The National Education Association strongly believes in the importance of an educator workforce that reflects the diversity of the United States. This belief extends not only to classroom teachers and education support professionals, but also to administrators and other school and district staff. To this end, this brief provides information about the representation (or lack thereof) of women, people of color, and LGBTQ+ people in PK-12 administrative positions. A list of sources for further reading is included at the end of this document.

**Gender in PK-12 Education Administration**

Women held 54.2% of principal positions during the 2015-16 school year according to the National Teacher and Principal Survey (NPTS), a periodic survey conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Although under-represented for decades, women have had a long history as school principals. However, as shown in Figure 1, it was not until the 2007-08 school year when women (50.3%) first surpassed men (49.7%) in the field.

![Figure 1. Public School Principals by Gender, 1993-94 to 2015-16](image)

Figure 2 shows how the gender distribution differs between public school principals and teachers. Unsurprisingly, the percent of principals who are female is far lower than that for teachers. However, female principals are more common in elementary schools than secondary schools. During the 2015-16 school year, 67.7% of primary schools had female principals as compared to only 32.7% of high schools. Additionally, female principals are more prevalent in urban (61%) and suburban (57.5%) schools than in towns (48.2%) and rural areas (46.4%).

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i. Data Brief: Diversity and Representation in PK-12 Education Administration (NBI 2018-111) NEA Research, June 2019

**Figure 1. Public School Principals by Gender, 1993-94 to 2015-16**

- **Percent Female**
  - 1993-94: 34.5%
  - 1999-2000: 43.8%
  - 2007-08: 50.3%
  - 2011-12: 51.6%
  - 2015-16: 54.2%

- **Percent Male**
  - 1993-94: 65.5%
  - 1999-2000: 56.2%
  - 2007-08: 49.7%
  - 2011-12: 48.4%
  - 2015-16: 45.8%
Although a slim majority of principals are female, women remain greatly under-represented as superintendents. A 2017-18 study conducted by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) found that approximately 23% of superintendent respondents were female. AASA noted that the number of female respondents to its voluntary survey has grown over the past five years, suggesting an increase in the number of female superintendents. This movement is promising but, overall, under-representation of women in school leadership and governance roles remains the norm.

**Race and Ethnicity in Public School Administration**

Under-representation of people of color in school administration is a persistent problem in American public schools. According to the NTPS and as shown in Figure 3, in 2015-16, 22.2% of public school principal positions were held by people of color, while 77.8% of principal positions were held by White, non-Hispanic people. In total, 10.6% of principals were African American, non-Hispanic, and 8.2% were Hispanic or Latinx regardless of race. While the percent of principals who are White has steadily decreased since 1993-94, most of the growth in principal diversity has been due to an increase in the proportion of Hispanic/Latinx principals. The percent of African American principals has remained flat, and only minute increases have occurred in terms of Asian or Pacific Islander, Native American/Alaska Native, and multi-racial principals.

Interestingly, principals are slightly more likely to be African American and less likely to be White than teachers are, as shown in Figure 4. However, racial and ethnic diversity among both principals and teachers still lags far behind that of the public school student population. Not surprisingly, there is greater representation of African American (19.6%) and Hispanic/Latinx (12.9%) principals in urban areas when compared with non-urban areas. Rural schools have the least representation of African American (5%) and Hispanic/Latinx (2.9%) principals.
Under-representation of people of color is even more prevalent among superintendents. According to the AASA, people of color represented 5.7% of respondents while White people represented 93.3% of respondents.\textsuperscript{xiv} Breaking the numbers down further, approximately, 2% of respondents were African American, 1.8% were Hispanic/Latinx, 0.5% were Native American, 0.2% were Asian, and 0.1% were Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander.\textsuperscript{xv}

**LGBTQ+ Representation in Administration**

Unfortunately, no data exist on the percent of educators or administrators who identify as LGBTQ+. However, there exists a small, but growing body of literature on LGBTQ+ issues in education leadership. The reading list below provides a sample of this literature in addition to resources that address gender and racial/ethnic diversity in administrative positions.
Additional Resources


Sperandio, J. Knowing the community: Women planning careers in educational leadership. Planning and Changing, 46(3-4), 416-427.


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iii Ibid.


vi Ibid.


viii It is important to note that this study was dependent on the voluntary response of superintendents. In total, 9,000 surveys were emailed to superintendents in all 50 states, of which only 1,172 were returned. Of that number, 891 respondents indicated male, 264 female, and 17 omitted gender.


x Ibid.


Ibid.