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**Findings from the Male Teacher Shortages Survey:  
Policy Conversation Starter**  
Nick Fletcher MP (Don Valley)

July 2023

## THE MALE TEACHER SHORTAGE IN OUR SCHOOLS

ONLY 1 IN 3  
SECONDARY  
TEACHERS  
ARE MALE



ONLY 1 IN 7  
PRIMARY  
SCHOOL  
TEACHERS  
ARE MALE



ONLY 1 IN 50  
EARLY  
YEARS'  
TEACHERS  
ARE MALE



1 IN 3  
PRIMARY  
SCHOOLS  
HAVE NO  
MALE  
TEACHERS  
AT ALL



4 IN 5  
CURRENT OR  
FORMER  
TEACHERS  
BELIEVE  
INCREASING  
MALE  
TEACHERS IS  
IMPORTANT



WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS?



NICK FLETCHER MP  
FOR DON VALLEY

WE NEED REAL ACTION TO GET  
MORE **#MALETEACHERS**

## (A) Introduction

During April and May 2023, an online survey was launched to ask current and former teachers why they felt there were now so few male teachers in UK schools, what the solutions could be and importantly, did it actually matter?

This not only has a direct input into the Education Select Committees' current inquiry into "Teacher recruitment, training and retention"<sup>1</sup> of which I am a member. It also feeds into the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Issues Affecting Men and Boys' inquiry into boys' educational underachievement.<sup>2</sup> It has wider policy implications as well.

This includes the need to increase the recruitment of men into Health, Education, Administration and Literacy (HEAL) roles where there is a dearth of men working. Given the continuing decline of so-called traditionally male roles due to post-industrialisation, opening up employment into HEAL roles is vital to ensure men can continue to gain employment. For more information and insight on this, please refer to the Richard Reeves book "Of Boys and Men"<sup>3</sup>.

In addition, to live in an inclusive society means that public institutions, as far as possible, must reflect the people and communities they serve. It is incongruous therefore that schools have so few male teachers, especially at primary level and in early years', given broadly the fact that school populations will be 50% male.

The last issue to reflect upon is the growing need to understand why boys underachieve at school compared to girls. They are behind girls at SATS, GCSEs, A levels and university entry. Not only are there 35,000 fewer 18-year-old young men going to university than young women of the same age every September<sup>4</sup>, 3,000 boys are also excluded from schools every year (three in every four of all exclusions)<sup>5</sup>. It has been contended that a lack of male teachers could have an influence on this. The research, whilst not focusing on the sex of the pupils, asked what impact the lack of male teachers has. Many teachers who replied stated that it did have an impact, especially with respect to positive male role models.

In addition, the fact that there are 35,000 fewer 18-year-old young men going to university than women every year, means there are broadly 35,000 fewer young men every year likely to become teachers. It is a vicious cycle.

In searching for evidence on why there is a lack of male teachers, what has been interesting is the simple lack of it. Not just on the barriers to entry but also on the impact. I read a policy blog recently from a leading university on improving teacher recruitment/retention, yet it did not even mention male teachers at all. If no one is

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<sup>1</sup> Education Select Committee - Teacher recruitment, training and retention:

<https://committees.parliament.uk/work/7357/teacher-recruitment-training-and-retention>.

<sup>2</sup> APPG for Issues Affecting Men and Boys - Boys' Educational Underachievement: <https://equi-law.uk/inquiry-4-boys-edu-underachievement/>

<sup>3</sup> Richard V Reeves – Of Boys and Men: <https://www.brookings.edu/books/of-boys-and-men/>

<sup>4</sup> UCAS - undergraduate sector-level end of cycle data resources 2022 <https://www.ucas.com/data-and-analysis/undergraduate-statistics-and-reports/ucas-undergraduate-end-cycle-data-resources-2022>

<sup>5</sup> Department for Education - Permanent exclusions and suspensions in England: 2020 to 2021 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/permanent-exclusions-and-suspensions-in-england-2020-to-2021>

prepared to even acknowledge it, then no wonder there is a lack of policy action to remedy it. It is as if anything specifically about male employment does not matter to policymakers, government and educationalists at a national level. It is policy tumbleweed.

There is a clear gender teacher gap but also a gender action gap too. There is substantial investment and focus on attracting girls into STEM subjects, which is welcome. However, it is hard not to conclude that the lack of a similar effort on recruiting male teachers, in terms of employment and representative public institutions, is primarily because it is about men. Does male employment not matter as much as female employment when both should equally matter? It is also hard not to conclude this when the evidence and inaction is so stark.

To be clear, this short piece of research is aimed at being a conversation starter. To see if there is an issue that needs to be resolved, that further research/policy needs to be undertaken and of course action then taken. The findings show that it does, so the conversation needs to continue and deepen. Talking and researching is important, but even more important is actually doing, which is where we need to get to. Ultimately, there can be no more excuse for the current policy of purposeful inaction.

**Nick Fletcher MP**  
**(Don Valley)**

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## (B) Executive Summary

The core findings from the research are that:

- 1) Teachers believe that the primary reasons for a lack of male teachers are due to pay (75%), the lack of prestige of the profession (60%) and workload (53%).
- 2) However, two secondary issues are that men fear being accused of false allegations/motives (32%) alongside teaching not being recognised or promoted as a professional career for men (31%).
- 3) Four in five (81%) teachers believe increasing the number of male teachers in schools is important.
- 4) The primary reasons featured in the verbatim comments are that it benefits all pupils to see men in teaching roles as a key part of their socialisation, and, from a broad diversity and inclusion perspective.
- 5) A strong theme was also that male teachers acted as positive male role models for boys and girls, and even more so for boys without those role models elsewhere in their lives. This helps with their socialisation and culture, and, also helps to promote teaching as a career for men.
- 6) The specific recommendations include a male-specific recruitment campaign, ensuring teenage boys see teaching as a profession for them, and, for further research on the impact and value of male teachers. The same focus and investment should be made persuading young men to become teachers as is made for young women to go into STEM careers.
- 7) The purpose of the research is to be a conversation starter and a precursor for wider action and policy. This is based on this short survey which shows that within the teaching community, teachers value male teachers and are concerned about the lack of them on society, schools, and students – particularly boys.

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## (C) Teacher Numbers

In terms of the current gender breakdown of the teaching profession:

- 35% of secondary school teachers are male<sup>6</sup>
- 14% of primary and nursery schoolteachers are male
- 25% of special needs or PRU teachers are male
- 2-3% of early years' teachers are male<sup>7</sup>

Analysis from the Institute of Education / University of Essex shows that 30% of primary schools have no male teacher<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> . School workforce in England (Reporting year 2021): <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england>

<sup>7</sup> Department for Education and Fatherhood Institute: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/calls-for-more-men-to-work-in-the-early-years>

<sup>8</sup> Fullard, Joshua (2020) Trends in the diversity of teachers in England. The Education Policy Institute / University of Essex. <https://repository.essex.ac.uk/30979/>

In terms of those entering the sector, there is no real change on the horizon<sup>9</sup>:

- 34% of new teaching entrants for secondary school are male
  - 15% of new teaching entrants to primary and nursery school are male
  - 20% of new teaching entrants to special or PRU schools are male
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## **(D) Survey**

Between April and May 2023, a survey was created to ask current and former teachers why they felt there were so few male teachers and what could actually be done. It attracted 114 completed responses, and the survey was anonymous. The core statistics and answers are below.

### **(i) Demographics**

#### **(1) Age**

16-24	2%
25-34	19%
35-44	30%
45-54	27%
55 +	22%

#### **(2) Region**

East Midlands	7%
Eastern	1%
London	5%
North East	11%
North West	5%
Northern Ireland	0%
Scotland	3%
South East	4%
South West	10%
Wales	0%
West Midlands	4%
Yorkshire and Humber	51%

The survey was promoted across the UK but achieved more publicity in the Yorkshire and Humber area.

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<sup>9</sup> School workforce in England (Reporting year 2021): <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england>

### **(3) Ethnicity**

Asian, Asian British	0%
Black, Black British, African, Caribbean	3%
Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups`	1%
White, White British	96%
Other	1%

### **(4) Sex**

Male	40%
Female	60%

### **(5) Teaching Status**

Current	30%
Former	70%

### **(6) School Type**

Primary	42%
Secondary	37%
Sixth Form College	8%
Early Years	6%
PRU	4%
Nursery	2%
SEND	1%

### **(7) School Status**

State	93%
Private	7%

### **(8) Length of Time Teaching (years)**

0-4	15%
5-9	18%
10-14	12%
15-19	21%
20-24	10%
25-30	12%
30+	12%

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## **(ii) Core Results**

### **(9) Why do you believe men are not becoming teachers? (Pick three)**

Pay and Conditions	75%
Lack of prestige/status from society in being a teacher	60%
Workload	53%
Fear of false allegations/motives	32%
Teaching is seen by men as a profession for women	31%
Lack of career progression	14%
Costs too much to train (tuition fees)	13%
Other	10%
Emergence of the blended office/home model of working	7%
Not enough men studying degrees so not enough men are eligible for studying teaching qualifications	6%

There is a clear split between the first three answers which are overarching and could apply across the whole profession, whilst the next two are very specific to men.

With respect to the former, many of the verbatim comments (Annex A) of course could apply to all teachers. However, there was a theme from the comments where it was felt that men would be looking for higher paid roles with greater opportunities for progression. These were not available unless teachers progressed into management and leadership roles. It was also commented upon that men wanted to go into these roles for income reasons and regrettably are then lost to teaching.

The issue of pay as a constraint and barrier to the recruitment and retention for male teachers has to be investigated further. It has to be better understood. It is vital that the bonnet is lifted on men who have considered becoming teachers but then decided against it and pursued other careers. In addition, it is vital to understand the motivation behind those men who have left teaching to pursue other careers, particularly if the remuneration is a factor. It is obviously important to find out about the same issues for female teachers too.

Given the feedback, it would seem at face value that the current teacher pay system is not working for male teachers. It could be that the actual core salaries are in itself not enough, especially for those who are outstanding and experienced teachers, and, want to stay focused on the classroom. The challenge for them could be that to earn more they need to leave some, if not all, of their classroom activities behind.

There could be other factors at play. Such as the absence of overtime or other opportunities which prevents additional income from being gained within the school environment - without the need to change the core classroom role. Increasing pay because of experience could be another issue. This is certainly the scenario in other

industries where additional income can be made without changing the role – such as overtime. It could be that more experienced workers receive more pay. It could also be that extra responsibility payments for Teaching and Learning Responsibilities (TLR) and Lead Practitioners are not enough. Given the recent announcement on the teachers' pay rise of 6.5%, it will be interesting to see if that makes a difference to recruitment and retention, for men and women.

This research, as explained, is a conversation starter so it is not aimed at providing the answers, but is looking to see if answers need to be found. Clearly, the dynamics between male teachers and pay is an issue. There cannot be a situation though that to recruit and retain more male teachers they then should be paid more than female teachers. That would patently be unfair and indefensible. Pay and pay scales will of course be an issue for female teachers and therefore detailed research should be looking at this dynamic for them too. It may produce the same results or even different results, but it warrants further research to see if there is a difference between pay motivation and the gender of prospective, actual and teachers who have left the profession. However, whatever solution is made, it must not have the unintended consequence of creating barriers and inequalities for female teachers.

The issue about the fear of false allegations and motives is of great concern as this is more difficult to resolve than changing societal views about teaching not being seen as a profession for men. It is also an area that is not well-acknowledged or discussed and therefore clearly warrants further research and understanding.

Teaching being seen as a female occupation reinforces societal and gender stereotypes about what careers women and men go into. Verbatim comments show that the lack of male teachers in schools creates a vicious cycle as that reinforces this stereotype including for young men that teaching is not a profession men go into. In effect, it is not aligned to the "you have to see it, to be it" mantra. It also has a wider impact, as confirmed by teachers, of boys not having positive male role models. This is especially so for those boys with no positive role elsewhere in their life, including at home

### **(9a) Why do you believe men are not becoming teachers? (Verbatims)**

The primary comments reflected the above (section 9) with a particular focus on entry level salaries compared with other available careers layered with the concerns of workload, and the growing sense of the lack of prestige in teaching roles.

A cross-section of the comments is set out in Annex A

### **(10) Please suggest solutions to support an increase in male teachers (Verbatims)**

Overall, the feedback reflected a range of overarching areas captured above previously on pay, prestige and workload. However, there were a range of male teacher-specific comments.

A cross-section of the comments is set out in Annex B including targeting young men, advertising and removing the stigma about men working with young children.



## **(11) Do you believe increasing the number of male teachers in schools is important?**

Yes	81%
No	19%

The results clearly show how important teachers feel about the importance of increasing the number of male teachers.

## **(12) Why do you think so [in having more male teachers]? (Verbatims)**

There has been much debate on whether there is an impact on the educational performance of boys with respect to more male teachers – and there is no unanimity that it has a direct impact. That is, male teachers are better teachers of boys than female teachers. That is a binary view of the world, when the issue is far more nuanced.

Those in the men and boys' sector and related educationalists have viewed the need for male teachers as being more about tackling social norms and gender stereotypes – as well as role modelling and mentoring. This is especially so for vulnerable boys. There is also the wider view that public institutions should reflect the communities they serve and given that broadly 50% of those attending schools will be male, a lack of male teachers is not matching that purpose.

The primary reasons often given for the need for more male teachers are below and they concur broadly with many of the reasons given by the teachers in the survey.

- The presence of male teachers in a school shows boys that school, learning and education is not something that just girls do.
- The presence of male teachers helps to preserve a general sense of additional authority.
- It shows that boys can be teachers too – “you have to see it, to be it.”
- Boys, especially those without positive role models at home and/or their community, need to see how men are and how they should be. It is also a way of helping them steer clear of negative influences in communities and on social media.

It was interesting to note that on the final point above, many teachers said positive male role models were also a positive benefit to girls as well. This was due to them also not having positive male role models in their homes or communities, and/or, it was important to deal with a narrative that boys are a problem to them and to wider society.

It would seem the thread in the verbatim answers show that more male teachers benefits both girls and boys, with enhanced benefits to those boys who are disadvantaged and/or without positive non-school male role models. This can be seen in the following verbatim quotes in Annex C.

This has also been seen in research elsewhere such as that from the charity Lads Need Dads in Essex<sup>10</sup>. Their research showed that:

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<sup>10</sup> Lads Need Dads – Teachers <https://ladsneeddads.org/research/>: Teachers' experiences of the impact of fatherlessness on male pupils and behaviour

- 93% of secondary school teachers said they did believe there was a link between boys having absent fathers or limited access to a positive male role model and disruptive behaviour at school.
  - 78% stated it affected boys' academic achievement.
  - 66% stated it affected boys' attendance.
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## **(E) Recommendations and Conclusions**

The clear conclusion is that current and former teachers believe more male teachers matter. Whether that be to the benefit of all students, disadvantaged boys and/or the need to reflect communities.

The barriers for male teachers also reflect overarching themes about pay, workload and prestige that will affect male and female teachers. Albeit there was a sense that male teachers are keen to move into management/leadership roles because of the benefits to income and a regret that they are then lost to teaching. However, there were broader societal themes around false motives and teaching not being seen as a profession for men.

What is clear from a broader policy perspective, is that there is very little, if anything, happening at a national policy, governmental or educationalist level to tackle this gender teacher gap. This is an issue not just in an education sense, it is far wider. It impacts on actual/perceived employment careers for men; the socialisation, attainment (indirectly) and prospects of boys; and schools not reflecting the communities they serve.

Given this is a short survey, it is aimed as a means of starting the conversation on whether it is a recognised problem and whether it matters. The findings show that it does. The conversation needs therefore to both continue and deepen.

The primary recommendations are:

- 1) A gender-specific recruitment drive for male teachers, particularly focused on primary schools and early years.
- 2) Concrete action aimed at young men in their teens, so they see teaching as a profession for them – with exactly the same level of focus and investment given to persuading girls of a similar age to take on STEM careers.
- 3) A full programme of funded research with clear actions on understanding:
  - a) the barriers preventing men joining the profession alongside why they are leaving;
  - b) the dynamics between recruitment/retention and pay/pay scales based on the gender of prospective, current and former teachers who have left the profession;
  - c) the issue of false allegations/motives as a barrier to men taking up teaching careers.
- 4) A full programme of funded research on the impact the lack of male teachers has on students' attainment and socialisation. This is especially so for disadvantaged boys with no positive male role models in their immediate lives.

## **Annex A: Why do you believe men are not becoming teachers (Selected Verbatims)**

“As a male teacher, I have considered leaving the profession many times. Supporting my family financially can be done better with other professions. The profession has been devalued with media and government point scoring. The curriculum is overbearing and any problems with society, people think it can be fixed in schools rather than homes.”

“Better pay and working conditions and a revitalised positive regard for the profession will attract and retain more male teachers as well as driving up working conditions for other genders. It can only be a positive thing.”

“The current model of employment does not reward the hard working and successful in the classroom. It merely creates an environment where the great and the good are put into management roles.”

“The male teachers I worked alongside were either young, enthusiastic and burned out with the workload and emotional strain. A few did progress to lead roles and management roles but missed the teaching”

## **Annex B: Please suggest solutions to support an increase in male teachers (Selected Verbatims)**

“Overall, increasing the number of male teachers in schools can help to promote diversity, challenge gender stereotypes, and improve academic outcomes for students. Government, and other organisations need to promote teaching as a viable and rewarding career path for men.”

“More advertising about teaching including male role models.”

“Target young men who are taking degrees in the core subjects such as English, maths and science for marketing on becoming a teacher and stress that there is funding available for this role.”

“To address this issue, there have been efforts in recent years to encourage more men to pursue teaching careers and to support male teachers in their professional development. These efforts include initiatives such as the Men into Teaching programme, which aims to recruit more men into the teaching profession, as well as mentorship programmes as well as mentorship programmes and networking opportunities for male teachers.”

“Emphasis on the importance of male role models in the school environment for young male students. Success stories of how male teachers have influenced a young male students' life academically but ALSO outside of learning, in terms of life skills and self-growth and confidence as a man. Teaching boys how to be men.”

“Firstly, work on changing the culture. Especially parental expectations and the demonising of male primary teachers. Secondly, increase pay for teaching. This will enable male teachers to stay in the classroom.”

“Positive ‘marketing’ of primary teaching as being rewarding for men. Boys need men and women as role models and to see men following a woman’s lead, for example, the head.”

“SOME GUIDANCE AND TARGETS!!! Out of all my participants, a minority were aware of goals in the work force strategy and its aim to increase men in early years.”

“Try to remove the stigma around men working with children. Undertake a massive advertisement campaign in the media to try and attract Men.”

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### **Annex C: Why do you think so [in having more male teachers]? (Selected Verbatims)**

“Balance fair balance - many boys struggle and the system in many ways suits the female learners more [so something] should get done to make school suit more boys. Positive experience as pupil and as a member of a school community – [means] they may consider teaching.”

“I feel we have a society of disaffected young males who may lack male role models in their immediate family, community and beyond. It is important to have fair representation in school to help them with their own identity and learning styles. The male teachers I have worked with were spectacular at that and valued. Sadly, pay and a lack of support has meant many have left to find employment elsewhere- away from teaching.”

“Role models for students - reflecting and modelling good relationships and actions.”

“It is a kind of a vicious circle; children go to school seeing mainly women and this is a large part of why it is associated with being a woman’s job. Most effective way of getting men to think of teaching as a profession is to have them as role models growing up and seeing them in schools at every level.”

“Boys, particularly those from less affluent backgrounds, need good male role models. From my experience it is clear that many young boys respond more to male teachers than female teachers.”

“I think it’s important for students to see positive male role models while their growing up as young men and young women themselves. Also, the more men that are in the profession, the more the societal norms and stigma will be broken meaning more men will feel confident to pursue a career in education as a teacher.”

“There are also concerns about the lack of male role models in schools, particularly for boys from disadvantaged backgrounds who may lack positive male role models in their personal lives. The presence of male teachers in schools can be important in providing these students with positive male role models and helping to close the gender attainment gap. Addressing gender stereotypes: The lack of male teachers can perpetuate gender stereotypes and contribute to the idea that teaching is a female

profession. Having more male teachers can help to challenge these stereotypes and promote the idea that teaching is a profession for both men and women.”

“Diversity in teaching styles: Male teachers may bring different teaching styles and approaches to the classroom, which can benefit students and enhance the overall learning environment.”

“Positive messaging: Messaging that promotes the idea that teaching is a rewarding and important profession can help to attract more men to the field. Highlighting the diversity of experiences and perspectives that male teachers can bring to the classroom can also help to challenge gender stereotypes.”

“Lack of male role models has significant negative impacts on young boys’ development. Also, children inherently view men differently to women and it’s important to have a balanced set of influential figures to teach students male and female characteristics and attributes.”

“Diversity in any profession is important and it is good for children to see male and female teachers.”

“Important to have male role models for boys in schools.”

“There are already many male teachers in Secondary Education. I do feel that it is important for Primary aged children to have one good male role model in a school - be this a teacher, Head, or sports coach.”

“Positive role models A mix of genders in departments is good for the school/team Men at the chalk face is good, not just in leadership.”

“There is a very concerning rise in misogyny amongst young boys because I believe as a result of “porn in your pocket”. Strong male influences are needed to counter this.”

“Children need positive male role models. Children need to see that caring professions are suitable for both sexes, and it is not ‘unmanly’ to be in these jobs.”

“I feel that diversity, and the broad range of knowledge that can bring to the children can spark their interest and imagination.”

“Men are good role models for children. Some children have a bad view of men due to their experiences and a positive male role model can show them that men can help them too. Research has shown that boys show a wanting to share more time, are more open and want to be close to men in early years than girls. I think it’s good for boys to have male support.”

“It’s important for children to have a balance of female and male interaction. It’s even more important for those who don’t have a father figure in their life.”

“Boys need strong male role models, also if they grow up with Male teachers, it could encourage them to get into teaching after Uni”

“Firstly, as a role model. Secondly, boys in particular, especially early teens tend to look to identify more to male teachers and would probably be more comfortable confiding in or even chatting to a male teacher.”

“There are already many male teachers in Secondary Education. I do feel that it is important for Primary aged children to have one good male role model in a school - be this a teacher, Head or sports coach.”

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