

Should you survey staff in July? Actually, it may be the perfect time.

I saw someone online the other day claim that you should never survey staff in July. It's too late in the year, they said. Everyone's fried, and nothing meaningful will change.

It's a fair point. But not a true one.

Thanks to years of data from Teacher Tapp, we know that teacher stresses ebb and flow across the school year with remarkable predictability. September is the behaviour honeymoon and worries about exams are far away. By April, accountability pressure peaks and behaviour frays. July? Generally, behaviour is getting better and the stresses are reduced, even though everyone is indeed **exhausted.**

So when should you ask staff how they are doing?

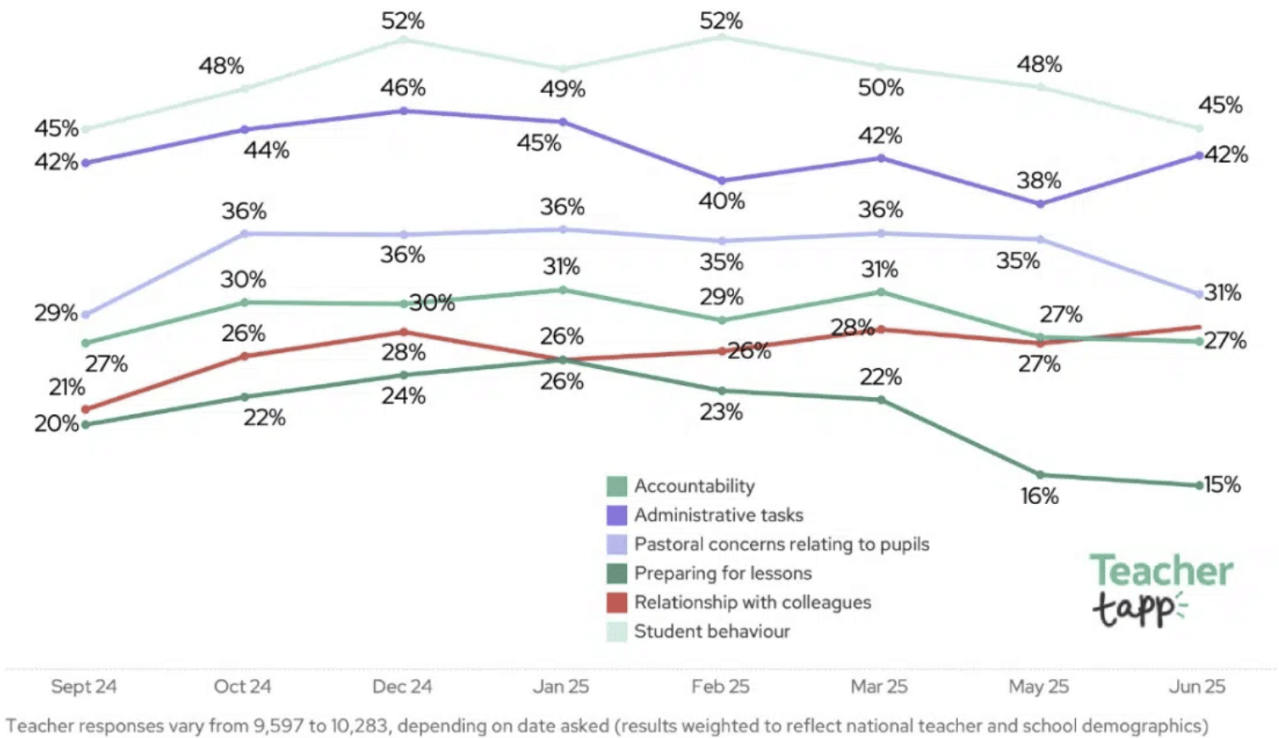
At School Surveys, leaders ask about this a lot as they are worried about skewed results. If stress levels are seasonal, isn't any survey just a snapshot – rather than a useful trend?

Yes and no.

To keep things meaningful, we do two things. First, we benchmark key School Surveys questions—like job satisfaction, workload pressure, and anxiety—against Teacher Tapp's national data, gathered regularly throughout the year if we feel the question is affected by seasonability. That way, even if your staff are feeling wobbly in July, you can see whether that's normal—or a red flag.

Here is the Teacher Tapp tracking over time of a key metric of how staff feel:

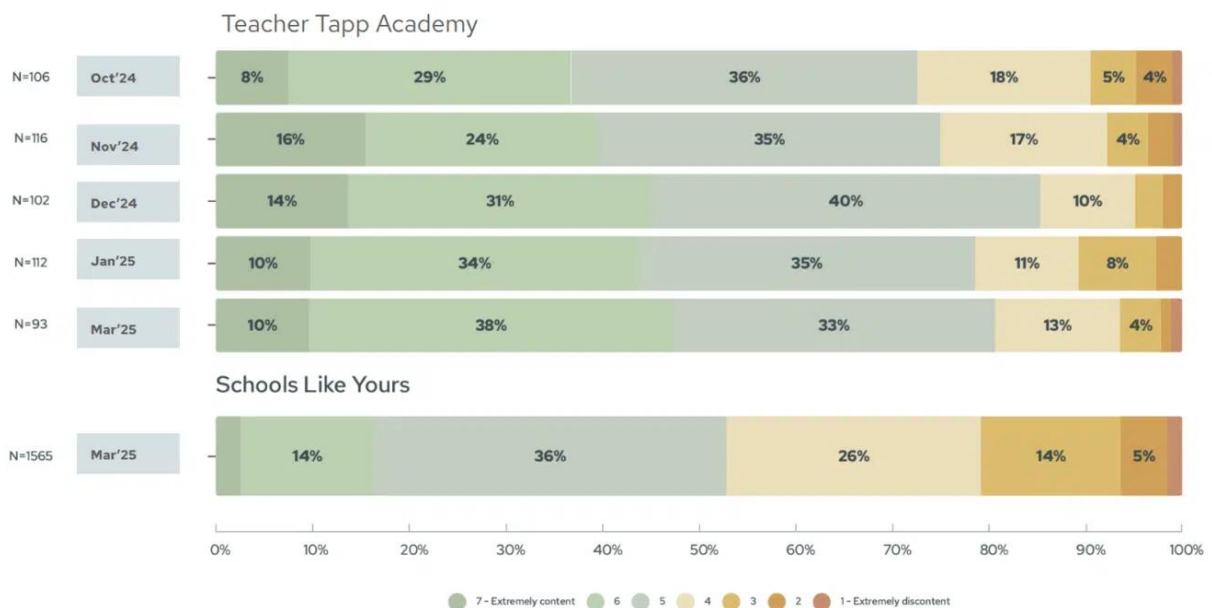
Have any of the following caused you to feel stressed or unhappy at work over the last 2 weeks?



And here is another useful question to track over time, this time shown at the individual school level, with the benchmarked data at the bottom, in the way it would appear in a School Surveys report:

Q: Taking everything about life at work into consideration, I am currently...

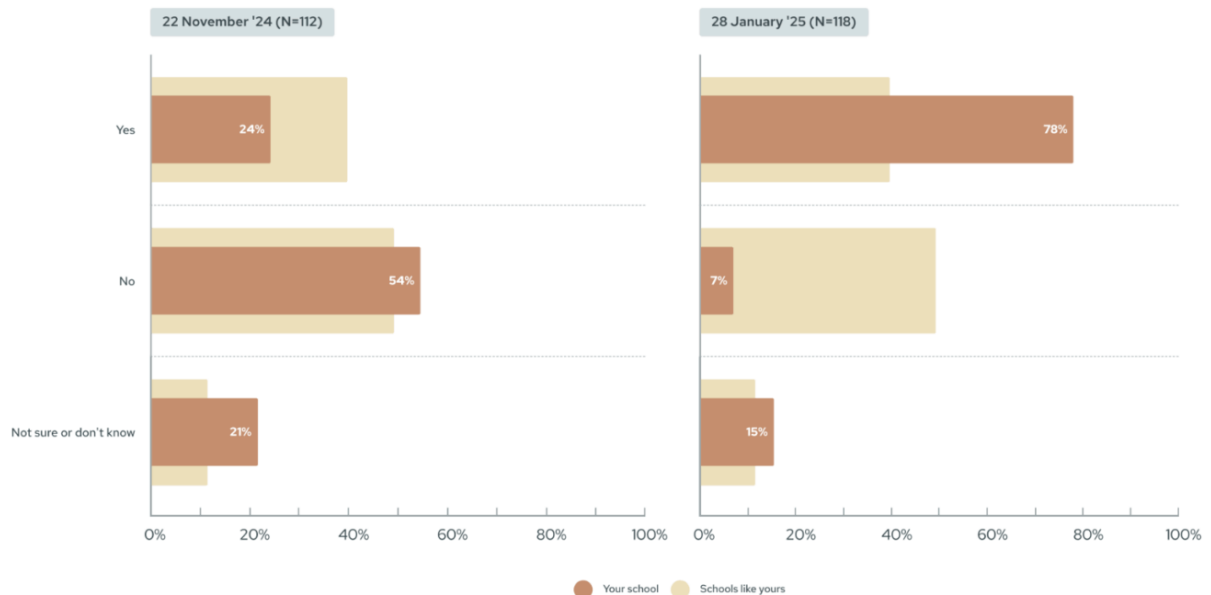
SchoolSurveys



Second, we encourage schools to plan their survey calendar like they do their curriculum. If you want to track long-term shifts in workload or wellbeing, then you can ask the same questions at the same time every year. That way, the conditions are roughly the same—and the changes are real.

If you are working on a particular area, you can re-visit it once you have made changes, and hope to see a shift in views, like in this example:

Would you describe your school's behaviour policy as effective?



Should you survey when things are at their worst?

Should you survey when things are at their worst? Some schools do. At Teacher Tapp, we usually ask questions when we know the answers will sting, because we want policymakers to face up to the worst reality, not hide behind rose-tinted averages.

But if you're a school leader, you might prefer to survey earlier: maybe use January behaviour survey to catch problems before they escalate. That way, the insights become an early-warning system, not an autopsy!

Still, the person online did get one thing right.

There's no point asking if you're not going to act. Staff will tolerate tricky questions. They'll even forgive a badly timed survey. But they won't keep answering forever if nothing changes.

So if you do ask in July, do this one thing: come back in September. Tell people what you heard. Share what you're trying. Let them know you're still listening—even when the sun's gone and the school gates open again.

Because that's what builds trust. And trust, not timing, is what makes a staff survey work.

