

Deanery Digests are short, plain language summaries of the Department of Education's research outputs. This Deanery Digest is based on the following published research article: Thompson-Lee, S., Snell, R. J. S., Wang, H. & Klassen, R. M. (2025). Career motivations and perceptions of teaching of 16–19-year-olds in England and Wales. *British Educational Research Journal*, 00, 1–23.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.70034>

Specified Audience: Policy | School leaders | Teachers | Career advisors

Tomorrow's Teachers: What Drives 16–19-Year-Olds' Career Choices.

What is this research about and why is it important?

This study enhances understanding of the career motivations of 16–19-year-olds in England and Wales. In light of global declines in teacher training recruitment, identifying the factors that influence young people's attraction to, or avoidance of, teaching careers may inform strategies to strengthen the teacher pipeline.

What did we do?

- We recruited 672, 16–19-year-old students in eight schools and A-level colleges across England and Wales.
- The students completed the Motivations for Career Choice ([Watt & Richardson](#)) and the Persistence Research in Science and Engineering ([Fuchs et al., 2022](#)) questionnaires to determine their career interests and motivations.
- Students were asked to rate how well teaching matched their various career motivations.

What did we find?

- The top motivations for choosing a future career were that it matches the person's interests and skills and would be exciting.
- The least important factors were having a career that their friends think they should pursue, working with children and adolescents, and a career requiring little effort.
- The most popular career was an entrepreneurial career, and the career of least interest was that of a trade.
- 77% were not interested in a teaching career and the majority felt that teaching would not match their career motivations.
- There was some mismatch between perceptions of teaching and reality e.g. teaching was perceived as having low job security and low pay despite this not reflecting reality, particularly compared to many graduate jobs.

What does it all mean anyway?

- Helping young people to identify their skills and interests might help them to make decisions about which careers interest them.
- Recruitment campaigns that focus on the mismatch between students' motivations and perceptions of teaching might encourage some young people to think differently about teaching.
- 33% of our sample would be interested in a teaching career – these were typically women who valued working with children and young people and were non-STEM students. Teacher recruitment interventions focusing on this group may be more successful than those focusing on groups likely to be uninterested in teaching.

Material, data, open access article: Open access paper available:

<https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.70034>

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