

2021 Fall BCTF Health and Safety Membership Survey

Preliminary report



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BCTF Research, October 22, 2021

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Preliminary Report

BCTF Research, October 22, 2021

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF) has been conducting research to better understand teachers' experiences and needs. Led by BCTF Research, work has included a quick poll in September 2020,¹ the 2021 BCTF Membership Health and Safety Survey (January 2021),² and a survey project in collaboration with researchers at the University of British Columbia to better understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teachers' well-being.³ What has been clear in these results is that as BC teachers have risen to the challenge, the COVID-19 pandemic has taken its toll.

In September 2021, as teachers moved into the third school year impacted by the pandemic, the BCTF wanted to construct a general picture of members' perceptions of health and safety, focusing on key health and safety measures, including vaccination.⁴

This report presents the preliminary findings of the 2021 Fall BCTF Health and Safety Membership Survey in four key themes:

1. There are ongoing gaps in measures to keep everyone safe in BC schools.
2. The pandemic has negatively affected teachers' well-being.
3. The experience of teaching during a pandemic is exacerbating already acute recruitment and retention challenges.
4. BC teachers are doing their part to keep everyone safe.

The random sample survey was conducted online from September 22 to October 11, 2021 (see Appendix A for a full description of the methodology). The overall margin of error for the sample is +/- 1.1% 19 times out of 20.

¹ BCTF Research (2020). Provincial Snapshot: September K–12 Restart. Available at info.bctf.ca/publications/ResearchReports.aspx?id=58256.

² BCTF Research (2021). Keeping Safe Schools Open in a Pandemic: What BC teachers say we still need. Available at files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED613704.pdf.

³ HELP (2021). The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Teacher Well-Being in British Columbia. Vancouver: Human Early Learning Partnership. Available at earlylearning.ubc.ca/media/bcteachersandcovid-19surveyreport_062821_final.pdf.

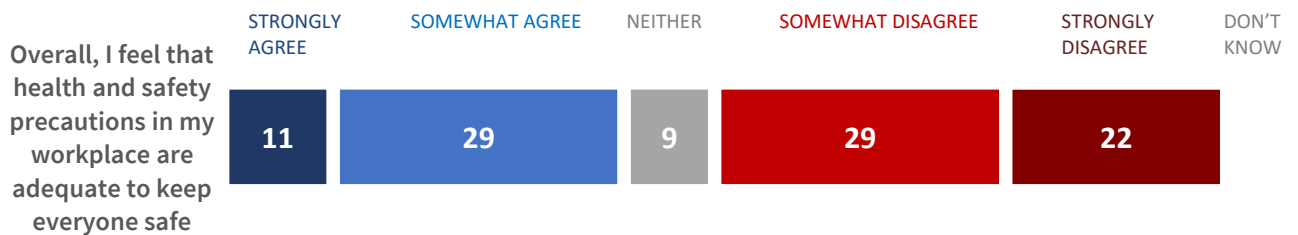
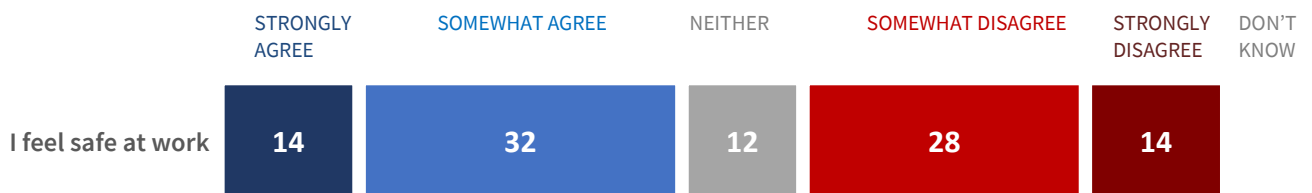
⁴ The BCTF represents all K–12 public school teachers.

1

There are ongoing gaps in measures to keep everyone safe in BC schools

Overall, teachers have different perspectives as to how safe they feel in schools, and how adequate they feel health and safety measures are for keeping everyone in our school communities safe. While almost half of teachers (46%) report that they do feel safe at work, almost the same amount (42%) do not.⁵

Q: Please indicate if you agree or disagree with the following statements.



Given the near impossibility of physical distancing in most BC classrooms,⁶ other safety measures become even more important. Masks are now mandated for all K–12 students and adults working in schools, a measure broadly supported by teachers in this survey.⁷

However, 53% of teachers feel that the frequency of cleaning/sanitation in schools is inadequate for helping reduce the spread of COVID-19.⁸

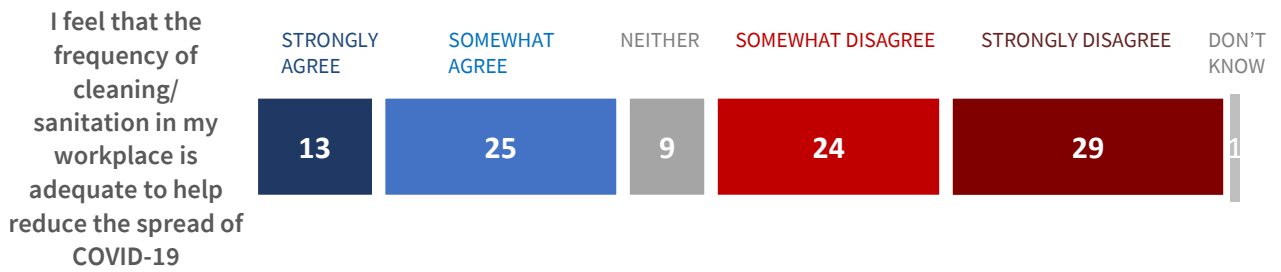
⁵ Appendix B, Table 1.

⁶ Appendix B, Table 3.

⁷ Appendix B, Table 4.

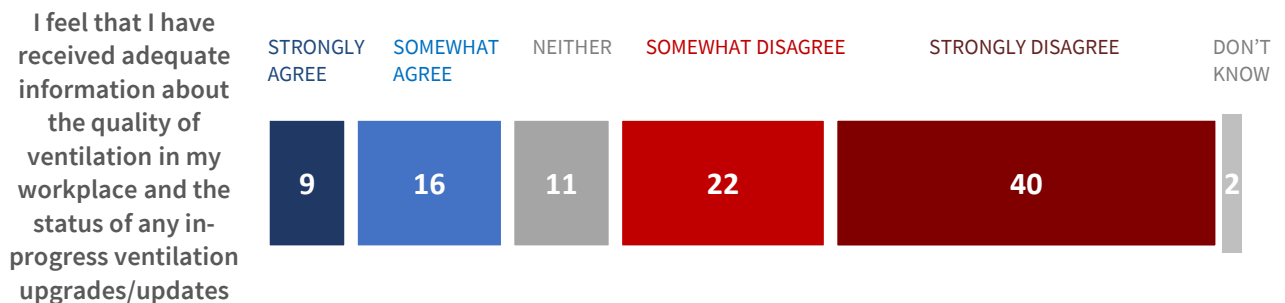
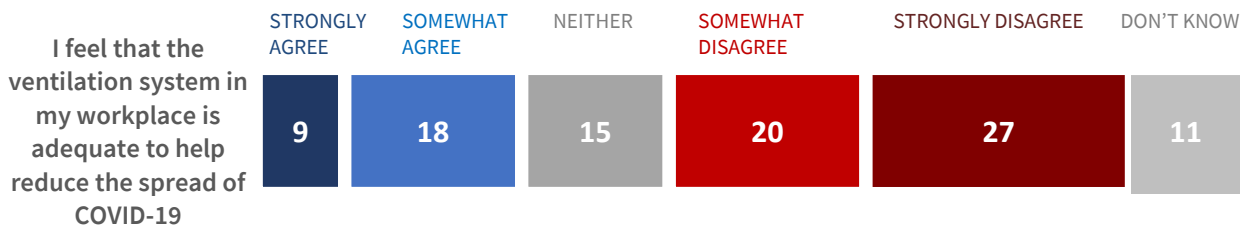
⁸ Appendix B, Table 5.

Q: Please indicate if you agree or disagree with the following statements.



Furthermore, adequate ventilation and filtration systems are a key measure for reducing the airborne spread of COVID-19, as well as decreasing the transmission of other common respiratory viruses such as influenza. While much attention has been focused on ventilation systems and the need to implement upgrades to meet this need, there is a gap in information on existing systems as well as the status and timeline of upgrades.⁹

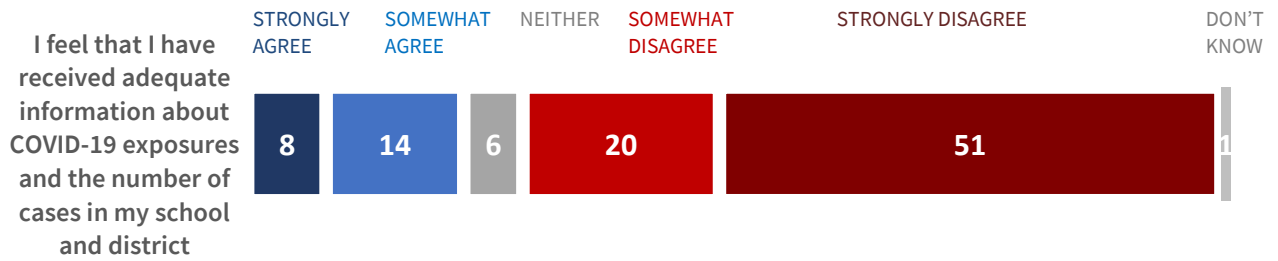
Q: Please indicate if you agree or disagree with the following statements.



⁹ Appendix B, Table 7.

The lack of transparent, timely, and reliable public health information can lead to speculation and anxiety. This has been evident throughout the pandemic in the lack of a standardized definition of or process for reporting school exposures to COVID-19. 71% of teachers say that they have not received adequate information about COVID-19 exposures and the number of cases in their school and district.¹⁰

Q: Please indicate if you agree or disagree with the following statements.



¹⁰ Appendix B, Table 8.

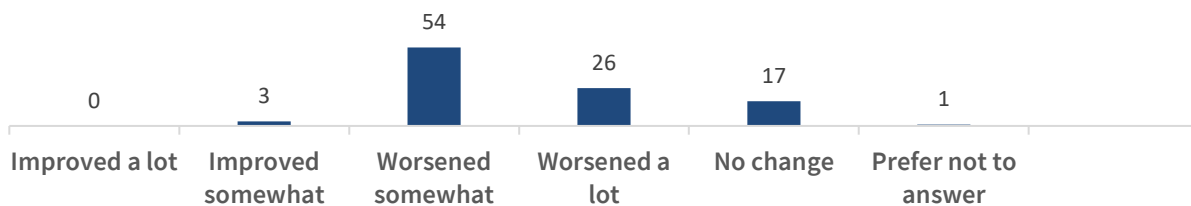
2

The pandemic has negatively affected teachers’ well-being

Previous research, conducted by the Human Early Learning Partnership at the University of British Columbia in February 2021, highlighted the detrimental effect that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on teachers’ mental health.¹¹ The study found that a majority of BC teachers (80.5%) reported that their mental health had worsened.

The current study supports these results, which are in stark contrast to a nationally representative sample of Canadian adults taken in January 2021 in which 40.5% reported that their mental health had worsened during the pandemic.¹² 79% of teachers report that their mental health has worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic.¹³

Q: Has your mental health improved or worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic?



Teachers are also reporting impacts on their physical health. Almost half of teachers (49%) report that their physical health has worsened during the pandemic.¹⁴

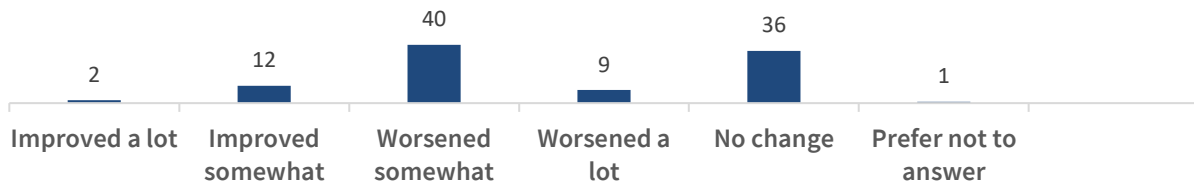
¹¹ HELP (2021). The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Teacher Well-Being in British Columbia. Vancouver: Human Early Learning Partnership. Retrieved from earlylearning.ubc.ca/media/bcteachersandcovid-19surveyreport_062821_final.pdf.

¹² Jenkins, E., McAuliffe, C., Hirani, S., Richardson, C., Thomson, K., McGuinness, L., Morris, J., Kousoulis, A., & Gadermann, A. M. (2021). A portrait of the early and differential mental health impacts of the COVID19 pandemic in Canada: Findings from the first wave of a nationally representative cross-sectional survey. *Preventive Medicine, 145*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ypmed.2020.106333>.

¹³ Appendix B, Table 9.

¹⁴ Appendix B, table 10.

Q: Has your physical health improved or worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic?

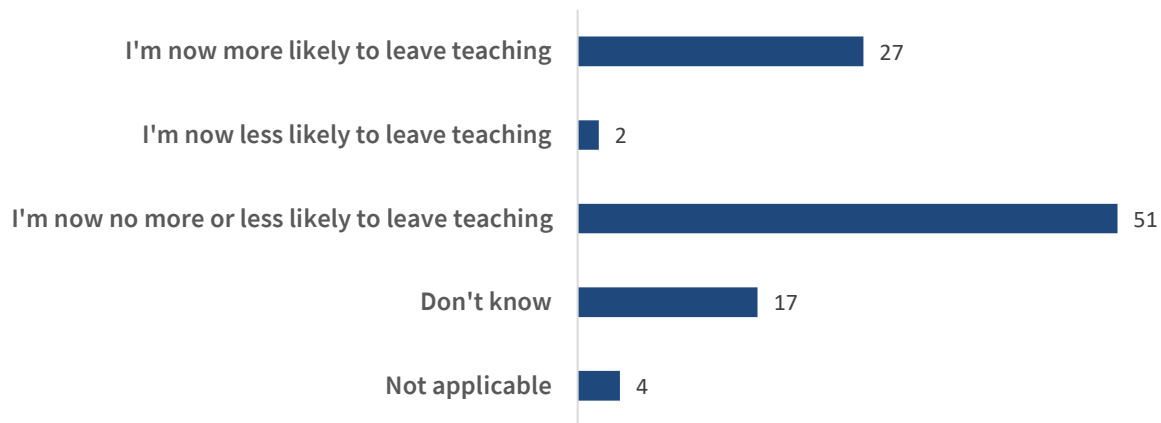


3

The experience of teaching during a pandemic is exacerbating already acute recruitment and retention challenges

British Columbia was confronted by a looming teacher shortage prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁵ The experience of teaching during a public health crisis has potentially deepened this shortage. Over a quarter of teachers in BC (27%) report that the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic has made it more likely that they will leave teaching within the next two years.¹⁶

Q: Has the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic made it more or less likely that you will leave teaching within the next two years?



¹⁵ Ministry of Education (2017). Report presented by the Minister’s Task Force on Immediate Recruitment and Retention Challenges. Retrieved from www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/uploads/task_force_report.pdf.

¹⁶ Appendix B, Table 11.

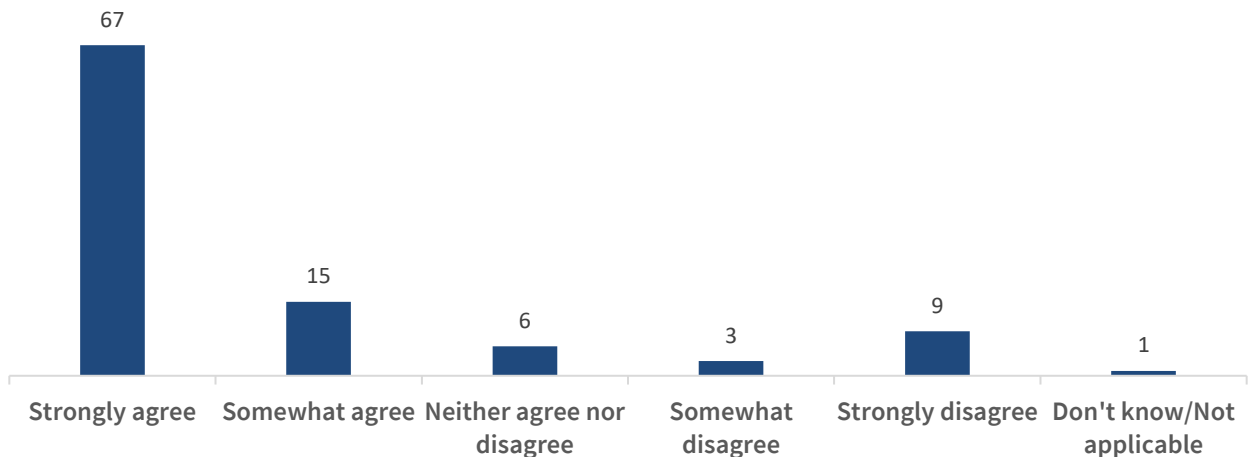
4

BC teachers are doing their part to keep everyone safe

A COVID-19 vaccine mandate is being considered for the public education system. This is broadly supported by teachers in BC. Overall, 82% of teachers agreed that all adults working in BC schools should be vaccinated.¹⁷

Q: There has been a great deal of discussion lately by the government, the public and media about mandatory vaccination in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some groups and individuals have suggested that all adults working in BC schools should be vaccinated.

Do you agree/disagree that all eligible adults working in BC schools should be required to be vaccinated against COVID-19?



BC teachers are already doing their part to keep everyone as safe as possible. 94% of BC teachers are already fully vaccinated. Additionally, 1% of teachers indicated they are partially vaccinated and planning to receive a second dose.¹⁸

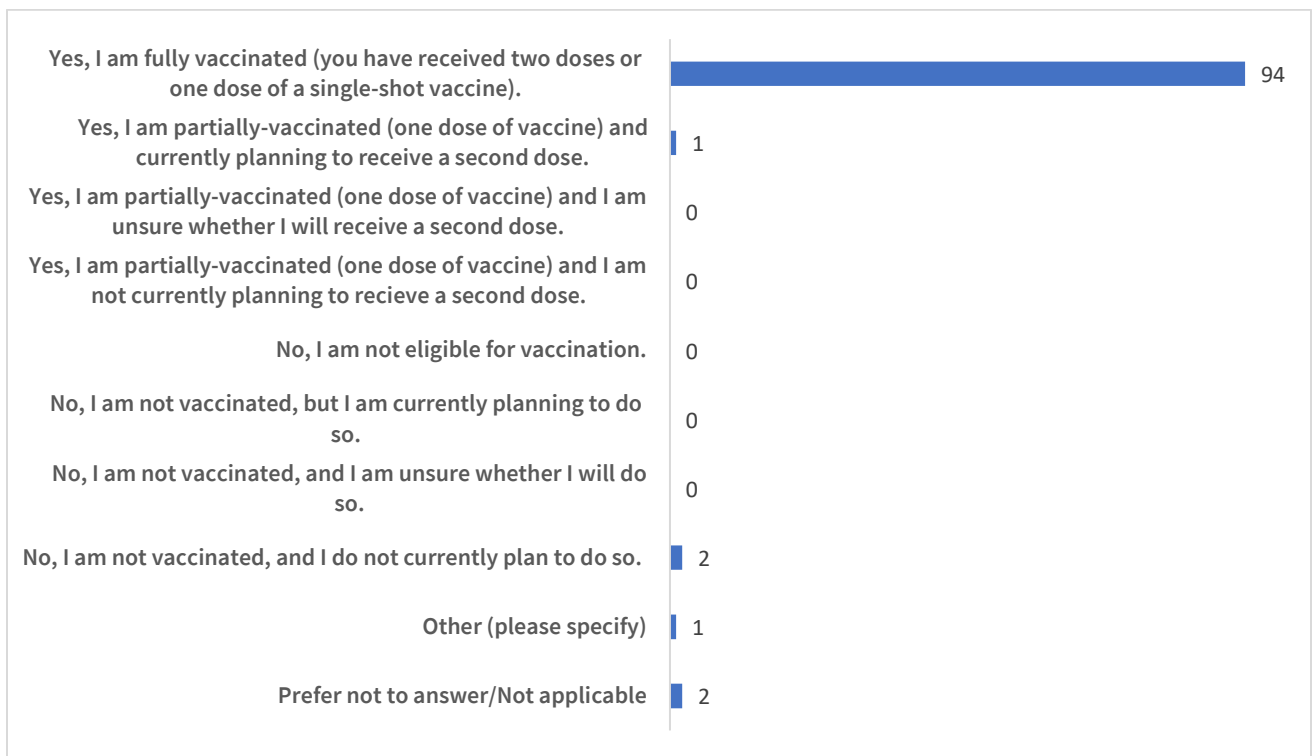
¹⁷ Appendix B, Table 12.

¹⁸ Appendix B, Table 13.

Q: Anecdotal accounts suggest that most teachers in BC schools are vaccinated. The BCTF would like to get a better understanding of where vaccination rates currently stand among our membership. The resulting data will be used to inform our ongoing advocacy for robust and complimentary prevention and protection measures (e.g. masks, ventilation, and cleaning) in schools.

A reminder that your responses in this survey are confidential. The BCTF will receive the survey results with no identifying information, meaning that your individual responses will remain anonymous and will not be reported back to the BCTF.

At present, have you received any vaccination against COVID-19?



Appendix A: Methodology

The 2021 Fall BCTF Membership Survey was conducted online by Strategic Communications Inc. (Stratcom) from September 22 to October 11, 2021. Stratcom is bound by federal privacy rules, regulations, and standards imposed by PIPEDA, and the global market research industry association—ESOMAR. Stratcom researchers were responsible for the random selection of participants and all survey responses were completely confidential. The BCTF received the survey results with no identifying member information.

Unique survey invites were emailed to a random sample of 15,378 active BCTF members, resulting in 6,183 completed surveys and a response rate of 40.2%. After initial data cleaning, the final analytical sample is made up of 5,996 currently working BCTF members. During the survey, a Broadcast Voice Message (BVM) was sent to 2,966 members in the random sample with phone numbers on file alerting them of the survey. Reminder emails and text messages were also sent out to potential participants during the fielding period. The final survey data were statistically weighted to ensure that the proportions of gender, age, and Regional Health Authority (based on school district) match their proportions in the BCTF member population. Margin of error for a sample of this size is +/- 1.1%, 19 times out of 20. The margin of error increases when analyzing sub-samples of the data.

A random sample methodology was chosen by the BCTF to build a statistically representative picture of the experiences and needs of teachers across the province, while minimizing the overall disruption caused by data collection. Our very large sample allows us to generalize these results to the overall member population with a high degree of accuracy and with a very small margin of error. Increasing the size of the sample any further would not have substantially improved the accuracy or reliability of our statistics, but it would have greatly increased the overall burden of participation placed on our membership. Furthermore, if the survey had been open to all members (a census survey), there would have been substantial self-selection bias. Without mandatory participation to ensure a response rate approaching 100%, an attempted census is less likely to provide statistically representative data for a population (here, the teachers of BC).

Percentages in this report have been rounded to the nearest whole numbers. A full report with more detailed analysis will be available in early November 2021. For questions, please contact research@bctf.ca.

Appendix B: Technical Tables

Table 1

I feel safe at work.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Strongly agree	834	13.9	14.3	14.3
	2 Somewhat agree	1865	31.1	31.9	46.1
	3 Neither agree nor disagree	687	11.5	11.7	57.9
	4 Somewhat disagree	1627	27.1	27.8	85.7
	5 Strongly disagree	833	13.9	14.2	99.9
	6 Don't know/Not applicable	4	.1	.1	100.0
	Total	5849	97.5	100.0	
Missing*	System	147	2.5		
Total		5996	100.0		

*NOTE: Only those who confirmed that they were currently working in-person were asked the in-person health and safety questions. Remote workers and others who did not indicate current in-person work were not shown this question, making up the 147 missing cases.

Table 2

Overall, I feel that health and safety precautions in my workplace are adequate to keep everyone safe.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Strongly agree	647	10.8	11.1	11.1
	2 Somewhat agree	1666	27.8	28.5	39.5
	3 Neither agree nor disagree	550	9.2	9.4	48.9
	4 Somewhat disagree	1691	28.2	28.9	77.9
	5 Strongly disagree	1274	21.2	21.8	99.6
	6 Don't know/Not applicable	21	.3	.4	100.0
	Total	5849	97.5	100.0	
Missing*	System	147	2.5		
Total		5996	100.0		

*NOTE: Only those who confirmed that they were currently working in-person were asked the in-person health and safety questions. Remote workers and others who did not indicate current in-person work were not shown this question, making up the 147 missing cases.

Table 3

I feel that class sizes in my workplace are adequate for effective physical-distancing to help reduce the spread of COVID-19.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Strongly agree	331	5.5	5.7	5.7
	2 Somewhat agree	696	11.6	11.9	17.6
	3 Neither agree nor disagree	271	4.5	4.6	22.2
	4 Somewhat disagree	1180	19.7	20.2	42.4
	5 Strongly disagree	3311	55.2	56.6	99.0
	6 Don't know/Not applicable	59	1.0	1.0	100.0
	Total	5849	97.5	100.0	
Missing	System	147	2.5		
Total		5996	100.0		

*NOTE: Only those who confirmed that they were currently working in-person were asked the in-person health and safety questions. Remote workers and others who did not indicate current in-person work were not shown this question, making up the 147 missing cases.

Table 4

Currently in BC, teachers and students are required to wear masks from grade 4 and up.* I feel that ALL students in my workplace should be required to wear a face mask in indoor areas, including those in kindergarten to grade 3.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Strongly agree	3015	50.3	51.6	51.6
	2 Somewhat agree	1034	17.2	17.7	69.2
	3 Neither agree nor disagree	437	7.3	7.5	76.7
	4 Somewhat disagree	514	8.6	8.8	85.5
	5 Strongly disagree	672	11.2	11.5	97.0
	6 Don't know/Not applicable	178	3.0	3.0	100.0
	Total	5849	97.5	100.0	
Missing ^o	System	147	2.5		
Total		5996	100.0		

*NOTE: The mask requirement was expanded to include students in kindergarten to grade 3 on October 4, 2021 (about a week before the end of the data collection period).

^oNOTE: Only those who confirmed that they were currently working in-person were asked the in-person health and safety questions. Remote workers and others who did not indicate current in-person work were not shown this question, making up the 147 missing cases.

Table 5

I feel that the frequency of cleaning/sanitation in my workplace is adequate to help reduce the spread of COVID-19.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Strongly agree	750	12.5	12.8	12.8
	2 Somewhat agree	1434	23.9	24.5	37.3
	3 Neither agree nor disagree	502	8.4	8.6	45.9
	4 Somewhat disagree	1422	23.7	24.3	70.2
	5 Strongly disagree	1665	27.8	28.5	98.7
	6 Don't know/Not applicable	75	1.3	1.3	100.0
	Total	5849	97.5	100.0	
Missing*	System	147	2.5		
Total		5996	100.0		

*NOTE: Only those who confirmed that they were currently working in-person were asked the in-person health and safety questions. Remote workers and others who did not indicate current in-person work were not shown this question, making up the 147 missing cases.

Table 6

I feel that the ventilation system in my workplace is adequate to help reduce the spread of COVID-19.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Strongly agree	513	8.6	8.8	8.8
	2 Somewhat agree	1026	17.1	17.5	26.3
	3 Neither agree nor disagree	893	14.9	15.3	41.6
	4 Somewhat disagree	1182	19.7	20.2	61.8
	5 Strongly disagree	1580	26.3	27.0	88.8
	6 Don't know/Not applicable	655	10.9	11.2	100.0
	Total	5849	97.5	100.0	
Missing*	System	147	2.5		
Total		5996	100.0		

*NOTE: Only those who confirmed that they were currently working in-person were asked the in-person health and safety questions. Remote workers and others who did not indicate current in-person work were not shown this question, making up the 147 missing cases.

Table 7

I feel that I have received adequate information about the quality of ventilation in my workplace and the status of any in-progress ventilation upgrades/updates.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Strongly agree	502	8.4	8.6	8.6
	2 Somewhat agree	916	15.3	15.7	24.2
	3 Neither agree nor disagree	649	10.8	11.1	35.3
	4 Somewhat disagree	1284	21.4	22.0	57.3
	5 Strongly disagree	2364	39.4	40.4	97.7
	6 Don't know/Not applicable	134	2.2	2.3	100.0
	Total	5849	97.5	100.0	
Missing*	System	147	2.5		
Total		5996	100.0		

*NOTE: Only those who confirmed that they were currently working in-person were asked the in-person health and safety questions. Remote workers and others who did not indicate current in-person work were not shown this question, making up the 147 missing cases.

Table 8

I feel that I have received adequate information about COVID-19 exposures and the number of cases in my school and district.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Strongly agree	443	7.4	7.6	7.6
	2 Somewhat agree	790	13.2	13.5	21.1
	3 Neither agree nor disagree	377	6.3	6.4	27.5
	4 Somewhat disagree	1193	19.9	20.4	47.9
	5 Strongly disagree	2981	49.7	51.0	98.9
	6 Don't know/Not applicable	65	1.1	1.1	100.0
	Total	5849	97.5	100.0	
Missing*	System	147	2.5		
Total		5996	100.0		

*NOTE: Only those who confirmed that they were currently working in-person were asked the in-person health and safety questions. Remote workers and others who did not indicate current in-person work were not shown this question, making up the 147 missing cases.

Table 9

Has your mental health improved or worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Improved a lot	23	.4	.4	.4
	2 Improved somewhat	172	2.9	2.9	3.3
	3 Worsened somewhat	3207	53.5	53.5	56.7
	4 Worsened a lot	1529	25.5	25.5	82.2
	5 No change	1001	16.7	16.7	98.9
	6 Prefer not to answer	64	1.1	1.1	100.0
	Total	5996	100.0	100.0	

Table 10

Has your physical health improved or worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Improved a lot	114	1.9	1.9	1.9
	2 Improved somewhat	708	11.8	11.8	13.7
	3 Worsened somewhat	2409	40.2	40.2	53.9
	4 Worsened a lot	550	9.2	9.2	63.1
	5 No change	2139	35.7	35.7	98.7
	6 Prefer not to answer	76	1.3	1.3	100.0
	Total	5996	100.0	100.0	

Table 11

Has the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic made it more or less likely that you will leave teaching within the next two years?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 I'm now more likely to leave teaching	1621	27.0	27.0	27.0
	2 I'm now less likely to leave teaching	90	1.5	1.5	28.5
	3 I'm now no more or less likely to leave teaching	3048	50.8	50.8	79.4
	4 Don't know	987	16.5	16.5	95.8
	5 Not Applicable	250	4.2	4.2	100.0
	Total	5996	100.0	100.0	

Table 12

There has been a great deal of discussion lately by the government, the public and media about mandatory vaccination in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some groups and individuals have suggested that all adults working in BC schools should be vaccinated.

Do you agree/disagree that all eligible adults working in BC schools should be required to be vaccinated against COVID-19?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Strongly agree	4025	67.1	67.1	67.1
	2 Somewhat agree	868	14.5	14.5	81.6
	3 Neither agree nor disagree	331	5.5	5.5	87.1
	4 Somewhat disagree	204	3.4	3.4	90.5
	5 Strongly disagree	519	8.7	8.7	99.2
	6 Don't know/Not applicable	49	.8	.8	100.0
	Total	5996	100.0	100.0	

Table 13

Anecdotal accounts suggest that most teachers in BC schools are vaccinated. The BCTF would like to get a better understanding of where vaccination rates currently stand among our membership. The resulting data will be used to inform our ongoing advocacy for robust and complimentary prevention and protection measures (e.g. masks, ventilation, and cleaning) in schools.

A reminder that your responses in this survey are confidential. The BCTF will receive the survey results with no identifying information, meaning that your individual responses will remain anonymous and will not be reported back to the BCTF.

At present, have you received any vaccination against COVID-19?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Yes, I am fully vaccinated (you have received two doses or one dose of a single-shot vaccine)	5645	94.1	94.1	94.1
	2 Yes, I am partially-vaccinated (one dose of vaccine) and currently planning to receive a second dose	41	.7	.7	94.8
	3 Yes, I am partially-vaccinated (one dose of vaccine) and I am unsure whether I will receive a second dose	15	.3	.3	95.1
	4 Yes, I am partially-vaccinated (one dose of vaccine) and not currently planning to receive a second dose	8	.1	.1	95.2
	5 No, I am not eligible for vaccination	5	.1	.1	95.3
	6 No, I am not vaccinated, but I am currently planning to do so	4	.1	.1	95.4
	7 No, I am not vaccinated, and I am unsure whether I will do so	22	.4	.4	95.7
	8 No, I am not vaccinated, and I do not currently plan to do so	104	1.7	1.7	97.5
	9 Other (please specify)	40	.7	.7	98.1
	10 Prefer not to answer/Not applicable	112	1.9	1.9	100.0
Total		5996	100.0	100.0	

Appendix C: Demographic Breakdown of the Sample

Which gender do you most identify with?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Man	1479	24.7	24.7	24.7
	2 Woman	4359	72.7	72.7	97.4
	3 Non-binary	28	.5	.5	97.8
	4 Two Spirited	9	.2	.2	98.0
	5 Other term you prefer (specify)	8	.1	.1	98.1
	6 Prefer not to answer	112	1.9	1.9	100.0
	Total	5996	100.0	100.0	

What is your age?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 24 years or younger	71	1.2	1.2	1.2
	2 25-34 years	1210	20.2	20.2	21.4
	3 35-44 years	1868	31.1	31.1	52.5
	4 45-54 years	1820	30.4	30.4	82.9
	5 55-64 years	849	14.2	14.2	97.0
	6 65 years or older	99	1.6	1.6	98.7
	7 Prefer not to answer	79	1.3	1.3	100.0
	Total	5996	100.0	100.0	

Regional Health Authority (based on school districts) *

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Fraser	2404	40.1	40.1	40.1
	2 Vancouver Coastal	1175	19.6	19.6	59.7
	3 Vancouver Island	1038	17.3	17.3	77.0
	4 Interior	971	16.2	16.2	93.2
	5 Northern	392	6.5	6.5	99.8
	88 Missing	15	.2	.2	100.0
	Total	5996	100.0	100.0	

*NOTE: SEPF members were asked in which school district they were physically located to determine their Regional Health Authority.

How many years of teaching experience do you have as a teacher? Please include years of teaching in all jurisdictions, including outside of Canada.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Less than 1 year	147	2.4	2.4	2.4
	2 1 to 5 years	1012	16.9	16.9	19.3
	3 6 to 10 years	988	16.5	16.5	35.8
	4 11 to 20 years	1883	31.4	31.4	67.2
	5 21 to 30 years	1489	24.8	24.8	92.0
	6 31 to 40 years	425	7.1	7.1	99.1
	7 Over 40 years	34	.6	.6	99.7
	8 Not applicable	17	.3	.3	100.0
	Total	5996	100.0	100.0	