary teachers.

## Acknowledgments

BCTF Research wishes to thank all those teachers who added to their workload by responding to this and other BCTF surveys during the Spring of 2001. The range and depth of their responses have provided the data on which to base this report, which will be used to lobby government and school boards to develop a healthier school system by reducing teachers' workload and stress.

BCTF Research staff Larry Kuehn, Charlie Naylor and Anny Schaefer designed the survey instrument in consultation with BCTF staff and the bargaining team. BCTF Research Assistant Anne Field formatted the survey for TeleForm data entry, processed the surveys, prepared the data for quantitative and qualitative analysis, and completed formatting of reports.

### **2001 Worklife of Teachers survey series**

In Spring 2001, BCTF Research staff prepared and administered three mail-out surveys focusing on teacher workload and stress. The first survey examined the workload of secondary teachers of English ("English Teaching Workload Survey Questionnaire," March 2001). The second considered workload and stress issues as perceived by both elementary and secondary teachers ("Workload Issues and Stress," April 2001), and the third addressed teacher perspectives on issues in Special Education ("Special Education," June 2001).

For further information and other worklife reports, visit the **Worklife of British Columbia teachers** home page at [www.bctf.ca/education/worklife](http://www.bctf.ca/education/worklife) and Information Services' **Teacher workload** home page at [www.bctf.ca/info/research/TeacherWorkload/](http://www.bctf.ca/info/research/TeacherWorkload/). To be alerted when new reports are published, sign up for the BCTF Research Department's mailing list, *bctf-research*, by visiting [www.bctf.ca/research/list/](http://www.bctf.ca/research/list/).

## Contents

Executive Summary .....	ii
Acknowledgments .....	iv
2001 Worklife of Teachers survey series.....	iv
Introduction.....	1
Response rate .....	1
Gender.....	1
Age .....	2
Years of teaching experience .....	2
Grade level taught .....	3
Work arrangements .....	3
Geographical distribution.....	4
Teachers on Call .....	5
Type of contract .....	6
Leave .....	6
Subject/work areas.....	7
Split- or multi-grade classes.....	8



## Introduction

This report examines the demographic information collected on BCTF Research's **Workload Issues and Stress** questionnaire in Spring 2001. The results indicate that our sample does generally reflect the population of B.C. teachers quite well. This information is intended to be used in conjunction with other reports on workload issues and stress from the BCTF Research worklife of teachers study.

## Response rate

The **Workload Issues and Stress** questionnaire was mailed to 1,500 teachers selected randomly from the BCTF membership database, which comprises approximately 45,000 active teachers. Measures were taken to ensure that all districts were represented. The response rate was 43%, as 644 elementary and secondary teachers from districts across the province returned completed surveys. **This exceeds the minimum statistical requirement of 384 respondents to ensure that results are accurate 19 times out of 20 within a range of plus or minus 5 percentage points.**

In addition, this report demonstrates that our sample is valid in terms of accurately reflecting the demographic makeup of the teaching population in British Columbia.

## Gender

In terms of gender, the sample is an accurate reflection of the actual population of teachers in B.C., although female teachers are slightly overrepresented (*Table 1*).

**Table 1: Gender of survey respondents and B.C. teachers**

Gender	Sample		Provincial Profile <sup>1</sup>	Survey Variance from Profile
	Number	Percent	Percent	
Female	451	69.9%	68.3%	+1.6%
Male	192	29.8%	31.7%	-1.9%
Missing	2	0.3%		+0.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	

Note: Totals may not add to 100 because of rounding.

<sup>1</sup> Provincial data source: B.C. Ministry of Education Standard Report 2063, *Average Gross Salary of Educators (Base plus all Allowances) by Gender and Position within District* (September 2000).

## Age

In general, our sample is representative of B.C. teachers in terms of age distribution; however, teachers 55 and older are slightly overrepresented in our sample (+1.8%), while those of age 45–54 are slightly underrepresented (-1.3%) (Table 2).

**Table 2: Age distribution of survey respondents and B.C. teachers**

Age group	Sample		Provincial Profile <sup>2</sup>	Survey Variance from Profile
	No.	%	Percent	
< 25	8	1.2%	1.0%	+0.2%
25–34	137	21.3%	21.7%	-0.4%
35–44	167	26.0%	26.2%	-0.2%
45–54	252	39.2%	40.5%	-1.3%
55+	79	12.3%	10.5%	+1.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>643</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	

Note: Totals may not add to 100 because of rounding.

## Years of teaching experience

Teachers with less than 10 years of experience were somewhat underrepresented in our sample (Table 3): They represent nearly 44% of teachers but made up only 32.2% of the sample. Teachers with 20 or more years of experience were overrepresented, as they made up 39% of the sample but are only 26% of all teachers. Thus, **our results may underestimate some of the burden on teachers**, especially new teachers, as teachers with less experience typically must spend more time on teaching preparation, marking, and so forth, and therefore may not have time to spare to complete a survey such as this one.<sup>3</sup>

**Table 3: Years of teaching experience for sample and B.C. teachers**

Years Taught	Sample	Provincial Profile <sup>4</sup>	Survey Variance from Profile
<1	2.2%	3.2%	-1.0%
1–4	13.3%	19.4%	-6.1%
5–9	16.7%	21.3%	-4.3%
10–19	28.9%	29.7%	-0.8%
20+	38.9%	26.4%	+12.5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	

Note: Totals may not add to 100 because of rounding.

<sup>2</sup> Provincial data source: B.C. Ministry of Education Standard Report 2059, *Age Distribution of Educators by Position within District* (September 2000). Table refers only to teaching (non-AO) staff.

<sup>3</sup> See the BCTF research report, “How I spent my summer vacation,” page 7; [www.bctf.ca/ResearchReports/2001wlc04](http://www.bctf.ca/ResearchReports/2001wlc04).

<sup>4</sup> Provincial data source: B.C. Ministry of Education Standard Report 2067, *Years of Experience within B.C. Education System of Educators by Position and Gender within School District* (September 2000). Teachers only – administrative officers omitted. Covers B.C. teaching experience only.

## Grade level taught

About 61% of our survey respondents had at least some elementary responsibility, compared to 59% of all educators in the B.C. teaching force (*Table 4*).<sup>5</sup> Just under 3% are involved in adult education.

**Table 4: Grade-level distribution of survey respondents**

Level	No.	Percent
Adult Education	18	2.8%
Elementary	239	37.1%
Elementary-junior secondary	16	2.5%
Elementary-secondary	3	0.5%
Primary only	133	20.7%
Secondary	219	34.0%
Missing	16	2.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>644</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Note: Totals may not add to 100 because of rounding.

## Work arrangements

Of all the teachers we surveyed, **77% worked full-time and 15% worked part-time, while 8% worked only as teachers on call (TOCs)**. Unfortunately, no comparable population data are available as the Ministry of Education does not collect information on TOCs. We can, however, compare part-time versus full-time teachers: 18.4% of contract teachers sampled worked part-time compared to 23.5% of all educators,<sup>6</sup> so it appears the sample may underrepresent part-time teachers.

Of those who worked part-time, assignments ranged from 20% to 92% with an average assignment of 62%. Almost half (45.3%) worked 40 to 60% of the time.

B.C. has a higher proportion of part-time teachers than any other province.<sup>7</sup> Data from this survey allow us to assess, for the first time, why our members are working part-time (*Table 5*):

- **More than half** of the teachers working part-time **had chosen** to do so (55.5%).
- **Approximately 1 in 5 (21.1%) worked part-time involuntarily** and would prefer a larger assignment.

<sup>5</sup> Provincial data source: B.C. Ministry of Education Standard Report 1568, *Teacher Headcount by School and School Type within District/Authority* (September 2000).

<sup>6</sup> B.C. Ministry of Education Standard Report 2052, *Head Count of Full Time and Part time Educators by Gender within School District* (September 2000). Includes administrative officers, excludes teachers on call.

<sup>7</sup> According to Statistics Canada, 20.9% of educators in B.C. worked part-time in 1998-1999, compared to the national average of 14.3% (18.2% in Alberta and 11.8% in Ontario). *Education in Canada, 2000*, Cat. #81-229-XPB, May 2001, Tables 55 and 57.

- **Almost 1 in 10 teachers (9.4%) worked part-time because of workload.**
- **Another 6.3% worked part-time because of illness/disability or Accommodation/Rehabilitative employment.<sup>8</sup>**

**Table 5: Reasons for working part-time**

REASON	No.	Percent
Personal preference	71	55.5%
Involuntary – prefer more time	27	21.1%
Because of workload	12	9.4%
Because of illness/ disability	6	4.7%
Accommodation or rehabilitative employment	2	1.6%
Other	7	5.5%
Not answered	3	2.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Note: Totals may not add to 100 because of rounding.

## Geographical distribution

With a few exceptions, the sample conformed well to the distribution of teachers throughout the province (*Table 6*). Teachers in the Lower Mainland, Fraser Valley and southern Vancouver Island were somewhat underrepresented in the sample, while Vancouver Island North, Okanagan, Kootenay, and North Coast teachers were slightly overrepresented. Unfortunately, no teachers from the Francophone Education Authority or the Bulkley Valley responded to the survey.

<sup>8</sup> “A claimant in receipt of benefits may return to normal employment duties, undertaken as accommodation employment, on a part-time basis. Prior to such a return, the accommodation employment must be recommended by a physician and approved by the plan administrator. The plan administrator’s decision is subject to review by the Salary Indemnity Plan Committee.

“**Note:** Accommodation employment means a return to teaching on a reduced assignment basis.”

“A claimant in receipt of benefits may engage in remunerative employment other than the claimant’s normal employment duties, undertaken as rehabilitative employment, that has been recommended by a physician and approved by the plan administrator, subject to review by the Salary Indemnity Plan Committee.

“**Note:** Rehabilitative Employment means work other than teaching.”

Source: BCTF Salary Indemnity Plan regulations, [www.bctf.ca/pensions/salary/regulations.html](http://www.bctf.ca/pensions/salary/regulations.html) .

**Table 6: Geographical distribution of survey respondents and teachers**

Zone <sup>9</sup>	Sample	Provincial Profile <sup>10</sup>	Survey Variance from Profile
Kootenay	5.5%	4.4%	+1.1%
Metro West	37.8%	41.0%	-3.2%
Metro-Fraser Valley	13.1%	15.3%	-2.2%
North Central	2.8%	2.9%	0.0%
North Coast	6.4%	5.7%	+0.7%
Okanagan	13.8%	11.8%	+1.9%
Peace River	1.9%	2.1%	-0.2%
Vancouver Island North	11.1%	8.5%	+2.6%
Vancouver Island South	7.7%	8.4%	-0.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	

Note: Totals may not add to 100 because of rounding.

## Teachers on Call

The average Teacher on Call (TOC) who replied to our survey worked 63.6 days between September and the end of March (Table 7). It should be noted, however, that the sub-sample of TOCs in our survey is quite small so results should be used with caution. It appears that TOCs may be getting more work than they were when BCTF Research conducted a survey of TOCs several years ago. In 1997–1998, TOCs worked an average of 73 days during the entire school year.<sup>11</sup> Assuming that our 2000–2001 study period is about 70% of the school year, TOCs would only have worked about 51 days, if the average were the same as it was in 1997–1998. TOCs in our sample worked 12.6 days more than that.

**Table 7: Number of days worked by TOCs, September 2000–March 2001**

Days	No.	Percent
N/A	5	9.6%
0–35	10	19.2%
106+	5	9.6%
36–70	21	40.4%
71–105	11	21.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Note: Totals may not add to 100 because of rounding.

<sup>9</sup> Districts composed as follows: Kootenay: districts 5, 6, 8, 10, 20, 51; Metro West: 36, 38–41, 43–46, 48–49, 93; Metro-Fraser Valley: 33, 34, 35, 37, 42, 75, 78; North Central: 27, 28, 91; North Coast: 50, 52, 54, 57, 82, 87, 92; Okanagan: 19, 22, 23, 53, 58, 67, 73, 74, 83; Peace River: 59, 60, 81; Vancouver Island North: 47, 68–72, 84, 85; Vancouver Island South: 61–64, 79.

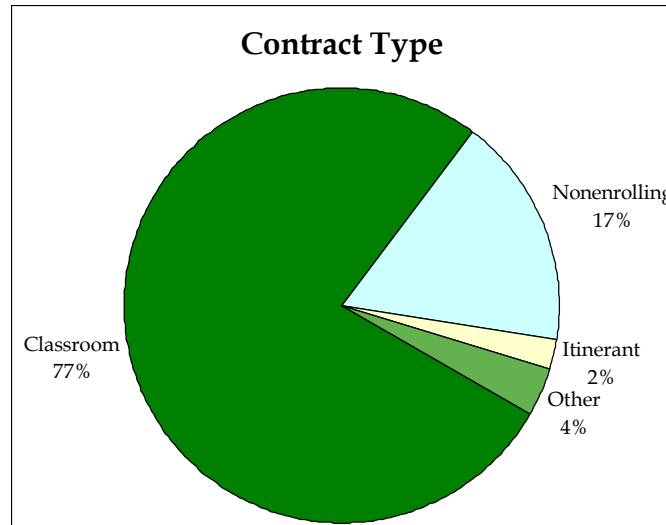
<sup>10</sup> Provincial data source: B.C. Ministry of Education Standard Report 2063, *Average Gross Salary of Educators (Base plus all Allowances) by Gender and Position within District* (September 2000). Administrative officers omitted.

<sup>11</sup> Teachers on Call in British Columbia: A BCTF Research Survey, Spring 1999, [www.bctf.ca/ResearchReports/99wlc05](http://www.bctf.ca/ResearchReports/99wlc05).

## Type of contract

Just over three-quarters of teachers in our sample worked primarily as classroom teachers, while 17% were non-enrolling teachers (e.g., counsellors, teacher-librarians and ESL specialists), 2% were itinerant teachers, and 4% fit into other categories (*Figure 1*). This conforms to staffing data collected by the Ministry of Education, which indicate that about 74% of teachers are in the classroom while about 21% are non-enrolling or itinerant.<sup>12</sup>

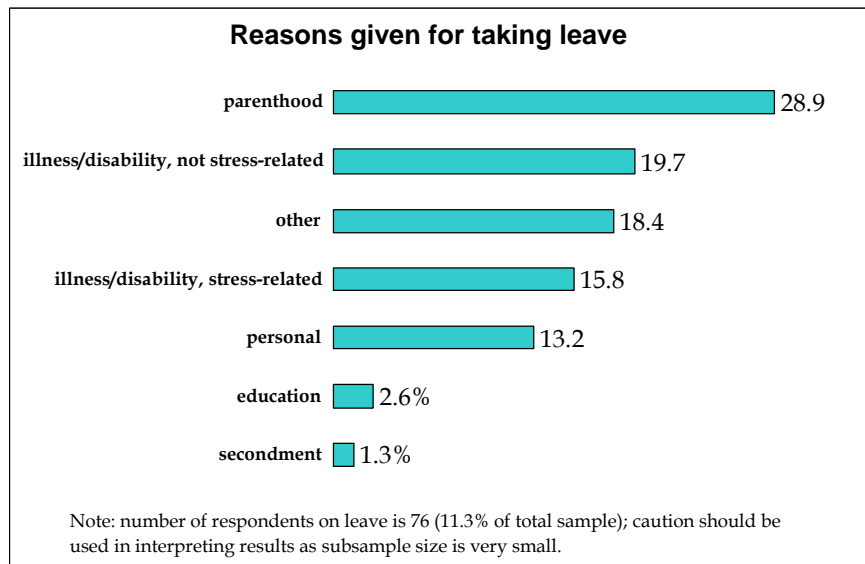
Figure 1



## Leave

One in 9 members (11.3%) was on leave at the time of our survey. The most frequently cited single reason was parenthood (29%), but more teachers were on leave from work because of illness or disability (*Figure 2*). When the two categories of illness or disability that is stress-related and illness or disability that is not stress-related are combined, **more than a third (35.5%) of teachers cited illness/disability as their reason for taking leave.**

Figure 2



<sup>12</sup> Unpublished Form 1530 data (September 30, 2000) analyzed by BCTF Research.

## Subject/work areas

Teachers provided us with information on the one or two subject areas in which, at the time of the survey, they taught or worked most of the time. Among elementary teachers, three-quarters (74.1%) reported that they taught their students the majority of their subjects. Learning Assistance, Music/Drama/Fine Arts, ESL, and French Immersion/Programme Cadre were the next most commonly cited areas of responsibility (Table 8). As would be expected, secondary teachers' time was more segmented, but 12.5% of our sample – the largest subgroup – reported that they taught their students the majority of their subjects (Table 9). The next largest subgroup (11.2%) taught Alternative Education; interestingly, almost 13% of those who specified a second area of responsibilities also mentioned Alternative Education.

Middle-school, mixed-level, and adult-education teachers were omitted from these analyses.

**Table 8: Subject areas in which elementary teachers work most of the time**

Elementary teachers	Most time		Other time	
	No.	%	No.	%
Teach students most of their subjects	275	74.1%	6	5.1%
Learning Assistance	13	3.5%	14	11.9%
Music/Drama/Fine Arts	12	3.2%	18	15.3%
ESL	11	3.0%	4	3.4%
French Immersion/Programme Cadre	11	3.0%	7	5.9%
Other	9	2.4%	13	11.0%
Special Education	8	2.2%	6	5.1%
Library	7	1.9%	8	6.8%
Counselling	6	1.6%	1	0.8%
English/Language Arts	5	1.3%	4	3.4%
French as a Second Language	4	1.1%	10	8.5%
Distance Education/Distributed Learning	3	0.8%		0.0%
Alternative Education	1	0.3%	2	1.7%
Geography	1	0.3%		0.0%
Home Economics	1	0.3%		0.0%
Industrial/Vocational/Technological Studies	1	0.3%	4	3.4%
Mathematics	1	0.3%	2	1.7%
Physical Education	1	0.3%	5	4.2%
Social Studies	1	0.3%	5	4.2%
Business Education		0.0%	2	1.7%
CAPP		0.0%	2	1.7%
Languages other than English or French		0.0%	2	1.7%
Science		0.0%	3	2.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>371</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**Table 9: Subject areas in which secondary teachers work most of the time**

Secondary teachers	Most time		Other time	
	No.	%	No.	%
Teach students most of their subjects	28	12.5%	6	5.1%
Alternative Education	25	11.2%	15	12.8%
Business Education	21	9.4%	6	5.1%
CAPP	19	8.5%	8	6.8%
Counselling	17	7.6%	12	10.3%
Distance Education/Distributed Learning	15	6.7%	6	5.1%
English/Language Arts	12	5.4%	5	4.3%
ESL	10	4.5%	2	1.7%
French as a Second Language	9	4.0%	2	1.7%
French Immersion/Programme Cadre	9	4.0%	3	2.6%
Geography	8	3.6%	4	3.4%
Home Economics	7	3.1%	1	0.9%
Industrial/Vocational/Technological Studies	6	2.7%	3	2.6%
Languages other than English or French	6	2.7%	3	2.6%
Learning Assistance	6	2.7%	2	1.7%
Library	5	2.2%		0.0%
Mathematics	4	1.8%		0.0%
Music/Drama/Fine Arts	4	1.8%	4	3.4%
Physical Education	4	1.8%	3	2.6%
Science	4	1.8%	16	13.7%
Special Education	2	0.9%	10	8.5%
Social Studies	2	0.9%	5	4.3%
Other	1	0.4%	1	0.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

## Split- or multi-grade classes

Forty-five percent of teachers reported that they taught at least one class as a split- or multi-grade class. This configuration appears to be a source of stress for many teachers: 41.7% of those who responded rated it as a “medium” source of stress, while 17.9% rated it as a “high” source of stress. In all, **almost 60% of affected teachers consider teaching a split- or multi-grade class to be a moderate or high source of stress.**

## Notes