

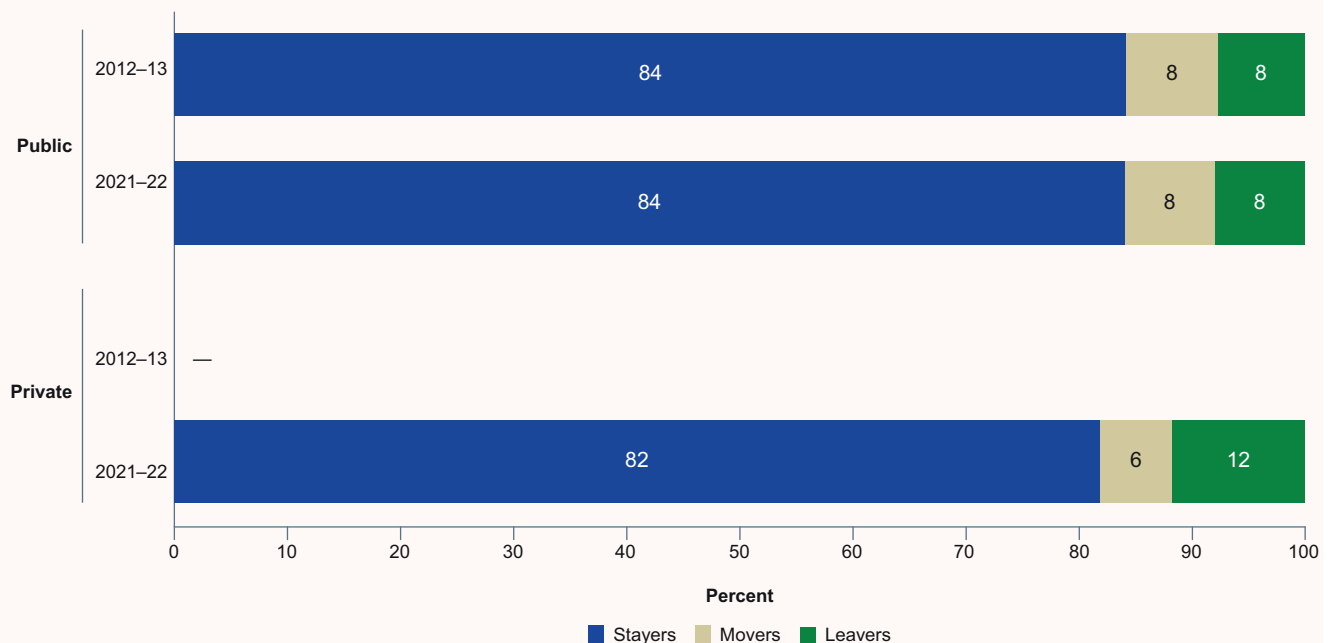
Teacher Turnover: Stayers, Movers, and Leavers

Among the teachers in 2020–21 who voluntarily moved to another school for the 2021–22 school year, a higher percentage of public school teachers than private school teachers reported school factors as the most important reason for the move (31 vs. 20 percent), while a higher percentage of private school teachers than public school teachers reported salary and other job benefits as the most important reason (36 vs. 9 percent).

In the United States,¹ 84 percent of teachers in public schools and 82 percent of teachers in private schools in 2020–21 stayed on as teachers at the same school in 2021–22.² Meanwhile, 8 percent of public school teachers and 6 percent of private school teachers moved to a position as a teacher at another school, and 8 percent of public school teachers and 12 percent of private school teachers left the profession. These three groups are referred to as “stayers,” “movers,” and “leavers,” respectively, in this indicator. Mobility or attrition status refers to a teacher’s status as a stayer, mover, or leaver.

FIGURE 1.

Percentage distribution of public and private school teachers, by mobility or attrition status: School years 2012–13 and 2021–22



— Not available.

NOTE: Stayers are teachers who stayed in the same position at the same school in the school year reported above as in the previous school year, movers are teachers who moved to work as a teacher at a different school in the school year reported above, and leavers are teachers who were no longer working as a teacher in the school year reported above. Figures are plotted based on unrounded data. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding in the data labels.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS), “Current and Former Teacher Data Files,” 2021–22; Teacher Attrition and Mobility: Results From the 2012–13 Teacher Follow-up Survey, U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES 2014-077). See *Teacher Attrition and Mobility: Results From the 2021–22 Teacher Follow-up Survey to the National Teacher and Principal Survey*, table 1.

Comparing the 2021-22³ mobility or attrition status of public school teachers with that of private school teachers,

- a higher percentage of public school teachers were movers (8 vs. 6 percent); and
- a higher percentage of private school teachers were leavers (12 vs. 8 percent).

For public school teachers, data on mobility or attrition status are also available for 2012-13. The percentage of public school teachers in each of the three groups (stayers, movers, and leavers) in 2021-22 was not measurably different from the percentage in 2012-13.

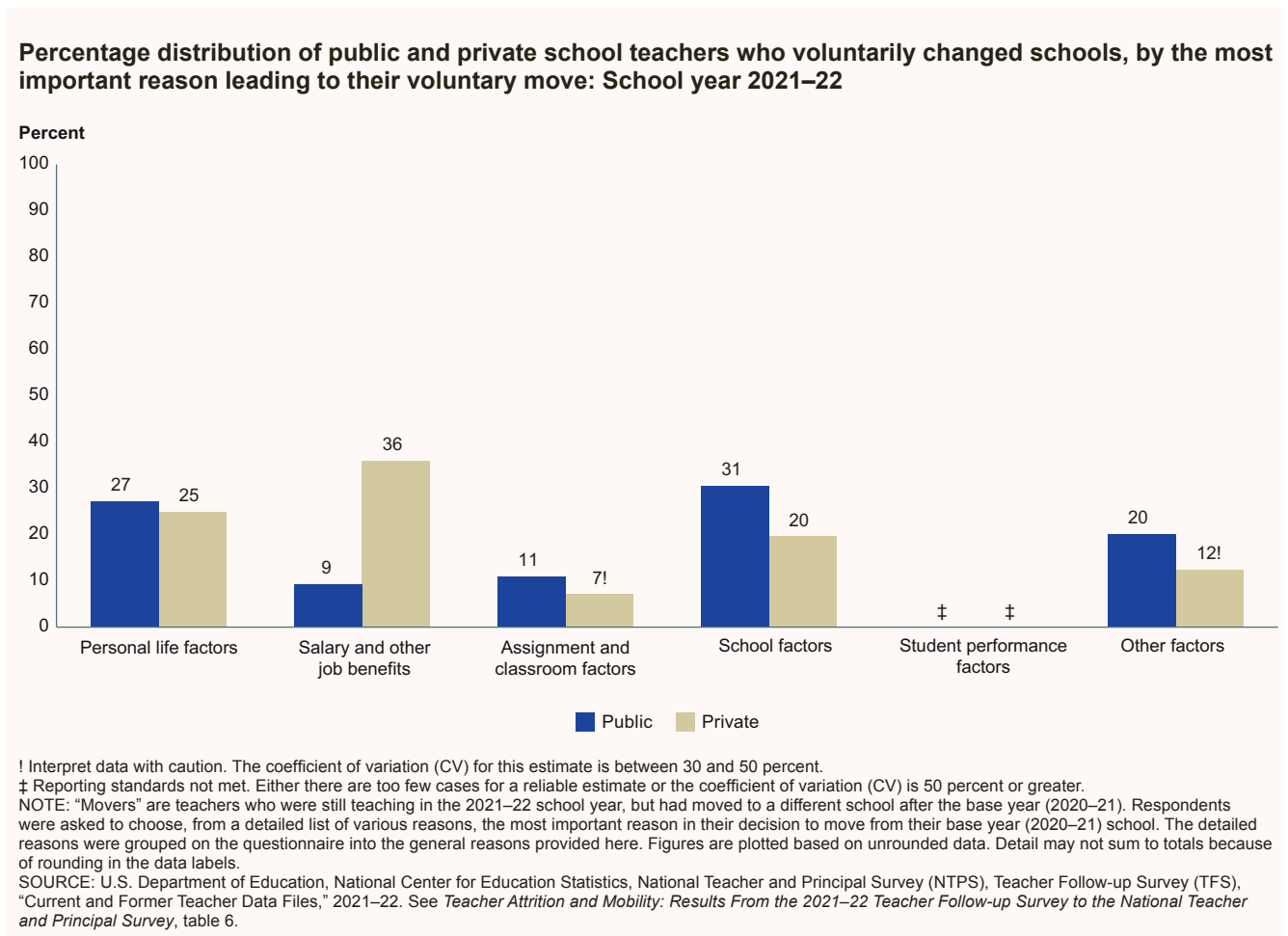
New Occupational Status for Movers

Teachers who stayed in the profession but moved to a new school may or may not have been working in a school of the same control (public or private) as the prior year. Among teachers who were movers in 2021-22,

- 96 percent of public school movers moved to another public school (including 51 percent who stayed in the same district); and
- 54 percent of private school movers moved to another private school.

Voluntary Reason for Moving Schools

FIGURE 2.



Eighty-one percent of teachers who moved from public schools between 2020-21 and 2021-22 did so voluntarily. Among these voluntary public school movers, the reasons they cited as the most important for their decision included

- school factors (31 percent);
- personal life factors (27 percent);
- assignment and classroom factors (11 percent); and
- salary and other job benefits (9 percent).⁴

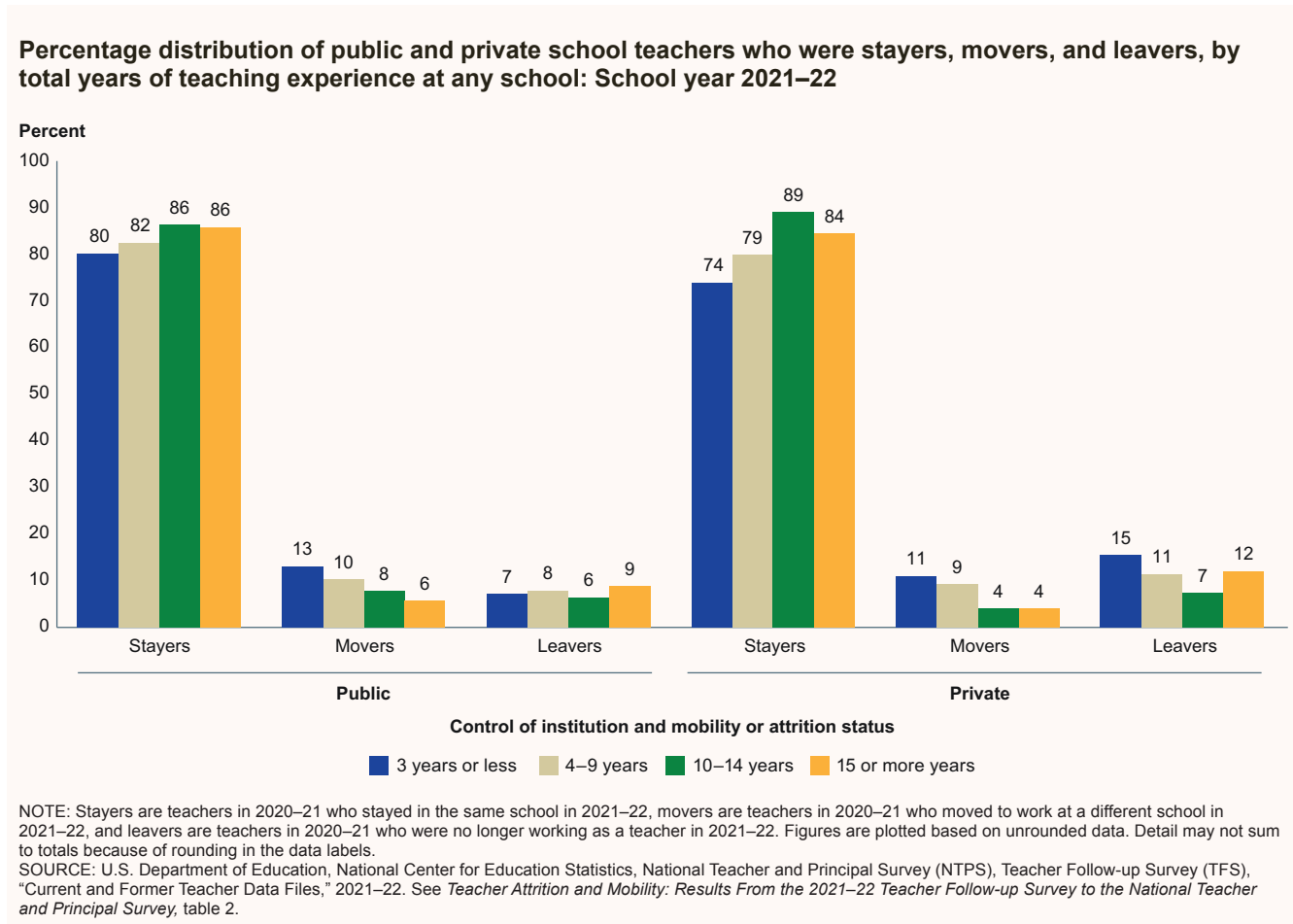
Eighty-four percent of private school teachers who moved to other schools between 2020-21 and 2021-22 did so voluntarily, and the reasons they reported as most important included

- salary and other job benefits (36 percent);
- personal life factors (25 percent);
- school factors (20 percent); and
- assignment and classroom factors (7 percent).

Among teachers who moved schools voluntarily in 2021-22, a higher percentage of public school teachers than private school teachers reported school factors as the most important reason for the move (31 vs. 20 percent), while a higher percentage of private school teachers than public school teachers reported salary and other job benefits as the most important reason (36 vs. 9 percent).⁵

Mobility or Attrition Status by Teacher Characteristics⁶

FIGURE 3.



Teachers at different points in their careers may exhibit different propensities for mobility or attrition. The data show some differences in mobility or attrition status in 2021-22 by years of experience⁷ for public and private school teachers. For example, at public schools,

- the percentage of stayers was lower for those with less than 3 years of teaching experience (80 percent) and 4 to 9 years of teaching experience (82 percent) than for those with 10 to 14 years and 15 or more years of experience (86 percent each);
- the percentage of movers was higher for those with less than 3 years of teaching experience (13 percent) and 4 to 9 years of teaching experience (10 percent) than for those with 10 to 14 years of experience (8 percent) and 15 or more years of experience (6 percent); and
- the percentage of leavers was lower for those with 10 to 14 years of teaching experience (6 percent) than for those with 15 or more years of experience (9 percent).

At private schools,

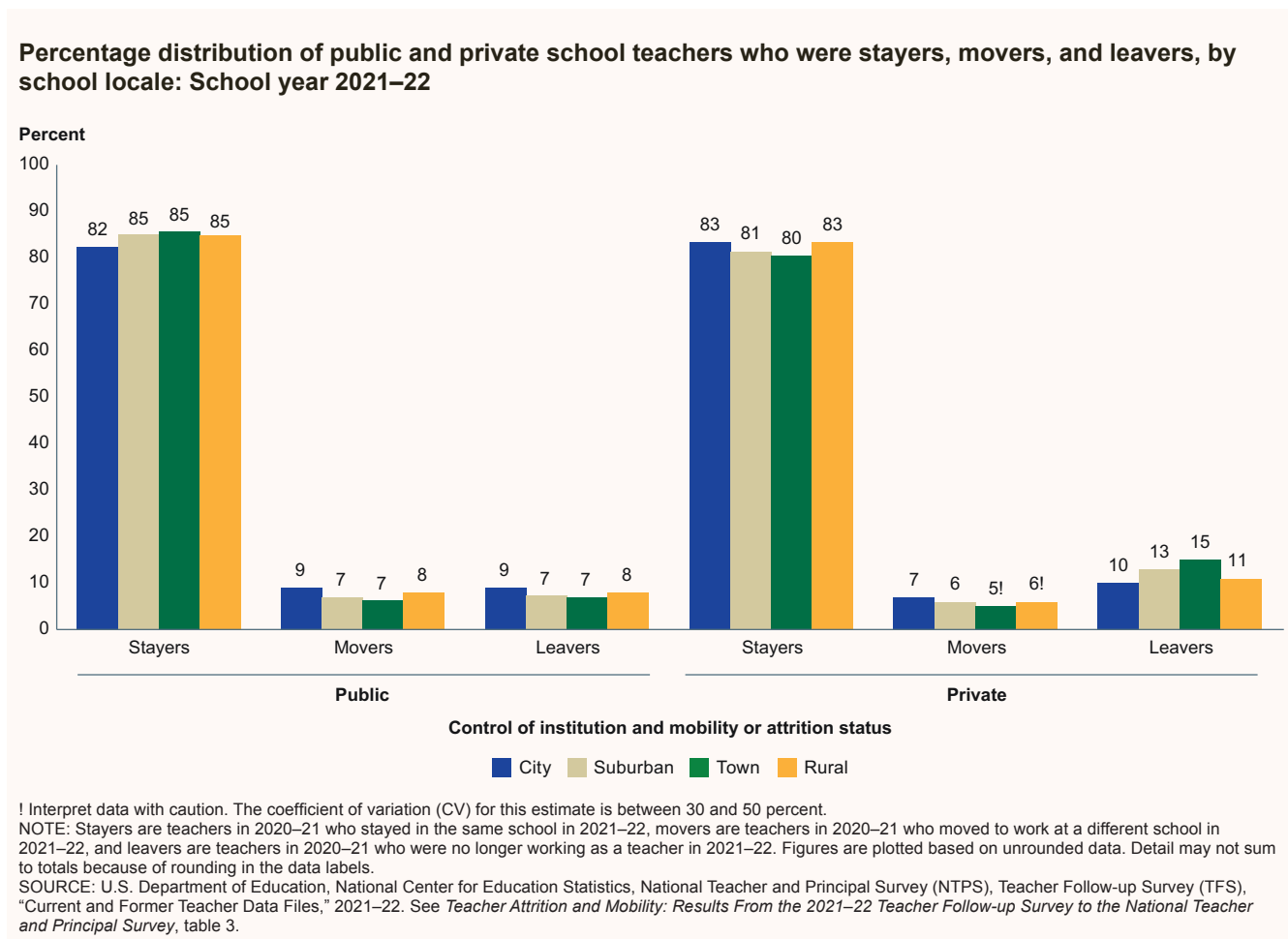
- the percentage of stayers was lower for those with less than 3 years of teaching experience (74 percent) than for those with 10 to 14 years of experience (89 percent) and 15 or more years of experience (84 percent);
- the percentage of movers was higher for those with less than 3 years of teaching experience (11 percent) and 4 to 9 years of teaching experience (9 percent) than for those with 10 to 14 years and 15 or more years of experience (4 percent each); and
- the percentage of leavers was lower for those with 10 to 14 years of teaching experience (7 percent) than for those with less than 3 years of experience (15 percent) and 15 or more years of experience (12 percent).

There were also some differences in mobility or attrition status in 2021-22 for public school teachers by level of highest education attainment:

- The percentage of movers was higher for those with a bachelor's degree or less (9 percent) than for those with a master's degree or a degree higher than a master's (7 percent each).
- The percentage of leavers was lower for those with a bachelor's degree or less (6 percent) than for those with a master's degree (9 percent) or a degree higher than a master's (12 percent).

However, there was no measurable difference in mobility or attrition status for private school teachers by highest level of education attainment.

Few measurable differences were observed in mobility or attrition status for public or private school teachers in 2021-22 by other teacher characteristics, including sex and race/ethnicity.⁸

Mobility or Attrition Status by School Characteristics⁹**FIGURE 4.**

Some differences were also observed in the mobility or attrition status of public school teachers in 2021–22 by school characteristics. The mobility or attrition status of teachers in 2021–22 varied by the locale (city, suburban, town, rural) of the schools in which teachers worked in 2020–21. Among public school teachers,

- the percentage of stayers was lowest in cities (82 percent vs. 85 percent each in other locales); and
- the percentage of movers was higher in cities (9 percent) than in suburban areas and towns (7 percent each).

On the other hand, among private school teachers, there were no measurable differences in mobility or attrition status by the locale of the schools.

There were some differences in the mobility or attrition status of teachers in 2021–22 by the level of the schools in which teachers worked (e.g., elementary or secondary) in 2020–21.¹⁰ Among public school teachers,

- the percentage of stayers was lower for teachers from elementary schools (83 percent) than for teachers from secondary/high schools (86 percent); and
- the percentage of leavers was lower for teachers from secondary/high schools (7 percent) than for teachers from combined/other schools (11 percent).

Among private school teachers,

- the percentage of stayers was lower for teachers from secondary/high schools (77 percent) than for teachers from combined/other schools (84 percent);
- the percentage of movers was higher for teachers from elementary/middle schools (8 percent) than for teachers from combined/other schools (5 percent); and
- the percentage of leavers was higher for teachers from secondary/high schools (16 percent) than for teachers from combined/other schools (11 percent).

Lastly, in 2021-22, the percentages of public school teachers who were stayers or leavers generally did not differ measurably by school poverty, based on the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL) in the school in which they worked in 2020-21.^{11, 12} The only difference was that the percentage of movers was higher in high-poverty public schools (9 percent) than in low-poverty public schools (7 percent).

Endnotes:

¹ Throughout this indicator, the United States includes the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

² For general technical notes related to data analysis, data interpretation, rounding, and other considerations, please refer to the *Reader's Guide*.

³ Throughout this indicator, mobility or attrition status for a given school year refers to the status in that year relative to the prior year.

⁴ Respondents were asked to choose, from a detailed list of various reasons, the most important reason in their decision to move from their base year (2020-21) school. The detailed reasons were grouped on the questionnaire into the general reasons discussed here.

⁵ Leavers were also asked the question on their reason behind leaving. The reason public school and private school leavers cited as the most important for their decision for the leave was personal life factors (37 and 45 percent, respectively).

⁶ Teacher characteristics are based on reports during the 2020-21 school year.

⁷ Refers to years of experience as a teacher at any school.

⁸ Many differences by race/ethnicity, particularly for private school teachers, were not testable because reporting standards were not met.

⁹ School characteristics are for the schools in which teachers taught during the 2020-21 school year.

¹⁰ School levels include elementary, middle, secondary/high, and combined/other. All school levels are defined in the glossary. For private schools, elementary and middle are combined for reporting purposes.

¹¹ Students from households with incomes under 185 percent of the poverty threshold are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch under

the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). In addition, some groups of children—such as foster children, children participating in the Head Start and Migrant Education programs, and children receiving services under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act—are assumed to be categorically eligible to participate in the NSLP. Students reported as eligible for FRPL also include students whose NSLP eligibility has been determined through direct certification, which is a “process conducted by the states and by local educational agencies (LEAs) to certify eligible children for free meals without the need for household applications” (<https://www.fns.usda.gov/direct-certification-national-school-lunch-program-report-congress-state-implementation-progress-1>). Also, under the Community Eligibility option, some nonpoor children who attend school in a low-income area may participate if the district decides that it would be more efficient to provide free lunch to all children in the school. For more information, see <https://www.fns.usda.gov/nslp>.

¹² Eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL) is a common measure of poverty in public schools. In this indicator, low-poverty schools are defined as public schools where 34 percent or less of the students are eligible for FRPL; mid-low poverty schools are defined as those where 35 to 49 percent of the students are eligible for FRPL; mid-high poverty schools are defined as those where 50 to 74 percent of the students are eligible for FRPL; and high-poverty schools are defined as those where 75 percent or more of the students are eligible for FRPL under the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). Most private schools do not participate in the NSLP, therefore, this section presents data for public school teachers only.

Reference tables: *Teacher Attrition and Mobility: Results From the 2021-22 Teacher Follow-up Survey to the National Teacher and Principal Survey*, tables [A-1](#), [A-2](#), [A-3](#), [A-4a](#), [A-4b](#), [A-5](#), [A-6](#), and [A-7](#); *Digest of Education Statistics 2019*, table [210.30](#)

Related indicators and resources: [Characteristics of Public School Teachers](#); [Characteristics of Public School Teachers Who Completed Alternative Route to Certification Programs \[The Condition of Education 2018 Spotlight\]](#); [Characteristics of Traditional Public, Public Charter, and Private School Teachers](#); [Principal Turnover: Stayers, Movers, and Leavers](#)

Glossary: [Bachelor's degree](#); [Combined/other school](#); [Educational attainment](#); [Elementary school](#); [Locale codes](#); [Master's degree](#); [Middle school](#); [National School Lunch Program](#); [Private school](#); [Public school or institution](#); [Racial/ethnic group](#); [Secondary/high school](#)