

Characteristics of 2020-21 Public and Private K-12 School Teachers in the United States

Results From the National Teacher and Principal Survey

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First Look—Summary Report

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Introduction

The 2020-21 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS)¹ is a nationally representative sample survey of public² and private³ K-12 schools, principals, and teachers in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. State-level data are also available for public schools, principals, and teachers. NTPS collects data on core topics including teacher and principal preparation, classes taught, school characteristics, and demographics of the teacher and principal labor forces. The survey is developed by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) within the U.S. Department of Education, and data are collected by the U.S. Census Bureau. This report presents basic estimates from the Public School Teacher and Private School Teacher Data Files of the 2020-21 NTPS, the third collection of NTPS.

The purpose of NTPS is to collect data to provide a detailed picture of U.S. elementary and secondary schools and their staff. Data are collected through school, principal, and teacher surveys. Data on the three surveys can be linked using the school identification number (see the *User's Manual for the 2020-21 National Teacher and Principal Survey Volumes 1-4*, Petraglia et al. 2022).

The 2020-21 NTPS used a school-based sample of public and private schools. The selected samples included about 9,900 public schools and their principals, 68,300 public school teachers, 3,000 private schools and their principals, and 8,000 private school teachers.

Data were collected between October 2020 and August 2021. Items about how schools first adapted to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic during the spring of 2020 were included in the school, principal, and teacher questionnaires. See Berger et al. (2022) for an initial look at results from these items using preliminary NTPS data. In addition, an item was included at the beginning of each questionnaire asking about the current effect of COVID-19 on instruction at the school at the time the survey was completed during the 2020-21 school year. Other topics in the 2020-21 NTPS school teacher survey included

- General employment and background information, such as type of teaching position held and whether full-time or part-time, base salary and salary supplements, and demographic characteristics such as race/ethnicity and birth year;
- Class organization, including main teaching assignment, grades taught, number of classes and students taught, and number of students with Individualized Education Plans⁴ or who were English-Language Learners;

¹ NTPS is a redesign of the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS). NTPS was introduced in the 2015-16 school year and administered again in 2017-18 and 2020-21.

² Public schools include traditional public and charter schools.

³ While SASS included both public and private sector schools, principals, and teachers, the 2015-16 administration of NTPS only included the public sector. The 2017-18 and 2020-21 administrations of NTPS included both public and private sector schools.

⁴ The questionnaire asked how many students had an “Individualized Education Plan (IEP).” This is also known as an “Individualized Education Program.”

- Education and training, such as degrees earned, student teaching experiences, and courses taken to prepare for teaching;
- Certification, such as type of teaching certificate held, and the content areas and grade ranges of the certificate;
- Early career experiences, including how well prepared they were for various activities and kinds of support received during their first year of teaching;
- Working conditions, such as total weekly hours required to work and hours spent delivering instruction; and
- School climate and teacher attitudes, such as perceptions of influence over school policy and control over areas of planning and teaching in their classroom, agreement with various statements about their job, perceived problems at their school, and plans to remain in teaching.

The purpose of this First Look is to provide summaries of the new data collected using tables of descriptive information. Selected findings presented in the tables and text show the range of information available in the 2020-21 NTPS Public School Teacher and Private School Teacher data files. Findings presented in the text do not include all differences in the tables and do not emphasize any one issue.

This First Look highlights findings from the NTPS public school teacher and private school teacher surveys. Findings from the school and principal surveys are presented in two companion First Look reports:

- *Characteristics of 2020-21 Public and Private K-12 Schools in the United States: Results From the National Teacher and Principal Survey First Look* (NCES 2022-111); and
- *Characteristics of 2020-21 Public and Private K-12 School Principals in the United States: Results From the National Teacher and Principal Survey First Look* (NCES 2022-112).

Results shown in this report are not causal. Many of the variables in the report relate to one another, but only simple comparisons are presented, which do not account for all possible relationships. More information about NTPS can be found at <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ntps>.

For readers interested in appendixes with estimate and standard error tables, definitions of terms used in the findings and tables, and additional information about the survey from which the findings are drawn, please see the “View full report” link at <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2022113>.

Selected Findings

- About 80 percent of all public K-12 school teachers were non-Hispanic White, 9 percent were Hispanic, 6 percent were non-Hispanic Black, 2 percent were non-Hispanic Asian, and 2 percent indicated they were non-Hispanic and of Two or more races. Among private K-12 school teachers, about 83 percent were non-Hispanic White, 8 percent were Hispanic, 4 percent were non-Hispanic Black, 2 percent were non-Hispanic Asian, and 2 percent indicated they were non-Hispanic and of Two or more races (table A-1).
- About three-quarters of both public and private K-12 school teachers were female (77 percent and 75 percent, respectively). A higher percentage of public elementary school teachers were female (89 percent) than were teachers in middle, secondary/high, or combined/other grade levels (72, 60, and 74 percent, respectively). In private schools, a higher percentage of elementary/middle school teachers were female (90 percent) than were teachers in secondary/high or combined/other grade levels (56 and 77 percent). The median age of public school teachers was 42 years old, and the median age of private school teachers was 45 years old (table A-2).
- Both public and private K-12 school teachers reported having an average of about 15 total years of teaching experience, of which an average of about 8 years was spent teaching at the current school. On average, teachers in traditional public schools reported more total years of teaching experience than did teachers in public charter schools (15 years compared with 10 years) (table A-3).
- In the 2020-21 school year, 51 percent of public K-12 school teachers had a master's degree, 38 percent had a bachelor's degree, 10 percent had higher than a master's degree, and about 1 percent had less than a bachelor's degree as their highest degree earned. Among private K-12 school teachers, 41 percent had a master's degree, 45 percent had a bachelor's degree, 9 percent had higher than a master's degree, and 5 percent had less than a bachelor's degree as their highest degree earned (table A-4).
- On average, regular full-time teachers in public K-12 schools spent 52 hours per week on all school-related activities, including 25 hours that they were paid to deliver instruction to students. Public school teachers were required by their contracts to work an average of 38 hours per week. Regular full-time private K-12 school teachers spent an average of 52 hours per week on all school-related activities, including 24 hours that they were paid to deliver instruction to students. Private school teachers were required by their contracts to work an average of 39 hours per week (table A-5).
- In the 2020-21 school year, regular full-time teachers in public K-12 schools had a higher average base salary⁵ (\$61,600) than regular full-time teachers in private schools (\$46,400). About 17 percent each of public and private K-12 school teachers had jobs outside their school

⁵ Average base salary is for the school year; summer earnings are not included. Teachers who reported a base salary of zero are excluded.

system during the school year. A higher percentage of public school than private school teachers had earnings from extracurricular or additional activities in the same school system (40 percent compared with 26 percent) (table A-6).

- For public K-12 school teachers in self-contained classrooms,⁶ the average class size was 19 students in elementary schools, and 17 students in middle schools, secondary/high schools, and schools with combined/other grades. For departmentalized teachers⁷ in public K-12 schools, the average class size was 21 for elementary schools, 22 for middle schools, 21 for secondary/high schools, and 18 for schools with combined/other grades (table A-7a).
- For private K-12 school teachers in self-contained classrooms, the average class size was 14 students in elementary/middle schools, 16 students in secondary/high schools, and 15 students in schools with combined/other grades. For departmentalized teachers in private K-12 schools, the average class size was 14 students in elementary/middle schools, 16 students in secondary/high schools, and 14 students in schools with combined/other grades (table A-7b).
- Compared to public K-12 school teachers, a lower percentage of private K-12 school teachers had taken graduate or undergraduate courses across a range of subjects prior to their first year of teaching, including lesson planning, learning assessment, classroom management techniques, serving students with special needs, serving students from diverse economic backgrounds, using student performance data to inform instruction, and teaching students who are limited-English proficient or English-language learners. For example, 78 percent of public school teachers had courses in lesson planning compared to 66 percent of private school teachers (table A-8).
- Most public (81 to 85 percent) and private (84 to 96 percent) K-12 school teachers thought they had influence on establishing curriculum, setting performance standards for their students, and determining the content of in-service professional development programs. In addition, many public (71 percent) and private (82 percent) school teachers thought they had influence on setting discipline policy (table A-9).
- Almost all public K-12 school teachers (96 to 98 percent) and private K-12 school teachers (98 to 99 percent) reported that they had some control over selecting teaching techniques, evaluating and grading students, determining the amount of homework to be assigned, and disciplining students. Most public school teachers (84 to 86 percent) and almost all private school teachers (95 to 96 percent) reported that they had some control over selecting content, topics, and skills to be taught, and selecting textbooks and other instructional materials (table A-10).

⁶ Self-contained classes are defined as instruction to the same group of students all or most of the day in multiple subjects.

⁷ Departmentalized instruction is defined as instruction to several classes of different students all or most of the day in one or more subjects.

References

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