

Work-Life Balance of Beginning Music Teachers

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to discover if beginning music teachers were able to achieve a healthy work-life balance and what challenges prevented beginning music teachers from achieving a healthy work-life balance. This study surveyed 63 beginning elementary, middle, and high school music teachers from around the country via Google Forms. Surveys and short response data were compiled and analyzed to determine if beginning music teachers were able to achieve a work-life balance. Based upon the analysis of survey results and short answer responses, the study's findings suggested that some teachers were able to achieve a work-life balance. However, the study revealed that for many teachers (68.3%) it is extremely difficult to feel "satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home, with a minimum of role conflict (Clark, 2000). Furthermore, the findings of this study highlight that all teachers had unique and individualized challenges that kept them from maintaining a successful work-life balance, both in the school setting and at home. After drawing conclusions, the study provided important information for professional development and future support for beginning music teachers.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Table of Contents.....	iii
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Statement of Purpose	
Rationale	
Chapter 2: Work-Life Balance in the School Setting.....	2
Defining Work-Life Balance	
Work-Life Balance Among Music Teachers	
Barriers to Work-Life Balance	
<i>Burnout</i>	
<i>Emotional Dissonance</i>	
<i>Cognitive Dissonance</i>	
Challenges Specific to Beginning Music Teachers	
Chapter 3: Methodology and Results.....	12
Descriptive Design	
<i>Demographics</i>	
<i>Work Environment and Burnout</i>	
<i>Work Overload and Free Time</i>	
<i>Work Challenges</i>	
Analysis of Multiple Choice Results	
Analysis of Short Answer Responses	
Survey Data Results	

Demographics

Work Environment and Burnout (Survey #1)

Work Overload and Free Time (Survey #2)

Short Answer Responses

Chapter 4: Conclusions.....23

Future Research and Limitations

Professional Understandings

Appendices

Appendix A: Online Survey Protocol

Appendix B: Online Survey Data

Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to discover if beginning music teachers were able to achieve a healthy work-life balance and what challenges prevented beginning music teachers from achieving a healthy work-life balance. This study surveyed current elementary, middle, and high school music teachers via Google Forms to understand how they feel about their current job, personal life, and what strategies beginning music teachers try to employ to achieve a healthy work-life balance. Results were analyzed to determine common trends.

Rationale

Many beginning music teachers feel they have to “pay their dues” in order to create a quality music education program. Teachers feel the desire to put in countless hours, in and out of the classroom, planning and teaching with the hopes of providing their students with the best quality music education. However, this desire can lead to teachers feeling extremely stressed, overwhelmed, tired, and as a result, some eventually leave the profession altogether. It is important to understand the factors that create stress for beginning music teachers so they can learn effective strategies to stay healthy and prolong their happiness and longevity in the profession.

This study discovered if beginning music teachers were able to achieve a healthy work-life balance and what challenges prevented beginning music teachers from achieving a healthy work-life balance. The survey was distributed through Google Forms to elementary, middle, and high school music teachers to understand what strategies beginning music teachers implemented to cope with the stressors they encounter.

Chapter 2: Work-Life Balance in the School Setting

Walk into any public or private school after hours and you may find yourself running into a small handful of people. There will be administrators catching up on emails or talking to parents, custodians cleaning hallways and classrooms, or coaches running after school sports. However, walk a little farther and there is a good chance a music teacher will be sitting in their office or leading a rehearsal and if you ask them what time they are leaving, you will get a variety of answers. During marching band season some music teachers may say five, six, or even eleven o'clock at night. During concert season you may hear comments like "I had to stay after school everyday this past week" or "We have concerts this week AND next". Or maybe it is a typical Tuesday during a spring semester and they have to stay after school to teach private lessons on top of submitting grades, programming their concert for next year, preparing contest music, organizing auditions, and planning community performances.

The list of demands placed on any music teacher, let alone a beginning music teacher, can be challenging and overwhelming. Research has shown that music teachers are at risk for higher levels of stress and burnout when compared to other teachers (McLain, 2005). Plagued by lack of training, administrative support, and funding coupled with long work hours and increased workload, music teachers are at risk for severe burnout and turnover (Figueras, 2014; Hamann & Gordon, 2000; Krueger, 2000).

As a result, music teachers are leaving the profession. A study of college students who graduated with a music education degree found that one-third of graduates were no longer teaching after 6 years (Madsen & Hancock, 2002). These findings are concerning, as music teachers are leaving the profession at a higher rate than teachers of other subjects (Madsen & Hancock, 2002). With very few qualified teachers entering the profession (Welch et al., 2011), it

is imperative that beginning music teachers are happy, supported, and encouraged to continue teaching.

In addition to the many professional challenges faced by beginning music teachers, there are additional social and personal challenges teachers face as they graduate college and enter the workforce. Some challenges include moving to a new city, finding a place to live, establishing routines, and adapting to a new culture or environment they are not familiar with. Beginning teachers leave established support groups and set out to make new personal connections in the work environment. Social interactions and building relationships at work take a deliberate and proactive approach that can be challenging for any new teacher (Polach, 2004).

The joys and challenges of being a new teacher can make it difficult to balance one's work life and personal life. How does a music teacher balance the stress of running a music program while also building social connections or supporting a family? It can seem overwhelming and stressful for any teacher to have to take care of their work family and home family all at the same time. Research has shown that there is a relationship between work-life balance and quality of life. A teacher who focuses more on their family or achieves a balance between work and family will be happier than someone who focuses too much on their work (Greenhaus et al., 2003). Additionally, with an increased focus on mental health and wellness, it is more important than ever for teachers to strive for this balance.

Defining Work-Life Balance

Early research on the relationship between work and families saw the two as an open system where emotions from one would “spillover” to the next. While they were physically separated, emotions like anger or sadness would carry over from one to another. In the context of a band director, if they were put in a bad mood because of a student's actions at school, then they

would ultimately be in a bad mood when they got home (Staines, 1980). The “compensation theory” suggested that the home and work environment had an inverse relationship with one another. The theory stated that people feel a specific emotion in one environment as a way to make up for what they were missing in the other. A teacher may come to school extremely happy and excited to make up for the stress they experience at home (Staines, 1980). While important to demonstrating the connection between work and home environments, these theories only provide an emotional link (happiness, sadness, anger) but fail to address social and behavioral connections.

As the complexity of our work and home environments evolved, so did our ideas around a healthy work-life balance. Clark (2000) researched this progression and understood the primary connection between work and family systems was not just emotional but also physical. People, or border-crossers, shape these worlds and in turn, are shaped by them as they cross from one environment to the next. People “often tailor their focus, their goal, and their interpersonal style to fit the unique demands of each” (Clark, 2000, p. 751). Her work/family theory emphasizes that humans can create a balance between their work and family spheres. She defines work-life balance as “satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home, with a minimum of role conflict” (Clark, 2000, p. 751). The current study will use Clark’s framework to define work-life balance.

However, it is important to recognize the subjectivity that arises from this definition and the use of words such as “satisfaction” and “good functioning.” For instance, some teachers are productive and remain happy even after spending long hours at work. Others prefer to make their family and friends a higher priority and need that time away from work in order to be healthy and satisfied. Although subjective perceptions of work-life balance exist, it is still necessary to

recognize that evidence suggests working long hours is associated with unhealthy coping strategies (Nomoto et al., 2015).

Work-Life Balance Among Music Teachers

Many beginning music teachers strive to create a balance between their professional responsibilities and personal desires. However, this balance can be difficult to achieve. Many music teachers are passionate and will do anything to support their students. The term “band family” is a phrase that is thrown around in many band rooms and it truly captures the culture many teachers strive to create. Students desire to be in their music classrooms because they feel comfortable and safe. As found in one study (Edgar, 2012), students felt their band and orchestra teachers created a family atmosphere and they felt at home in the band room—“a home away from home.” The study followed four music teachers and their attempt to nurture their students’ emotional and social well-being throughout the school day. This care was critical for the students well being, but the teachers had to take on many different roles within this community. They served as a parent, teacher, friend, and role model during and after school which made balancing life at home extremely difficult (Edgar, 2012)

Another case study examined the experiences of a successful female high school band director and the challenges that arose with being a mother and high school band director (Fitzpatrick, 2013). The study found that challenges created by a lack of time, complicated logistics, feelings of guilt, and the different expectations perceived between a working male and female parent made it very difficult for the participant to create balance in her life (Fitzpatrick, 2013).

Finally one interesting study conducted on music teachers and work-life balance was a case study on competitive marching band directors. Shaw (2014) found some of the most

challenging factors to achieving a healthy balance were parents, students, staff, workload, and a general pressure to uphold the reputation of their band program. These challenges were very difficult to handle given the extreme time commitment of competitive marching band circuits.

One band director talked about the impact it had on his marriage:

One of the things that had a toll on my marriage was just that there's no privacy....The day that we got divorced—because we went downtown together and took care of it—there were band parents there...Even on the day of our divorce, [the band] was represented somehow (Shaw, 2014).

Barriers to Work-Life Balance

All teachers face barriers that keep them from achieving optimal work-life balance such as burnout, emotional dissonance, and cognitive dissonance. These barriers make it more difficult to achieve and maintain a healthy work-life balance (Owens et al., 2018).

Burnout

Burnout can be defined as “a crisis of overworked and disillusioned human service workers” (Huberman & Vandenberghe, 1999, p. 1). Indicators of burnout in teachers are emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach, Jackson & Leiter, 1996). Factors that increase the likelihood of burnout include work overload, lack of control, insufficient reward, breakdown in community, absence of fairness, and conflicting values (Maslach, Jackson & Leiter, 1996). Maslach and Leiter (1996) believed that all these factors emerge when there is a mismatch between the job and the nature of the person or teacher who is doing the job. Music teachers who feel they are stretched too thin or forced to teach multiple grades or multiple disciplines within music (choir, band, and general music) will experience higher levels of burnout (Bernhard, 2016)

Additionally, burnout is especially prevalent in younger teachers when compared to older teachers (Byrne, 1999). Conway and Micheael-Mays (2005) found that early career music teachers felt isolated, sought out validation, lacked job security, and wanted more opportunities for personal reflection. Early teachers also felt more isolated than more experienced teachers which ultimately led to burnout or leaving the profession altogether (Sindberg & Lipscomb, 2005). Hedden (2005) also emphasized the benefit of being in the profession longer. She found that more experienced teachers had better time management and stress reduction strategies. Taken together, these studies emphasize the need to help beginning teachers implement the proper strategies to combat burnout which ultimately increases the likelihood of a stronger work-life balance.

Emotional Dissonance

Many teachers feel they are unable to show their true emotions. While they may be feeling sad or angry on the inside, on the outside they put on a facade of excitement and happiness. This conflict between one's true emotions and those displayed at work is called emotional dissonance (Hochschild, 2012). Found commonly in human-service organizations and the teaching profession (Chang, 2009), this mismatch leads to stress, strain, burnout, and eventually impacts one's work-life balance.

Previous studies support the relationship between emotional dissonance and burnout. Hulsheger and Schewe (2011) found a strong relationship between emotional dissonance and emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment which are all components of burnout. Chueng and Cheung (2013) found that emotional dissonance was positively associated with burnout. They supported the idea that emotional dissonance leads to teachers and other professionals feeling worn out and expressing negative emotions.

Finally, Cheung and Tang (2012), reported that employees who have increased levels of emotional dissonance at work tend to feel more negative feelings, dissatisfied with their job, and have disruptions in their family relationships. As Cheung & Tang (2012) noted, emotional dissonance leads to more family conflicts and added stress levels as these emotions put additional strain on all family relationships.

Cognitive Dissonance

Cognitive dissonance is created when there is a conflict between the demands of a job, work environment, and one's overall beliefs and attitudes. According to Festinger (1957), people "attempt to establish internal harmony, consistency, or congruence among their opinions, attitudes, knowledge, and values" (p. 260). When their actions conflict with their beliefs, dissonance occurs. For example, teachers may want to spend more time with their spouse and children when they get home from work (beliefs) but are forced to plan, research, grade, or answer emails when they get home (behavior).

There has been some research regarding cognitive dissonance in the school setting. One study looked at the role of emotional labor, cognitive dissonance, and work engagement among private school teachers (Mangi et al., 2021). They found that emotional labor has a significant positive impact on work engagement and cognitive dissonance has a substantial negative effect on work engagement. While the study was limited to private school teachers, it shows the need to understand the effect cognitive dissonance has on job satisfaction. Other studies looked at how cognitive dissonance emerges in the school setting. For example, teachers become more conflicted when they are forced to teach a subject or lesson that contradicts their strengths or personal philosophy. Alford (2010) found that 70% of teachers in an inclusion setting were dissatisfied when they had to teach to the "test" rather than focusing on what they felt the

students needed the most. This challenge is equally felt by music teachers who are held to an unrealistic vision of success and given multiple teaching assignments or required to teach classes outside of their content area (Conway, 2001b). Finally, cognitive dissonance can occur between two people. Studies have found that cognitive dissonance exists when there are conflicting values, attitudes, and beliefs between supervisors and supervisees or members within a group.

Challenges Specific to Beginning Music Teachers

While burnout, emotional dissonance, and cognitive dissonance are experienced by all teachers in the school setting, these factors have a greater impact on early career music teachers (Bryne, 1999). With very few new teachers coming into the profession, there is a need to understand how to make their beginning years easier (Welch et al., 2011). Many already come into the profession with negative perceptions about pay, class sizes, long hours, bureaucracy, and lack of support from administration before beginning their career, so it is important to support our most vulnerable teachers (Welch et al., 2011). Understanding their challenges can lead to teaching mitigating strategies to combat stress, burnout, isolation, and eventually promoting a better work-life balance.

Studies about the challenges faced by first year beginning music teachers have been extensively studied. One study found that the emotional “lows” of a beginning music teacher were related to the perceived demands of the role, reported workload, and challenging relationships with student, parents, and other teachers (Hobson et. al., 2007). They also found a staggering 35% percent of beginning music teachers were asked to teach a class outside of their speciality which increased their workload and created an unacceptable work-life balance. Krueger (1996) highlighted these same struggles for first year teachers. She found through

interviews that first year teachers struggled with student discipline, physical exhaustion, isolation, and not teaching in their primary area of expertise. This forces many teachers to do their best even with poor equipment and facilities, budget issues, and curriculum concerns.

Other studies pointed to the lack of teacher education as a factor that made their initial years of teaching very challenging. Beginning music teachers felt that their initial training failed to prepare them for the realities of the classroom and never taught them to deal with the stress, limited guidance, and diversity of their role (Leongs, 1999). They also felt unprepared to communicate with colleagues, students, and parents and run extracurricular music activities (Ballantyne & Packer, 2004). Additionally, they did not know how to manage student behaviors in the classroom, work with a large number of students, perform, and focus on the goals of teaching music.

These studies clearly show the immense challenges faced by beginning music teachers. Without the proper strategies to cope with these challenges, music teachers are at a high risk for experiencing the effects of burnout, emotional dissonance, and cognitive dissonance. This ultimately leads to poor performance, decreased job satisfaction, and unhealthy work-life balance.

The current study will investigate work-life balance among beginning music teachers and strategies implemented to achieve a healthy balance. The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. Are beginning music teachers able to achieve a healthy work-life balance?
2. What challenges prevent beginning music teachers from achieving a healthy work-life balance?

3. What strategies do beginning music teachers employ to maintain a healthy work-life balance?

Chapter 3: Methodology and Results

Descriptive Design

This study investigated whether beginning music teachers were able to achieve a healthy work-life balance and what challenges prevented beginning music teachers from achieving a healthy work-life balance. The survey was distributed through Google Forms to elementary, middle, and high school music teachers to better understand their current work-life balance and what strategies beginning music teachers implemented to cope with their stressors. Participants of this study consisted of beginning music teachers who taught no more than 8 years in a public or private school. Survey links were distributed via email and Facebook to music teachers from all over the country. The survey results were collected and analyzed after remaining open for two weeks. In total, 63 responses were collected. The survey consisted of questions focused on teacher demographics, job requirements, work environment, burnout, work overload, free time, and work challenges.

Demographics

Section one included demographic questions. Participants provided their gender, age, work experience, and education as well as information about the participant's family and children. Additional information was obtained about the participant's current job and hours spent at school.

Work Environment and Burnout

Section two consisted of survey questions used to understand how beginning music teachers feel about their current job. Questions were taken from a teacher burnout scale that was created to determine the degree to which teachers feel various emotions towards their job, job responsibilities, and their students (Wrench et al., 2009). Participants were asked 20 questions

and instructed to circle their first impression after reading each statement. Participants circled a degree to which each statement applied to them on a four-point scale ranging from “Strongly Agree” (1) to “Strongly Disagree” (5).

Work Overload and Free Time

Section three consisted of 10 survey questions used to understand a beginning music teacher's workload and the amount of free time they have to pursue other interests and hobbies outside of work. Participants circled a degree to which each statement applied to them on a four-point scale ranging from “Strongly Agree” (1) to “Strongly Disagree” (5). Ruiz and Baca (1993) developed this reliable scale called the Quality of Life Questionnaire (QoLQ) that measures one's perceived quality of life (Boixados et al., 2009). A component within the survey, called the absence of excessive workload/free time (AWOF), was used to determine a person's work overload and available free time outside of work. Teachers who scored higher on this section displayed healthier patterns of behavior away from work. Additional questions were added in this section to further understand a beginning music teacher's free time and quality of life away from work.

Work Challenges

Section four consisted of four open-ended questions used to understand personal and professional challenges that prevented or made it difficult for a beginning music teacher to achieve a healthy work-life balance. Additionally, participants provided strategies, healthy or unhealthy, that they use to achieve balance, or satisfaction and good functioning, at work and at home.

Analysis of Multiple Choice Results

All responses were individually analyzed to determine a teacher's level of burnout and quality of life at home. Each answer choice was given a number and that scoring was as follows: "Strongly Agree" (1); "Agree" (2); "Disagree" (4); "Strongly Disagree" (5).

For the *Work Environment and Burnout Survey*, responses were added together to create a combined score. Teachers who scored a combined score of 20-35 have burnout; 36-55 experience strong feelings of burnout; 56-70 experience some feelings of burnout; 71-80 experience few feelings of burnout; 81-100 experience no feelings of burnout. Teachers who score lower on this scale experience stronger feelings of burnout and stress, and will have a more difficult time maintaining a healthy work-life balance. Teachers who score higher on this scale experience less feelings of burnout, stress, and have a healthier healthy work-life balance.

For the *Work Overload and Free Time Survey*, responses were added together and then divided by the number of questions for an average score. Teachers who scored an average of 3 or below exhibited an unhealthy quality of life at home. Teachers who scored an average of 3.1 or higher exhibited a healthy quality of life at home.

Analysis of Short Answer Responses

After the survey was closed, short answer responses were examined through a qualitative analysis. Each response was read and then similar answers were grouped together in general themes that capture the essence of the response. For example, "Being expected to answer emails/calls outside of work hours," "Any communication between colleagues," and "Parents, admin issues, and lack of communication" were grouped together as a general theme of "Communication." Once general themes were established, all short answer responses were placed within these categories. The results of this analysis can be seen in Table 1: Work

Challenges Preventing Work-Life Balance, Table 2: Personal Challenges Preventing Work-Life Balance, and Table 3: Work and Personal Strategies to Maintain a Healthy Work-Life Balance.

Survey Data Results

Demographics

Teachers who participated in the survey were mostly female (61.9%) with an average age of 27.96 years old (Min: 22, Max: 68). Twenty-seven percent of teachers had between 2-3 years of experience, 27% of teachers had 6-8 years of experience, 25.4% of teachers had 4-5 years of experience, and 20.6% of teachers had only one year of experience. Twenty-seven (42.9%) teachers held a bachelor's degree while the remaining teachers pursued higher education; 15 (23.8%) teachers had a bachelors plus; 16 (25.4%) teachers had a master's degree, and 5 (7.9%) teachers had a masters plus. Finally, when participants were asked about marital status and children, a majority of teachers were single (41.3%) or married (31.7%) with only 6 teachers (9.5%) having kids.

Of the 63 teachers surveyed, 93.7% taught in a public school setting. Seventy-seven percent taught at least one class at the middle school level, 42.9% taught at the elementary level, and 38.1% taught at the high school level. Additionally, the most common subjects taught by the participants were band (79.4%), general music (47.6%), choir (19%), and orchestra (14.3%) and the most common extracurricular activities taught were marching band (46%), pep band (40%), jazz band (36%), musical/pit orchestra (18%), and winter guard (10%). Finally, participants were asked to describe how many hours they spent at school and how many hours they spent doing work at home per week. Fifty-four percent worked an average of 9-10 hours per day, 39.7% worked 7-8 hours per day, 3.2% worked either less than 7 hours, and 3.2% worked 11-12 hours on average per day. At home, participants reported that 42.9% percent worked 0-2 hours at home

per week on tasks (e.g., lesson planning, answering emails, score study, ect) while 25.4% reported not doing any work at home and 20.6% spent on average 3-4 hours per week doing work at home.

Work Environment and Burnout (Survey #1)

The second section contained questions used to determine how beginning music educators felt about their job and the feelings they experienced at work. Of the 63 participants, zero teachers experienced full burnout, two teachers experienced strong burnout feelings, 13 teachers experienced some feelings of burnout, 15 teachers experienced few feelings of burnout, and 33 teachers experienced no feelings of burnout (Min: 45, Max: 100, Mean: 79.38).

Participants were first asked if they felt they are achieving a healthy work-life balance based on the definition provided in the survey. Work-life balance was defined as “satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home, with a minimum of role conflict” (Clark, 2000). Using the definition, 50.8% self reported that they felt they do not achieve a healthy work-life balance. Next, teachers were asked to rate statements on a 4-point Likert scale: “Strongly Disagree,” “Disagree,” “Agree,” and “Strongly Agree.” For a majority of the statements, teachers showed little feelings of burnout or negativity towards their students and colleagues. Over 90% of teachers answered “Strongly Disagree” and “Disagree” to the statements: “I avoid communication with my students;” “I avoid communication with my colleagues;” “I communicate in a hostile manner at work;” “I think about calling my students ugly names;” “I avoid looking at my students;” “My students make me sick” (Wrench et al., 2009). However, some of the statements revealed more significant feelings of burnout than others. When asked about their job responsibilities, 49% of teachers agreed with the statement: “I am weary with all my job responsibilities.” Teachers were also asked if they have problems concentrating at work

and 47.6% of teachers agreed with this statement. Additionally, a staggering 52% of teachers felt frustrated and 73% felt stressed at work.

Work Overload and Free Time (Survey #2)

The third section contained questions used to determine how beginning music educators felt about their life outside of work. Their answers provided an understanding of their access to free time and their ability to recharge and relax at the end of the day. Teachers were asked to rate each statement on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from, “Strongly Disagree,” “Disagree,” “Agree,” and “Strongly Agree.” Overall, 37 teachers scored an average of 3 or below on their responses and exhibited a more unhealthy quality of life at home while 26 teachers scored an average of 3.1 and above and exhibited a more healthy quality of life at home (Min:1, Max: 4.7, Mean: 2.95).

Looking at individual questions from the survey, many teachers felt they were unable to relax when they got home. Around 60% of teachers agreed that they do not have enough time to relax, forget about work, and recharge at the end of the day. Fifty-Five percent of teachers agreed to some degree that “Work-related problems or concerns prevent me from enjoying my free time” and 53% agreed that they “struggle to find time for hobbies, leisure activities, or to maintain friendships” (Ruiz et. 1993). It should be noted that only 11 teachers (17.4%) said they needed to take work home on most evenings.

Finally, it is important to recognize that when teachers were asked if they felt like they were unable to balance their personal and professional life well, 15 Strongly Disagreed, 26 Disagreed, 13 Agreed, and 10 Strongly Agreed. More than half of the participants (65%) felt they were able to balance their personal and professional lives. This question is very similar to a question asked in section two. When this question was asked in section 2, only 49.2% of

teachers felt they were able to balance both their personal and professional lives. However, when it was asked in section 3, a majority of teachers felt they were able to balance both personal and professional lives.

Short Answer Responses

Short answer responses were collected and analyzed for recurring themes. The following results were obtained for each short answer response.

Table 1: Work Challenges Preventing Work-Life Balance

Themes (# Responses)	Teacher Response Examples
Extra-Curricular Activities (16)	<p>Learning to “say no”</p> <p>Required/expected job responsibilities outside of school hours (pep band, honor band, contests)</p> <p>Too many hours during the fall (marching band)!</p>
Stress and Emotional Investment in Students and Program (15)	<p>Leaving work at work and releasing myself of the stresses of the day</p> <p>Worrying about the issues that students are dealing with (stress, acceptance, bullying, etc.)</p> <p>Work stress causing migraines</p>
Scheduling and Lesson Planning (10)	<p>Students being dropped into/taken out of my classes at any ability level at any time without my say in the matter</p> <p>Overloaded schedule in a school with many unmet behavior needs</p> <p>All of the planning that is necessary to make the program go...not enough planning time to work</p>
Communication (13)	<p>Being expected to answer emails/calls outside</p>

	<p>of work hours</p> <p>Any communication between colleagues</p> <p>Parents, admin issues, and lack of communication</p>
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Table 2: Personal Challenges Preventing Work-Life Balance

Themes (# Responses)	Teacher Response Examples
Mental Barriers (23)	<p>I'm anxious and overthink a lot-can't turn my brain off when I'm trying to rest</p> <p>ADHD and hyper fixating on work problems during off hours</p> <p>Caring too much and perfectionism</p>
Too Many Responsibilities (17)	<p>I won't have the energy to do the things I enjoy</p> <p>Feeling the need to take control of everything and not delegating out to other helpers</p> <p>Inability to say "no" to the people in my personal life</p>
Life Events (7)	<p>Currently pregnant</p> <p>Planning a wedding, very stressful and time consuming</p> <p>Family medical issues</p>
Travel/Commute (6)	<p>Having to travel to see family consistently</p> <p>Located far from home. I drive 2 hours which eats up my planning time and wasting free time</p>
Relationships (3)	<p>My relationship with my significant other</p> <p>Not having someone holding me accountable for good work-life balance</p>

Table 3: Work and Personal Strategies to Maintain a Healthy Work-Life Balance

Themes (# Responses)	Teacher Response Examples
Leave Work At School (20)	<p>Do all work at work so when I'm home I don't do any, It means a bit longer hours at work, but separates it from home</p> <p>I refuse to take my school laptop home with me. If the work task isn't something I can quickly do on my phone, then it can wait until the next day</p>
Hobbies and Activities (10)	<p>I own horses, which are kept at my home. My chores are my wind down time to find a good head space.</p> <p>I try to go on walks or listen to podcasts when I'm feeling stressed and reflect on the things that are going well</p> <p>Taking time for my hobbies (reading, watching tv, playing flute) everyday</p>
Focus On Relationships (8)	<p>I try to hang out with friends outside of work and TRY to not speak about work woes so I have time where it isn't consuming me</p> <p>Go out to dinner as often as I can with significant other. Enjoy time off and cherish every day with family/pets.</p> <p>I meet with my therapist every few months. My therapist has taught me various strategies on how to relax.</p>
Don't Work Beyond Contracted Hours (6)	<p>Not responding to emails outside of the school day</p> <p>When I am not home for a weekend or if there is a break from the school year, I set a vacation response on my school email and remove my work email from my phone and tablet</p>

Mindshift (5)	<p>Silent time at home where I can shut my brain off</p> <p>I live one day at a time and sometimes one moment at a time. My brain goes into survival mode and shuts down when I get home</p>
Time Management Strategies (4)	<p>Creating time goals to end work sessions at home</p> <p>Converting lessons from smart notebook to google slides so I can work on lesson plans at any time. It allows me to leave work at a decent time, and work on lesson plans when I have time in small increments</p>

Chapter 4: Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether beginning music teachers were able to achieve a healthy work-life balance and what challenges prevent teachers from achieving a healthy work-life balance. This study surveyed current beginning elementary, middle, and high school music teachers via Google Forms to understand how they feel about their current job, personal life, and what strategies teachers employ to achieve a healthy work-life balance. Results were analyzed to determine common trends. This chapter provides answers and conclusions to the following research questions:

1. Are beginning music teachers able to achieve a healthy work-life balance?
2. What challenges prevent beginning music teachers from achieving a healthy work-life balance?
3. What strategies do beginning music teachers employ to maintain a healthy work-life balance?

In the survey teachers were asked to respond “yes” or “no” to the question “Are you currently achieving work-life balance?” In addition, teachers completed the *Work Environment and Burnout Survey* (Survey #1) and *Work Overload and Free Time Survey* (Survey #2). Teachers also completed short response questions. After analyzing the online survey results, a few conclusions can be drawn from the data. When teachers were asked if they maintained a healthy work-life balance, about half of the participants self-reported that they were able to achieve a healthy work-life balance (48.2%) while the remaining teachers (50.8%) believed they did not achieve a healthy work-life balance. This information was confirmed in both Survey #1 and Survey #2. According to the *Work Environment and Burnout Survey*, 33 teachers (52%) experienced no feelings of burnout at work and according to the *Work Overload and Free Time*

Survey, 26 teachers (42%) reported they do not maintain healthy habits outside of work.

However, looking at the information together, from both Survey #1 and #2, only 20 (31.7%) teachers did not experience any feelings of burnout at work (Survey #1) AND maintained healthy habits at home (Survey #2). This means a significant portion of teachers (68.3%) were unable to maintain a healthy balance. These teachers felt some degree of burnout and/or stress; have difficulty relaxing; and have limited time to do the things they enjoy doing at home.

Open ended responses resulted in a second conclusion from this study. The survey asked teachers what work and personal challenges prevented them from maintaining a healthy work-life balance. There were many work challenges that prevented teachers from maintaining a healthy work-life balance (e.g., extracurriculars, emotional investment in students, planning, communication). No one specific challenge impacted all beginning teachers. These results indicate that support for beginning music teachers should be provided on an individualized basis. Experienced colleagues and administrators need to establish strong relationships with new teachers to determine the cause of stress that may ultimately lead to burnout. Additionally, mentorship is an effective way to understand specific challenges new teachers face. Specialized professional development can also address these specific concerns. While district-wide professional development is important, it may not address the specific challenges faced by beginning music teachers. More specialized support ideally will lead to a healthier work-life balance.

When teachers were asked about their personal challenges, a significant number of teachers experienced mental health challenges (e.g., Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, stress, anxiety, perfectionism). These results do not come as a surprise as mental illness has become increasingly more prevalent in society and education. According to the World Health

Organization, global prevalence of anxiety and depression increased by a massive 25% during the first year of the pandemic. In education, it has become even worse. Research from 2021 found 27 percent of teachers experienced symptoms of depression, while 37 percent experienced symptoms consistent with generalized anxiety (Woo et al., 2021). This information and the results from the survey show the need to provide training, professional development, and support for teachers dealing with mental illnesses. Removing the negative stigma that surrounds mental health and providing resources for teachers to access help is extremely important in maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

Another conclusion drawn from this study can be found by analyzing the final open ended question. Participants were asked what strategies they employ to maintain a healthy work-life balance. The most popular strategy was not bringing work home, even if it meant staying past contractually obligated hours. Although this strategy seems effective, there may be negative consequences for overuse of this strategy. Teachers who complete all their work at school, may end up staying late into the evening. This prevents teachers from having more time at home to relax and rest before the next day. This strategy also does not address any mental health barriers and challenges. Out of the 63 participants, only 2 teachers described working with a therapist. Mental health barriers were the most prevalent personal challenge but completing all work at school before going home, does not address mental health issues.

Future Research and Limitations

When understanding the results of this study, it is important to consider the timing of the dissemination of the survey. The survey was disseminated at the beginning of May. In May, many classroom routines are established, students are playing their instruments, and musical skills are typically at their peak. Concerts, graduations, and field trips are happening at this time.

Students and teachers are typically looking forward to summer. Therefore, the results of this survey may have been impacted to favor a healthy work life balance. It would be important to also disseminate the survey in the fall. During the fall, music teachers are starting to set up and establish their classrooms. Beginning band students are starting new instruments and the stresses of a new school year are high. If this survey were disseminated in the fall, the results may have been different. Teachers may have greater feelings of burnout and stress. In addition, 23 teachers (46%) from the survey were responsible for marching band. If these teachers responded to this survey in the fall rather than the spring, their answers may have been different. In future research, the survey should be disseminated at the beginning and end of the school year to ensure results encompass a teacher's perceptions of work-life balance the entire year.

The purpose of this study was to discover if beginning music teachers are able to achieve a healthy work-life balance and what challenges prevent beginning music teachers from achieving a healthy work-life balance. Future studies should analyze individual factors (e.g., age, years of experience, grade levels, etc.) that may correlate with work-life balance. Correlations between factors and work-life balance would help understand what populations are at highest risk.

Professional Understandings

Being a beginning music teacher can be extremely challenging. It is easy to get caught up in the day-to-day responsibilities that can cause teachers to lose sight of life beyond work. Teachers put in many hours of work that causes them to get stressed, overwhelmed, and tired, ultimately forgetting to focus on themselves and their own mental health. From this research, I learned the importance of relationship building and mentorship with colleagues. There is not one challenge that stresses teachers, nor one solution that helps every teacher. Continually having

open communication with colleagues, family, loved ones, and students about one's feelings, can help alleviate those challenges. Checking in on one another and asking “How are you doing?” can go a long way to ensure beginning music teachers and all educators maintain a healthy work-life balance.

On a personal note, since adding a new member to our family with the birth of our first son and starting a new job, creating a healthy work-life balance has been challenging. I was interested in this research because I wanted to find effective strategies I could use in my own life. I have only been teaching for seven years so learning new strategies I can implement can only enhance my current work-life balance. Many of the short answer responses affirmed my feelings and struggles, but also gave me many new strategies I have already started to implement this year. While not many beginning teachers who completed the survey had kids of their own, it was still great to hear from teachers who are in my position.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Online Survey Protocol

Work-Life Balance of Beginning Music Teachers

As a graduate student of the University of the Arts Music Education program, I am conducting my masters thesis. I am interested in learning about Work-Life Balance among beginning music teachers. If you have a moment, I would really appreciate it if you could take this survey. Participants taking this survey need to be current music teachers who are 18 years or older and have no more than 8 years of music teaching experience in a school setting. This survey should take 5-10 minutes and all responses will remain anonymous.

Thank you in advance for your help and please share with anyone who may be eligible and interested to take the survey!

Section 1: Demographics

1. Are you currently a music teacher at an elementary, middle school, or high school?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
2. How many years have you been employed as a music educator (does not have to be continuous)?
 - a. 1
 - b. 2-3
 - c. 4-5
 - d. 6-8
3. What is your sex?
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
 - c. Other
 - d. Choose not to disclose
4. What is your age?
5. Highest education completed?
 - a. Bachelors
 - b. Bachelors+
 - c. Masters
 - d. Masters+
 - e. Doctorate
6. Which of the following best describes your relationship status?
 - a. Married
 - b. Married but living separately
 - c. Divorced
 - d. Widowed
 - e. Domestic partnership or civil union
 - f. Single, but living with significant other
 - g. Single
 - h. Other

7. Do you have any children?

- a. Yes b. No

8. How old are your children?

Check all that apply

- a. Under 5 b. 5-10 c. 11-17 d. 18 and older e. No children

9. What school type do you currently teach in?

Check all that apply

- a. Public b. Private c. Charter

10. What grade levels do you teach?

Check all that apply

- a. Elementary b. Middle c. High School

11. What Subjects do you teach?

Check all that apply

- a. General Music b. Band c. Choir d. Orchestra e. Music Tech
f. Music Technology g. Guitar h. Piano I. Other: _____

12. On average how many hours do you spend a day at school?

- a. Less than 7 b. 7-8 c. 9-10 d. 11-12 e. 13+

13. How many hours do you spend doing work at home per week (ex. Lesson planning, answering emails, score study)?

- a. No work at home b. 0-2 c. 3-4 d. 5-6 e. 7-10
f. 11+

14. Which extracurricular activities are you responsible for?

Check all that apply

- a. Marching Band b. Jazz Band c. Winter Guard d. Musical/Pit Orchestra
e. Glee Club f. Pep Band g. Other: _____

15. Are there other music teachers in your school that you work with on a daily basis?

- a. Yes b. No

Section 2: Work Environment and Burnout

Definition: Satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home, with a minimum of role conflict (Clark, 2000)

16. Based on the definition above, are you currently achieving work-life balance?

- a. Yes b. No

17. *These questions are designed to determine how you currently feel about your job. Please answer as honestly as you can. All answers will remain completely confidential.*

I am bored with my job

- a. Strongly Disagree b. Disagree c. Agree d. Strongly Agree

I am tired of my students

- a. Strongly Disagree b. Disagree c. Agree d. Strongly Agree

I am weary with all of my job responsibilities

- a. Strongly Disagree b. Disagree c. Agree d. Strongly Agree

My job doesn't excite me anymore

- a. Strongly Disagree b. Disagree c. Agree d. Strongly Agree

I dislike going to my job

- a. Strongly Disagree b. Disagree c. Agree d. Strongly Agree

I feel alienated at work

- a. Strongly Disagree b. Disagree c. Agree d. Strongly Agree

I feel frustrated at work

- a. Strongly Disagree b. Disagree c. Agree d. Strongly Agree

I avoid communication with students

- a. Strongly Disagree b. Disagree c. Agree d. Strongly Agree

I avoid communication with my colleagues

- a. Strongly Disagree b. Disagree c. Agree d. Strongly Agree

I communicate in a hostile manner at work

- a. Strongly Disagree b. Disagree c. Agree d. Strongly Agree

I feel ill at work

- a. Strongly Disagree b. Disagree c. Agree d. Strongly Agree

I think about calling my students ugly names

- a. Strongly Disagree b. Disagree c. Agree d. Strongly Agree

I avoid looking at my students

- a. Strongly Disagree b. Disagree c. Agree d. Strongly Agree

My students make me feel sick

- a. Strongly Disagree b. Disagree c. Agree d. Strongly Agree

I feel sick to my stomach when I think about work

- a. Strongly Disagree b. Disagree c. Agree d. Strongly Agree

I wish people would leave me alone at work

- a. Strongly Disagree b. Disagree c. Agree d. Strongly Agree

I dread going into a classroom

- b. Strongly Disagree b. Disagree c. Agree d. Strongly Agree

I am apathetic about my job

- b. Strongly Disagree b. Disagree c. Agree d. Strongly Agree
- I feel stressed at work
- b. Strongly Disagree b. Disagree c. Agree d. Strongly Agree
- I have problems concentrating at work
- b. Strongly Disagree b. Disagree c. Agree d. Strongly Agree

Section 3: Work Overload/Free Time

18. *These questions are designed to determine how you currently feel about your job. Please answer as honestly as you can. All answers will remain completely confidential.*

- I do not have enough time to relax and enjoy myself everyday
- b. Strongly Disagree b. Disagree c. Agree d. Strongly Agree
- Work-related problems or concerns prevent me from enjoying my free time
- b. Strongly Disagree b. Disagree c. Agree d. Strongly Agree
- I am permanently tense as a result of my work
- b. Strongly Disagree b. Disagree c. Agree d. Strongly Agree
- I struggle to find time for hobbies, leisure activities, or to maintain friendships
- b. Strongly Disagree b. Disagree c. Agree d. Strongly Agree
- I have to take work home most evenings
- b. Strongly Disagree b. Disagree c. Agree d. Strongly Agree
- At the end of the day I am tired and all I want to do is rest
- b. Strongly Disagree b. Disagree c. Agree d. Strongly Agree
- Relaxing and forgetting about work issues is hard to do
- b. Strongly Disagree b. Disagree c. Agree d. Strongly Agree
- I am unable to pursue enjoyable activities outside of work

- b. Strongly Disagree b. Disagree c. Agree d. Strongly Agree

I am unable to balance my personal and professional life

- b. Strongly Disagree b. Disagree c. Agree d. Strongly Agree

I would like to reduce my working hours and stress levels, but feel I have no control over the situation

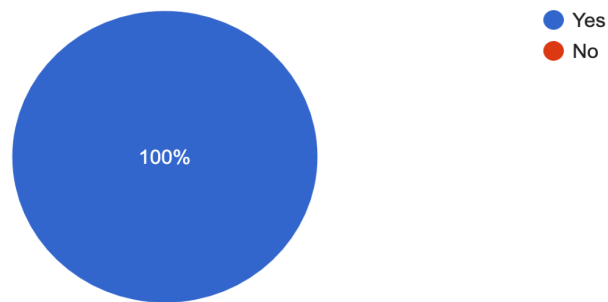
- c. Strongly Disagree b. Disagree c. Agree d. Strongly Agree

Section 4: Challenges

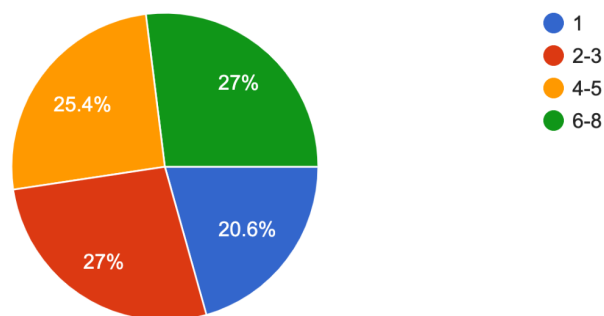
19. What is the most significant work challenge that prevents you from achieving work-life balance?
20. What is the most significant personal challenge that prevents you from achieving work-life balance?
21. What other challenges prevent you from achieving work-life balance?
22. What work or personal strategies do you use in order to maintain a healthy work-life balance?

Appendix B: Online Survey Data**Section 1: Demographics**

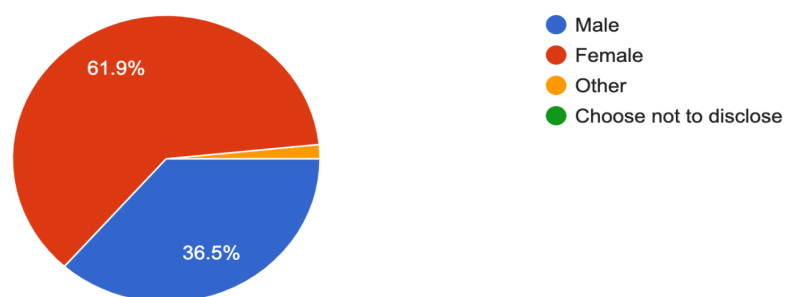
1. Are you currently a music teacher at an elementary, middle school, or high school?



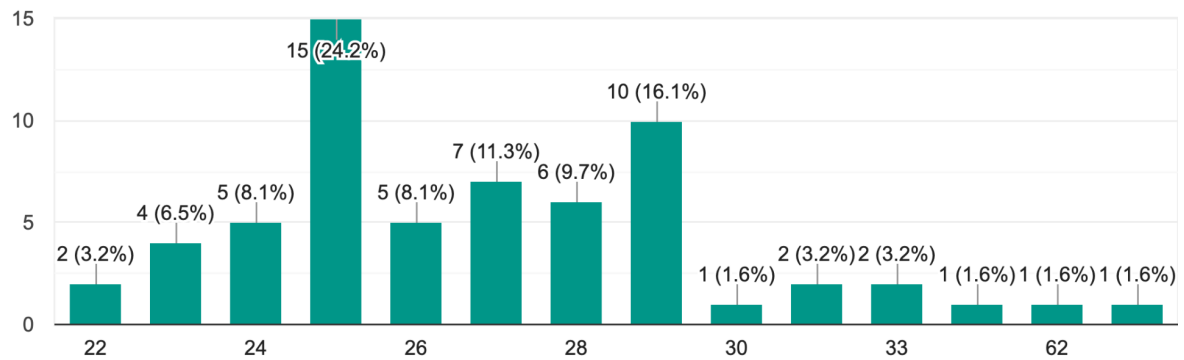
2. How many years have you been employed as a music educator (does not have to be continuous)?



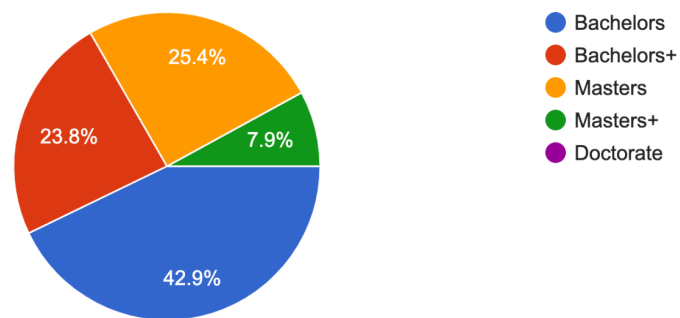
3. What is your sex?



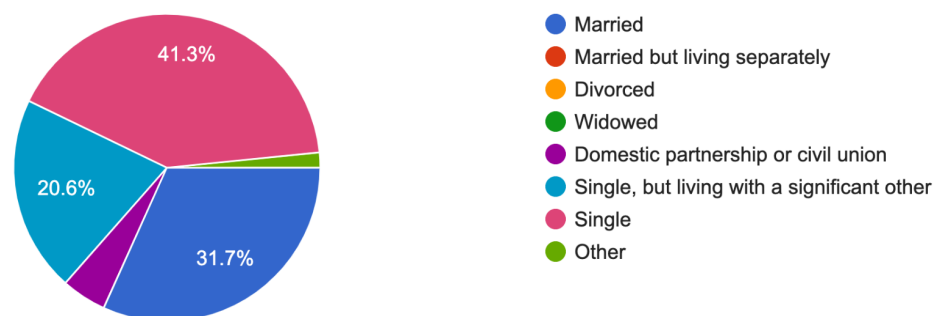
4. What is your age?



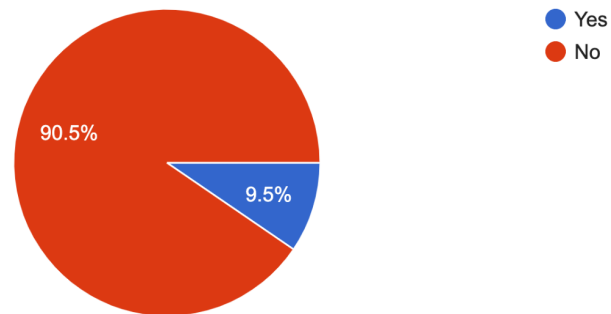
5. Highest education completed?



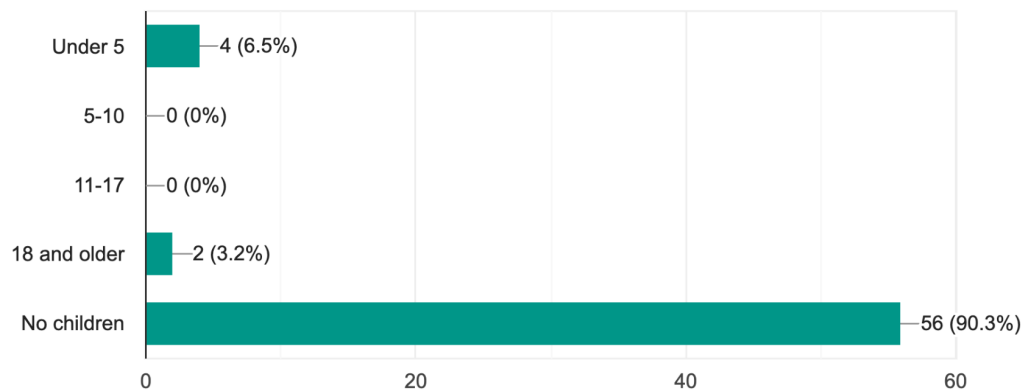
6. Which of the following best describes your relationship status?



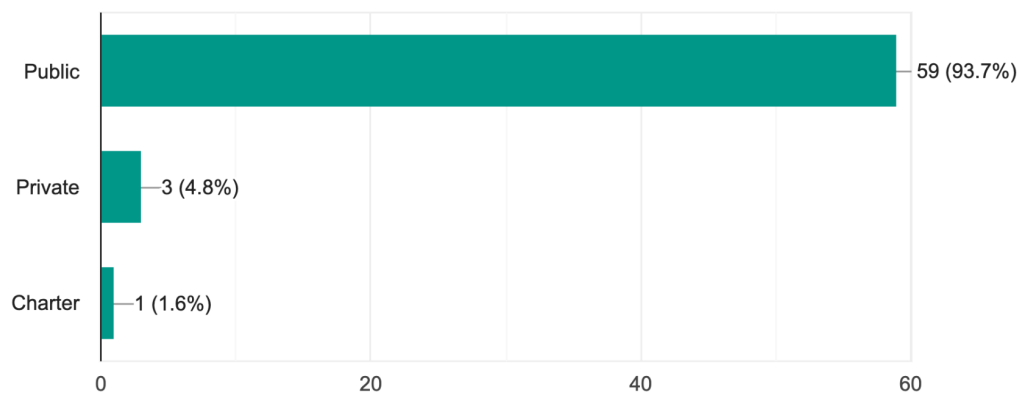
7. Do you have any children?



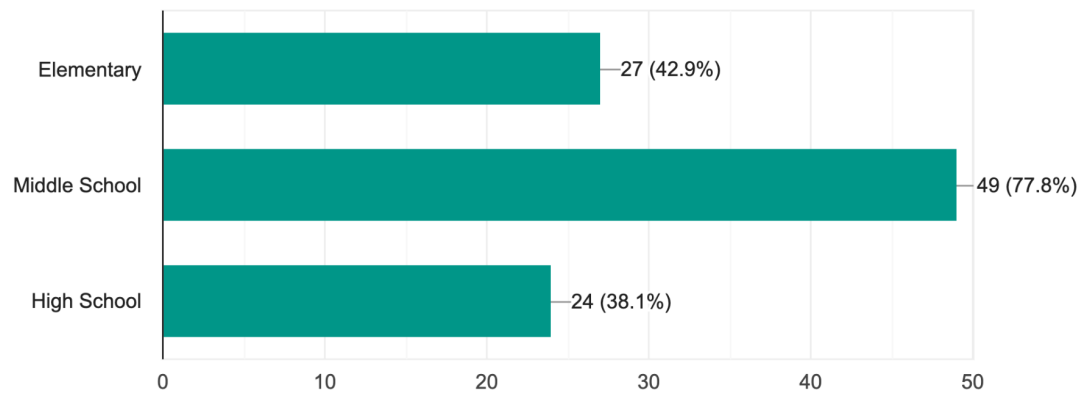
8. How old are your children?



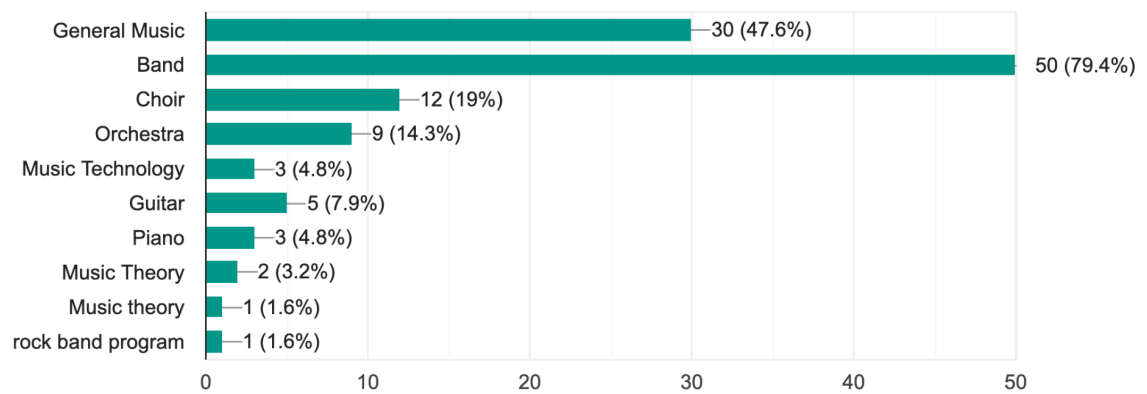
9. What school type do you currently teach in?



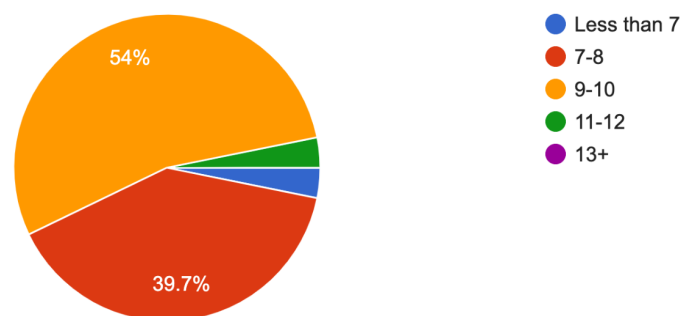
10. What grade levels do you teach?



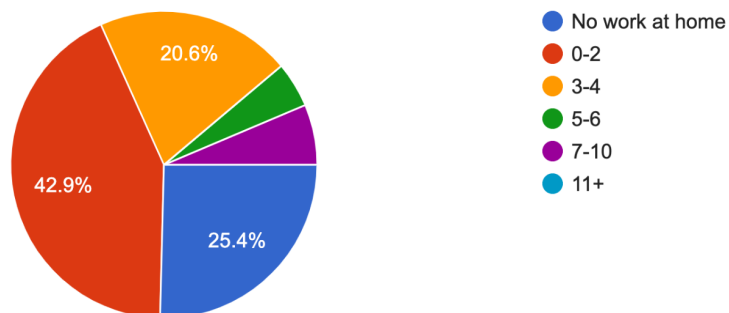
11. What subjects do you teach?



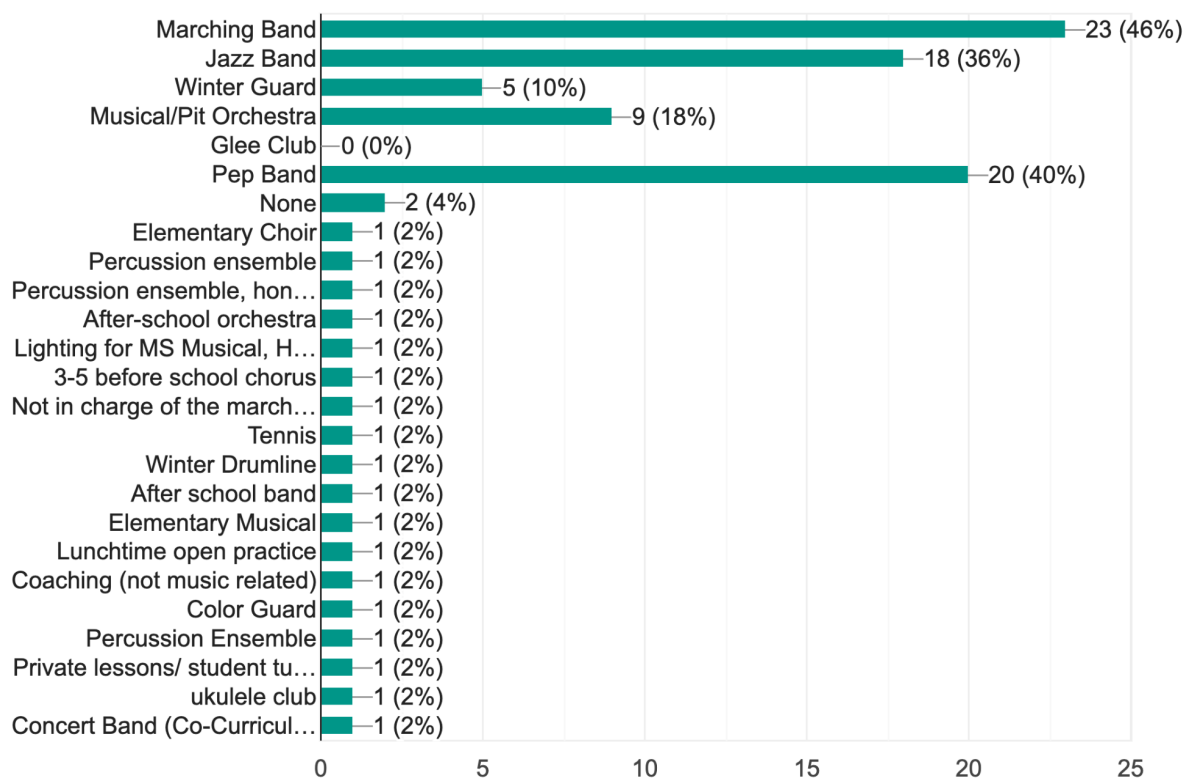
12. On average how many hours do you spend a day at school?



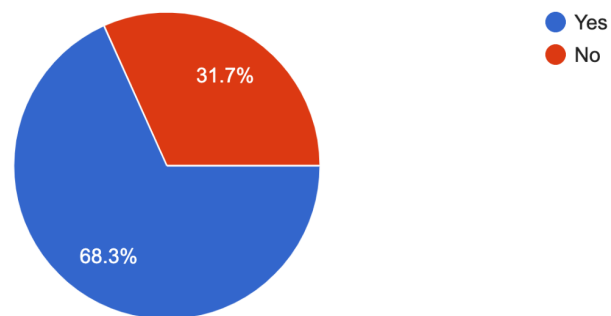
13. How many hours do you spend doing work at home per week (ex. Lesson planning, answering emails, score study)?



14. Which extracurricular activities are you responsible for?



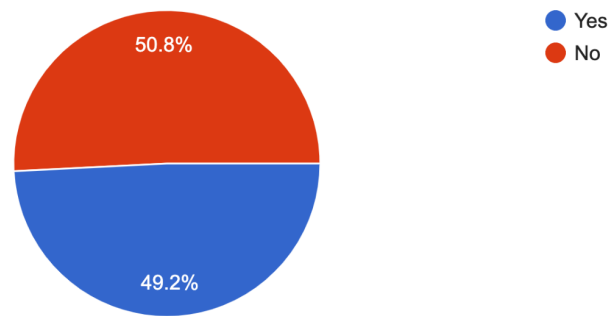
15. Are there other music teachers in your school that you work with on a daily basis?



Section 2: Work Environment and Burnout

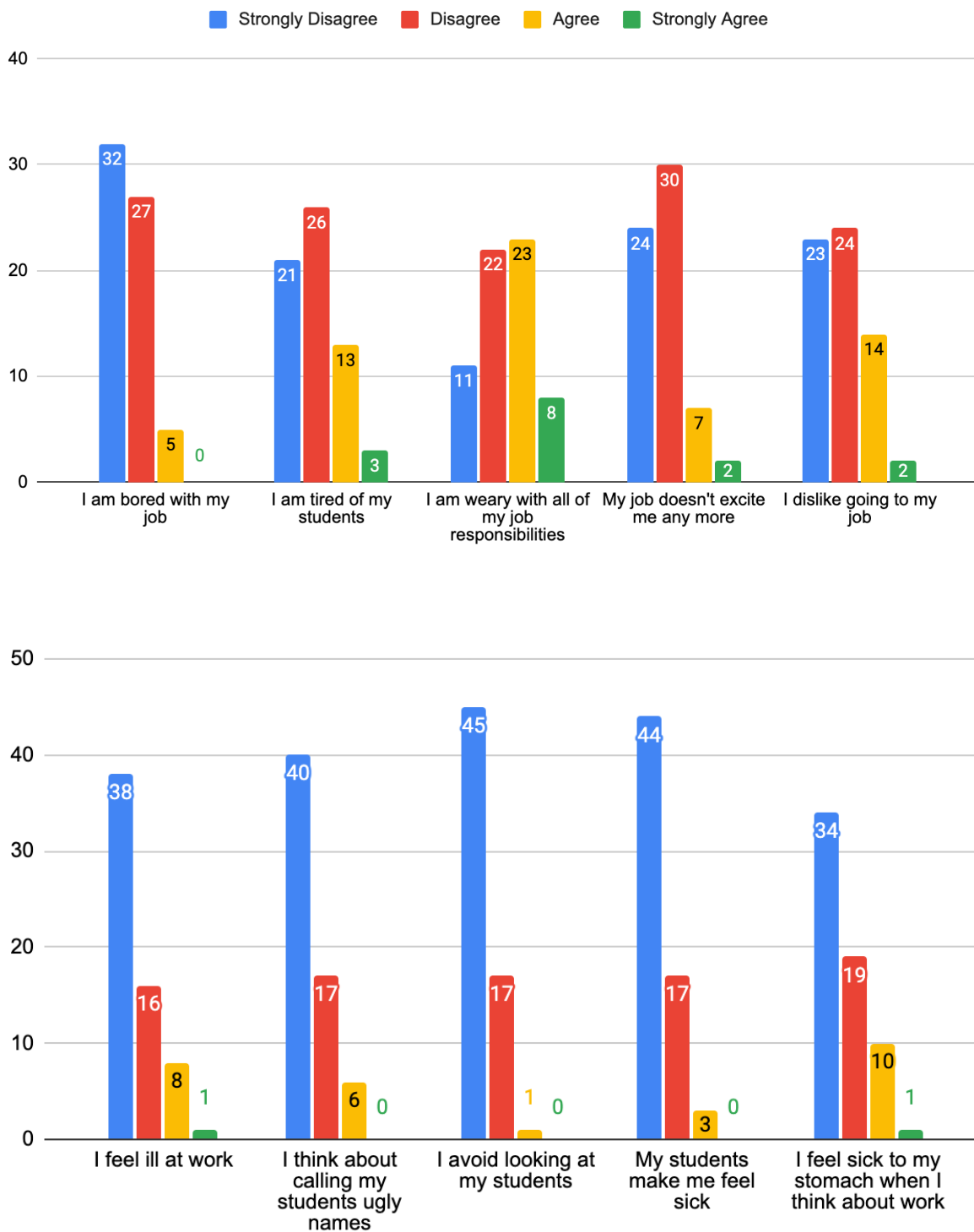
Definition: Satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home, with a minimum of role conflict (Clark, 2000)

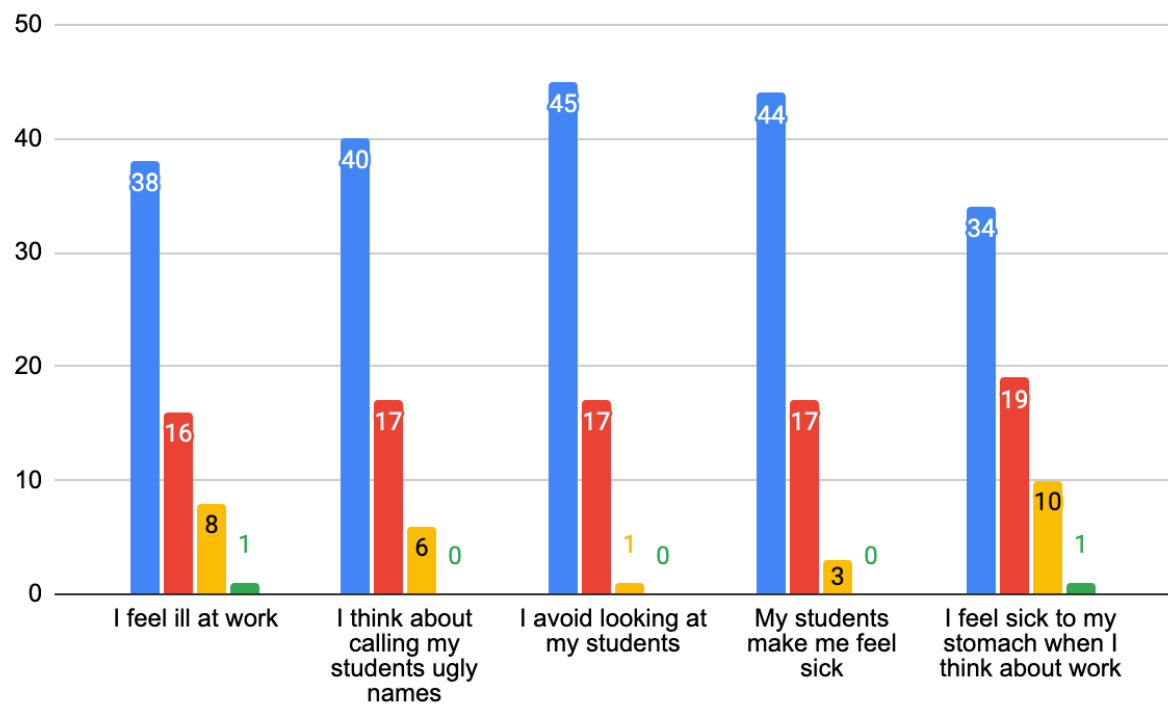
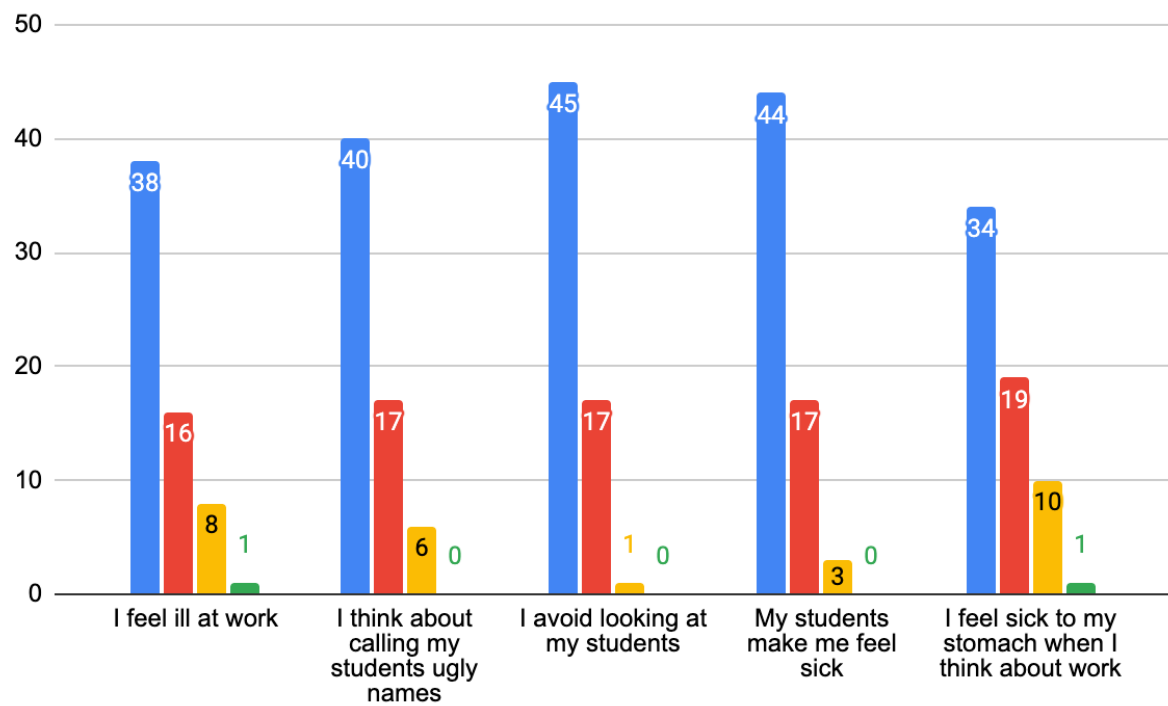
16. Based on the definition above, are you currently achieving work-life balance?



17. These questions are designed to determine how you currently feel about your job. Please answer as honestly as you can. All answers will remain completely confidential.

Work Environment and Burnout

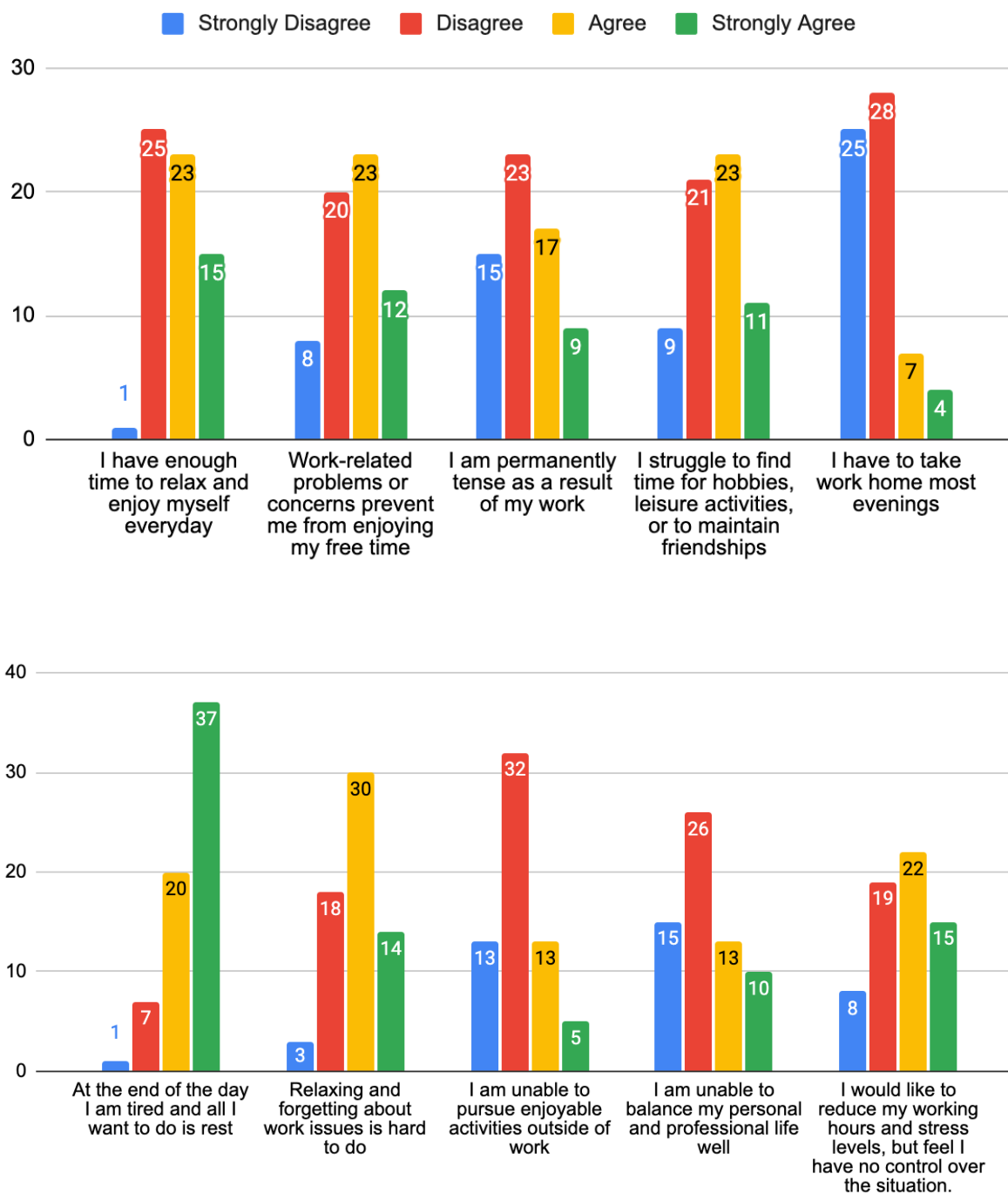




Section 3: Work Overload/Free Time

18. These questions are designed to determine how you currently feel about your job. Please answer as honestly as you can. All answers will remain completely confidential.

Work Overload and Free Time



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