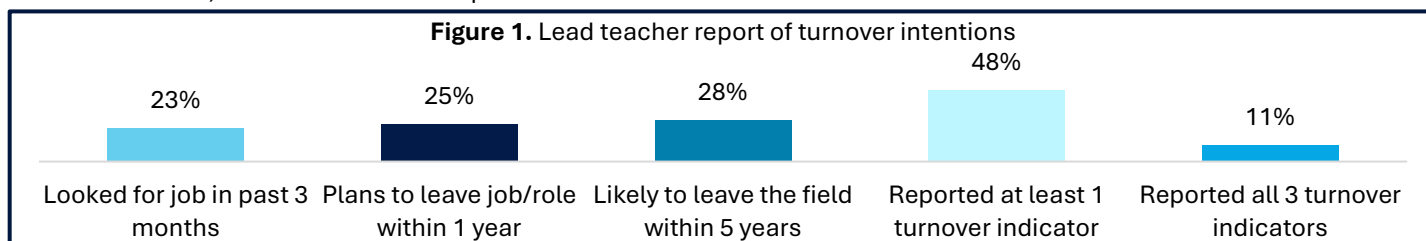




Data Snapshot: New Jersey Lead Teacher Turnover Intentions in Center-Based Providers

Research from the [National Institute for Early Education Research \(NIEER\)](#) provides a descriptive portrait of lead teachers' turnover intentions among those in center-based providers in New Jersey (NJ). These findings come from a statewide survey of lead teachers.¹ As shown in Figure 1, roughly 1 out of 4 teachers reported recently looking for a job, that they would leave their role within the next year, or were likely to leave the field within 5 years. Nearly half of teachers reported at least one of these potential indicators of turnover intention, and 11% of teachers reported all three indicators.



Descriptive analyses suggested variability in turnover intentions along select characteristics of teachers and their centers (Figure 2):

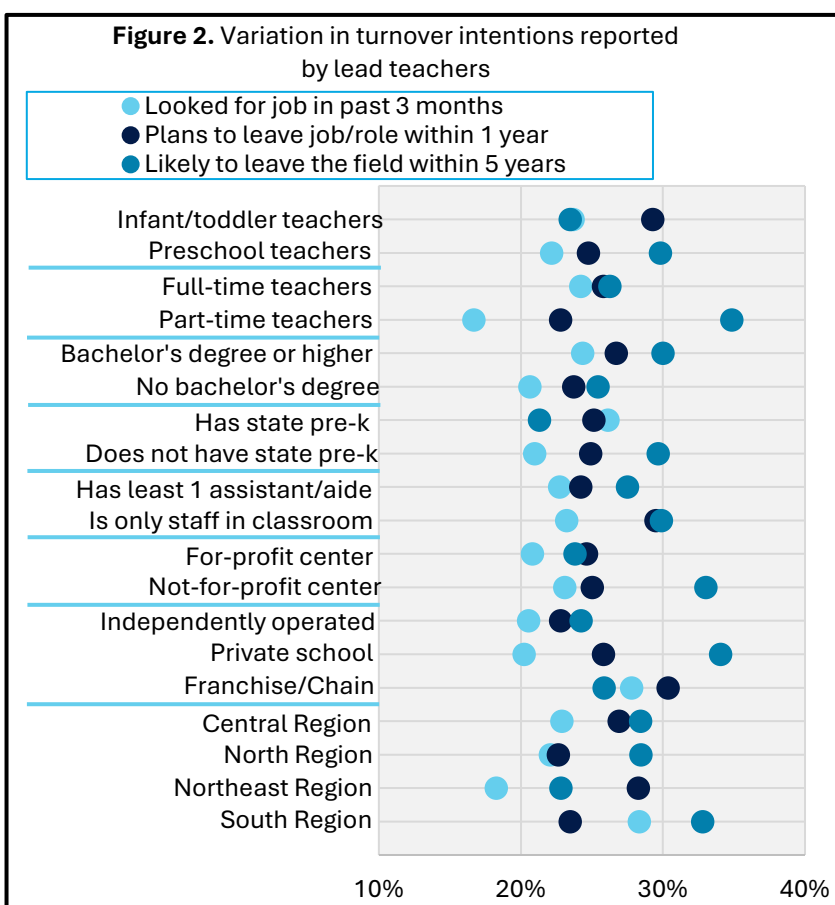
1. Report of looking for a job was highest among teachers in Franchise/Chain organizations and in South NJ.
2. Report of looking for a job was lowest among part-time teachers, and in Northeast NJ.
3. Teachers' intentions to leave their role within the next year were highest among those that served infants/toddlers (29%).
4. Teachers' intentions to leave the field within 5 years were highest among those working part-time, in non-for-profit settings, private schools, or in South NJ.
5. A smaller share (21% vs. 30%) of teachers in centers with state pre-k reported an intention to leave the field within 5 years.
6. Teachers who had at least one classroom assistant/aide were also less likely report an intent to leave their role within 1 year (24%), or the field within 5 years (27%), relative to those who were the only staff in the classroom (30%).

Why this matters: Lead teachers play a vital role in shaping the quality of early childhood education for children. However, recent reports find considerably high rates of turnover among the child care workforce.² This is concerning because issues around workforce turnover and retention could lead to lower quality care, and worse child outcomes.³

Moreover, related findings from our research in NJ indicate teaching staff shortages could impact centers' ability to enroll children.⁴

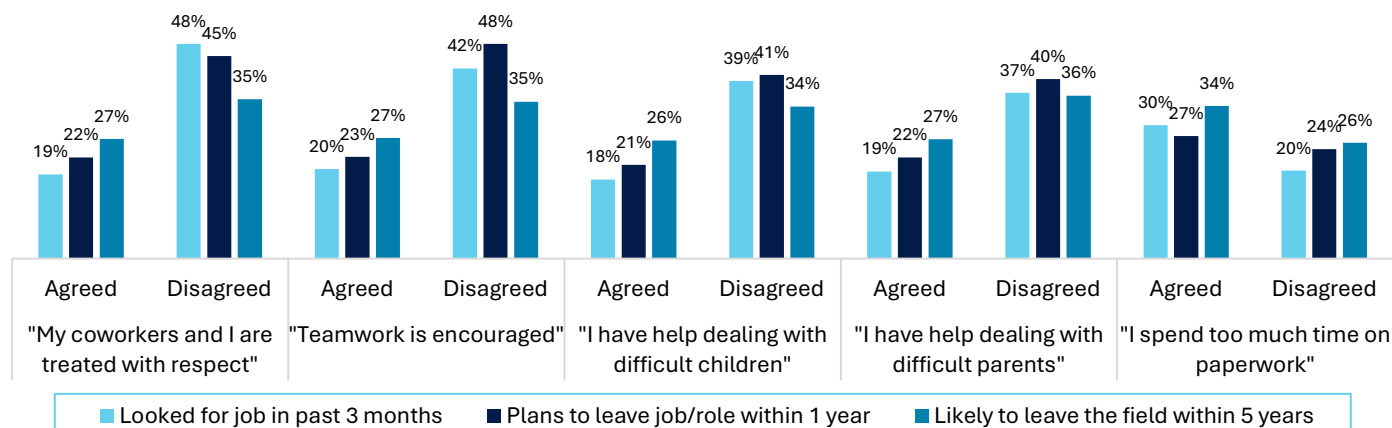
Additionally, our data showed some signal of experiences related to turnover intentions:

7. Teachers who reported not having experiences of financial stress on a regular basis were less likely to have looked for a job (16% vs. 33% who experienced stress), and more likely to stay in their role over the next year (81% vs. 65%).
8. One out of 4 teachers received public assistance,¹ and these individuals were more likely to report looking for a job (31%) or intentions to leave their role (29%), relative to those not receiving assistance (24% & 23%, respectively).
9. As shown in Figure 3, teachers who reported agreement that they experienced a positive working climate were much less likely to report turnover intentions, relative to those who disagreed.



10. Teachers who reported that they spend too much time on paperwork were also more likely report turnover intentions.

Figure 3. Variation in lead teacher turnover intentions by agreement/disagreement on indicators of a positive working climate



Why this matters: Teachers need financial stability and a supportive workplace to effectively deliver high-quality learning experiences for young children. Recent national research finds that teachers are experiencing increased economic hardship and instability that highlight significant need for increased pay and availability of workplace benefits.⁵ Additionally, burnout and challenges stemming from center working climate and staffing issues undermine teachers' ability to stay in the profession.

Where do we go from here? To stabilize NJ's early childhood education workforce, it is important to strengthen supports for lead teachers, and to improve compensation and working conditions. **There are several next steps to consider:**

First, this research highlights the utility and continued need to collect data and monitor teachers' turnover intentions and workplace experiences. **Second**, NJ could learn from promising examples of efforts to increase workforce compensation from other states that could improve teachers' financial well-being. For instance, the Great Start Compensation program in Minnesota⁶ involved the state passing legislation to develop a wage scale that establishes a target level of pay based on teachers' credentials. This effort also included payments issued to programs to fund increases in teacher compensation, which was signed into law as a permanent, noncompetitive program for eligible providers in 2023. These wage supplements have been made available through State Funds, the Child Care and Development Fund, and the Preschool Development Grant Birth Through Five program. And **third**, leaders and policymakers in the child care field should refer to guidance on improving working conditions from the Model Work Standards framework.⁷ Recommended practices include (1) efforts to ensure sufficient staffing, (2) paid time to plan classroom activities, complete professional responsibilities, and engage in reflection with colleagues, and (3) opportunities for teachers to provide input on decisions that impact their program, classroom, and teaching practices. Several states have used the framework to shape components of their quality rating and improvement system (Minnesota), technical assistance (Indiana), and strategic planning (Washington and Wisconsin).⁸

¹ **Data Source:** In 2024, 1,074 lead teachers of children ages 0-5 years at licensed center-based providers across NJ were surveyed. More information on the results of this survey can be found in the full report: Stephens, C., Friedman-Krauss, A., Nores, M., & Kent, A. (2025). *Child Care Lead Teachers in New Jersey: Full Report*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research. https://nieer.org/sites/default/files/2025-09/nieer_nj_lead_teacher_report_9.24.25.pdf

² Bryant, D., Yazejian, N., Jang, W., Kuhn, L., Hirschstein, M., Soliday Hong, S. L., Stein, A., & Educare Learning Network Investigative Team. (2023). Retention and turnover of teaching staff in a high-quality early childhood network. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 65, 159–169. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2023.06.002>

³ Grunewald, R., Nunn, R., & Palmer, V. (2022). Examining teacher turnover in early care and education. Minneapolis, MN: Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis. <https://www.minneapolisfed.org/article/2022/examining-teacher-turnover-in-early-care-and-education>

⁴ Stephens, C., Friedman-Krauss, A., Nores, M., & Kent, A. (2026). *Workforce in Licensed Center-Based Child Care in New Jersey: Teaching and Non-Teaching Staff*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research. https://nieer.org/sites/default/files/2026-03/final_report_childcareprovider_staffing2.pdf

⁵ National Association for the Education of Young Children (2026). *National Workforce Survey Data Brief "A Year of Tough Choices:" The Child Care Affordability Crisis is Destabilizing Educators and Families*. Washington, DC: NAEYC. https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/user-174467/2026_survey_brief.pdf

⁶ Lee, H., Muñoz, S., & McLean, C. (2026). *Progress Through Persistence and Partnership: Minnesota's Collaborative Effort to Advance Early Educator Compensation*. Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley. https://cscce.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/MN_CaseStudy_Final_Tagged_1.pdf

⁷ Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE) & American Federation of Teachers Educational Foundation (AFTEF) (2019). *Model Work Standards for Teaching Staff in Center-Based Child Care*. Berkeley, CA: CSCCE, University of California, Berkeley. Washington DC: AFTEF. https://cscce.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/publications/The-Model-Work-Standards-Center-Based_FINAL.pdf

⁸ Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE) (2024). *Early Childhood Workforce Index 2024: State Policies to Improve Early Childhood Educator Jobs – Work Environment Standards*. Berkeley, CA: CSCCE, University of California. <https://cscce.berkeley.edu/workforce-index-2024/state-policies-to-improve-early-childhood-educator-jobs/early-childhood-educator-workforce-policies/work-environment-standards/>

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