

EDVECTUS WHITEPAPER

2023 INTERNATIONAL TEACHER JOBSEEKER SURVEY

THE PAST INFORMS THE PRESENT

The last three years have caused widespread disruption to many systems, including international school recruitment cycles. With some notable exceptions, many international schools reported lower than normal staff turnover due to teachers deciding to extend their contracts at a time of global uncertainty. The risk-reward equation was altered and few wanted to be 'last in-first out' or be caught on the wrong side of an unexpectedly closed border.

At the same time, the supply of teachers was constrained. From the 2019-2020 recruitment season to the end of the current 2021-2022 season, the number of teachers entering the international school market dropped drastically, year on year. The 'stay put' messages put out by governments, quarantines and travel restrictions stopped all but the most of teachers from leaving their home country. Schools that needed to hire significant numbers of teachers found they had to consider teachers of alternative nationalities or those with weaker work histories compared to pre-pandemic hiring. Many schools noted an influx of applications from South Africa and Jamaica where low salaries at home made the international market a risk worth taking. Edvectus' registrations from teachers living in the US, UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand and Canada dropped by over 50% compared to pre-pandemic levels during this time, starving the leaky bucket of international teachers of its needed replenishment.

From the 2019-2020 recruitment season to the end of the current 2021-2022 season, the number of teachers entering the international school market dropped drastically, year on year.

THE PAST INFORMS THE PRESENT

Not all schools felt the pinch, however. Some schools lost enrolment and thus cut teaching posts. Some created larger online teaching communities. Others hired more local teachers. Most found a way to get what they needed, and parents understood these were extraordinary times. To fill jobs left by international teachers who went back home during the pandemic, schools in some regions with impermeable or unpredictable borders found that their lowest risk source of teachers were those already in the country. This, in turn, drained teachers from lower paying schools and less desirable regions to higher paying schools and more desirable regions. It also resulted in some staff being offered promotions and raises, sometimes deserved but sometimes not, in order to stay.

Now that globally 68% of the population has received at least one dose of Covid vaccine[1], and many countries are learning to live with the virus, opening borders, eliminating onerous testing requirements and returning to a more normal life, how do teachers now feel about taking a new international teaching job? Has the risk-reward equation shifted again?

[1] <https://ourworldindata.org/covid-vaccinations>

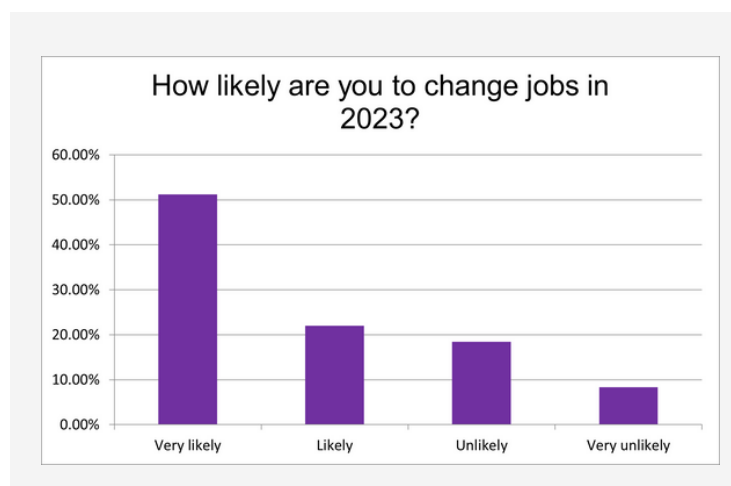


TEACHERS ARE ON THE MOVE

Edvectus surveyed almost 500 primary and secondary school teachers with an interest in international teaching in September and October 2022, including teachers on the international market already and those in the domestic markets. The respondents were mainly from the most sought after education systems and nationalities – the US, UK, Canada, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand – as well as other nationalities such as South Africa and Jamaica.

The results indicate that after years of Covid lockdowns, teachers are restless. 73% of teachers surveyed are likely or very likely to look for a new job in 2023. Only 8% were very unlikely to look for a new role. Compare this to the normal, pre-pandemic international school staff turnover of 20%, and it becomes apparent that this will be anything but a typical year.

With over 50% of teachers surveyed looking for a new job, international schools cannot be complacent, especially against the backdrop of an ongoing teacher shortage in the two main source countries, the UK[2] and USA[3], experiencing difficulties attracting and retaining teaching staff.



There will be winners and losers in the race for post-pandemic international teaching staff as the international school market grows yet again, emerging from the pandemic even stronger than before.[4]

[2] <https://www.openaccessgovernment.org/article/where-have-we-gone-wrong-in-our-battle-against-teacher-shortages/140272/>

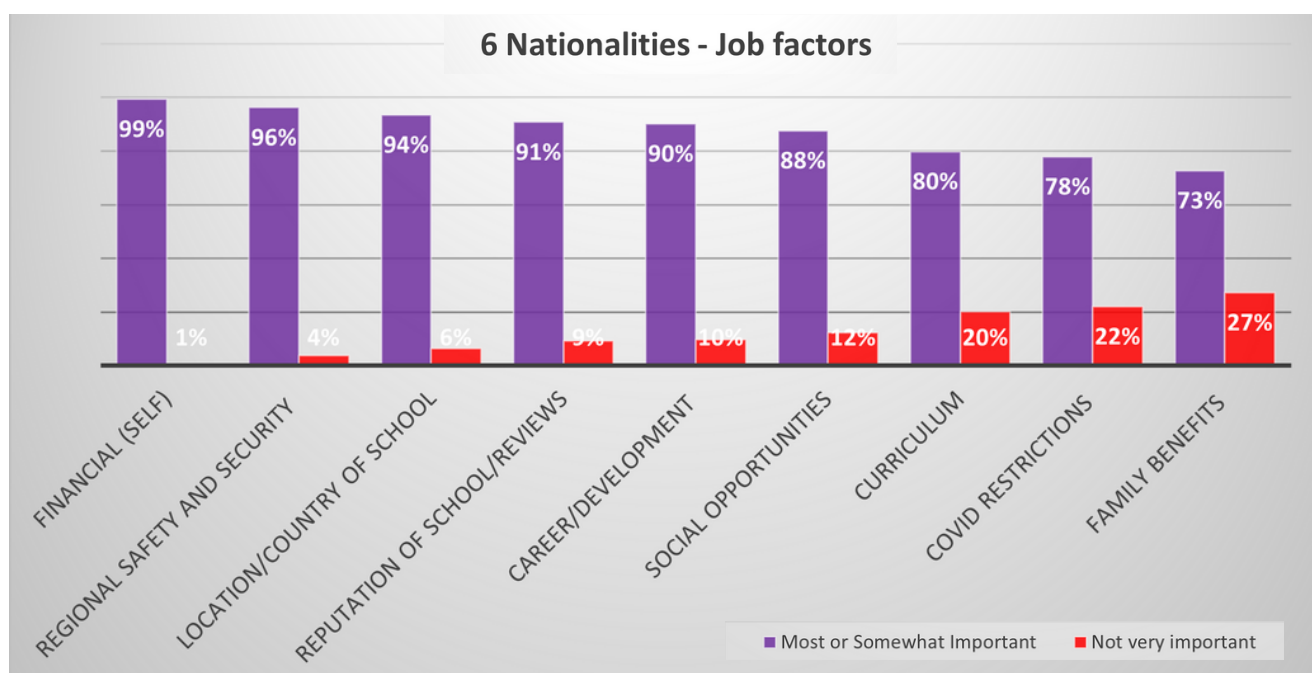
[3] <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2022/08/03/school-teacher-shortage/>

[4] <https://iscresearch.com/international-school-data-for-2022>

WHAT FACTORS WILL INFLUENCE A TEACHER'S JOB CHOICE?

As opposed to previous studies that indicated professional development was a main motivator, our respondents had very clear priorities with financial factors being prominent. Whether a reaction to the cost of living crisis, the perception of a sellers' market or a reflection of Millennials and Gen Z's financial sensibilities[5], teachers are now focused on moving for financial gain. 99.4% of respondents indicated that financial benefits of salary, bonus and other benefits were important to their job decisions, with 73% saying it was most important and 26% saying it was a somewhat important factor. Only safety and security, normally at the top of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, exceeded financial gain as most important (77%), indicating just how essential financial security has become to international job seekers.

Further down the priority list, but still with about 50% attributing most importance were career (56%), location (50%) and family benefits (48%). The responses from teachers from the US, UK, Ireland, Canada, Australia and New Zealand are below.

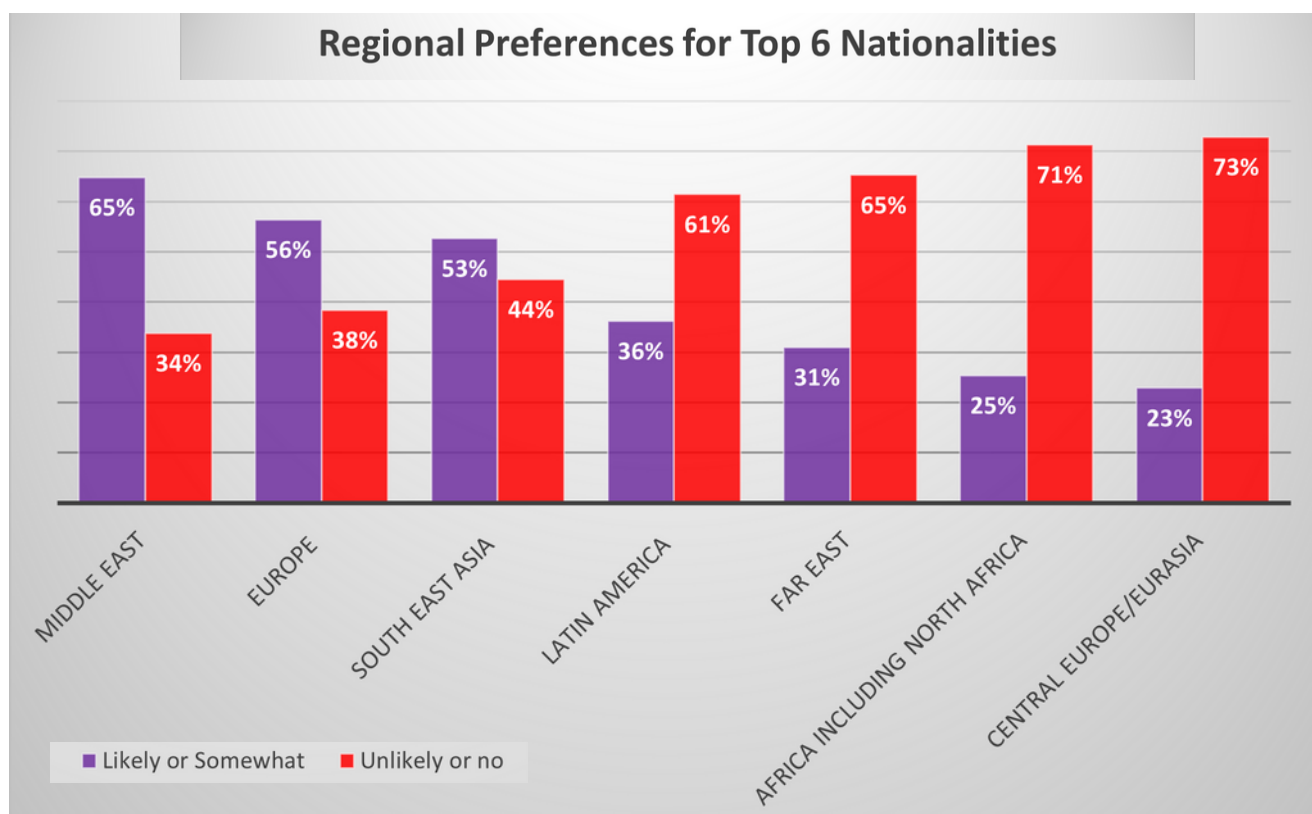


[5] <https://www.insiderintelligence.com/content/us-generation-z-financial-behaviors>

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

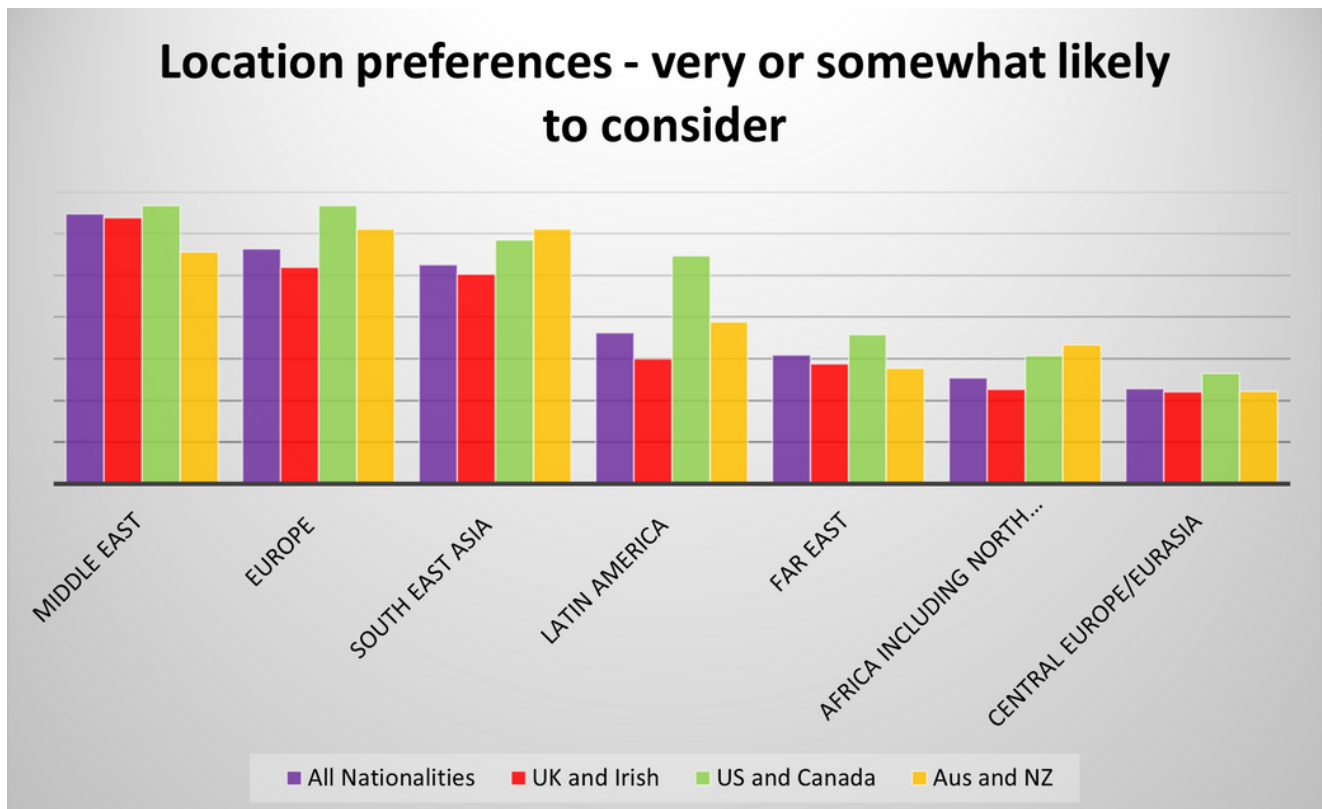
Location preference is an important factor for teachers, and the location of a school will greatly influence its ability to attract applications. Thus, Edvectus set out to find out not only what locations interested teachers, but what locations they would not consider.

Unsurprisingly, Middle East was the top choice, with its large number of international teaching opportunities, relatively high tax free salaries, freedom from most Covid restrictions and large English speaking populations. All but one nationality grouping, the Australians and New Zealanders, picked the Middle East as the top location of choice. Europe and Southeast Asia were also positively viewed. The rest of the regions in the survey – Latin America, Far East, Africa and Eurasia- were viewed more negatively than positively with more teachers saying they would not consider it, than would. It follows that schools in these regions will struggle more to attract top talent.



LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

Some differences in location preference based on nationality emerged. North Americans seemed most flexible with respect to location, saying they were very or somewhat likely to consider locations a higher percentage of time compared to other nationalities. Antipodeans- Australians and New Zealanders – showed a stronger preference for Southeast Asia than other nationalities, and a weaker preference for the Middle East.



WHAT THIS MIGHT MEAN FOR YOUR SCHOOL

School leaders relying on the past 2 years as an indicator of the upcoming recruitment season are advised to reconsider. The pandemic was a seminal time that changed behaviours across the world, and our survey indicates that behaviours are changing yet again. Teachers who hunkered down for the past 3 years will now be looking for greener pastures in areas they feel are safe, financially beneficial and able to provide the career development and social opportunities they crave.

The online reputation of a school is used as a measure of trust, and schools would do well to monitor review sites such as Google, Indeed, International Schools Review, Glassdoor and the like. One or two negative reviews are to be expected and teachers know this, but overwhelmingly negative reviews are seen as a strong indicator of truth. It will hurt applications and more importantly, job acceptances. Internationally-bound teachers from the six most sought after educational systems – the US, UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand and Canada – have the most opportunities and the younger generations in the target age ranges of 22-35 tend to trust online reviews and influencers[6] to a greater degree than previous generations.

Many schools are questioning their staff early about their intentions to renew contracts, with a hope of getting ahead of the recruitment curve. However, the large number of teachers looking at changing jobs, whether overtly or covertly, means that the recruitment season is likely to be extended later into the season. Looking turns to interest and interest turns into a job offer. We do not expect the season to be done and dusted by January, regardless of a school's proactivity, and we expect schools in less desirable locations and those that have mid-range salaries to feel the bite first.



[6] <https://www.websitebuilderexpert.com/building-online-stores/how-to-use-online-reviews-infographic/>

WHAT THIS MIGHT MEAN FOR YOUR SCHOOL

In a challenging recruitment market, we strongly recommend engaging multiple channels earlier in the season, including using a limited number of trusted recruitment agencies. The fundamentals of the international school recruitment market have not changed. International schools are growing at a faster rate than source countries are producing teachers. The pandemic may have temporarily halted the mismatch between supply and demand, but with more schools needing more teachers and more teachers looking to 'trade up', the mismatch will grow wider for most schools. Parents who may have overlooked sub-standard teachers or larger than expected class sizes during the pandemic will demand a return to pre-pandemic quality. There will be a high price to pay for HR complacency this year as we enter the first of the 'new normal' post-pandemic recruitment seasons.

