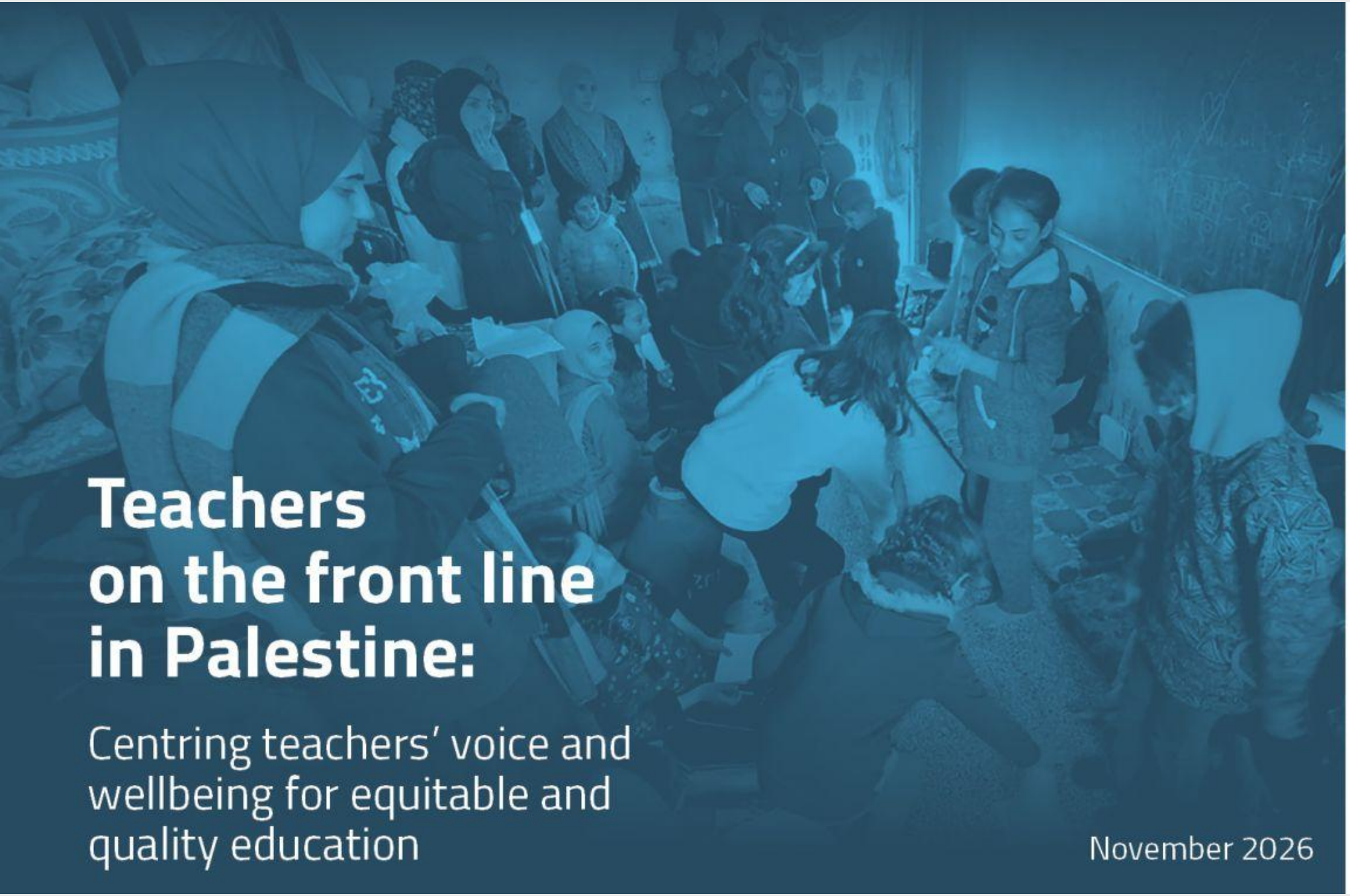

Teachers on the front line in Palestine:

Centring teachers' voice and wellbeing for equitable and quality education

November 2026

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UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
Faculty of Education

Teachers on the front line in Palestine: centring teachers voice and wellbeing for equitable and quality education

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17 November, 2026

“I hope that… collective efforts will be strengthened to rebuild the education sector and provide a safe learning environment that guarantees every child’s right to learn, grow and live with dignity.” (Teacher, Gaza)

Palestine under Occupation

1948 — Start of Israeli Occupation

2007 — Gaza Blockade & Recurrent Military Assaults



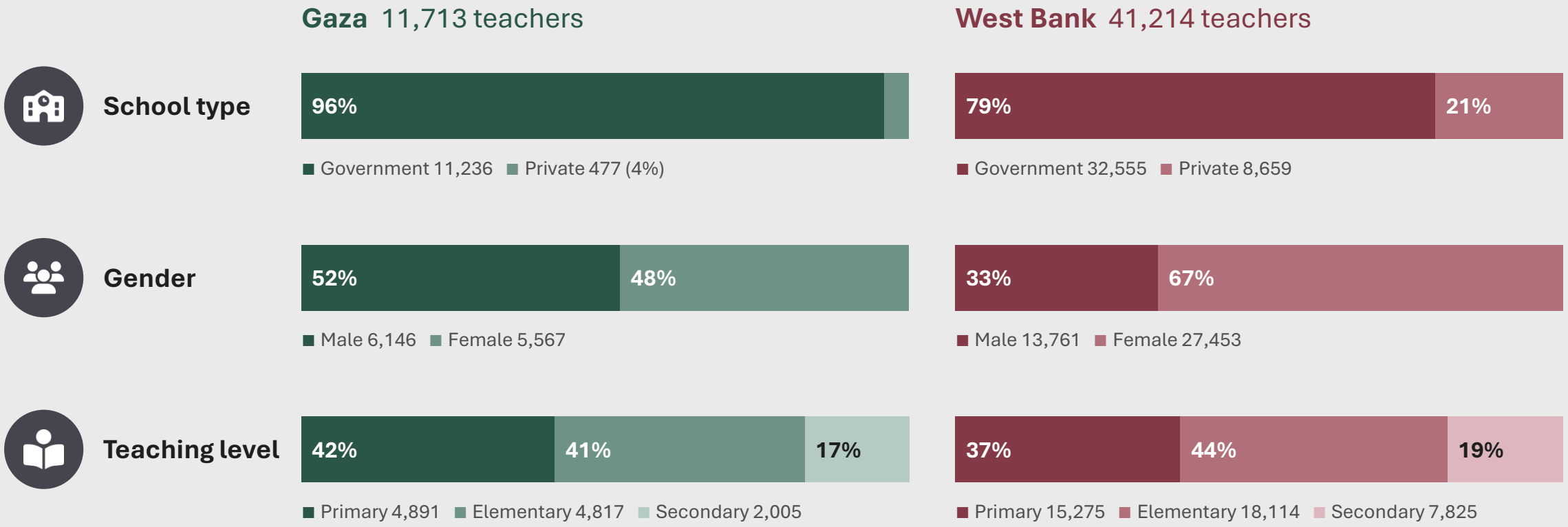
October 2023

January–March 2025 — Temporary Ceasefire

March-October 2025

Palestine’s teaching workforce before October 2023: 52,927 teachers

62% of teachers are women and 83% work in government schools



Teaching workforce by school type, gender and level

By gender	Gaza	West Bank	Total
Government			
Male	5,895	10,606	**16,501**
Female	5,341	21,949	**27,290**
Total government	**11,236**	**32,555**	**43,791**
Private			
Male	251	3,155	**3,406**
Female	226	5,504	**5,730**
Total private	**477**	**8,659**	**9,136**

By teaching level	Gaza	West Bank	Total
Government			
Primary (1–4)	4,788	13,393	**18,181**
Elementary (5–9)	4,496	12,314	**16,810**
Secondary (10–12)	1,952	6,848	**8,800**
Total government	**11,236**	**32,555**	**43,791**
Private			
Primary (1–4)	103	1,882	**1,985**
Elementary (5–9)	321	5,800	**6,121**
Secondary (10–12)	53	977	**1,030**
Total private	**477**	**8,659**	**9,136**

11,713 teachers in Gaza

41,214 teachers in the West Bank

52,927 teachers in total

Why this study was needed

Education recovery depends on the people who sustain it



WHAT WE KNOW

Much is known about attacks on education



THE GAP

Less is known about teachers' everyday lives and work



WHAT RECOVERY NEEDS

Recovery planning needs teachers' experiences and priorities

Methodology

2,958 teachers responded to the online survey

635 Gaza

2,323 West Bank

2 June–6 July 2026
online survey circulated through GUPT networks

66
focus group participants

14
interview participants: 9 teachers and 5 officials

Non-probability sample. Self-reported experiences. Those facing the greatest barriers may be missing.

Teachers living conditions across Gaza and the West Bank

Gaza

76%

displaced because their home was damaged or destroyed

Repeated displacement and loss of basic services

West Bank

85%

reported living at home under normal conditions

Military incursions, settler violence and restricted movement

"On a personal level, life has completely changed; we've moved to living in tents and shelters amidst a complete lack of stability, privacy, and basic services." **(Teacher, Gaza)**

Teachers' financial conditions

Teachers reporting regular serious financial difficulty in the previous three months

Gaza

78%

around 8 in 10 teachers



West Bank

68%

around 7 in 10 teachers



"Teachers also need social and economic stability. Having a reliable and secure source of income is essential, as financial insecurity places additional stress on teachers and affects their wellbeing and performance." (Development agency employee)

"Despite these hardships, teachers have continued to perform their duties to the best of their ability, although doing so has become increasingly difficult. Unfortunately, there is still no clear prospect of an economic solution, and the situation continues to deteriorate." (Development agency employee)

Mobility and safety

High transport costs



Safety concerns during travel



Share of respondents reporting each barrier on the way to school

65%

of West Bank respondents reported checkpoint restrictions

Teaching spaces and workloads have changed

Gaza

91%

reported damage to their usual school building

Emergency learning spaces and scarce basic facilities

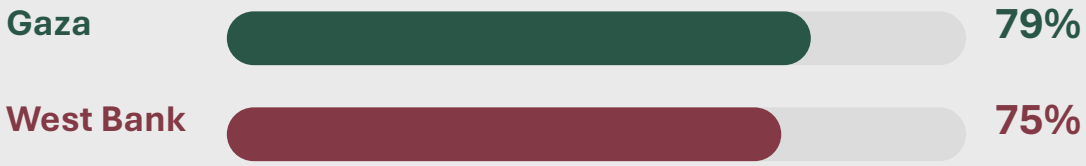
West Bank

89%

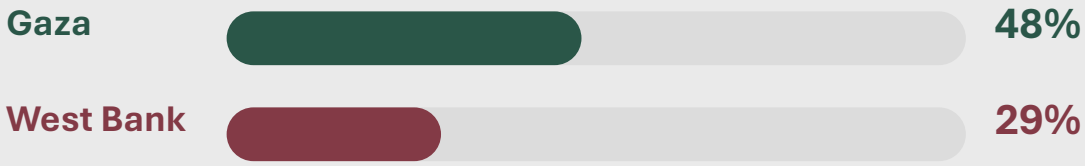
reported a fully functional school building

But resource shortages and disrupted teaching continue

Inadequate resources constrain teaching



Teachers working additional shifts



Teaching spaces and workloads have changed

"...a lack of essential stationery and supplies for the educational process, such as blackboards, pens, paper... chairs, tables... and screens to protect from the sun and the spread of diseases, rodents and insects within the classrooms; and unsafe school locations that put students at risk." (Teacher, Gaza)

"All the houses and the school are slated for demolition... My students' house was demolished right before their eyes...". (Teacher, West Bank)

"when houses near the school are demolished" this instils *"terror, fear and oppression"* in students and teachers alike. (Teacher, West Bank)

Gaza teaching spaces lack working basic facilities

Teachers reporting each facility as fully functional

Electricity

Gaza	West Bank
1%	79%

Clean water

Gaza	West Bank
5%	72%

Sanitation

Gaza	West Bank
12%	75%

Physical classrooms

Gaza	West Bank
15%	78%

Student furniture

Gaza	West Bank
10%	74%

Textbooks

Gaza	West Bank
5%	63%

Teaching resources

Gaza	West Bank
15%	76%

At most 15%

of Gaza teachers reported any facility as fully functional

Teachers views about teaching practices

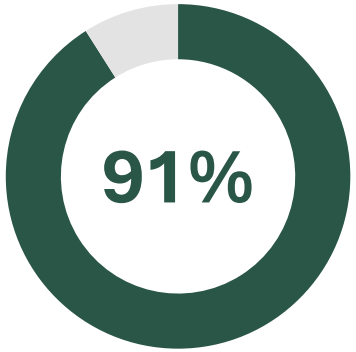
> *“My role transformed from simply teaching an academic subject to facilitating and providing psychological and social support.”*

Teacher, Gaza

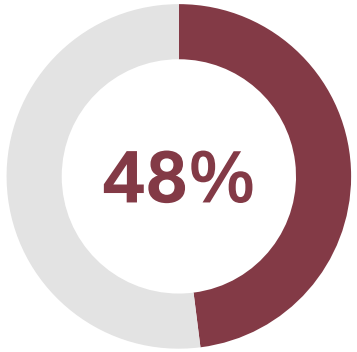
Flexible lessons and attention to students’ distress

Strong demand for practical professional learning

In Gaza: demand outstrips support



actively seek opportunities to improve their teaching



received trauma-related professional development

In the West Bank, just over a third received trauma-related training

Teachers views about teaching practices

Teachers who agree or strongly agree

Encourage student participation despite challenging circumstances

95% Gaza

97% West Bank

Adjust learning expectations for students affected by the conflict

94% Gaza

94% West Bank

Use flexible approaches when resources or facilities are limited

92% Gaza

93% West Bank

But covering the curriculum when teaching time is reduced is much harder

61% Gaza

49% West Bank

Adaptive teaching in teachers' own words

"The teacher's responsibilities have been multiplied, as his role is no longer limited to teaching, but includes providing psychosocial support, compensating for educational losses, managing educational initiatives, coordinating with families, and working in continuous emergency conditions."

Teacher, Gaza

"I am committed to treating students affected by war and trauma with sensitivity and understanding... I employ flexible teaching methods that consider their emotional state and encourage them to express their feelings appropriately, while fostering values of hope, cooperation, and mutual support among students."

Teacher, West Bank

Teachers’ views about professional development

Teachers who agree or strongly agree

Teaching remains meaningful to me

Gaza	West Bank
92%	88%

I feel responsible for continuing students’ learning

Gaza	West Bank
95%	97%

Education helps communities recover

Gaza	West Bank
95%	93%

Emotionally satisfied after a typical day

Gaza	West Bank
81%	79%

Commitment to teaching has increased since the war

Gaza	West Bank
81%	77%

It has become harder to retain qualified teachers

Gaza	West Bank
90%	80%

Young people see teaching as an attractive profession

Gaza	West Bank
57%	30%

Teachers see their role as a source of hope

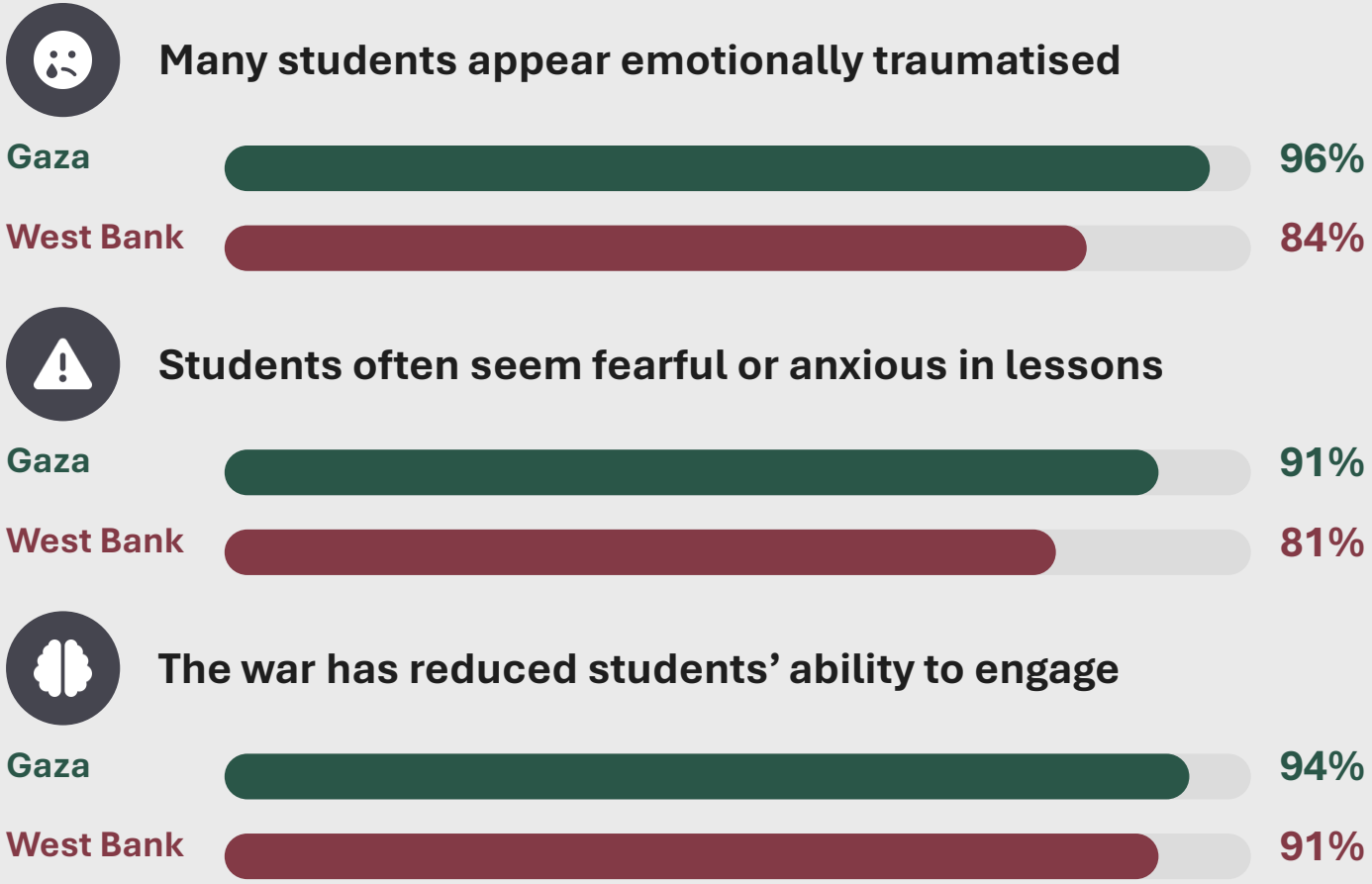
“The role of the teacher in the shadow of war has gone beyond the transfer of knowledge; he [sic] is a psychological supporter, a role model, a builder of hope, and an essential partner in protecting children and maintaining the continuity of education. I feel a great responsibility towards the students and their families because the presence of a teacher in such circumstances contributes to strengthening the resilience of children, supporting their recovery, and maintaining their sense of security and belonging.”

Teacher, Gaza

“I believe that education remains one of the strongest sources of hope for our society. Despite all the challenges, teachers will continue to do their best to support students and help them build a better future.”

Teacher, West Bank

Views about student engagement



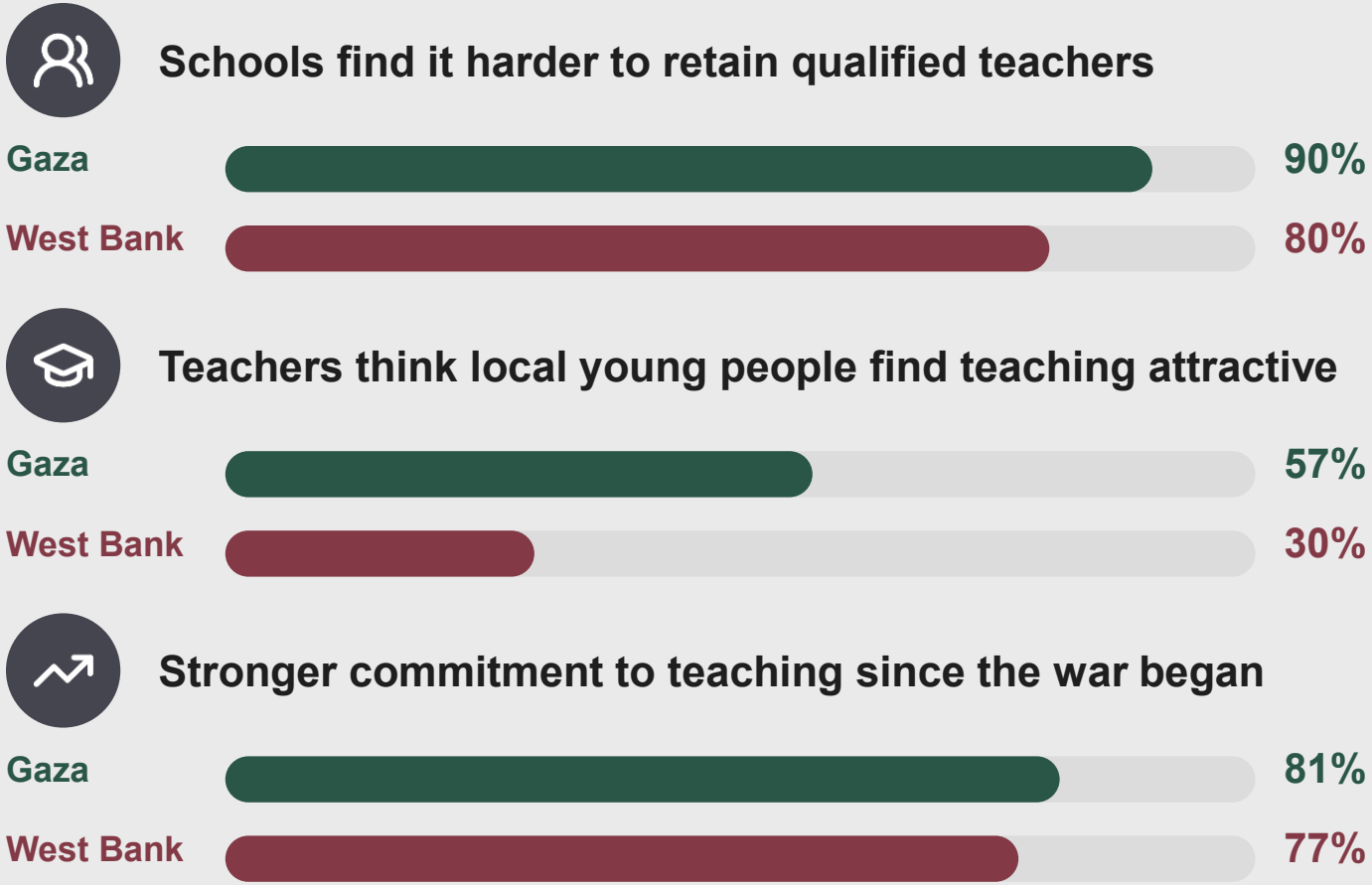
Yet students remain motivated to continue their education

78% Gaza

53% West Bank

"The fear among students, coupled with their absence from school and attending only three days a week, has created a state of lethargy among them." (Teacher, West Bank)

Teacher motivation and commitment



Teachers feel a professional responsibility to continue supporting students' learning

95% Gaza

97% West Bank

Teacher survey. Percentages combine the rounded shares for 'agree' and 'strongly agree'.

Teachers views about health and wellbeing: exposure to conflict and bereavement

Reported losing an immediate family member

65%

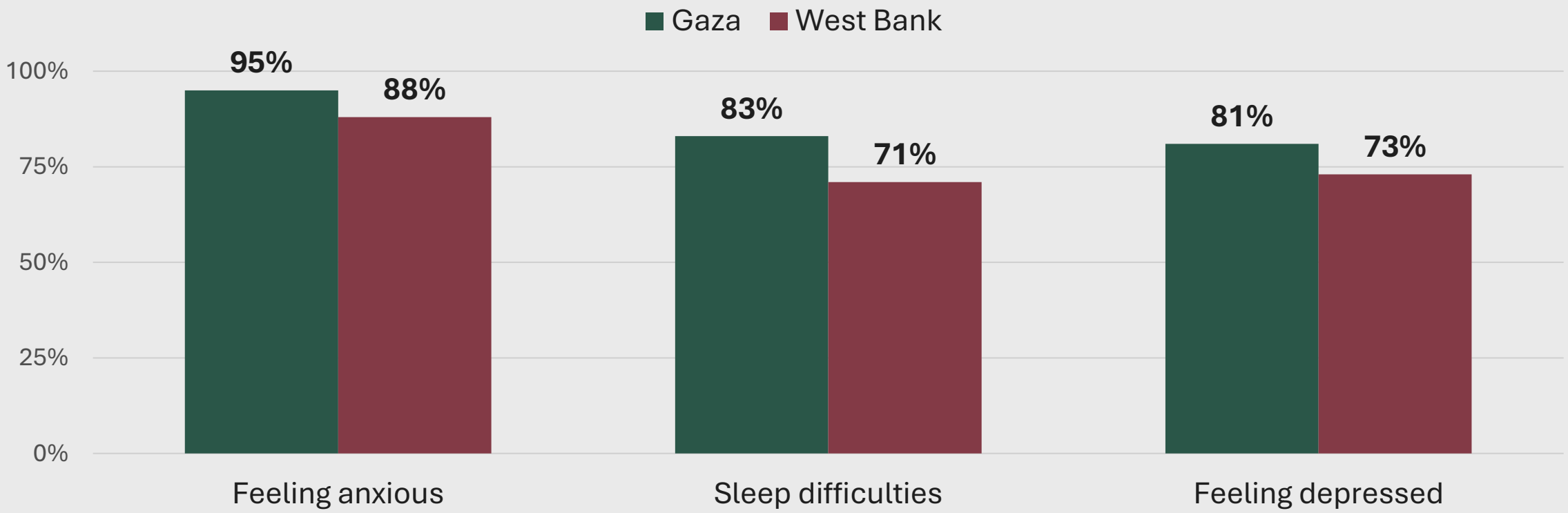
Gaza

13%

West Bank

“During the few hours of teaching, my mind is divided between explaining lessons to my students and worrying about my family in the displacement tent whenever a nearby explosion occurs”. (Teacher, Gaza)

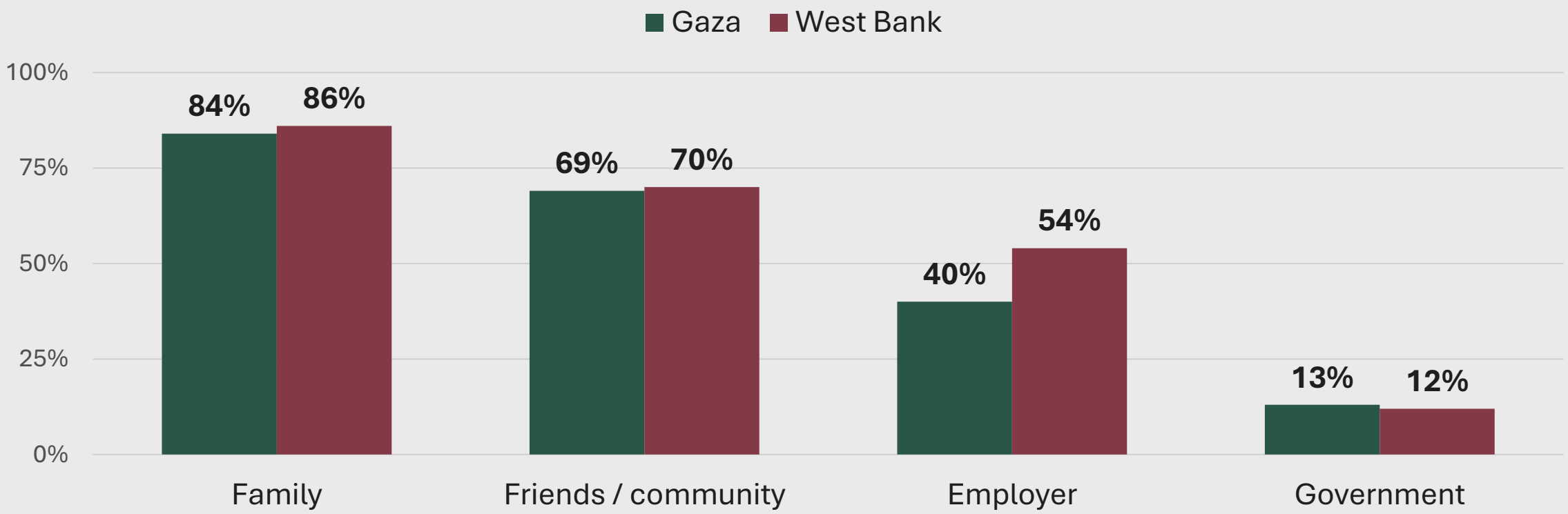
Psychosocial wellbeing



Teachers support distressed learners while experiencing distress themselves

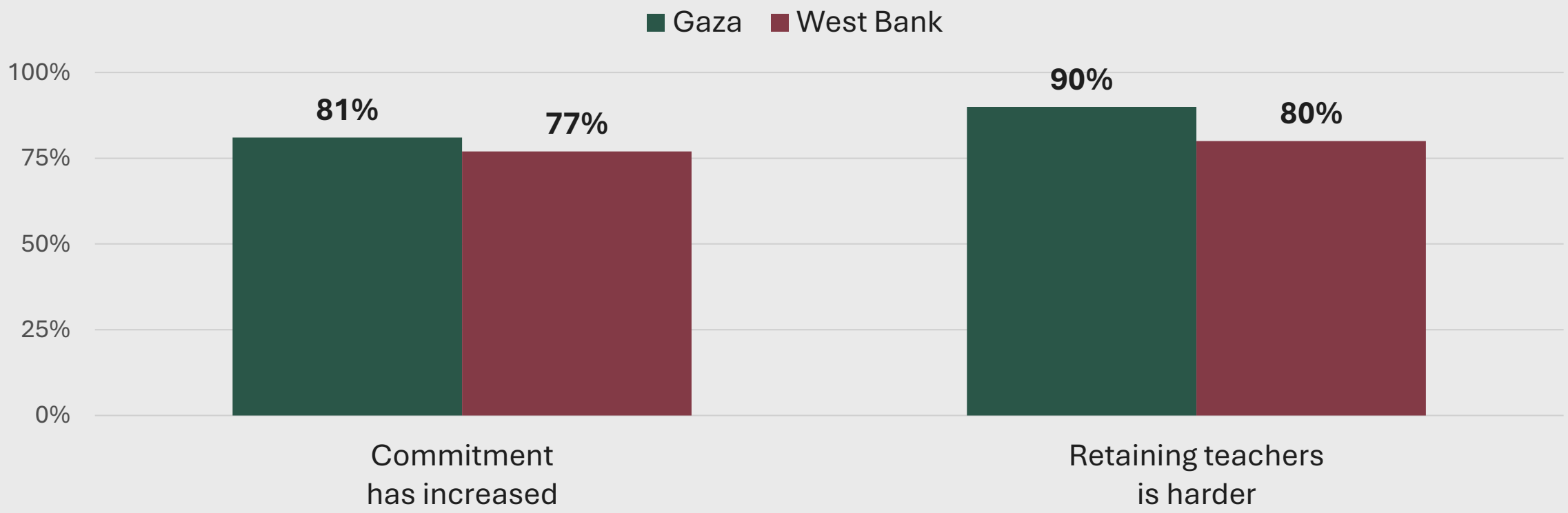
Self-reported experiences, not clinical diagnoses

Support received for health and wellbeing



A source of support does not necessarily mean adequate support

Teachers' beliefs and values



Only 30% in the West Bank considered teaching attractive to young people

“I approach the values of human rights, justice and dignity as daily practices rather than merely concepts found in a textbook. I try to connect them to the real-life situations that students experience and to create a safe space where they can discuss issues and express their opinions and feelings… I also make sure not to present these values in an idealised way that is disconnected from reality. Female students sometimes see a clear contradiction between what they learn about rights and justice and what is happening around them. I therefore acknowledge this contradiction and help them understand and analyse it critically and consciously. I emphasise that the violation of rights does not reduce their importance; rather, it makes commitment to them even more necessary.” (Teacher, Gaza)

Teaching rights amid violations of rights

89%

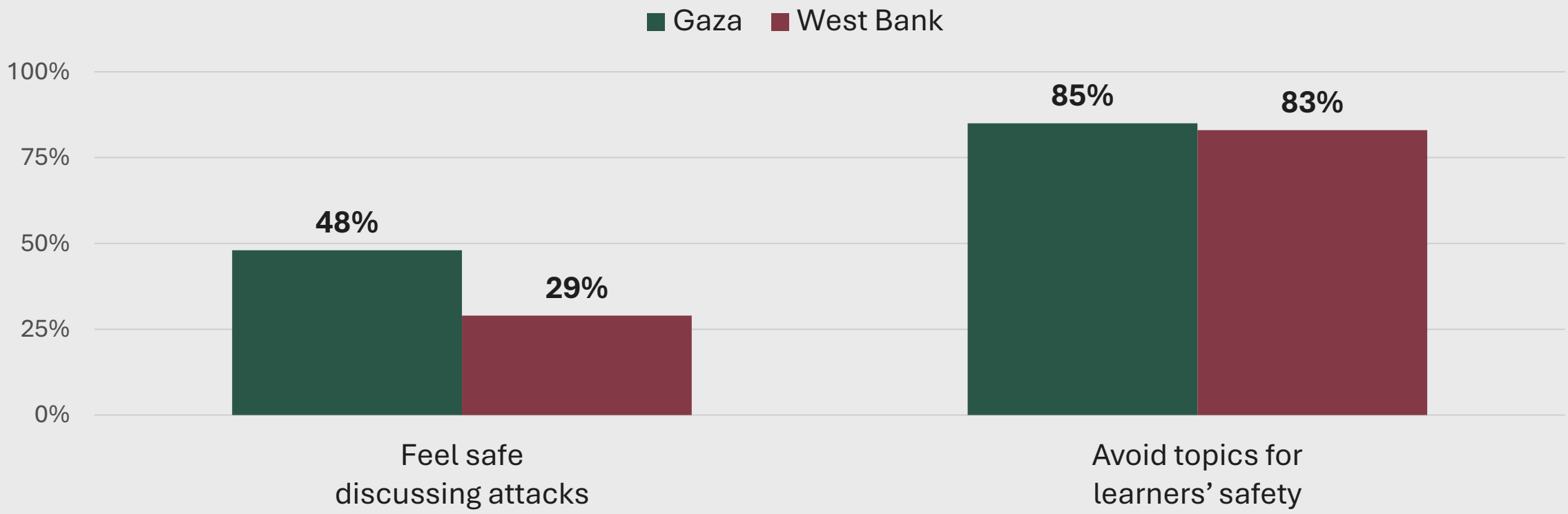
87%

said their beliefs about justice and human rights had been challenged

“if external justice is lacking, I emphasise establishing it within the classroom through mutual respect and equality for all.” Teacher, Gaza

“The teacher is currently maintaining a minimum of humanity and scientific knowledge (addressing educational losses) to continue life and instil hope in the hearts of students. I preserve what remains of the morals and values in light of the disappearance of the values of justice and dignity as a result of the Israeli attacks, and preserve the remaining educational losses among the students.” (Teacher, Gaza)

Teachers’ professional and pedagogical autonomy



Professional judgement operates within substantial safety constraints

Teachers' voice and involvement in educational decision making

63%

69%

Reported no meaningful consultation in education recovery and planning

"I believe that greater involvement of teachers and educational counsellors in recovery planning is essential, as they are the closest to students and the most capable of identifying their educational, psychological, and social needs"
(Teacher, Gaza)

Teachers’ future needs and education reconstruction



Regular and full payment of salaries

85% Gaza

74% West Bank

Rated as high priority	Gaza	West Bank
Psychosocial support for students	80%	62%
Psychosocial support for teachers	72%	56%
Professional development (six topics)	64–78%	55–63%
Strengthening school leadership	68%	56%
Recruiting additional teachers	51%	39%

Recommendations

"Today, education is our only window for preserving hope." **(Teacher, Gaza)**

“I hope that… collective efforts will be strengthened to rebuild the education sector and provide a safe learning environment that guarantees every child’s right to learn, grow, and live with dignity.”
(Teacher, Gaza)

The logic behind the recommendations

Attacks have affected teachers' living and working conditions, wellbeing and voice, and with them their ability to teach.

Teachers feel let down by the international community, yet sustain education through Sumud: steadfastness and commitment to the right to education.

The recommendations follow this order

1 · WHAT MUST CHANGE

- **Ending the occupation and attacks on education**

Education is a human right and education spaces must be protected under international law

2 · FOUNDATIONS OF RECOVERY

- **Rebuilding education infrastructure**
- **Rebuilding trust: accountable international action and aid**

Learning needs safe, resourced spaces, backed by aid that is accountable

3 · TEACHERS THEMSELVES

- **Working conditions and rights**
- **Status of the profession**
- **Teachers' voice**

Teachers cannot support traumatised children while their own basic needs go unmet

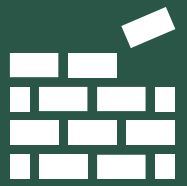
Recommendations apply to both Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem; context-specific ones are flagged.

“Palestinian teachers must be ensured financial and moral recognition. It is impossible to speak about educational commitment and passion while teachers are struggling [without] regular payment of full salaries, and … cost-of-living allowances … to safeguard teachers’ human dignity. Sustainable psychosocial support programmes and professional protection measures should be provided for educational personnel to help them overcome trauma … and continue fulfilling their educational mission. Safe learning spaces equipped with essential educational resources should be established instead of relying on empty tents. Frontline teachers should be engaged as genuine partners and decision-makers in designing recovery plans and rebuilding the educational system, as their direct experience provides essential insights into the realities and needs of learners and educators.” (Teacher, Gaza)

Ending the occupation and attacks on education



- Ensure that humanitarian assistance complements international efforts to protect civilians and education.
- Exert sustained political and diplomatic pressure on the Israeli government to release the Palestinian clearance revenues it withholds.
- Ensure that all parties comply with applicable international humanitarian and human rights law.



- Ensure that attacks on civilian educational spaces, teachers and learners cease.
- Protect safe and continuous access to education, including by removing restrictions that unnecessarily obstruct teachers and learners from reaching it.

Rebuilding education infrastructure

"I would like to add that Palestinian teachers continue to carry out their mission despite the difficult psychological, financial and on-the-ground conditions they face. However, they cannot be expected to remain resilient and constantly adapt without receiving the support and stability they need... Teachers should be viewed first as human beings, with families, needs and concerns, and also as professional partners whose experience and voices should be represented in educational decision-making. Despite all the challenges, I still believe in the power of education to preserve hope and build a better future, provided that we protect teachers and give them the trust, support and professional recognition they deserve." (Teacher, West Bank)

Rebuilding education infrastructure

Undertake a coordinated assessment of destroyed, damaged and partially functioning education facilities

Treat safe access to learning spaces as a core infrastructure issue and incorporate it into reconstruction planning.

Ensure that all reconstructed, temporary and existing facilities are accessible to learners and teachers with disabilities

Prioritise underserved, marginalised and high-risk communities

Maintain and adequately resource existing school infrastructure

Restore and expand reliable digital connectivity, electricity, devices and digital learning resources

Rebuilding trust: accountable international action and aid

“Perhaps the most profound impact [of war] is that many teachers have lost confidence in the international system of humanitarian values. The events of the war have led them to question principles such as equality, human rights and tolerance, as they feel these values have not been upheld in practice.” (NGO staff member)

Rebuilding trust: accountable international action and aid

Ensure sustained, predictable and adequate international financing for educational recovery

Substantially expand and sustain direct financial support from international donors to the Palestinian government

Protect continuity of education funding to organisations capable of delivering education at scale, including UNRWA

Align aid with Palestinian teacher organisations' priorities on safe access, salaries, psychosocial support, professional development and learning continuity during movement restrictions.

Improve transparency concerning the purpose, duration, funding and outcomes of international education interventions

Meeting teachers working conditions and needs

"...support teachers by improving their living conditions, ensuring regular salaries and disbursement of their financial dues, and investing in the quality of education..." (Teacher, Gaza)

Meeting teachers working conditions and needs

Ensure regular and full payment of salaries, establish transparent mechanisms for settling outstanding payments.

Establish sustained, easily accessible psychosocial, mental health and counselling services for teachers

Avoid transferring responsibility for specialist mental health care of learners to teachers.

Ensure that displaced teachers and their families have access to adequate shelter and other facilities

Develop flexible professional and administrative arrangements for teachers

Provide protected time and resources for teachers to engage in professional learning

“Teachers still need greater psychological, professional, and financial support, as well as long-term programs that ensure the continuity of education…” (Teacher, West Bank)

Enhancing the status of the teaching profession



Develop a comprehensive strategy for recruiting and retaining the teaching workforce.



Protect teachers' professional autonomy and academic freedom, rather than merely expecting individual adaptation.



Protect employment relationships and professional status when teachers are unable to teach



Restore and strengthen career structures and progression, and access to sustained, practical professional development as the education system is rebuilt

Centring Palestinian teachers' voices

"Unfortunately, the opportunities available for teachers to contribute to decision-making or participate in planning for the recovery phase have been extremely limited and almost absent. Most decisions have continued to be made through top-down administrative processes, without establishing genuine mechanisms to listen to our voices and experiences. Despite our own initiatives and field-based efforts, our role has largely remained limited to implementation and confronting challenges on the ground. This situation highlights the urgent need to ensure the meaningful involvement of frontline teachers in future planning processes, as they are the ones directly experiencing the realities and challenges of education during crises." (Teacher, Gaza)

Centring Palestinian teachers' voices

Teacher unions and representative associations must be able to operate freely and without restriction

Moving from consultation to meaningful participation through formal representation of teachers and unions in national and local structures

Representation should also reflect the diversity of the profession

Teachers need to be represented in all discussions about stopping the attacks, as well as about education reconstruction and transformation in Palestine

Key take away

"I would like to add that Palestinian teachers continue to carry out their mission despite the difficult psychological, financial and on-the-ground conditions they face. However, they cannot be expected to remain resilient and constantly adapt without receiving the support and stability they need… Teachers should be viewed first as human beings, with families, needs and concerns, and also as professional partners whose experience and voices should be represented in educational decision-making. Despite all the challenges, I still believe in the power of education to preserve hope and build a better future, provided that we protect teachers and give them the trust, support and professional recognition they deserve."
(Teacher, West Bank)

Thank you.

To read the report scan: