

# EARLY YEARS STAFFING SURVEY

2021



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# Introduction

**Even before the Covid-19 pandemic, the Early Childhood Education and Care (childcare) sector faced considerable recruitment and retention challenges.**

Low pay is endemic in the sector with the majority of Early Years Educators earning below the Living Wage of €12.30 per hour. Indeed, managers earn just €15.28 per hour according to the POBAL early Years Sector Profile 2019/2020.

Unsurprisingly, this has resulted in an annual staff turnover of 40% on average in full day care services.

The SIPTU Early Years Professionals Survey 2020 presented a similar picture with 90% of all professionals reporting that they struggle to make ends meet with difficulty or great difficulty.

However, providers have recently reported greater difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff, while employees appear to be leaving the sector in increasing numbers. This 'Early Years Staffing Survey 2021' attempts to uncover the facts and figures behind this alarming anecdotal evidence.

It reveals the extent of recruitment and retention challenges faced by services and what impact this is having on quality and provision. It also reveals the situation for Early Years Educators and their future intentions.

# Key Findings

## Recruitment

The survey showed that recruitment is a massive issue for services. 70% of managers found it 'extremely difficult' to recruit staff, while another 25% found it "difficult".

Poor pay was the "biggest obstacle" to recruitment (57%), followed by stress / burnout (33%). Managers also stated that problems recruiting and retaining staff will impact on the quality of services for children (63%), reduce the number of children that can be cared for (61%) and lead to closure (34%).

## Retention

For those working on the frontline, 44% of Early Years staff are actively looking for a job outside the sector. Low pay is by far the biggest push factor (77%). 80% do not intend to work in the sector in 12 months' time 'if things say the same'.

For Early Years staff, just 11% would recommend a career in Early Years to a friend or family member. For managers / owner managers, the figure is just 13%.

# About the survey

**The survey was conducted between 3rd September and 8th September with 3,255 respondents. The profile of respondents reflected the makeup of the sector in terms of county, jobs role and service type (community/private).**

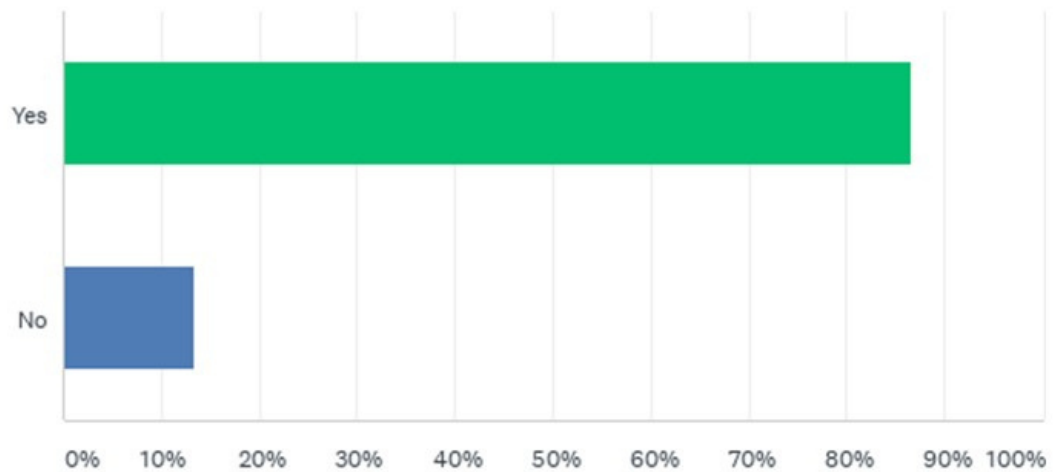
The survey was produced by the 'New Deal for Early Years Campaign', which includes SIPTU, the Association of Childhood Professionals, National Childhood Network, PLÉ, National Community Childcare Forum, CRANN Support Services, Irish Congress of Trade Unions, OMEP Ireland, Further Education Teachers Network, Men In Childcare, the National Women's Council and SPARK.

# Keys survey results

## Managers

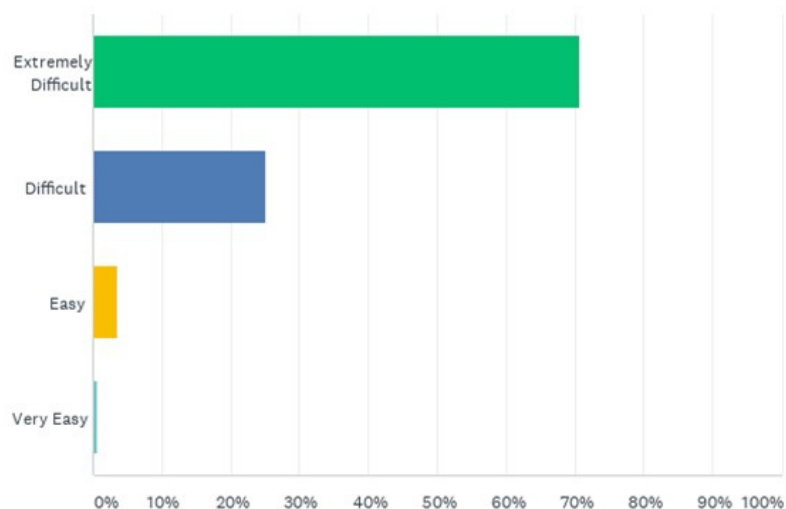
### Manager / Owner Manager: Did you have to recruit staff in the last 12 months?

Answered: 709



### Manager / Owner Manager: If yes, what was your experience of recruiting new staff?

Answered: 628

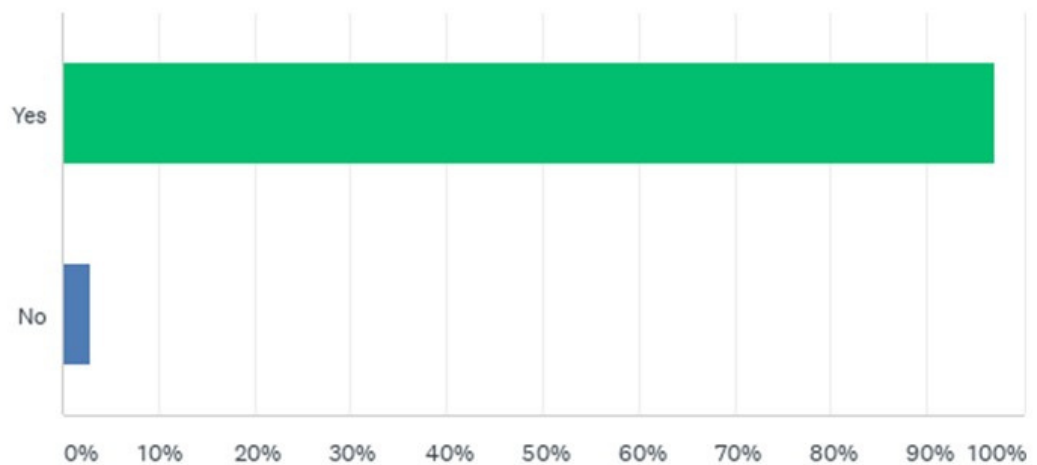


# Key survey results

## Managers

### Manager / Owner Manager: Are you concerned that problems recruiting and retaining staff will negatively impact service provision?

Answered: 709



### Manager / Owner Manager: If yes, what will be the impact be?

Answered: 697 Skipped: 2,564

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Reduced number of children that can be cared for	60.26%	420
Closure of service	33.29%	232
Closure of room (e.g. baby room)	31.99%	223
Longer waiting list	31.13%	217
Difficulty in maintaining child / staff ratios	59.25%	413
Use of staff with limited experience	51.08%	356
Impact on quality for children	63.56%	443
Other (please specify)	14.20%	99
Total Respondents: 697		

# Key survey results

## Educators

### Early Years Educator / Room Leader / Deputy Manager / Other: I am actively looking for another job

Answered: 2,120 Skipped: 1,141

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes, in another Early Years service	7.41%	157
Yes, in another sector	42.26%	896
No, I am not actively looking for another job	50.33%	1,067
TOTAL		2,120

### Early Years Educator / Room Leader / Deputy Manager / Other: If you intend to leave your job, what would be the main reason?

Answered: 2,001 Skipped: 1,260

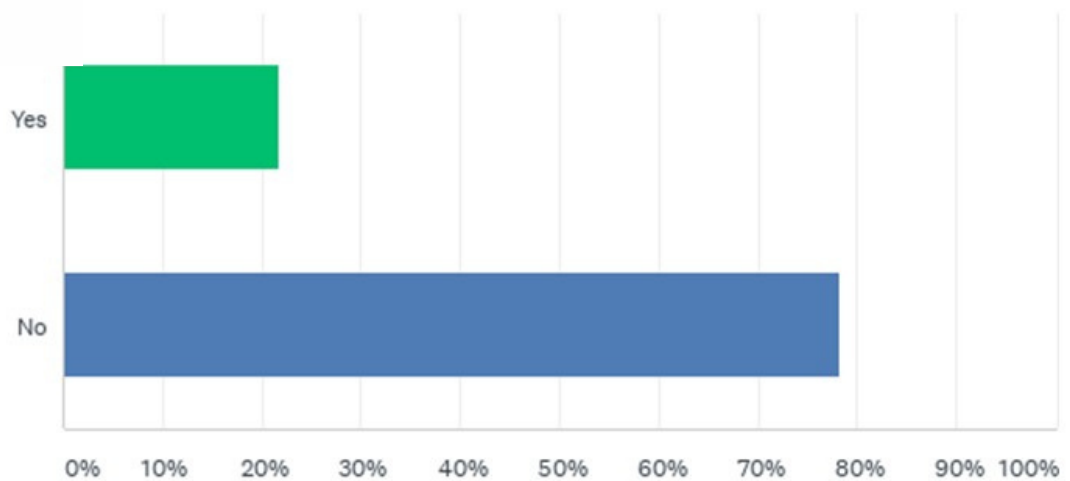
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Low pay	75.46%	1,510
Lack of recognition	7.15%	143
No sick pay scheme in work	3.40%	68
Unpaid non contact time	2.10%	42
Lack of job security	2.05%	41
Increased work load due to Covid-19	1.20%	24
Stress	8.10%	162
Fear of contracting COVID19	0.55%	11
TOTAL		2,001

# Key survey results

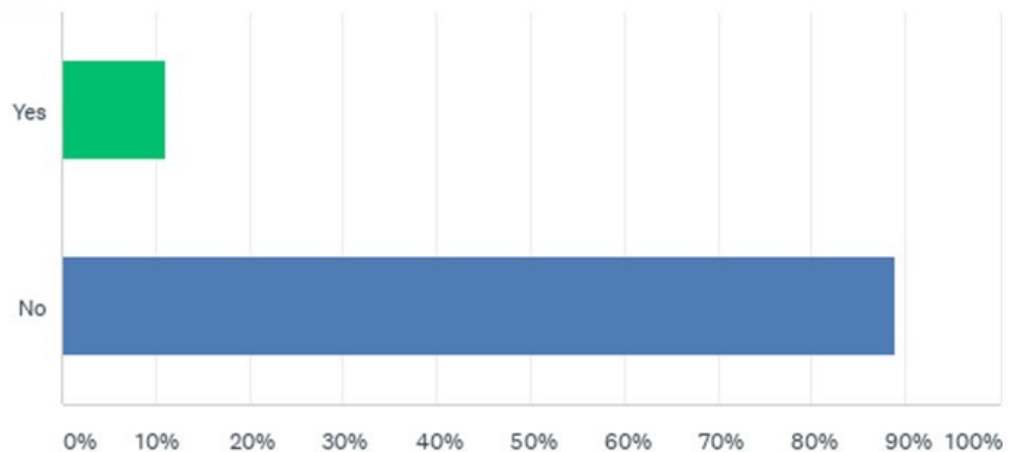
## Educators

**Early Years Educator / Room Leader / Deputy Manager / Other: If things stay the same, I will still be working in the Early Years Sector in 12 months' time.**

Answered: 2,052 Skipped: 1,209



**Early Years Educator / Room Leader / Deputy Manager / Other: Would you recommend a career in Early Years to a friend or family member?**





# Conclusion

Ireland's market approach to Early Years is not working. It fails children, parents, professionals, and providers by pitting the goals of affordability and quality (professionalised wages) against each other. **Budget 2022 is the opportunity to radically reform the Early Years sector, we are calling on Government to;**

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## **A Path to Professional Pay**

- Invest €75 million to improve pay and conditions for Early Years professionals
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## **Affordability**

- A further investment of €75 million to reduce full-time childcare fees by between €30 and €35 per week.
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## **Fixing the Broken Model**

- Introduce a new funding model to support a high quality, affordable, accessible early years service delivered by educators paid a professional wage in financially sustainable services.
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*We need a new public service model that places the rights of children and the needs of families at its heart. We need a system that recognises the essential contribution of all Early Years providers, private and community, and the commitment of qualified Early Years professionals to the provision of high-quality services that are accessible and affordable.*

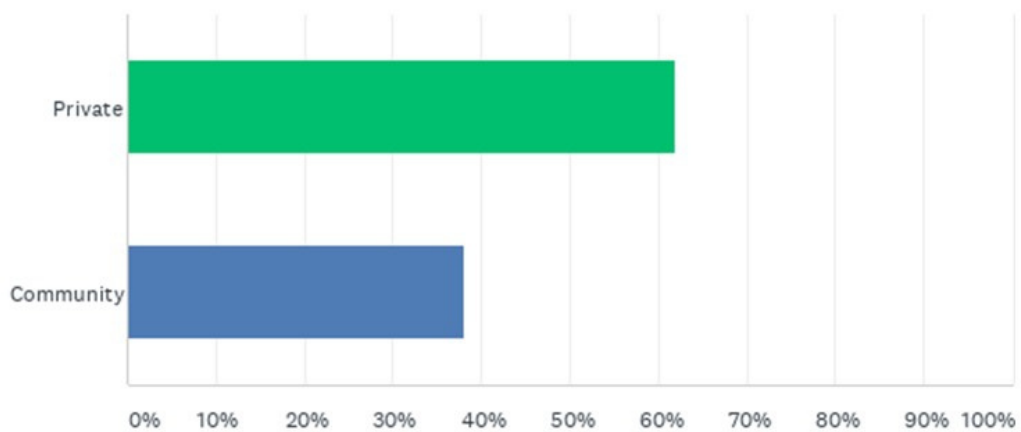
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# Appendix

# Early Years Staffing Survey

## Do you work in a private or community service?

Answered: 3,252



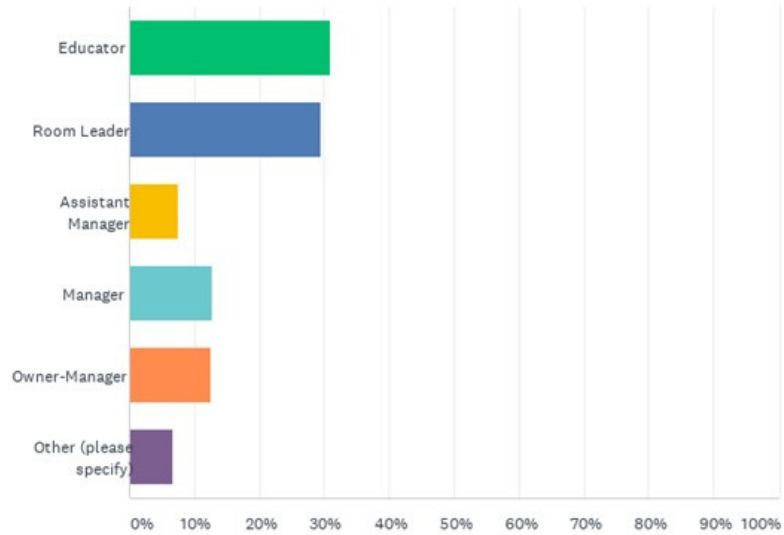
## Do you work in a private or community service?

Answered: 3,252

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Private	62.02%	2,017
Community	37.98%	1,235
TOTAL		3,252

## What is your job role?

Answered: 3,253



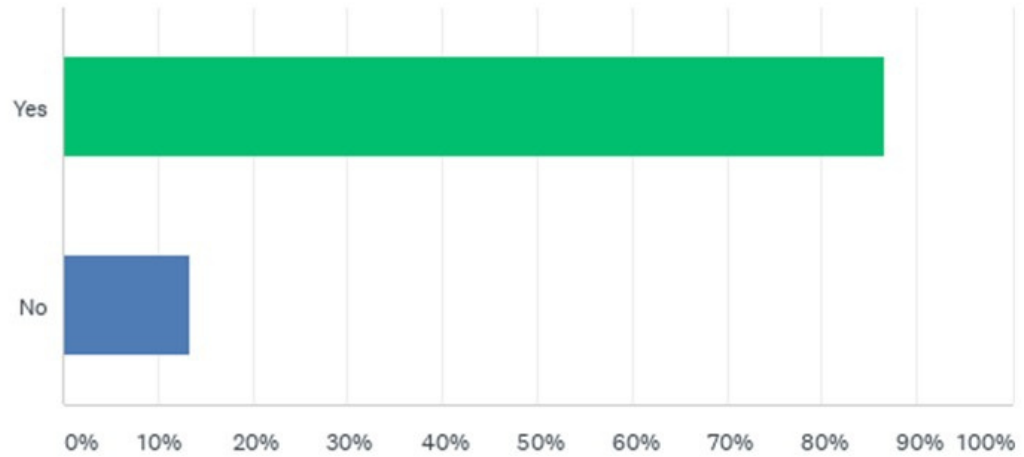
## What is your job role?

Answered: 3,253

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Educator	30.89%	1,005
Room Leader	29.45%	958
Assistant Manager	7.62%	248
Manager	12.79%	416
Owner-Manager	12.45%	405
Other (please specify)	6.79%	221
TOTAL		3,253

## Manager / Owner Manager: Did you have to recruit staff in the last 12 months?

Answered: 709



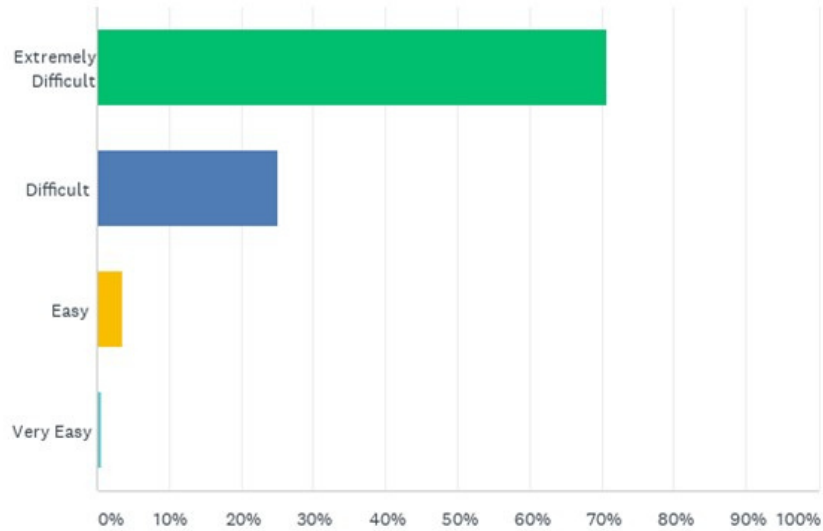
## Manager / Owner Manager: Did you have to recruit staff in the last 12 months?

Answered: 709

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	86.60%	614
No	13.40%	95
TOTAL		709

## Manager / Owner Manager: If yes, what was your experience of recruiting new staff?

Answered: 628



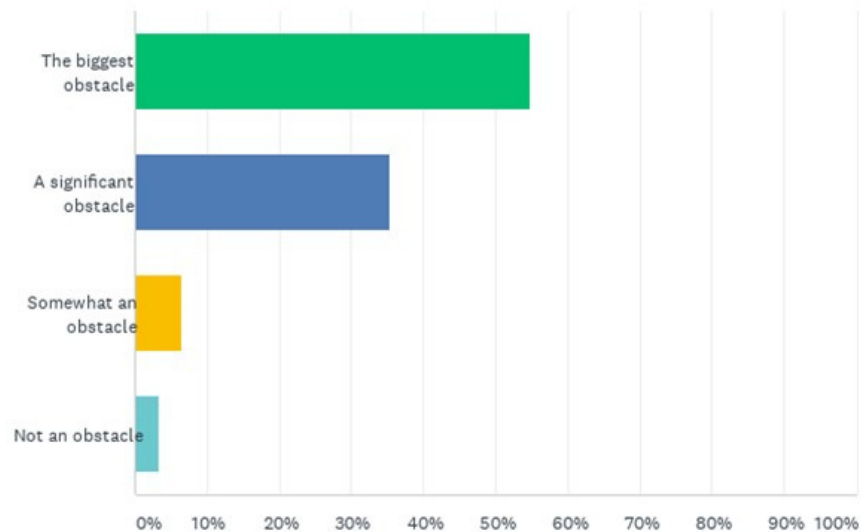
## Manager / Owner Manager: If yes, what was your experience of recruiting new staff?

Answered: 628

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Extremely Difficult	70.70%	444
Difficult	25.16%	158
Easy	3.50%	22
Very Easy	0.64%	4
TOTAL		628

## Manager / Owner Manager: To what extent is low pay an obstacle to recruiting new staff?

Answered: 703



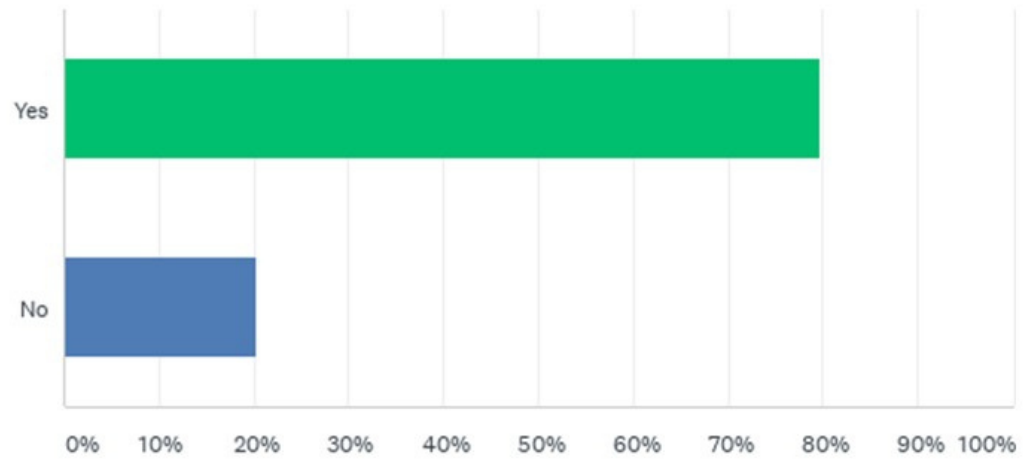
## Manager / Owner Manager: To what extent is low pay an obstacle to recruiting new staff?

Answered: 703

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
The biggest obstacle	54.91%	386
A significant obstacle	35.28%	248
Somewhat an obstacle	6.54%	46
Not an obstacle	3.27%	23
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>703</b>

## Manager / Owner Manager: Have any staff left your service in the past 12 months?

Answered: 707



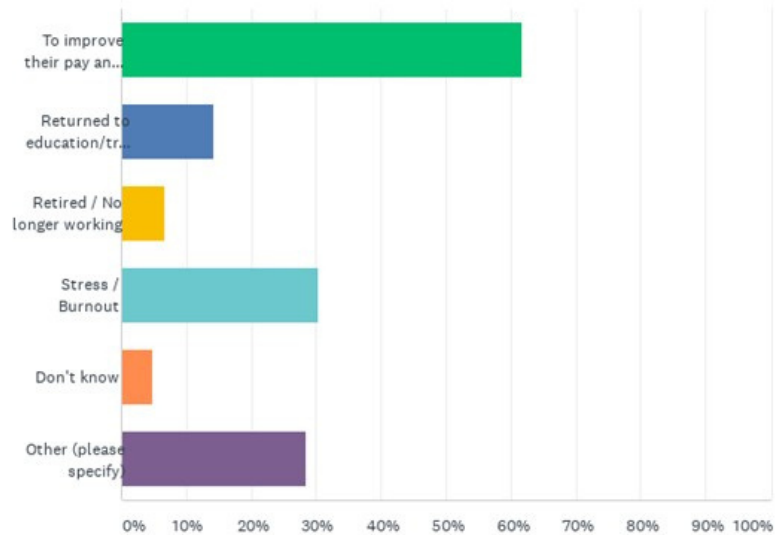
## Manager / Owner Manager: Have any staff left your service in the past 12 months?

Answered: 707 Skipped: 2,554

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	79.63%	563
No	20.37%	144
TOTAL		707

## Manager / Owner Manager: If yes, why did they leave?

Answered: 612



## Manager / Owner Manager: If yes, why did they leave?

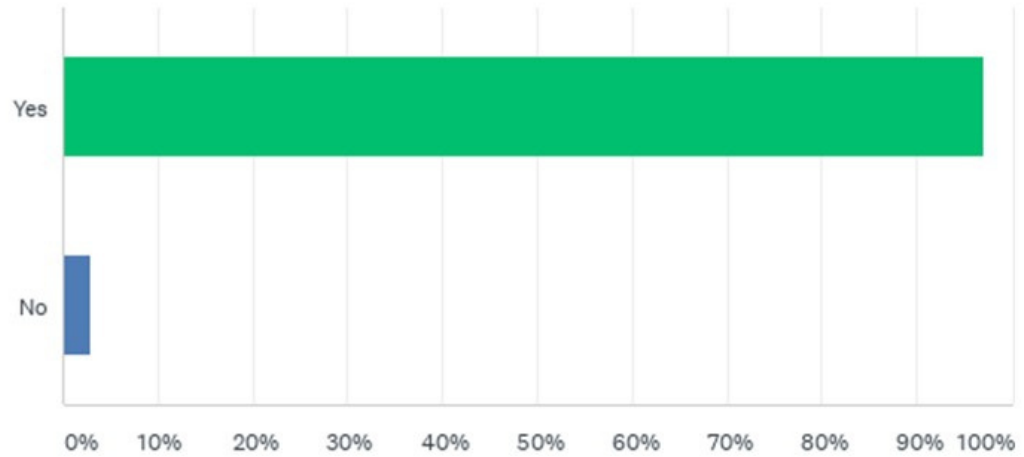
Answered: 612 Skipped: 2,649

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
To improve their pay and conditions	61.76%	378
Returned to education/training	14.22%	87
Retired / No longer working	6.70%	41
Stress / Burnout	30.39%	186
Don't know	4.74%	29
Other (please specify)	28.43%	174
Total Respondents: 612		



## Manager / Owner Manager: Are you concerned that problems recruiting and retaining staff will negatively impact service provision?

Answered: 709



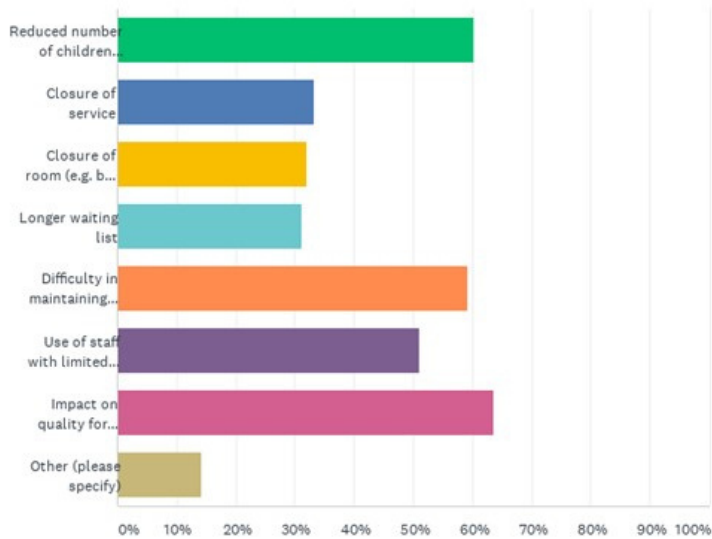
## Manager / Owner Manager: Are you concerned that problems recruiting and retaining staff will negatively impact service provision?

Answered: 70

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	97.04%	688
No	2.96%	21
TOTAL		709

## Manager / Owner Manager: If yes, what will be the impact be?

Answered: 697 Skipped: 2,564



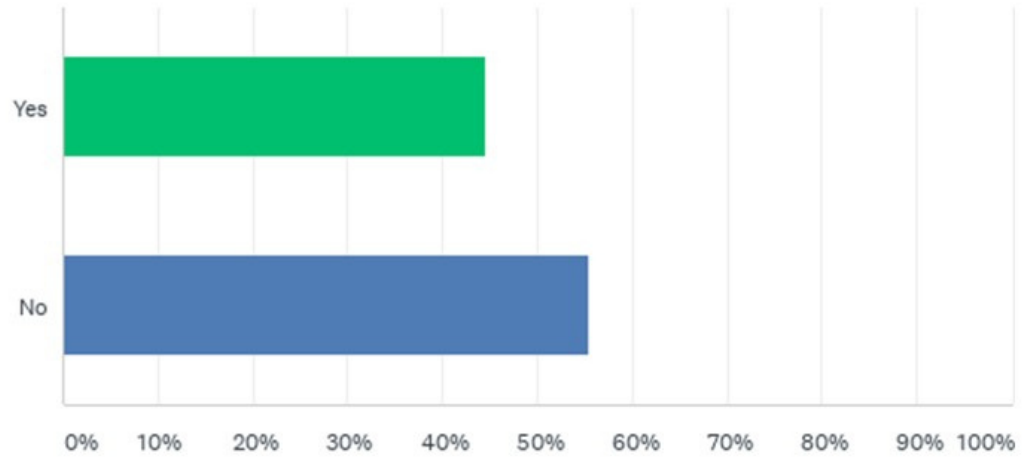
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## Manager / Owner Manager: If things stay the same, I will still be working in the Early Years Sector in 12 months' time.

Answered: 668 Skipped: 2,593



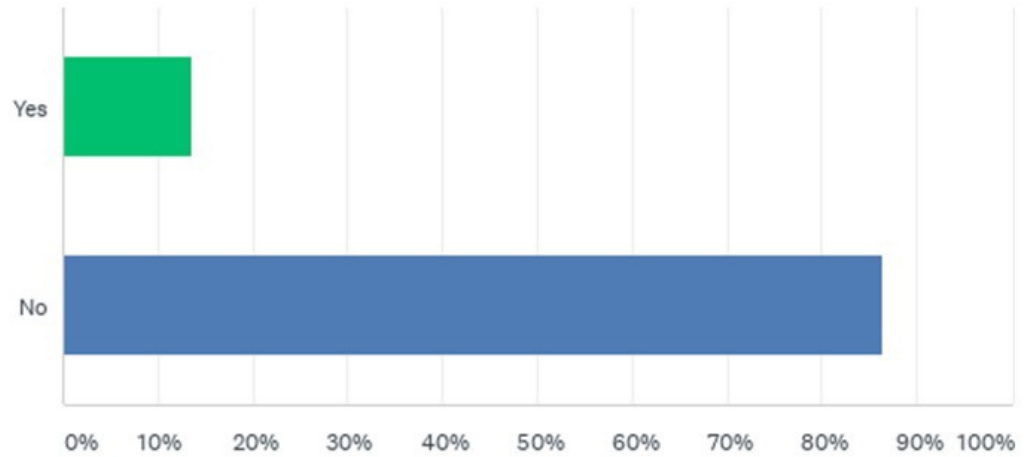
## Manager / Owner Manager: If things stay the same, I will still be working in the Early Years Sector in 12 months' time.

Answered: 668 Skipped: 2,593

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	44.61%	298
No	55.39%	370
TOTAL		668

## Manager / Owner Manager: Would you recommend a career in Early Years to a friend or family member?

Answered: 707 Skipped: 2,554



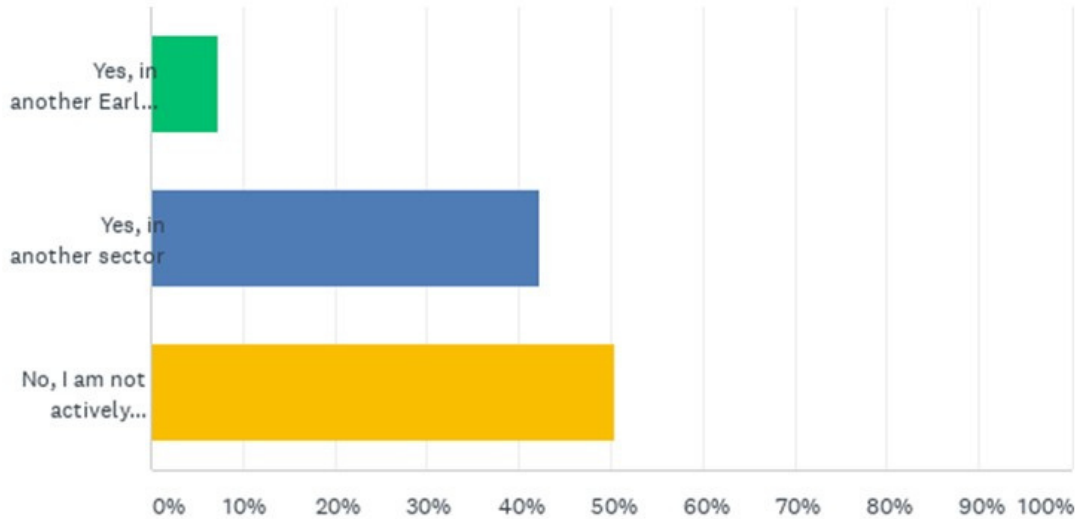
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Answered: 707 Skipped: 2,554

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	13.58%	96
No	86.42%	611
TOTAL		707

## Early Years Educator / Room Leader / Deputy Manager / Other: I am actively looking for another job

Answered: 2,120 Skipped: 1,141



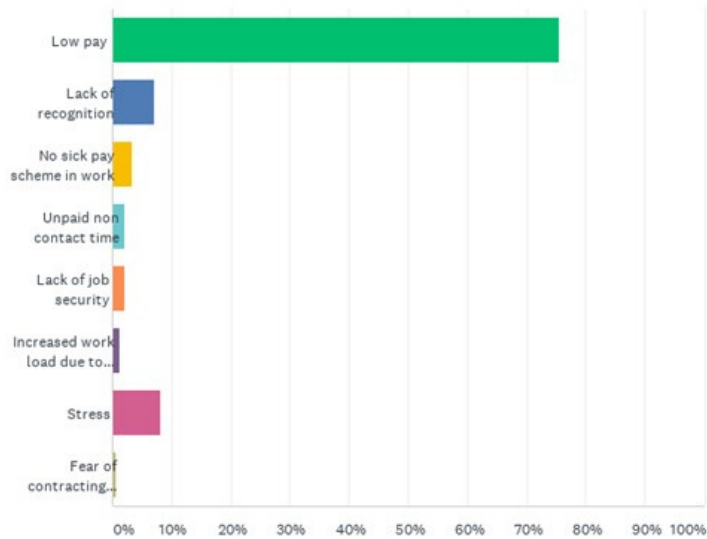
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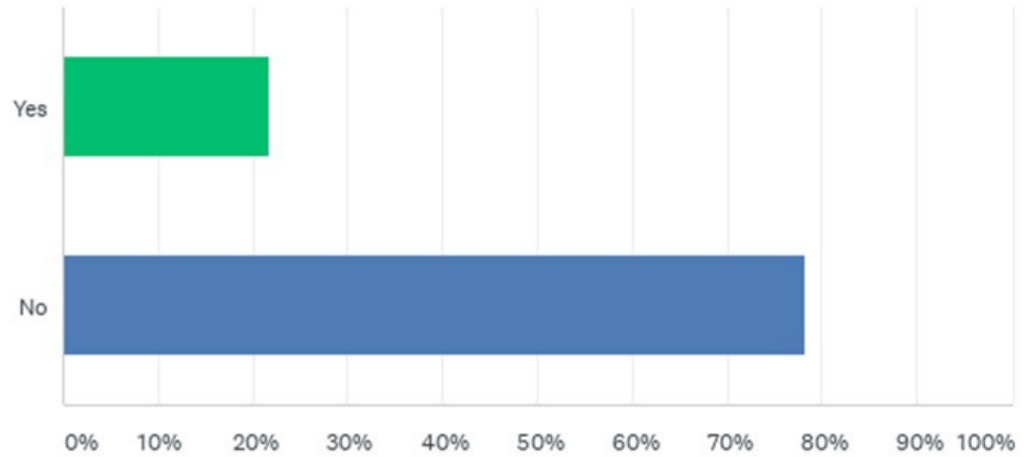
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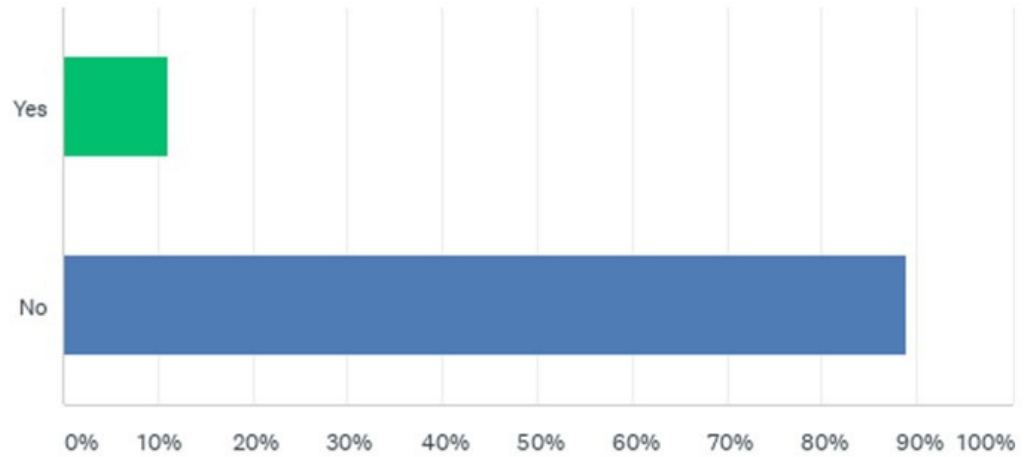
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Answered: 2,052 Skipped: 1,209

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	21.83%	448
No	78.17%	1,604
TOTAL		2,052

## Early Years Educator / Room Leader / Deputy Manager / Other: Would you recommend a career in Early Years to a friend or family member?

Answered: 2,121 Skipped: 1,140



## Early Years Educator / Room Leader / Deputy Manager / Other: Would you recommend a career in Early Years to a friend or family member?

Answered: 2,121 Skipped: 1,140

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	11.17%	237
No	88.83%	1,884
TOTAL		2,121



