

Understanding Teacher Compensation: A State-by-State Analysis

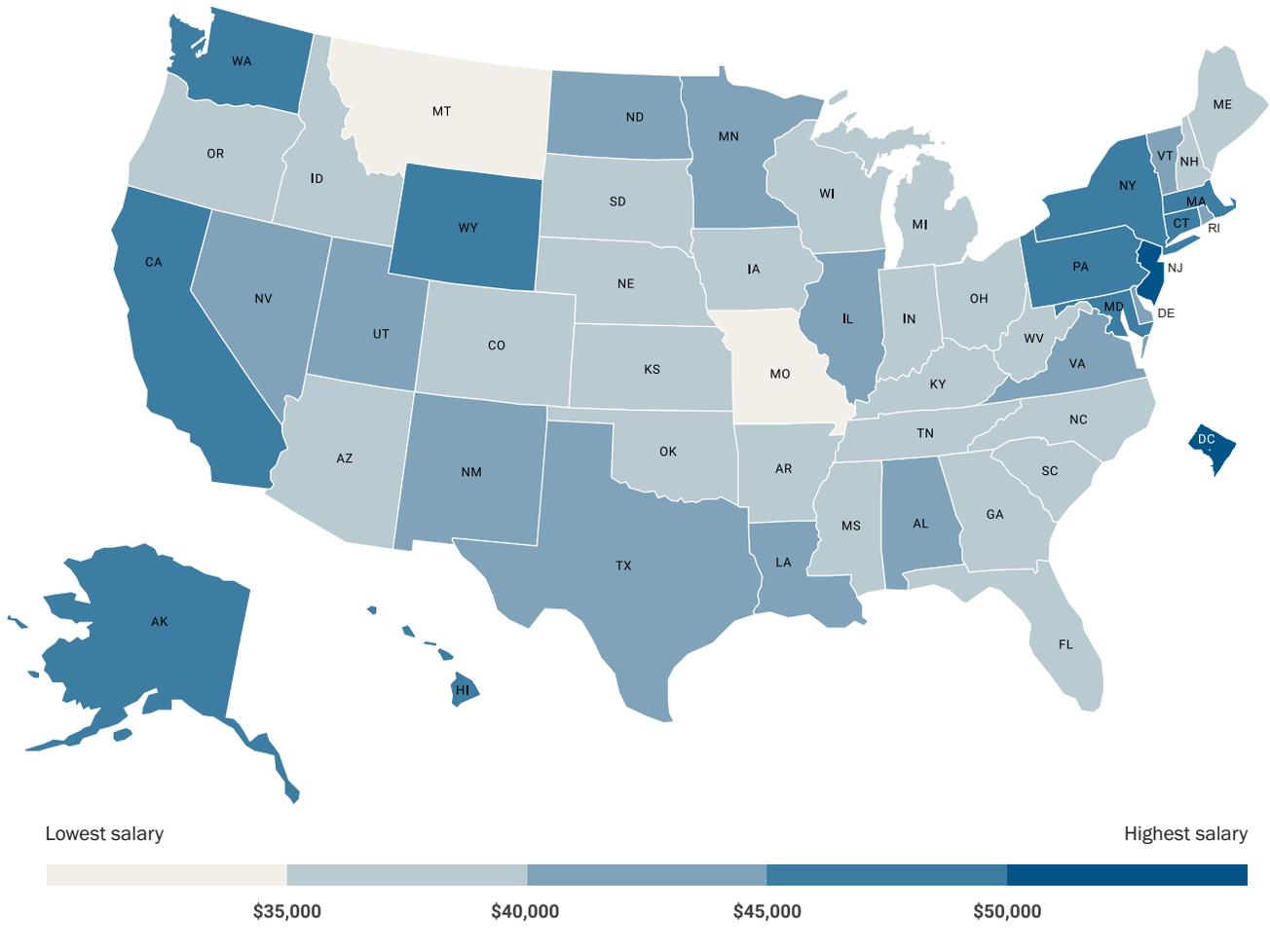
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Offering competitive teacher compensation is an important part of the solution to recruit and retain a strong and diverse teacher workforce. The maps and associated tables that follow show three teacher wage indicators for the nation and each state: (1) average annual starting salary for public school teachers, (2) average annual starting salary for public school teachers adjusted for cost-of-living differences across states, and (3) average weekly wage competitiveness—how much teachers earn relative to other college-educated workers in that state. Together, these indicators signal the overall wage conditions underlying efforts to attract and retain well-prepared teachers across a state. The final table in the series shows all three indicators for each state. Teacher starting salaries and cost of living vary by district, so within states (with the exception of Hawaii and Washington, DC, which each comprise a single school district), there are districts that will be higher or lower than their state average on these indicators.

A State-by-State Analysis of Annual Starting Salary

The map below highlights a key factor that influences teacher supply and attrition—starting salary. It shows the average annual starting salary for public school teachers in each state during the 2019–20 school year. Each state is color coded based on five salary bands from the lowest (below \$35,000, the lightest color) to the highest (\$50,000 or above, the darkest color). A table on the next page lists specific values for each state and the nation.

Average Annual Starting Salary by State, 2019–20



Average Annual Starting Salary by State, 2019–20

State	Average Annual Starting Teacher Salary	State	Average Annual Starting Teacher Salary
District of Columbia	\$56,313	South Dakota	\$39,636
New Jersey	\$53,177	Arizona	\$39,057
California	\$49,303	New Hampshire	\$38,990
Washington	\$49,113	Tennessee	\$38,809
Alaska	\$48,469	Florida	\$38,724
Hawaii	\$48,428	Wisconsin	\$38,678
Maryland	\$47,959	Georgia	\$38,509
Massachusetts	\$47,396	Kansas	\$38,314
New York	\$47,181	Oregon	\$38,280
Connecticut	\$46,905	Idaho	\$38,015
Wyoming	\$46,558	Oklahoma	\$37,992
Pennsylvania	\$46,232	West Virginia	\$37,978
Texas	\$44,582	Iowa	\$37,908
Rhode Island	\$43,569	Indiana	\$37,573
Delaware	\$43,092	Ohio	\$37,569
Utah	\$43,026	South Carolina	\$37,550
Virginia	\$42,069	Michigan	\$37,549
Louisiana	\$41,747	Kentucky	\$37,238
New Mexico	\$41,214	North Carolina	\$37,049
U.S. Average	\$41,163	Mississippi	\$36,543
Alabama	\$41,028	Maine	\$36,380
Nevada	\$40,732	Nebraska	\$35,820
Illinois	\$40,484	Colorado	\$35,292
Minnesota	\$40,310	Arkansas	\$35,201
Vermont	\$40,241	Missouri	\$32,970
North Dakota	\$40,106	Montana	\$32,871

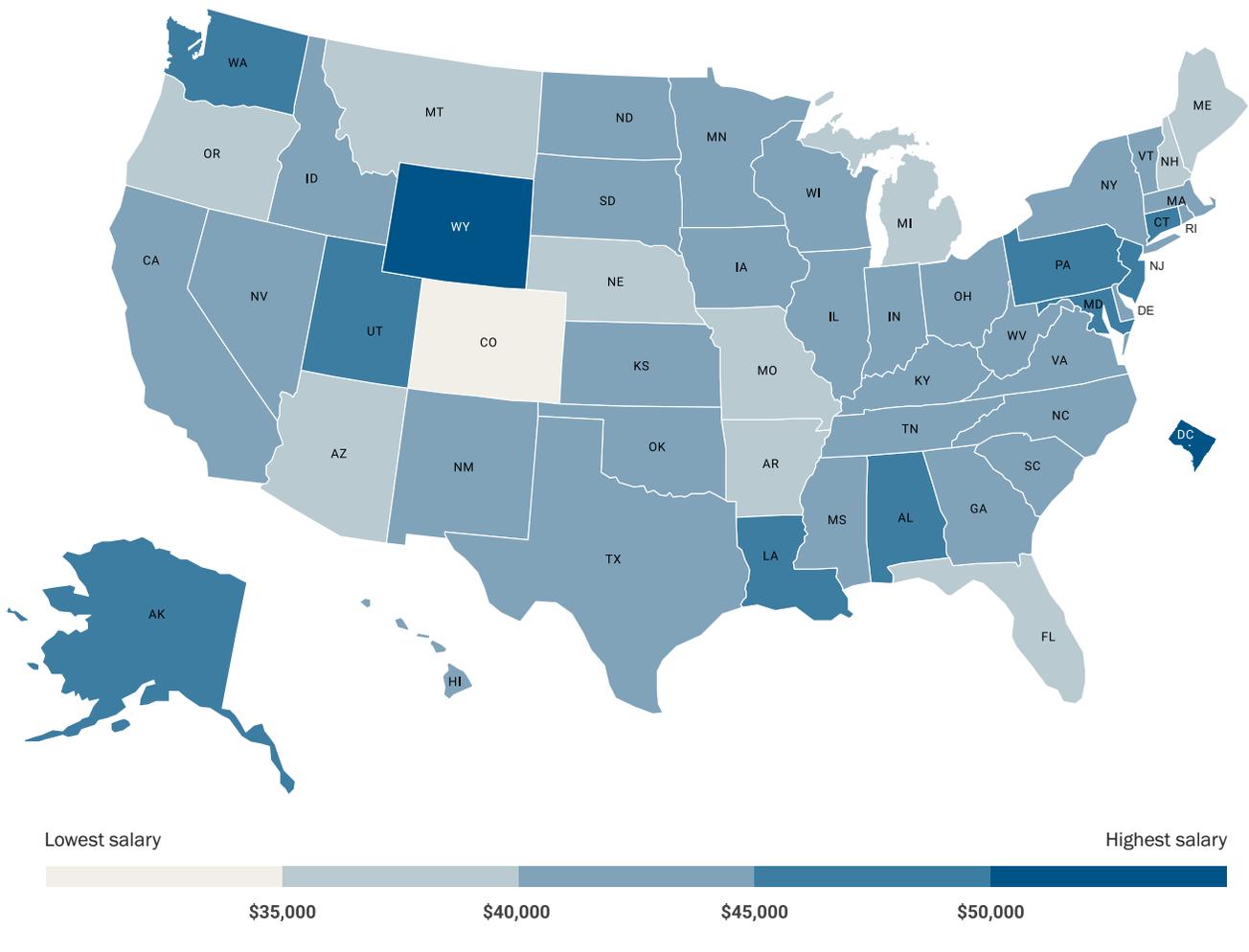
Note: Annual starting salary is defined as the salary paid to a teacher with a bachelor's degree and no prior experience. Annual starting salaries were collected by the National Education Association from district teacher salary schedules or district compensation plans. The national average is calculated as the average across districts. Annual starting salaries vary by district, so within states there are locales that offer starting salaries higher and lower than the state average.

Source: NEA 2019-2020 Teacher Salary Benchmark Report.

A State-by-State Analysis of Annual Starting Salary Adjusted for Differences in States' Cost of Living

The purchasing power of a dollar is not equivalent across states. As a result, the value of the same wage differs based on the local cost of living. The map below shows the average annual starting salary for public school teachers in 2019–20 after being adjusted for cost of living in the state, making comparisons across states more meaningful. Each state is color coded based on five salary bands from the lowest (below \$35,000, the lightest color) to the highest (\$50,000 or above, the darkest color). A table on the next page lists specific values for each state and the nation.

Cost-of-Living Adjusted Annual Starting Salary by State, 2019–20



Cost-of-Living Adjusted Annual Starting Salary by State, 2019–20

State	Cost-of-Living Adjusted Annual Starting Salary	State	Cost-of-Living Adjusted Annual Starting Salary
District of Columbia	\$50,505	Virginia	\$41,652
Wyoming	\$50,442	Mississippi	\$41,621
New Jersey	\$47,821	Oklahoma	\$41,612
Pennsylvania	\$47,369	Wisconsin	\$41,500
Alaska	\$46,966	Kentucky	\$41,468
Alabama	\$45,944	Kansas	\$41,465
Washington	\$45,729	U.S. Average	\$41,163
Connecticut	\$45,363	South Carolina	\$40,993
Utah	\$45,148	Ohio	\$40,969
Louisiana	\$45,035	Minnesota	\$40,882
Maryland	\$45,032	Georgia	\$40,750
New Mexico	\$44,993	Indiana	\$40,619
Texas	\$44,806	Vermont	\$40,525
California	\$44,659	North Carolina	\$40,358
Massachusetts	\$44,130	Illinois	\$40,283
Delaware	\$44,016	Michigan	\$39,946
North Dakota	\$43,593	Arkansas	\$39,463
South Dakota	\$43,318	Arizona	\$39,412
Hawaii	\$43,239	Nebraska	\$38,558
West Virginia	\$43,157	Florida	\$38,455
New York	\$42,814	New Hampshire	\$37,599
Rhode Island	\$42,799	Maine	\$37,583
Tennessee	\$42,092	Oregon	\$37,310
Nevada	\$41,949	Missouri	\$35,643
Idaho	\$41,683	Montana	\$35,575
Iowa	\$41,657	Colorado	\$34,297

Note: Annual starting salary is defined as the salary paid to a teacher with a bachelor's degree and no prior experience. Annual starting salaries were collected by the National Education Association from district teacher salary schedules or district compensation plans.

State cost-of-living adjustments are calculated using Regional Price Parities from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. Regional Price Parities are generated using average price quotes for a wide array of items from the Consumer Price Index such as apparel, education, food, housing, medical, recreation, transportation, and other goods and services. Regional Price Parities are expressed as a percentage of the overall national level. The national average starting wage for teachers does not get adjusted.

Annual starting salaries and cost of living also vary by district, so within states there are locales that offer adjusted starting salaries that are higher and lower than the state average.

Sources: NEA 2019-2020 Teacher Salary Benchmark Report; U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Regional Price Parity Indices 2020.

Teacher Wage Competitiveness by State

State	Wage Competitiveness Index	State	Wage Competitiveness Index
Wyoming	98.0%	U.S. Average	80.8%
Rhode Island	97.9%	Florida	80.7%
New Jersey	96.9%	Montana	80.6%
Alaska	90.3%	Wisconsin	80.1%
Delaware	90.2%	Idaho	79.1%
Hawaii	89.1%	District of Columbia	78.7%
Maryland	88.6%	Indiana	78.7%
New York	88.0%	Tennessee	78.6%
Vermont	87.3%	Kansas	78.2%
Pennsylvania	87.0%	Texas	78.1%
South Carolina	86.6%	Kentucky	77.8%
Connecticut	86.5%	Minnesota	77.5%
Iowa	85.3%	Maine	76.9%
Mississippi	84.8%	Louisiana	76.7%
Ohio	84.8%	Utah	76.7%
California	84.5%	Missouri	75.9%
Michigan	84.1%	Alabama	75.4%
North Dakota	83.6%	Georgia	74.9%
Nevada	83.4%	North Carolina	74.7%
Arkansas	82.3%	Oregon	72.7%
Nebraska	82.3%	Washington	71.9%
Massachusetts	82.0%	Colorado	71.2%
South Dakota	82.0%	Oklahoma	71.0%
New Hampshire	81.8%	New Mexico	70.5%
West Virginia	81.8%	Arizona	68.2%
Illinois	81.3%	Virginia	67.3%

Note: The wage competitiveness index represents the average public school teacher weekly wage as a percentage of the estimated weekly wage for other college-educated workers within each state. Weekly wages provide a comparison that adjusts for any differences in the work year across occupations. The data presented are the Economic Policy Institute's weekly wage penalty data transformed to a 0–100% scale. The wage competitiveness estimates are based on Population Survey data and control for factors that typically influence wages. State estimates are based on data from 2014 through 2019, and the national estimate is based on 2019 data.

Source: Allegretto, S., & Mishel, L. (2020). *Teacher Pay Penalty Dips but Persists in 2019: Public School Teachers Earn About 20% Less in Weekly Wages Than Nonteacher College Graduates*. Economic Policy Institute.

A State-by-State Analysis of Teacher Compensation Indicators

This table shows each state’s data and ranking across three compensation indicators: (1) average annual starting salary for public school teachers, (2) average annual starting salary for public school teachers adjusted for cost-of-living differences across states, and (3) average wage competitiveness—how much teachers earn relative to other college-educated workers in that state based on weekly wages that account for differences in the work year across occupations. For the rankings, 1 indicates the highest among the states and 51 indicates the lowest. State rankings should be interpreted with caution because the difference in value between ranks is often quite small.

Teacher Compensation Indicators by State

State	Starting Salary (2019–20) ^a	Starting Salary Rank (2019–20) ^a	Cost-of-Living Adjusted Starting Salary (2019–20) ^b	Cost-of-Living Adjusted Starting Salary Rank (2019–20) ^b	Wage Competitiveness Index ^c	Wage Competitiveness Rank ^c
Alabama	\$41,028	20	\$45,944	6	75.4%	42
Alaska	\$48,469	5	\$46,966	5	90.3%	4
Arizona	\$39,057	27	\$39,412	43	68.2%	50
Arkansas	\$35,201	49	\$39,463	42	82.3%	20
California	\$49,303	3	\$44,659	14	84.5%	16
Colorado	\$35,292	48	\$34,297	51	71.2%	47
Connecticut	\$46,905	10	\$45,363	8	86.5%	12
Delaware	\$43,092	15	\$44,016	16	90.2%	5
District of Columbia	\$56,313	1	\$50,505	1	78.7%	31
Florida	\$38,724	30	\$38,455	45	80.7%	27
Georgia	\$38,509	32	\$40,750	36	74.9%	43
Hawaii	\$48,428	6	\$43,239	19	89.1%	6
Idaho	\$38,015	35	\$41,683	25	79.1%	30
Illinois	\$40,484	22	\$40,283	40	81.3%	26
Indiana	\$37,573	39	\$40,619	37	78.7%	31
Iowa	\$37,908	38	\$41,657	26	85.3%	13
Kansas	\$38,314	33	\$41,465	32	78.2%	34
Kentucky	\$37,238	43	\$41,468	31	77.8%	36
Louisiana	\$41,747	18	\$45,035	10	76.7%	39
Maine	\$36,380	46	\$37,583	47	76.9%	38
Maryland	\$47,959	7	\$45,032	11	88.6%	7
Massachusetts	\$47,396	8	\$44,130	15	82.0%	22
Michigan	\$37,549	42	\$39,946	41	84.1%	17
Minnesota	\$40,310	23	\$40,882	35	77.5%	37
Mississippi	\$36,543	45	\$41,621	28	84.8%	14

State	Starting Salary (2019–20) ^a	Starting Salary Rank (2019–20) ^a	Cost-of-Living Adjusted Starting Salary (2019–20) ^b	Cost-of-Living Adjusted Starting Salary Rank (2019–20) ^b	Wage Competitiveness Index ^c	Wage Competitiveness Rank ^c
Missouri	\$32,970	50	\$35,643	49	75.9%	41
Montana	\$32,871	51	\$35,575	50	80.6%	28
Nebraska	\$35,820	47	\$38,558	44	82.3%	20
Nevada	\$40,732	21	\$41,949	24	83.4%	19
New Hampshire	\$38,990	28	\$37,599	46	81.8%	24
New Jersey	\$53,177	2	\$47,821	3	96.9%	3
New Mexico	\$41,214	19	\$44,993	12	70.5%	49
New York	\$47,181	9	\$42,814	21	88.0%	8
North Carolina	\$37,049	44	\$40,358	39	74.7%	44
North Dakota	\$40,106	25	\$43,593	17	83.6%	18
Ohio	\$37,569	40	\$40,969	34	84.8%	14
Oklahoma	\$37,992	36	\$41,612	29	71.0%	48
Oregon	\$38,280	34	\$37,310	48	72.7%	45
Pennsylvania	\$46,232	12	\$47,369	4	87.0%	10
Rhode Island	\$43,569	14	\$42,799	22	97.9%	2
South Carolina	\$37,550	41	\$40,993	33	86.6%	11
South Dakota	\$39,636	26	\$43,318	18	82.0%	22
Tennessee	\$38,809	29	\$42,092	23	78.6%	33
Texas	\$44,582	13	\$44,806	13	78.1%	35
Utah	\$43,026	16	\$45,148	9	76.7%	39
Vermont	\$40,241	24	\$40,525	38	87.3%	9
Virginia	\$42,069	17	\$41,652	27	67.3%	51
Washington	\$49,113	4	\$45,729	7	71.9%	46
West Virginia	\$37,978	37	\$43,157	20	81.8%	24
Wisconsin	\$38,678	31	\$41,500	30	80.1%	29
Wyoming	\$46,558	11	\$50,442	2	98.0%	1

Notes and sources:

- ^a Annual starting salary is defined as the salary paid to a teacher with a bachelor’s degree and no prior experience. Annual starting salaries were collected by the National Education Association from district teacher salary schedules or district compensation plans. Source: [NEA 2019-2020 Teacher Salary Benchmark Report](#).
- ^b Cost-of-living adjustments are calculated using Regional Price Parities from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. Regional Price Parities are generated using average price quotes for a wide array of items from the Consumer Price Index such as apparel, education, food, housing, medical, recreation, transportation, and other goods and services. Source: [U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Regional Price Parity Indices 2020](#).
- ^c The wage competitiveness index represents the average public school teacher weekly wage as a percentage of the estimated weekly wage for other college-educated workers within each state. Weekly wages provide a comparison that adjusts for any differences in the work year across occupations. The data presented are the Economic Policy Institute’s weekly wage penalty data transformed to a 0–100% scale. The wage competitiveness estimates are based on Population Survey data and control for factors that typically influence wages. State estimates are based on data from 2014 through 2019, and the national estimate is based on 2019 data. Source: Allegretto, S., & Mishel, L. (2020). *Teacher Pay Penalty Dips but Persists in 2019: Public School Teachers Earn About 20% Less in Weekly Wages Than Nonteacher College Graduates*. [Economic Policy Institute](#).

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