



Supporting and Sustaining a Diverse Teacher Workforce

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Executive Summary

A growing body of research demonstrates the vital importance of a diverse teacher workforce that can support student achievement and school climate, while enriching the whole school environment. Despite growing recognition of the importance of building a more racially and ethnically diverse teacher workforce, the teacher workforce plateaued at about 20% teachers of color between 2017 and 2020, raising questions about how teachers of color are entering the profession, how they experience teaching, and what would sustain them in the classroom. Using nationally representative teacher survey data, this study investigates the representation of teachers of color in the workforce—who stays, who leaves, and who would like to leave—and the conditions associated with their retention. The study primarily draws on data from the 2017–18 and 2020–21 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), the 2021–22 Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS), and teacher education data from 2008–09 to 2020–21 collected pursuant to Title II of the Higher Education Act.

Although recruiting more teachers of color into the profession can help to increase the diversity of the workforce, it is equally important to retain those teachers and the veteran teachers of color who are already in classrooms. Through descriptive analyses, this study finds that teachers of color were less likely to have access to the conditions associated with longevity in the profession. Teachers of color, compared to their peers, entered the profession through pathways offering less preservice preparation, taught in more challenging school settings, and reported limited access to competitive compensation and supportive mentoring. They were more likely to face higher financial burdens throughout preparation and while they were teachers, and they reported a high level of stress related to their debt. All these factors are associated with higher turnover rates. Indeed, teachers of color were more likely than White teachers to consider transferring schools or leaving the teaching profession entirely.

Why Increase Teacher Diversity?

Many studies show that Black student achievement and attainment are strongly and positively affected by access to Black teachers. Other studies have demonstrated broader influences of Black and Latino/a teachers on improved school climate, classroom perceptions, and learning outcomes across student groups. Importantly, all students benefit from having diverse role models who enrich the whole school environment.

Why Retention Matters for Increasing Teacher Diversity

The demand for teachers each year is largely a function of the number who have left the year before. Indeed, recruiting a revolving door of teachers year after year is a futile exercise that takes a disproportionately high toll on students of color and students from low-income families, who are more likely to attend high-turnover schools. Not only does teacher turnover undermine growing the share of teachers of color in the workforce, but it also exacts significant costs on the schools that are most impacted by high turnover rates. Decades of research show that several factors are associated with teacher retention, including access to comprehensive preservice preparation and supportive teaching conditions.

The State of Teacher Diversity

The proportion of teachers of color has increased by over 50% since 1987–88 (from about 13% to 20% in 2020–21), and more new teachers today are teachers of color than 30 years ago. However, between 2018 and 2021, the share of teachers of color entering the classroom failed to keep pace with an expanding White teacher workforce (including reentering teachers). At the same time, the attrition of thousands of teachers of color further undercut their ranks. For example, in 2021, 44% of teachers of color said they would “leave teaching as soon as possible” if they could get a higher-paying job; in 2022, 9% of Black teachers did leave teaching, compared to 7% of White teachers.

Access to Comprehensive Preservice Preparation

Prior research shows that access to comprehensive preparation—including preservice coursework and student teaching—is associated with greater retention rates among teachers, which in turn supports school stability and student achievement. Although the share of teacher candidates of color has been growing in recent years, enrollment trends suggest their access to comprehensive teacher preparation has been in decline. The number of candidates of color enrolling in alternative teacher preparation programs grew threefold between 2013 and 2021, while the number of enrollments in traditional preservice programs dropped by 10% for candidates of color. Moreover, we find that those enrolled in alternative teacher preparation programs were less likely to complete their preparation than those in traditional preparation programs.

Teachers of color were nearly twice as likely as White teachers to have entered teaching through an alternative route (31% vs. 17%) in 2020–21, with Black teachers being the most likely of all groups to enter through an alternative route. Relatedly, teachers of color were less likely than White teachers to have taken courses on topics critical to effective teaching, including classroom management and lesson planning, or to have completed any student teaching. Only about half of beginning teachers of color—including just 37% of Black and 50% of Latino/a beginning teachers—had taken any teaching classes prior to teaching, compared to 59% of beginning White teachers.

Teachers of color may be more likely to pursue alternative certification—which can typically be completed while earning a full teacher’s salary—due to the steep cost of higher education. Indeed, Black teachers were more likely than other teachers to have taken out a student loan to pay for their undergraduate or graduate education, whether related to teacher preparation or otherwise (71% vs. 60% for White teachers). Student loan debt may affect teachers of color long into their careers. Teachers of color, and Black teachers in particular, were more likely to report that they “still owe” all the student loans they had borrowed compared to peers, and they reported experiencing a high or very high level of stress regarding their student loan debt.

Access to Sustaining Teaching Conditions

While strong preparation enhances retention, preparation alone cannot overcome the challenging teaching conditions many teachers—including teachers of color—face. Teaching conditions can be key factors in whether teachers continue to stay in the profession. We found that teachers of color were particularly prone to less supportive conditions in their schools. In particular:

- Teachers of color disproportionately taught in schools serving more than 75% students of color (62% vs. 20% for White teachers) and with more than 75% students from low-income families (50% vs. 28% for White teachers). Other research indicates that these are desirable and sought-after schools for teachers of color but are often underresourced for meeting the needs of students.
- Teachers of color were more likely to report that “the stress and disappointments involved in teaching at this school aren’t really worth it” (30% vs. 24% of White teachers).
- More than one third of teachers of color worried about the security of their job because of the performance of their students or their school (35% vs. 26% of White teachers).

Access to Competitive Compensation

Prior research demonstrates that compensation makes a difference for retaining teachers and that teachers, overall, earn less than other college-educated professionals. In recent years (2016–2020), all teachers, on average, earned just 73% of what the average non-teacher college graduate earned, after adjusting for state cost-of-living differences. In contrast, teachers of color earned from as little as 61% of non-teacher wages for Native American/Alaska Native teachers to 72% for Latino/a teachers, while White teachers earned just above the average (74%).

Access to Mentoring and Professional Development

Beginning teachers who have access to early-career mentoring and induction support are far more likely to stay in teaching, but few teachers receive that support. For instance:

- In 2018, fewer than half of teachers overall (38%) or of teachers of color (44%) received regular mentoring (at least once per month), and even fewer received mentoring weekly (14% and 17%, respectively).
- In 2021, early-career teachers of color (those in their first 5 years of teaching) were less likely than their White peers to report being provided mentoring (79% vs. 83%) or induction programs (71% vs. 74%) during their first year of teaching.

Policy Implications

With the growth of teachers of color in the workforce at a standstill in recent years, it is more important than ever that decision-makers make a concerted effort both to recruit larger numbers of candidates of color and to better retain teachers of color. Prior research demonstrates that comprehensive teacher preparation, access to mentoring, competitive compensation, and positive teaching conditions matter

for retaining all teachers; however, teachers of color often have less access to many of these conditions. Policymakers can do the following to provide more teachers, including teachers of color, with these key conditions:

- **Provide Greater Access to Comprehensive Preparation.** Federal, state, and local agencies can increase access to comprehensive preparation by underwriting the cost of preparation through service scholarship and loan forgiveness programs as well as supporting high-quality teacher residencies and apprenticeships that can provide funding to candidates.
- **Improve Teaching Conditions.** Policymakers can better retain all teachers, including teachers of color, by supporting efforts that improve the teaching conditions they encounter. States can develop equitable school funding formulas that provide an adequate and reliable base level of funding for all schools and additional funding to meet the needs of various student groups. The federal government and states can support teacher retention by supporting school leader development focused on creating supportive collegial environments, particularly for schools in greatest need. States can establish or improve annual working conditions surveys to collect information about factors that may influence teacher decisions to stay in or leave the field.
- **Increase Teacher Compensation.** Increased salaries can improve teacher retention efforts. States and districts can raise teacher salaries to be more competitive within the local economy. The federal government can also help teacher incomes stretch further by providing refundable tax credits (which could include larger incentives for those in higher-need schools) and providing housing subsidies for teachers.
- **Improve Access to Mentoring and Induction to Support Early-Career Teachers.** Once teachers are prepared, comprehensive induction and mentoring can support them in their first years of teaching. Because of their lower access to preparation and early mentoring, teachers of color in particular can benefit from participating in strong induction programs with support from federal, state, and local agencies.

Introduction

A growing body of research demonstrates the vital importance of a diverse teacher workforce. Many studies show that Black student achievement and attainment are strongly and positively affected by access to Black teachers, and other studies have demonstrated broader influences of Black and Latino/a teachers on improved school climate, classroom perceptions, and learning outcomes across student groups.¹ Importantly, all students can benefit from having diverse role models who enrich the whole school environment, as well as adults, who exhibit less evidence of prejudice when they work and interact with adults of other racial and ethnic backgrounds.²

Despite growing recognition of the importance of building a more racially and ethnically diverse teacher workforce, increases in the share of teachers of color nationally have stalled in recent years. This slowed growth raises questions about how teachers of color are entering the profession, how they experience teaching, and what would sustain them in the classroom. Using nationally representative teacher survey data, this study investigates the representation of teachers of color in the workforce—who stays, who leaves, and who would like to leave—and the conditions associated with their retention, including preparation experiences, teaching conditions, and compensation.

Despite growing recognition of the importance of building a more racially and ethnically diverse teacher workforce, increases in the share of teachers of color nationally have stalled in recent years.

Study Overview

Recent data allow us to assess the status of teachers of color in the workforce and the extent to which they have access to the conditions that have been shown to improve teacher retention. We begin by using the most recently available national data to provide an overview of how many teachers of color are in the workforce and their intention to stay in the teaching profession, transfer schools, or leave the profession. The study primarily draws on data from the 2017–18 and 2020–21 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), the 2021–22 Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS), and teacher education data from 2008–09 to 2020–21 collected pursuant to Title II of the Higher Education Act.

Next, we explore the pathways through which teachers of color enter the profession, as a proxy for their access to comprehensive preservice preparation. We also describe the extent to which they teach in schools with supportive and sustaining teaching conditions, including school characteristics, mentorship, and competitive compensation.

For teaching conditions metrics, we present the most recently available data, which may be either 2017–18 or 2020–21 NTPS data. In some cases we present data for both years, where available, because we expect the 2020–21 NTPS teaching conditions data to be idiosyncratic at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.³ We evaluate how access to these conditions compares between teachers of color and White teachers and determine whether these differences are statistically significant.⁴ Any comparisons of NTPS data we present between teachers of color and White teachers are statistically significant differences (at the 95% confidence level or greater), unless otherwise noted. Throughout

this report, we present boxes with data specific to Latino/a, Native American/Alaska Native, Black, and Asian American teachers to expand upon prior research that tends to consider the characteristics and experiences of teachers of color as a whole, despite the variations in experience among these groups. Finally, we describe policies that can productively grow and sustain teachers of color in the workforce: increasing access to comprehensive teacher preparation, fostering positive teaching conditions, and offering competitive compensation.

Box 1. Terminology

This study highlights the ways that the experiences of teachers of color vary across and within racial and ethnic identity groups. However, because all teachers of color are underrepresented in the United States, it can be useful to investigate their experience in aggregate.

Teachers of color: Teachers who are Black, Latino/a, Asian American, Native American/Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, or multiracial. The race and ethnicity categories reflect those used in the original source. Teachers who identified as Black or African American in the original source are referred to as Black teachers for consistency. Similarly, teachers identified as Latino/a or Hispanic are referred to as Latino/a. Asian or Asian American teachers are referred to as Asian American in this report. If a teacher responded that they are of “Hispanic or Latino origin,” regardless of race, they are referred to as Latino/a; therefore, all other races and ethnicities only include non-Hispanic-identifying individuals. Teachers who select two or more races are categorized as multiracial.

Beginning teachers: Teachers in their first, second, or third year of teaching.

Fully certified teachers: Teachers with a regular or standard teaching credential issued by their state, or a probationary credential that is typically issued to beginning teachers who have completed all teacher credentialing requirements.

Through descriptive analyses, we find that although the proportion of teachers of color has grown over the past 3 decades—particularly among new teachers—this increase has failed to keep pace with an expanding White teacher workforce. At the same time, the attrition of thousands of teachers of color has further undercut their ranks. In addition to these high rates of attrition, a larger share of teachers of color than White teachers considered transferring schools or leaving the teaching profession entirely. In 2021, almost half of teachers of color said they would “leave teaching as soon as possible” if they could get a higher-paying job; in 2022, more Black teachers did move schools or leave teaching, compared to White teachers. Further, we find that teachers of color often reported experiencing conditions that are associated with higher turnover rates, such as entering the profession with little to no preservice coursework and clinical practice, experiencing challenging teaching conditions, and earning low compensation compared to other college-educated professionals. Ultimately, the study reveals that teachers of color, on average, were less likely to have access to the conditions associated with longevity in the profession.

Why Increase Teacher Diversity?

A growing body of research demonstrates the vital importance of a diverse teacher workforce. Many studies show that Black student achievement and attainment are strongly and positively affected by access to Black teachers, and other studies have demonstrated broader influences of Black and Latino/a teachers on improved school climate, classroom perceptions, and learning outcomes across student groups.⁵ For example, an analysis of Tennessee STAR test score data found that Black elementary students with Black teachers had reading and math test scores 3 to 6 percentile points higher, on average, than Black students without Black teachers and that gains in test scores accumulated with each year students were in a class with a Black teacher.⁶

Another analysis of the same data found positive long-term benefits of having a Black teacher. On average, Black K–3 students assigned to a Black teacher in their first year of the STAR program were 15% less likely to drop out of high school and were 10% more likely to take a college entrance exam.⁷ Similar long-term benefits were found among Black students in North Carolina who were assigned to a class with a Black teacher at least once in grades 3 to 5.⁸ Other studies have found improvements in reading and math scores when Black students have Black teachers, even after controlling for a host of variables such as student characteristics, school characteristics, teacher experience, and teacher education and license type.⁹

In addition to these academic benefits, studies have found benefits to students' social and emotional development when they are taught by Black teachers, including decreased absenteeism or suspensions, improved executive function, and improved engagement.¹⁰ Since most of these studies control for teacher characteristics, such as teacher preparation, they show that having a Black teacher provides an added benefit on top of the teacher being well prepared.

Emerging research also shows that Latino/a teachers improve some, primarily non-academic, outcomes for Latino/a students and other students of color. Some studies, for example, find decreased likelihood of chronic absenteeism, disruptive behavior, discipline referrals, and suspensions when Latino/a students have Latino/a teachers.¹¹

Importantly, all students can benefit from having diverse role models who enrich the whole school environment. Having positive interactions with individuals of other racial backgrounds can have positive impacts and long-lasting effects on children as well as adults.¹² A well-established body of research shows that living, learning, working, and playing together, across racial lines, are associated with reduced evidence of prejudice.¹³ For example, studies show that when children grow up in integrated settings in which they have interactions and develop friendships with people of other backgrounds, they exhibit less implicit racial bias in adulthood and continue to maintain cross-racial friendships and working relationships.¹⁴

This relationship extends to adults as well, who exhibit less evidence of prejudice when they work and interact with adults of other racial and ethnic backgrounds.¹⁵ Recent research, for example, demonstrates that having Black teachers in a school supports White teachers. A North Carolina study shows that when novice White teachers had at least one Black teacher peer on their grade-level team, their Black students had significantly higher math and reading test scores, perhaps because they learned skills from their peers on how to better meet the needs of students of different backgrounds.¹⁶ The research suggests that the representation of teachers of color can reduce racial bias among faculty members and expand shared understanding of students and what they need.

Why Retention Matters for Increasing Teacher Diversity

Although recruiting more teachers of color into the profession can help to increase the diversity of the workforce temporarily, high teacher attrition rates can undermine successful recruitment efforts. Thus, recruitment alone is not sufficient to diversify the educator workforce. It is equally important to retain teachers who are already in classrooms. Indeed, recruiting a revolving door of teachers year after year is a futile exercise that takes a disproportionately high toll on students of color and students from low-income families, who are more likely to attend high-turnover schools. Teacher turnover contributes to teacher shortages throughout the country, as roughly 9 of 10 new teachers hired each year are replacing colleagues who have left the classroom.¹⁷ Teacher shortages result in school instability and a reliance on inexperienced and underprepared teachers, thus undermining student achievement and consuming valuable staff time and resources.¹⁸

Recruitment alone is not sufficient to diversify the educator workforce. It is equally important to retain teachers who are already in classrooms.

Further, teacher turnover exacts significant costs on the schools that are most impacted by high turnover rates. Research shows that large districts can, on average, spend about \$25,000 on each new hire, including school and district expenses related to separation, recruitment, hiring, and training.¹⁹ Districts do not receive a return on these investments when teachers leave within 1 or 2 years after being hired. Because of the negative impact on students and the large investments that can be lost with turnover, this study specifically focuses on understanding teachers' preparation and their within-school conditions—both of which are strong influences on whether teachers choose to stay in the profession.

Decades of research show that several factors are associated with teacher retention, including access to comprehensive preservice preparation, supportive teaching conditions, and competitive compensation.²⁰ Below we summarize the prior research on the relationship between these conditions and teacher retention and identify variables that will be explored further in this study.

Preservice Preparation

A large body of research shows that teacher preparation matters both for retaining teachers and for supporting student achievement.²¹ Teachers who enter the profession with little to no preservice preparation are 2 to 3 times as likely to leave the profession within the first year as teachers who enter with the most comprehensive preparation, including preservice coursework on a variety of topics and student teaching experience.²² Further, lack of student teaching experience is associated with first-year teacher attrition rates that are more than 3 times as great as those of teachers who enter with at least 12 weeks of student teaching experience.²³

Teacher preparation is associated with outcomes for students overall and for students of color specifically. A California study, for example, shows that when districts had more experienced and fully credentialed teachers—teachers who had completed all the preparation requirements for earning a credential—their students outperformed their peers in the state, and this was especially true for Black and Latino/a students.²⁴

Teachers who enter the profession through a traditional teacher preparation pathway, typically by earning an undergraduate or graduate degree at a college or university, are likely to complete the type of comprehensive preservice preparation that is associated with greater retention in teaching, including rigorous coursework aligned to robust clinical practice in the classroom, opportunities to observe teaching, and opportunities to receive feedback on their own teaching.²⁵ In contrast, teachers who enter the profession through alternative certification routes typically begin teaching in the classroom while simultaneously completing the teacher preparation coursework needed to meet credential requirements. These teachers are less likely to have completed the type of comprehensive preservice preparation that is associated with greater retention rates, if they have any preservice preparation at all. Depending on state regulations, teachers who begin teaching on an emergency-style permit may be permitted to teach for a limited amount of time as the teacher of record without demonstrating subject-matter competency or enrolling in a teacher preparation program.

It is no surprise that some teacher candidates begin teaching through alternative certification pathways or under an emergency-style permit, given the considerable income and cost savings these routes may provide compared to an undergraduate or graduate degree program. For example, these routes allow teachers to earn a teaching salary, in contrast to a traditional teacher preparation program that may require candidates to forego employment to meet coursework and student teaching obligations. The debt burden of college is especially profound for college students of color, which likely influences the teaching pathway they pursue.²⁶

Given the role that preparation pathways play in teacher retention, this study investigates the representation of candidates of color in alternative and traditional teacher preparation pathways, their access to preservice coursework and clinical practice, and their experiences with student debt.

Teaching Conditions

While teachers who have access to more comprehensive preparation are more likely to persist in the classroom, preparation alone is not a cure-all for the challenging teaching conditions many teachers of color face. Indeed, research shows that both where teachers teach and multiple teaching conditions shape a teacher's turnover and retention decisions.²⁷ For example, teachers who feel their school leaders are not supportive or encouraging are more than twice as likely to transfer schools or leave the profession.²⁸ Based on prior research, school characteristics can also be key factors in whether teachers stay in teaching.²⁹

The schools in which teachers of color teach are likely to influence whether those teachers stay in the profession. The geographic location of schools across the United States—in rural, urban, or suburban regions—and the proportion of students who are students of color and students from low-income families are strongly related to the resources in those schools and their ability to support and sustain teachers.³⁰ Prior research shows that access to resources matters for schools to provide the kinds of conditions that support both teaching and learning. Indeed, research shows that increases in school funding levels can have significant benefits to student outcomes and that schools primarily achieve these benefits by increasing spending to reduce class sizes, increase teacher salaries, and reduce teacher turnover.³¹

Teachers of color are more likely to seek out teaching in schools serving concentrations of students from low-income families and students of color—schools that are often underresourced, subjected to high-stakes accountability pressures, and experience higher turnover rates on average.³² One recent analysis, for example, finds that high-poverty districts nationally receive far less funding than low-poverty districts relative to the resources these districts need to serve their students.³³ Further, the analysis demonstrates that Black students are about twice as likely as White students to attend a school in an underfunded district.³⁴ About 80% of Black students nationally attend an underfunded district, compared to 42% of White students. These rates are higher for other students of color as well, with 74% of Latino/a, 62% of Native American/Alaska Native, 52% of multiracial, and 45% of Asian American students attending schools in underfunded districts. In addition, many students of color attend districts in which the magnitude of underfunding is considerable. For example, Black students, on average, attend districts that spend about 33% less than what the researchers determined is an adequate spending level, whereas White students, on average, attend districts that spend 9% more than an adequate spending level.³⁵ Latino/a students attend districts that spend 22% less than an adequate spending level, and Native American/Alaska Native students attend districts that spend about 13% less.

Schools serving predominantly Black, Latino/a, and Native American/Alaska Native students are also overrepresented among comprehensive support and improvement (CSI) schools—schools that states are required by the Every Student Succeeds Act to identify as the lowest-performing in the state based on a set of criteria.³⁶ The designation is meant to focus additional resources and supports to schools with the highest need, but in some states CSI schools can also be subject to punitive accountability measures. In Arkansas, for example, more rigorous interventions for schools struggling to exit CSI status could include allocating additional dollars or increasing access to prekindergarten programming but could also include closing and reconstituting schools or removing staff and school boards.³⁷ Punitive accountability measures in schools in which teachers of color disproportionately teach could contribute to higher turnover rates.³⁸

In this study, we examine the distribution of teachers of color in schools across the United States, by urbanicity and by student composition, since these are conditions associated with school resources and supports, and thus, teacher retention.

Compensation

Prior research demonstrates that teacher compensation makes a difference for retaining teachers and that teachers earn less than other college-educated professionals.³⁹ The most recent estimates indicate that teachers make just under 77% of what their college-educated peers earn on a weekly basis, accounting for teachers' shorter annual contracts, while controlling for worker characteristics that typically influence compensation.⁴⁰ Prior research also shows that Black teachers, in particular, report receiving lower pay than White teachers, which contributes to job-related stress and intention to leave their job.⁴¹ In this study, therefore, we explore how the compensation of teachers of color compares with that of their peers as a potential contributor to their higher rates of leaving the profession.

Mentoring and Professional Development

Mentoring is an important aspect of professional development for new teachers. Prior research indicates that beginning teachers who have access to early-career induction support, including, for example, mentoring, seminars, regular communication with school leaders, and reduced workloads, are far more likely to stay in teaching.⁴² A study drawing on national teacher data, for example, found that beginning teachers who did not participate in any induction and mentoring support left teaching at twice the rate of beginning teachers who received a comprehensive set of induction supports that included mentoring from a teacher in their field, supportive communication with their principal, regular collaboration time with peers, and extra resources, such as a reduced workload and support from a paraprofessional.⁴³

Evidence from Delaware's Comprehensive Induction Program—a mandatory 4-year mentoring and induction program launched in 1994—suggests that the program helped to support teacher practice and retention in the state.⁴⁴ Statewide teacher survey data showed that the vast majority of respondents felt that the induction supports improved their instructional practice and were important in their decision to continue teaching at their current school.⁴⁵

While in the past, many states had invested in mentoring and induction programs, these supports have been in decline. These programs were widespread during the 1990s and early 2000s, however, many lost funding during the Great Recession.⁴⁶ In 2022, 31 states required induction and mentoring support for new teachers; however, previous research shows that fewer states provide dedicated funding to support these programs.⁴⁷ Given all of this prior evidence, in our current study, we also explore the extent to which teachers—and in particular, teachers of color—have access to mentoring and induction supports.

In this report, we provide an overview of the status of teachers of color in the workforce, their intention to stay in the teaching profession, the pathways through which teachers of color enter the profession, and the extent to which they teach in schools with supportive and sustaining teaching conditions. Finally, we describe policies that can foster those conditions.

A Tipping Point in Teacher Diversity

According to the most recent National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) data on public school teachers from 2020–21, about 760,000 teachers out of more than 3.8 million were teachers of color, representing about 1 in 5 teachers (20.1%) in the workforce. Looking back over the past 30 years, teachers of color increased their representation among all teachers (up from 13% in 1987–88; see [Figure 1](#)) and also increased their representation among new teachers. However, after slow but steady increases in the share of teachers of color, the diversity of the teacher workforce has stalled since 2017–18: Teachers of color made up nearly 21% of the workforce in 2018 and just 20.1% in 2021.

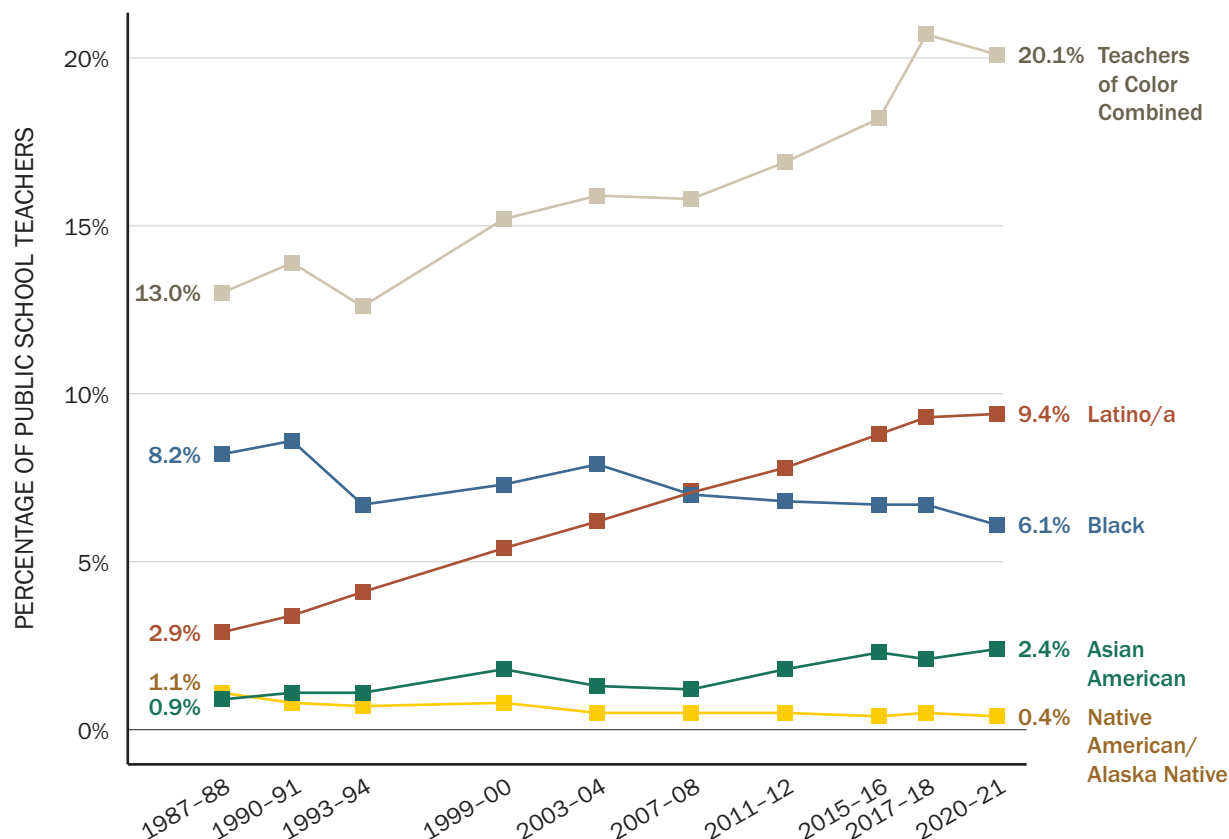
Teacher Diversity Has Shifted Over Time

Overall growth in teacher diversity in the past 3 decades has been driven by increases in the shares of Latino/a and Asian American teachers. As shown in [Figure 1](#), the share of Latino/a teachers grew more than any other group of teachers of color—more than tripling from 1987–88 to 2020–21, increasing from 2.9% in 1988 to 9.4% in 2021. (See [Box 2. The Growing Share of Latino/a Teachers](#).) In the same period, the share of Asian American teachers more than doubled (increasing from 0.9% to 2.4%). In contrast, Black teachers went from composing 8.6% of the workforce (in 1991) to 6.1%—a drop of nearly one third. Likewise, the percentage of Native American teachers declined by nearly two thirds over the past 3 decades (from 1.1% to 0.4%).

Between 2018 and 2021, the teacher workforce grew by nearly 5.6%, an estimated 200,000 teachers (see [Figure 2](#)). These additional teachers included new teachers as well as teachers reentering the workforce after time away from the classroom. Although higher proportions of first-year teachers were teachers of color, at over 25% in both 2015–16 and 2020–21 ([Figure 3](#)), the evidence shows that growth in the share of novice teachers of color was insufficient to increase the overall diversity of the teacher workforce in 2020–21. Based on estimated counts, a full 92% of all the additional teachers between 2018 and 2021 were White teachers, growing the White teacher population by 6.5%.

Meanwhile, during the same period, the ranks of teachers of color—combined—grew by only 2.2%, while at the same time losing noticeable shares of Black, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Native American/Alaska Native, and multiracial teachers (see [Figure 2](#).) Notably, the estimated number of Black teachers lost from the workforce was concentrated among Black teachers in their 40s, suggesting that the teacher workforce is losing mid-career Black teachers, rather than those nearing retirement age.⁴⁸ Additional research will be needed to understand the extent to which hiring and turnover trends between 2018 and 2021 were impacted by the pandemic.

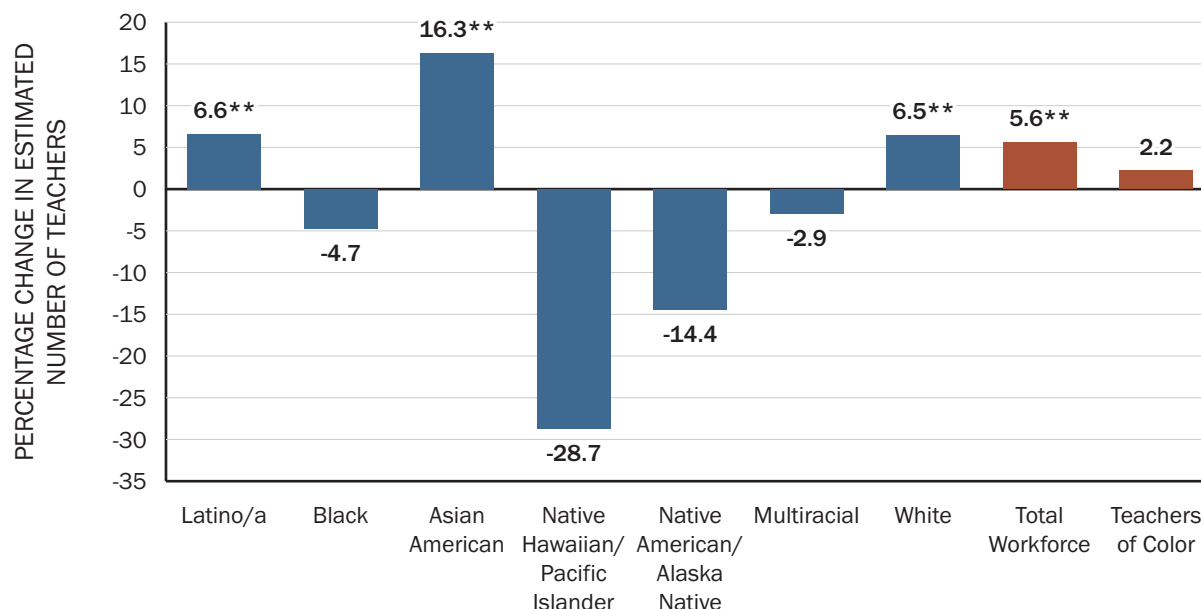
Figure 1. Percentage of Public School Teachers Who Are Teachers of Color, 1988–2021



Note: “Teachers of color combined” includes all non-White teachers, including Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander and multiracial teachers.

Sources: Learning Policy Institute analysis of reports by the National Center for Education Statistics for data available for 1987–88 to 2020–21. **1987–88:** Hammer, C., & Gerald, E. (1990). *Selected characteristics of public and private school teachers: 1987–88* [NCES 90-087]. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. **1990–91:** Learning Policy Institute analysis of Schools and Staffing Survey 1990–91 public use data file. **1993–94:** Henke, R. R., Choy, S. P., Chen, X., Geis, S., Alt, M. N., & Broughman, S. P. (1997). *America’s teachers: Profile of a profession, 1993–94* [NCES 97-460]. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. **1999–2000:** Luekens, M. T., Lyter, D. M., & Fox, E. E. (2004). *Teacher attrition and mobility: Results from the Teacher Follow-up Survey, 2000–01* [NCES 2004-301]. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. **2003–04:** Strizek, G. A., Pittsonberger, J. L., Riordan, K. E., Lyter, D. M., & Orlofsky, G. F. (2006). *Characteristics of schools, districts, teachers, principals, and school libraries in the United States: 2003–04 Schools and Staffing Survey* [NCES 2006-313 Revised]. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. **2007–08:** U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2009). *Characteristics of public, private, and Bureau of Indian Education elementary and secondary school teachers in the United States: Results from the 2007–08 Schools and Staffing Survey*, Table 2. **2011–12:** U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2013). *Schools and Staffing Survey*, Table 1. Total number of public school teachers and percentage distribution of school teachers, by race/ethnicity and state: 2011–12. **2015–16:** Taie, S., & Goldring, R. (2017). *Characteristics of public elementary and secondary school principals in the United States: Results from the 2015–16 National Teacher and Principal Survey first look* [NCES 2017-070]. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. **2017–18:** Taie, S., & Goldring, R. (2020). *Characteristics of public and private elementary and secondary school teachers in the United States: Results from the 2017–18 National Teacher and Principal Survey first look* [NCES 2020-142]. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. **2020–21:** Taie, S., & Lewis, L. (2022). *Characteristics of 2020–21 public and private K–12 school teachers in the United States: Results from the National Teacher and Principal Survey first look* [NCES 2022-113]. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

Figure 2. Percentage Change in the Estimated Number of Teachers by Race/Ethnicity, 2017–18 to 2020–21



Notes: Sample includes teachers who are full time, part time, or itinerant in public schools. Total number of teachers by race/ethnicity is estimated using survey weights (standard errors are used to construct the 95% confidence intervals, not reported). The change is calculated using the estimated total number of teachers by race/ethnicity in each year, and the statistical significance is calculated using the standard errors of the differences by group. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of the 2017–18 and 2020–21 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) microdata from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

Box 2. The Growing Share of Latino/a Teachers

Latino/a teachers are among the fastest-growing populations of teachers in the United States, making up nearly 14% of all first-year teachers and nearly 10% of teachers overall. It should be noted, however, that “Latino/a” is an ethnicity, not a racial category, that comprises a wide range of backgrounds and experiences. This includes everyone from, for example, a first-generation teacher from Central America to a Mexican American teacher whose lineage predates the geographic boundaries of the United States to an Afro-Latino/a teacher from Puerto Rico, a U.S. territory.

While the National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) data do not disaggregate by country of origin, they allow some disaggregation by race. Most Latino/a teachers (85%) identify as White, and about 15% of Latino/a teachers identify with a race other than White. Research suggests, however, that the way people respond to census-style categories can conflict with other ways of self-identifying. In a national survey by the Pew Research Center, for example, 58% of Latino/a respondents identified as White when answering a census-style survey question. When asked to describe their race or origin in their own words, however, only 9% identified as White, and 70% said that others would describe them as Hispanic if they walked past them on the street. In other words, although the vast majority of Latino/a teachers identified as White in a census-style question in the NTPS, this likely masks variation in how Latino/a teachers identify and how they are perceived by others. These distinctions are

meaningful because Latino/a teachers reported in a Pew Research Center study that their race and skin color influence their experiences of discrimination. Due to small sample sizes in this dataset, little analysis can be done to compare the experiences between White and non-White Latino/a teachers. However, some results (not included in this report) suggest that non-White Latino/a teachers were less likely than White Latino/a teachers to complete preservice preparation before entering the workforce.

Overall, Latino/a teachers had more limited access to preservice preparation and were less likely than other teachers to be fully certified. In 2020–21, Latino/a teachers were nearly twice as likely as White teachers to have entered the profession through an alternative route (31% vs. 17% among White teachers). Further, according to Title II data on teacher preparation enrollment and completion rates, Latino/a teacher candidates disproportionately enrolled in alternative preparation programs based outside of institutions of higher education (IHEs). Non-IHE alternative programs typically offer minimal coursework and no formal preservice student teaching. Overall, 88% of Latino/a teachers were fully credentialed in their state (holding either a regular or probationary certificate)—smaller than the share of White teachers (94%).

Having limited access to preservice preparation means that Latino/a teachers were less likely to complete student teaching or take coursework on necessary teaching skills. In 2020–21, the share of Latino/a teachers who did not complete any student teaching (25%) was more than twice the share for White teachers (12%). Although Latino/a teachers were less likely than White teachers to take preservice courses on classroom management, lesson planning, assessment, using student data to inform instruction, and serving students with special needs, they were more likely to take preservice courses on how to teach English learners than any other group. This may be a function of the communities in which Latino/a teachers teach. Latino/a teachers were nearly 3 times as likely as White teachers to teach in the top quartile of schools serving the most students identified as English learners (50% vs. 18%).

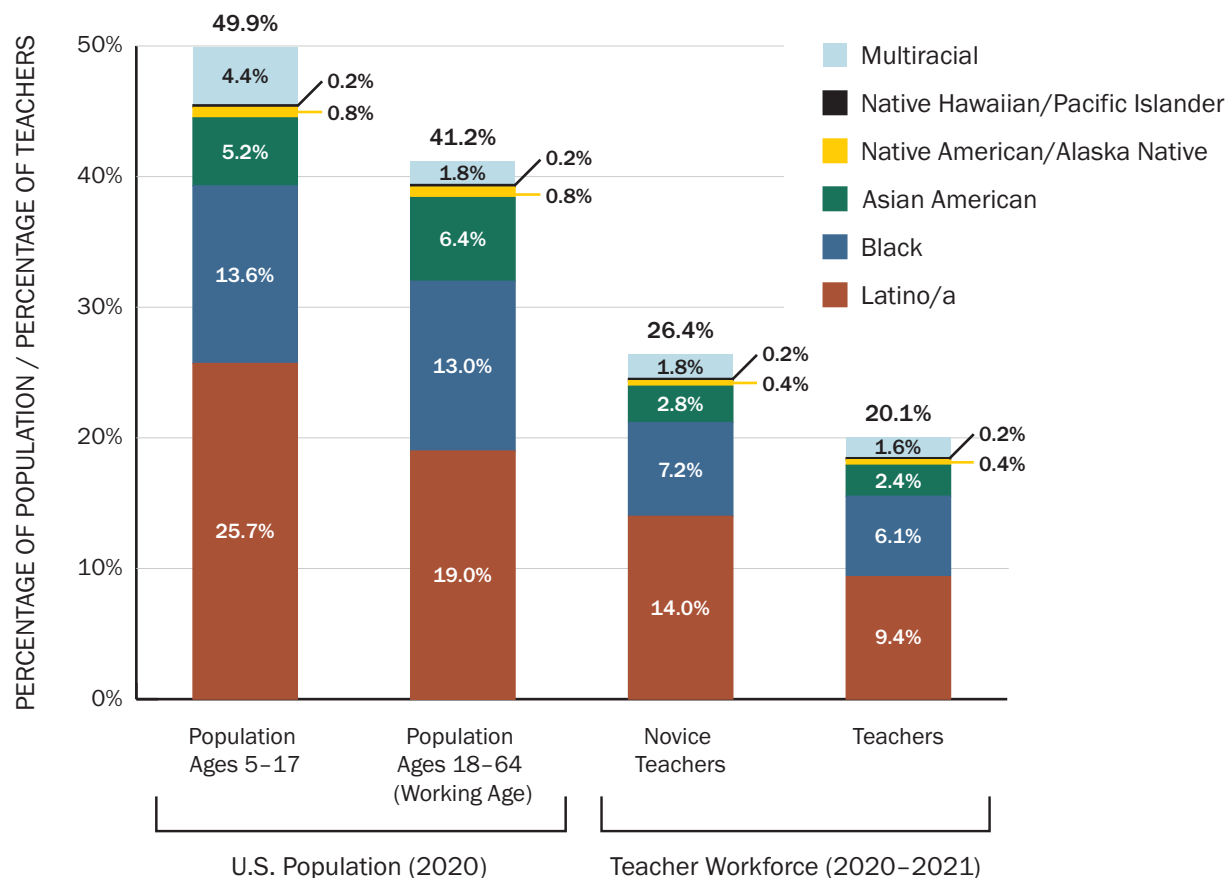
Teacher access to professional development and support matters for retention. Compared to teachers overall, Latino/a teachers reported similarly limited participation in most professional development activities. However, a larger share of Latino/a teachers than White teachers reported not having acted as a coach or mentor (40% vs. 37%), and a smaller share received coaching or mentoring from other teachers (29% vs. 34%).

Sources: Learning Policy Institute analysis of the 2017–18 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) microdata from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics; Pew Research Center (2021). *Majority of Latinos say skin color impacts opportunity in America and shapes daily life.*

Teachers of Color Are Underrepresented

The share of teachers of color (20%) was far less than the share of individuals of color overall in the working-age population (41%) and in the student population (50%) (see [Figure 3](#)). Despite the substantial growth in Latino/a and Asian American teachers since 1987–88, these proportions still fall short of the Latino/a and Asian American population in the United States. About 19% of the U.S. working age population is Latino/a, compared to 9.4% of teachers (see [Figure 3](#)). Likewise, about 6% of the U.S. working age population is Asian American, compared to 2.4% of teachers. Similarly, while Black teachers made up 6.1% and Native American/Alaska Native teachers made up 0.4% of the workforce in 2021, 13% of the U.S. working age population is Black and 0.8% is Native American/Alaska Native. (See [Box 3. State of the Black Teacher Workforce](#).)

Figure 3. Percentage of Individuals of Color in the U.S. Population (2020) and in the Teacher Workforce (2020–21) by Race/Ethnicity



Note: Novice teachers are those who are in their first year of teaching.

Sources: Learning Policy Institute analysis of: 2020–21 *National Teacher and Principal Survey*, U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics; National U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division. (2018). [Main projections series for the United States, 2017–2060 projected population by single year of age, sex, race, and Hispanic origin for the United States: 2016 to 2060 \[NP2017_D1\]](#). (accessed 07/17/2025).

Box 3. State of the Black Teacher Workforce

Over the past 3 decades, one of the most profound changes to the teacher workforce has been the steady decline in the share of Black teachers. As noted, the proportion of Black teachers dropped by nearly a third, from 8.6% of teachers in 1990 to 6.1% in 2021. Meanwhile, the Black population was nearly 13% of the U.S. working age population in 2020. In just 3 years, from 2018 to 2021, the teacher workforce lost an estimated 4.7% of Black teachers.

Several factors could account for the large-scale attrition of Black teachers. Compensation might be one factor, as about 73% of Black teachers teach in southern states that, on average, invest far less in education than the national average. Indeed, based on an analysis of data pooled between 2016 and 2020, Black teachers earned just 71% of average non-teacher wages after adjusting

for state cost of living. In 2020–21, nearly half of Black teachers (47%) agreed, “If I could get a higher-paying job, I’d leave teaching as soon as possible.” Unless more Black teachers both enter the profession and persist in it, the downward trend in the share of Black teachers is likely to continue.

Black teachers were less likely than other teachers to have access to preservice preparation and to be fully certified. A staggering 47% of beginning Black teachers entered teaching through an alternative route in 2020–21, compared to 28% of beginning White teachers. This likely explains why beginning Black teachers were unlikely to have completed any preservice coursework (37% of beginning Black teachers did) or to have done any student teaching (60%). Among those who did student teach, less than two thirds (64%) of beginning Black teachers student taught for 12 weeks or more. Just 54% of beginning Black teachers were fully credentialed (holding either a regular or probationary certificate) in their state, compared to nearly 80% of beginning White teachers. As will be discussed, having less access to preservice preparation is associated with higher turnover rates, undermining growth of the Black teacher workforce.

Teacher access to support also matters for retention. In 2020–21, 35% of Black teachers agreed that “stress and disappointments involved in teaching at this school aren’t really worth it,” suggesting that school teaching conditions could push them out of the profession. In addition, just 75% of Black teachers reported that they were assigned a mentor teacher in their first year of teaching. However, among those who were assigned a mentor teacher their first year, Black teachers were more likely than or as likely as their White peers to report that their mentor taught the same subject, met with them at least weekly, supported them with paperwork or recordkeeping, demonstrated lessons, and helped them develop standards-based lessons and student assessment tools.

Black teachers also reported receiving limited professional development support, although their rates tended to be higher than rates for White teachers. For example, in 2017–18 (the most recent year of data available), less than half (47%) of Black teachers reported that they planned at least weekly with other teachers. The same was true for 40% of White teachers. In addition, less than half (41%) of Black teachers strongly agreed that their professional development opportunities align with their school’s performance goal and that the techniques they are learning about will help improve student achievement. Further, just 30% of Black teachers strongly agreed that “I have sufficient resources available for my professional development.”

Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of the 2017–18 and 2020–21 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) microdata from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

In summary, the proportion of teachers in the United States who are people of color increased by over 50% between 1988 and 2021. However, between 2018 and 2021, increasing numbers of new teachers of color failed to keep pace with the number of teachers of color leaving the profession and the number of White teachers entering. In particular, while the proportions of Latino/a and Asian American teachers steadily increased over the past 3 decades, the ranks of Black and Native American teachers declined. Across all teachers of color groups, data show they are severely underrepresented in the teacher workforce compared to the U.S. adult and student populations.

Who Stays and Who Leaves the Teacher Workforce

To begin to understand why diversity within the teacher workforce has stagnated in recent years, we examine data on teacher willingness to leave the profession. We also investigate who has stayed in the workforce and who has left. Overall, we find that teacher attrition indicators, including both the desire to leave the profession and actually leaving the profession, were worse for teachers of color than for White teachers.

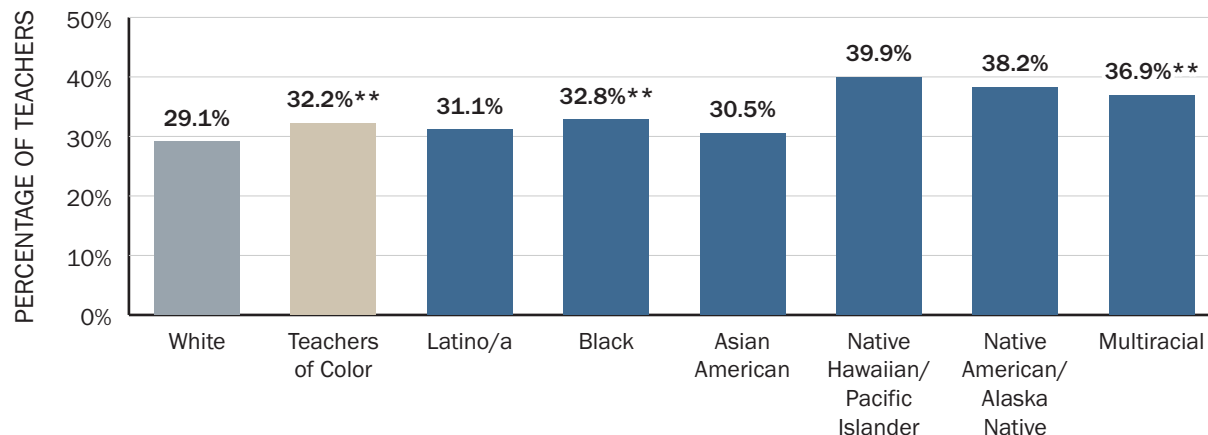
Willingness to Quit Is Higher Among Teachers of Color

In 2021, the most recent data available, roughly one third of teachers of color reported that they think about transferring to another school and close to one half indicated they would leave teaching as soon as possible if they could get a higher-paying job (see [Figure 4](#) and [Figure 5](#)). This is significantly higher than their White peers (at 29% and 36%, respectively). These shares were even larger for Black teachers—about 33% agreed that they think about transferring and 47% would leave teaching for a higher-paying job.⁴⁹ Nearly half (48%) of Native American/Alaska Native teachers also indicated they would leave for a higher-paying job. (See [Box 4. The Declining Share of Native American/Alaska Native Teachers](#).) Notably, when looking at similar data from across all teachers in 2018, the proportions were roughly similar, suggesting that these attitudes among teachers of color were not attributable solely to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic (see the [Teacher Diversity 2017–18 Online Supplement](#)).

In 2021, when asked how long they planned to remain in teaching, just 2.4% of teachers overall reported that they “definitely plan to leave as soon as [they] can.” These rates are about the same for White teachers and teachers of color. However, 3.7% of Black teachers reported that they plan to leave teaching as soon as they can, which could amount to thousands of Black teachers leaving the profession.

Figure 4. Percentage of Teachers Thinking About Transferring to Another School, 2020–21

Percentage of teachers who somewhat or strongly agreed with the statement “I think about transferring to another school”

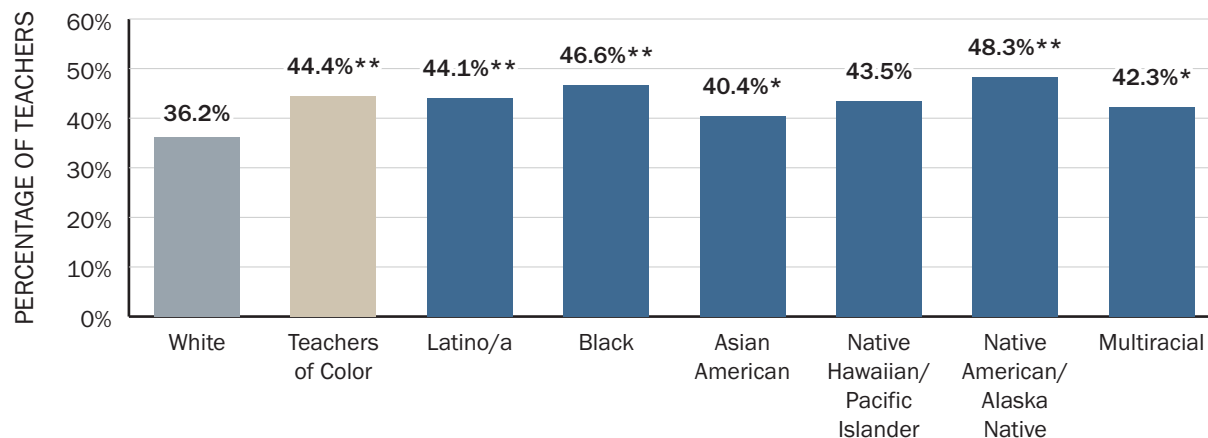


Notes: Sample includes teachers who are full time, part time, or itinerant in public schools. Statistical tests were conducted to compare teachers from each racial group, as well as teachers of color overall, with White teachers. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of the 2020–21 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) microdata from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

Figure 5. Percentage of Teachers Reporting They Would Leave Teaching If They Could Get a Higher-Paying Job, 2020–21

Percentage of teachers who somewhat or strongly agreed with the statement “If I could get a higher-paying job, I’d leave teaching as soon as possible”



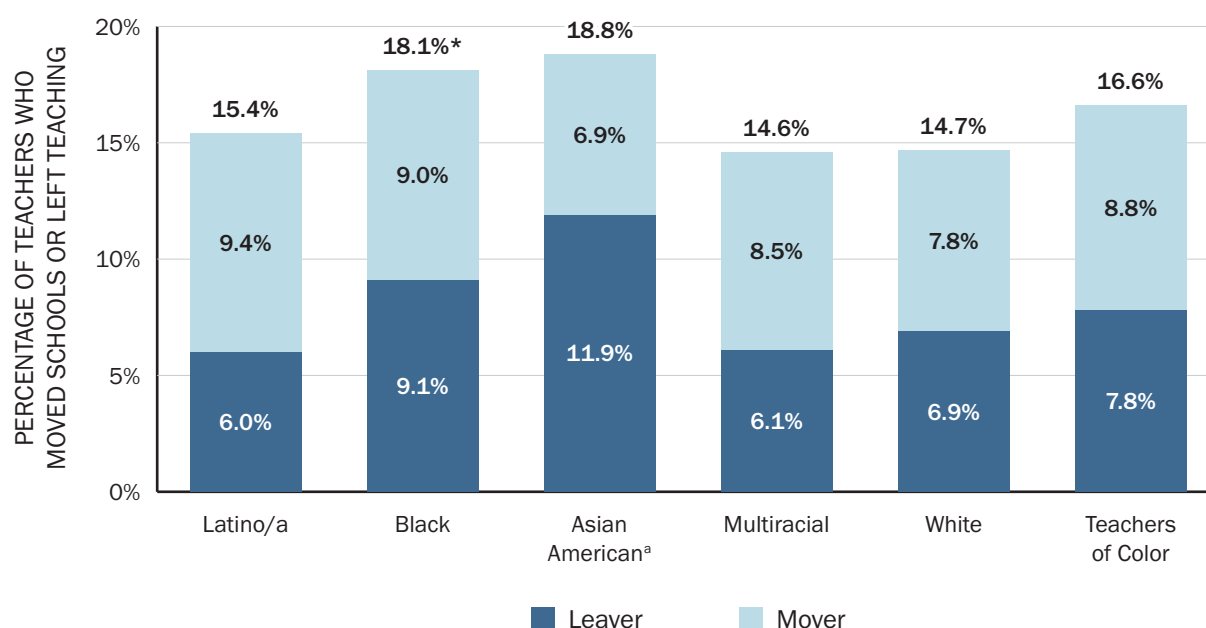
Notes: Sample includes teachers who are full time, part time, or itinerant in public schools. Statistical tests were conducted to compare teachers from each racial group, as well as teachers of color overall, with White teachers. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of the 2020–21 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) microdata from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

Teacher Turnover Is Highest Among Teachers of Color

Not only do we see evidence that teachers of color have a greater desire to leave the profession, but the most recent Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS) teacher turnover data also show that in fact some groups of teachers of color *do* leave the profession at greater rates than White teachers.⁵⁰ Between 2021 and 2022, nearly 9% of teachers of color transferred schools (movers) and another 8% left the teaching profession (leavers) (see Figure 6). The total turnover rate for teachers of color was nearly 17%, which was greater than the turnover rate for White teachers at 15% (though the difference was not statistically significant). The total turnover rate for Black teachers was even greater, at roughly 18%, including 9% of Black teachers who moved and another 9% who left teaching. As such, turnover rates were more than 20% higher among Black teachers than among White teachers (a difference that was statistically significant).

Figure 6. Percentage of Teachers Who Moved to Another School or Left the Profession, by Race/Ethnicity, 2020–21 to 2021–22



^a Interpret data for Asian American teachers with caution. The coefficient of variation (CV) for this estimate is between 30% and 50% (i.e., the standard error is at least 30% and less than 50% of the estimate). Data for Native American/Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander teachers did not meet reporting standards and are excluded.

Notes: Results are based on full-time, part-time, or itinerant teachers in public schools in 2020–21 who were followed in the 2021–22 school year. Data are weighted estimates of the population. “Movers” are teachers who were still teachers in the 2021–22 Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS) school year but had moved to a different school from their 2020–21 NTPS school. “Leavers” are 2020–21 NTPS teachers who were no longer teachers in the 2021–22 TFS school year. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding. Regression analysis was conducted to compare teachers from each racial group, as well as teachers of color overall, with White teachers. * $p < .10$.

Sources: Learning Policy Institute analysis of the 2021–22 Teacher Follow-up Survey and the 2020–21 National Teacher and Principal Survey microdata from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

Box 4. The Declining Share of Native American/Alaska Native Teachers

Native American and Alaska Native populations are often neglected in research about the teacher workforce, typically because small sample sizes in administrative datasets can limit the extent to which analysis is possible. This omission, however, is important to rectify, especially given the declining share of Native American/Alaska Native teachers in the workforce. While about 0.8% of the total U.S. population identified as Native American/Alaska Native in 2020, just 0.4% of teachers did, down from 0.8% in 1999–2000. While this population is relatively small on the national level, Native American/Alaska Native teachers are a vital part of the teacher workforce. In fact, there are several states in which Native communities compose sizable segments of the population: 13.7% in Alaska, 9.3% in New Mexico, 8.2% in South Dakota, 7.5% in Oklahoma, and 5.8% in Montana. These proportions are even greater when they include multiracial Native Americans. Further, Native American/Alaska Native teachers often teach in schools and positions that are difficult to staff. In 2020–21, Native American/Alaska Native teachers were twice as likely as White teachers to teach in schools serving the highest proportions of students of color (40% vs. 20%) and were also more likely to teach in schools serving the highest proportions of students eligible for free or reduced-price meals (48% vs. 28%).

In 2020–21, nearly half (48%) of Native American/Alaska Native teachers reported that they would leave teaching as soon as possible if they could get a higher-paying job. An analysis of pooled data from 2016 to 2020 shows that Native American/Alaska Native teachers earned just 61% of average non-teacher wages after adjusting for state cost of living—less than any other group by race or ethnicity. A higher propensity to leave the profession could undermine successful recruitment efforts.

Native American/Alaska Native teachers had limited access to the kind of preparation associated with retention in the field. For example, in 2020–21, 31% of Native American/Alaska Native teachers had entered teaching through an alternative certification pathway (nearly twice the rate of White teachers). Indeed, a striking 45% of beginning Native American/Alaska Native teachers entered through such a pathway. As a result, Native American/Alaska Native teachers reported having limited participation in preservice coursework on topics including classroom management and lesson planning (though differences in participation rates between Native American/Alaska Native and White teachers were not statistically significant). However, Native American/Alaska Native teachers were more likely than White teachers to report taking preservice coursework on serving students from diverse economic backgrounds (73% vs. 64%).

Although teacher reports regarding access to resources and professional development opportunities were low across the board, they were especially low among Native teachers. In 2017–18 (the most recent year of data available), just 18% strongly agreed that they “have sufficient resources available for my professional development.” One quarter agreed that they had about the same access to resources as other teachers. While they reported less access to resources for themselves, Native American/Alaska Native teachers were the most likely of all teachers to report acting as a coach or mentor to other teachers or staff. About three quarters of Native American/Alaska Native teachers reported acting as a mentor or coach, compared to about 63% of White teachers. For the most

part, 2020–21 results regarding first-year mentoring experiences were not statistically significant, but they were in the direction of limited access for Native American/Alaska Native teachers. For example, only 67% of Native American/Alaska Native teachers hired in 2016–17 or later reported being assigned a mentor teacher in their first year, and nearly 30% of those teachers met with their mentor just a few times a year, or never.

Source: U.S. Census. (2021). *ACS 1-year estimates selected population profiles*. These population estimates include Native American/Alaska Native ALONE and not in combination with any other race/ethnicity.

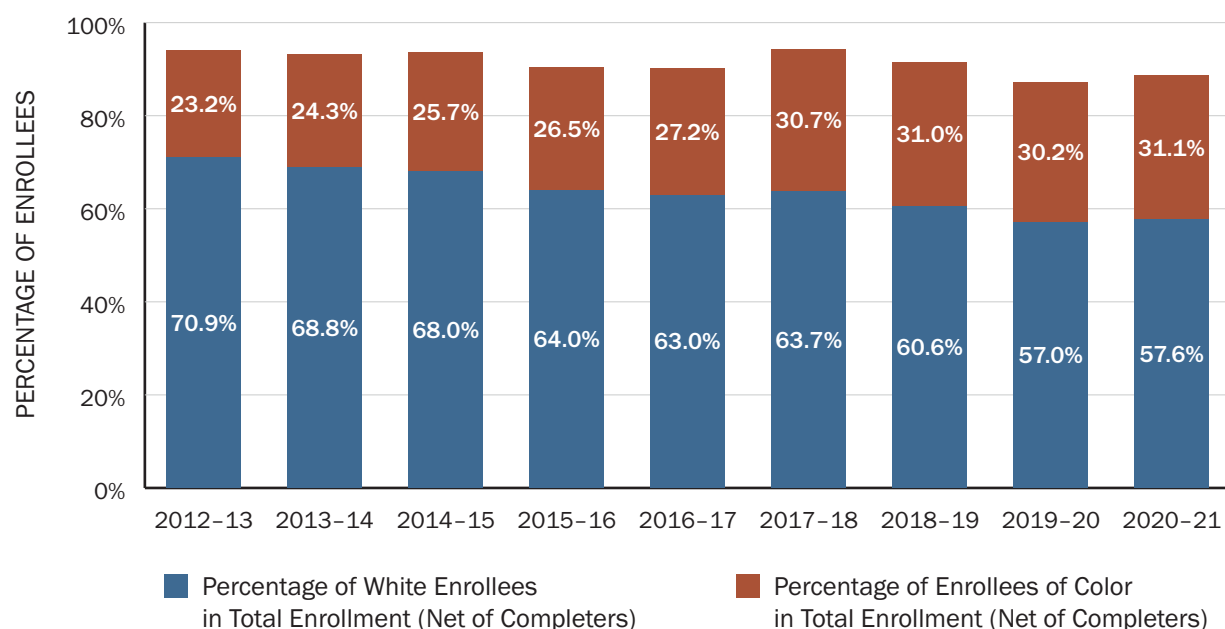
What Matters for Retention: Comprehensive Preservice Preparation

With the evidence that teachers of color have a greater desire to leave the profession and in fact do leave the profession at higher rates, we now look at the conditions that may contribute to these decisions. As noted, prior research shows that among teachers as a whole, access to comprehensive preservice preparation is associated with greater retention rates. In the sections that follow, we investigate the extent to which teachers of color have had access to preservice preparation, currently and over time. We also highlight the role that college debt may play in these trends.

More Teaching Candidates Are Candidates of Color

While the overall proportion of teachers of color has been relatively stagnant in recent years, the number of teaching *candidates* of color, and their share of all candidates, has increased over the past decade.⁵¹ Most recently, enrollment of teacher candidates of color increased by 11.4% (from 161,768 enrollees in 2018–19 to 180,260 in 2020–21). As such, they also represented a larger share of the total pool of teacher candidates over time: In 2020–21, about 31.1% of enrollees were enrollees of color, up by nearly 8 percentage points since 2012–13 (see [Figure 7](#)). The number of preparation completers of color also increased substantially (from 38,556 to 46,174, an increase of 19.8% between 2018–19 and 2020–21).⁵²

Figure 7. Percentage of Teacher Preparation Program Enrollees Who Are Candidates of Color and White, 2012–13 to 2020–21



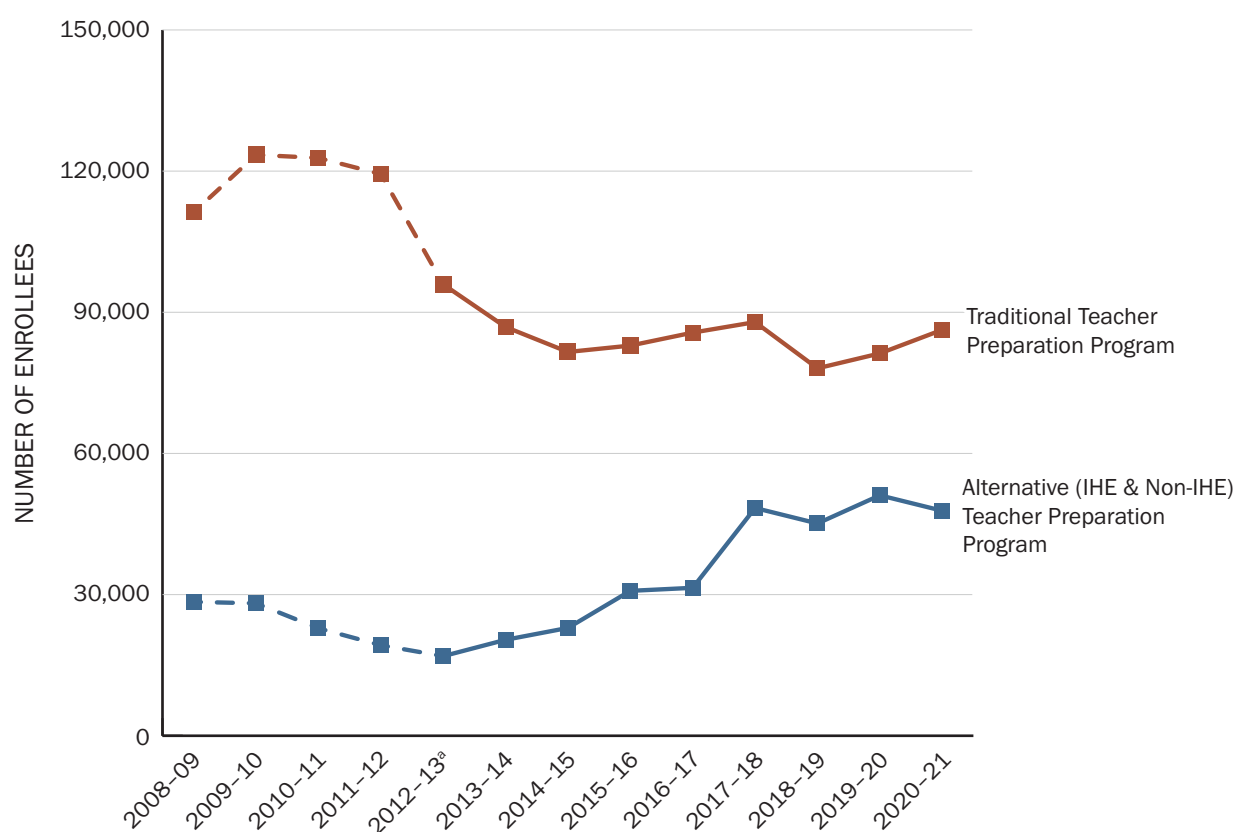
Notes: Percentages do not add up to 100% due to item nonresponse. Enrollment series excludes completers (i.e., enrollment net of completers), as per the Title II definition until academic year 2017–18.

Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of Title II Teacher Preparation Enrollment data [All States datafiles] from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education.

Candidates of Color Increasingly Enroll in Alternative Preparation

Although the share of teaching candidates of color has been growing, their access to comprehensive teacher preparation has been in decline. In 2020–21, candidates of color were more likely to be enrolled in an alternative preparation program than White teacher candidates, a trend that has been growing over a decade. Among teaching candidates of color, enrollments in alternative teacher preparation programs (TPPs) grew nearly threefold between 2012–13 and 2020–21 (from 16,832 to 47,817) (see [Figure 8](#)). Meanwhile, during the same period, traditional enrollments dropped by 10% for candidates of color (from 95,807 to 86,269). The decline in traditional programs is even greater when taking into account enrollments before 2012, though these data are less reliable.

Figure 8. Enrollment of Candidates of Color in Teacher Preparation Programs, 2008–09 to 2020–21



^a Results prior to 2012–13 should be interpreted with caution.

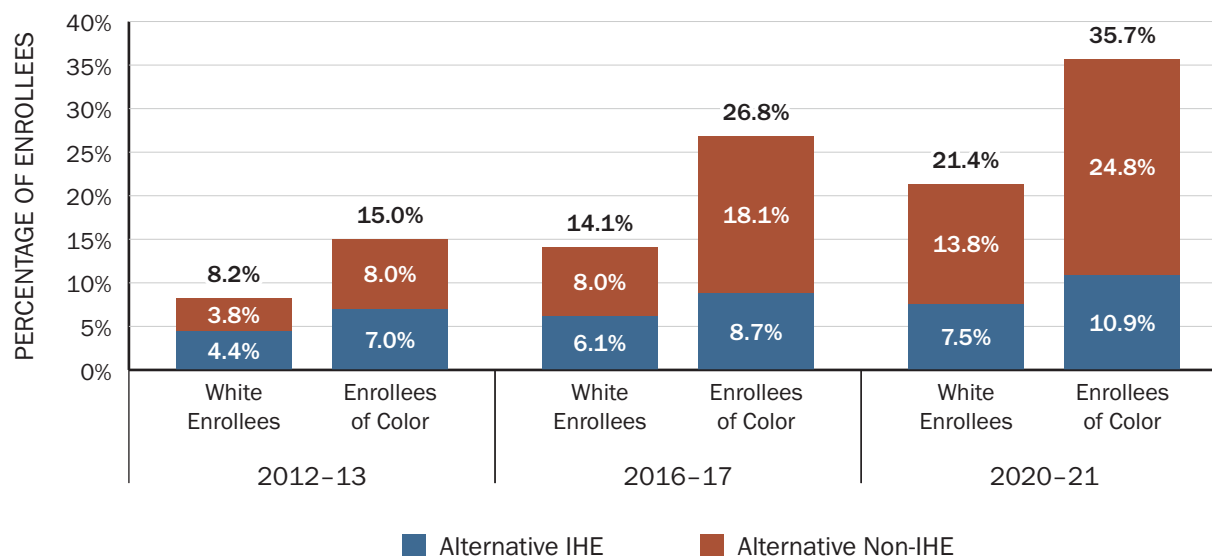
Notes: Alternative teacher preparation program enrollment data include enrollments from institutions of higher education (IHEs) and non-IHEs and are based on data from the 50 states and District of Columbia. Individuals of color include individuals of all non-White racial and ethnic groups, including those who are multiracial. Individuals with unknown race or ethnicity are excluded. Enrollment data exclude completers, as per the Title II definition until academic year 2017–18.

Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of Title II Teacher Preparation Enrollment data from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education from 2008–09 to 2020–21.

As of 2020–21, nearly 36% of all teacher enrollees of color were enrolled in an alternative certification program, up from about 15% in 2012–13 (see [Figure 9](#)). Alternative TPP enrollments also increased for White candidates, more than doubling in the same period, though the proportion in 2020–21 (21%) was far smaller than the share for candidates of color. Although there is variation in the level of preparation alternative certification programs provide, on average, they offer less preservice coursework and student teaching, if any, compared to traditional TPPs.⁵³

We look more specifically at the types of alternative TPPs candidates attend, with a focus on non-institution of higher education (IHE) based programs. According to prior research, non-IHE-based alternative certification programs primarily serve candidates attending for-profit programs, some of which offer minimal coursework and no formal preservice student teaching.⁵⁴ Compared to White teacher candidates, candidates of color have been increasingly more likely to enroll in non-IHE-based alternative certification programs (see [Figure 8](#)). Between 2012–13 and 2020–21, the share of all enrollees of color enrolled in non-IHE alternative certification programs grew threefold for candidates of color (from 8% to 25%) and in 2020–21, they were more likely to enroll in such a program compared to White candidates (25% vs. 14%). For both White candidates and candidates of color, enrollments in IHE-based alternative certification programs have also increased over the decade, but at a much more modest pace. As will be detailed, teachers of color may be more likely to pursue alternative certification—which can typically be completed with evening and weekend classes while earning a full teacher’s salary—due to the steep cost of higher education.⁵⁵

Figure 9. Percentage of Enrollees in Alternative Teacher Preparation Programs by Candidate Race/Ethnicity, 2012–13, 2016–17, and 2020–21



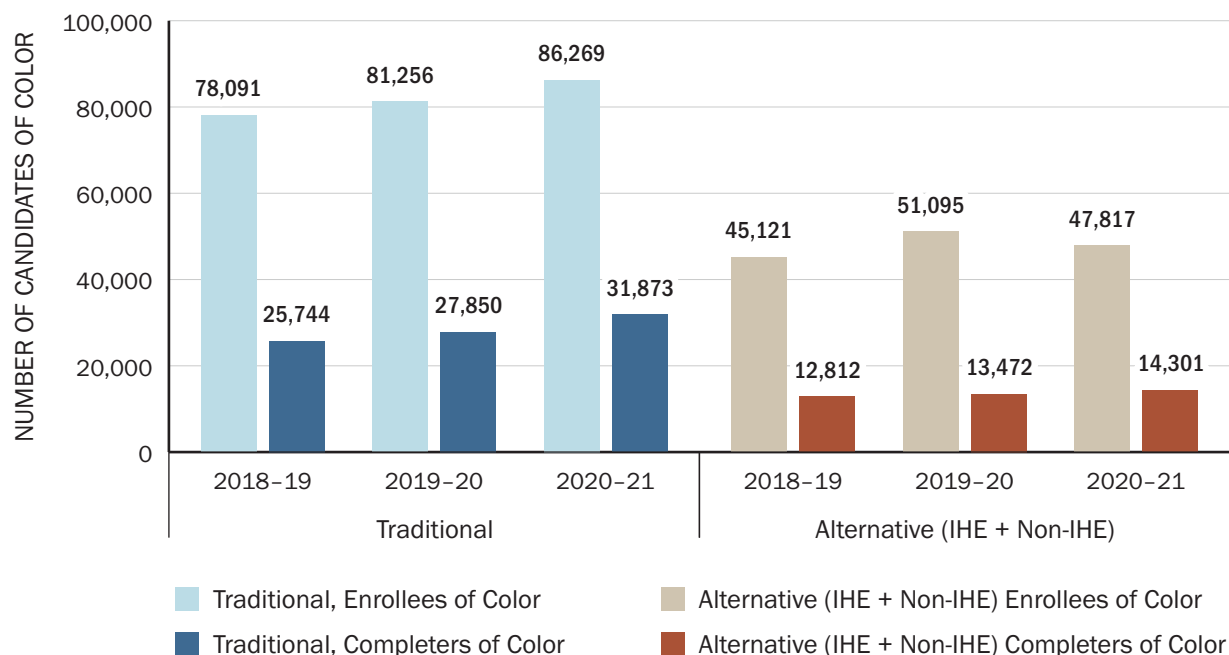
Notes: The denominator for each bar is the total number of enrollees for that group (either enrollees of color or White enrollees). IHE = institution of higher education. This figure includes data from the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Enrollees of color include individuals of all non-White racial and ethnic groups and those who are multiracial. Individuals with unknown race or ethnicity are excluded. Enrollment series exclude completers, as per the Title II definition until academic year 2017–18.

Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of 2012–13 to 2020–21 Title II Teacher Preparation Enrollment data from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education.

Enrolling in an alternative certification program seems to be associated with a lower likelihood of completing preparation, particularly for candidates of color (see [Figure 10](#)). It should be noted that completion figures are typically lower than enrollment figures because candidates can enroll in programs that require different lengths of time. However, the ratio of completers to enrollees is markedly lower for candidates of color in alternative certification programs than for candidates of color in traditional programs, or for White candidates in any type of program.

Between 2018–19 and 2020–21, the ratio of completers to enrollees ranged from 0.26 to 0.30 for candidates of color in alternative certification programs. In contrast, for candidates of color in traditional programs, the ratio ranged from 0.33 to 0.37. For White candidates, the completer-to-enrollee ratio was nearly always above 0.40 for both traditional and alternative programs. This disparity in completer-to-enrollee ratios suggests that despite more candidates of color enrolling in alternative certification programs, these pathways may not actually be producing more teachers of color. Indeed, these programs could be leaving candidates of color worse off if they are saddled with additional debt with no certification to show for it.

Figure 10. Number of Enrollees and Completers of Color in Alternative and Traditional Certification Programs, 2018–19 to 2020–21



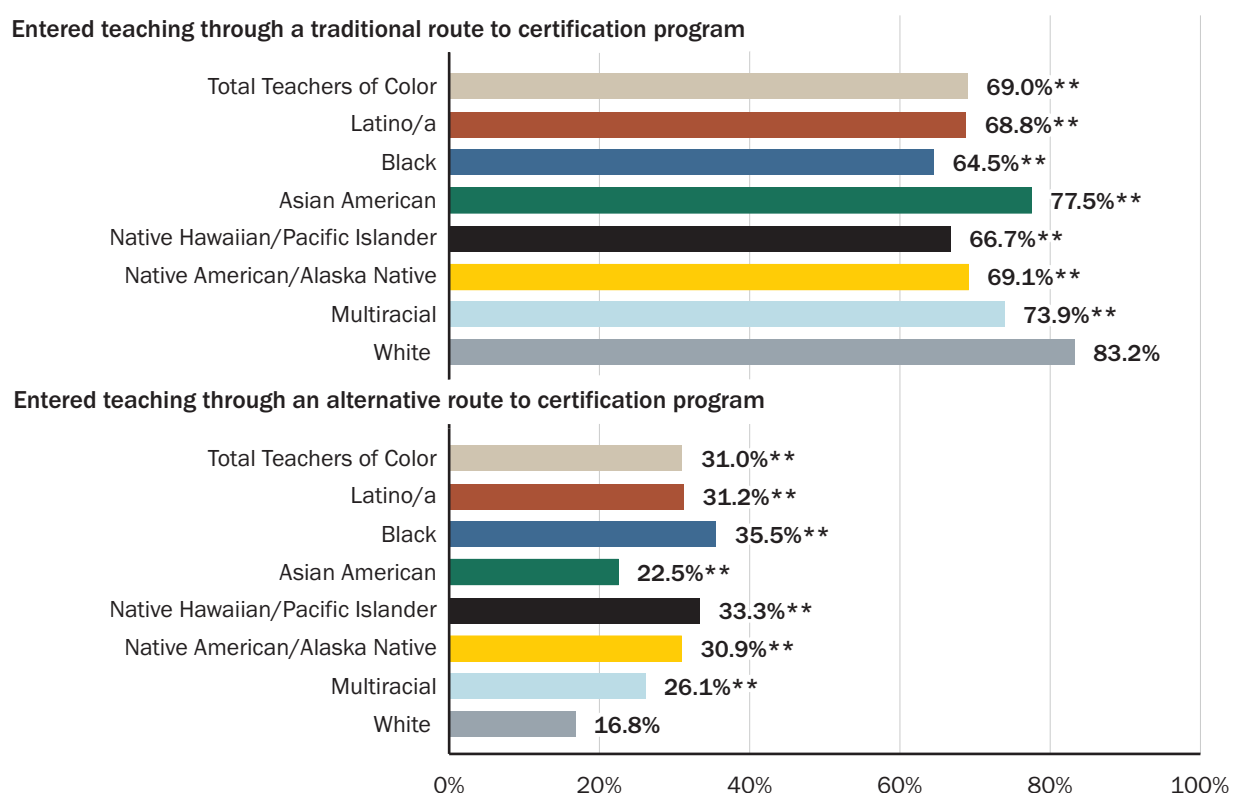
Notes: Figure includes data from the 50 states and District of Columbia. IHE = institution of higher education. Individuals of color include individuals of all non-White racial and ethnic groups and those who are multiracial. Individuals with unknown race or ethnicity are excluded. Enrollment series exclude completers, as per the Title II definition until academic year 2017–18. Title II teacher preparation data disaggregate program completers by race and ethnicity beginning in 2018–19.

Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of 2018–19 to 2020–21 Title II Teacher Preparation Enrollment data from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education.

Teachers of Color Entered Teaching With Less Preparation

Consistent with teacher preparation data, current teachers of color were more likely than White teachers to have entered teaching through an alternative route program. Importantly, the previously presented data on teacher preparation trends includes teaching candidates who may or may not have become teachers, whereas the data below only include teachers who did in fact enter the profession. While about 20% of all teachers in 2021 entered the profession through an alternative route, teachers of color were nearly twice as likely as White teachers to have entered teaching through an alternative route (31% of teachers of color vs. 16.8% of White teachers) (see Figure 11). Black teachers were the most likely to enter through an alternative route (35.5%).

Figure 11. Teacher Certification Route Into Teaching by Race/Ethnicity, 2020–21

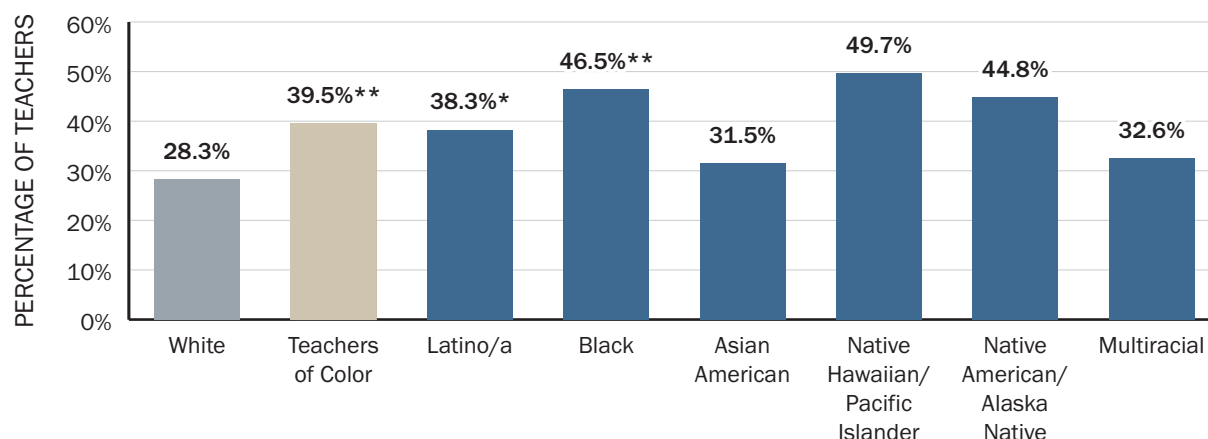


Notes: Sample includes teachers who are full time, part time, or itinerant in public schools. Statistical tests were conducted to compare teachers from each racial group, as well as teachers of color overall, with White teachers. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of the 2020–21 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) microdata from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

As might be expected, these patterns also hold for beginning teachers. The likelihood of entering teaching through an alternative route was even greater for beginning teachers within their first 3 years of teaching. In 2020–21, about 40% of beginning teachers of color had entered teaching via an alternative route, compared to 28% of beginning White teachers (see [Figure 12](#)). Among beginning Black teachers, nearly half entered teaching through an alternative route.

Figure 12. Percentage of Beginning Teachers Who Entered Teaching Through an Alternative Route to Certification Program, 2020–21



Notes: Sample includes teachers who are full time, part time, or itinerant in public schools. Beginning teachers are teachers with 3 or fewer years of experience. Statistical tests were conducted to compare teachers from each racial group, as well as teachers of color overall, with White teachers. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of the 2020–21 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) microdata from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

Teaching Certification Types

As a result of entering teaching through alternative certification programs, teachers of color, overall, were more likely than White teachers to be teaching on a temporary, provisional, or emergency permit, or with no state certification at all—another indicator of their access to preparation for their roles. In 2020–21, 93% of teachers overall were fully certified, meaning they held a regular or standard certificate or probationary certificate (often granted to beginning teachers) that allowed them to teach in their state. However, teachers of color were less likely to be fully certified, at about 88%, and with even lower full certification rates among Black (84.2%) and Latino/a (88.4%) teachers (see [Table 1](#)).

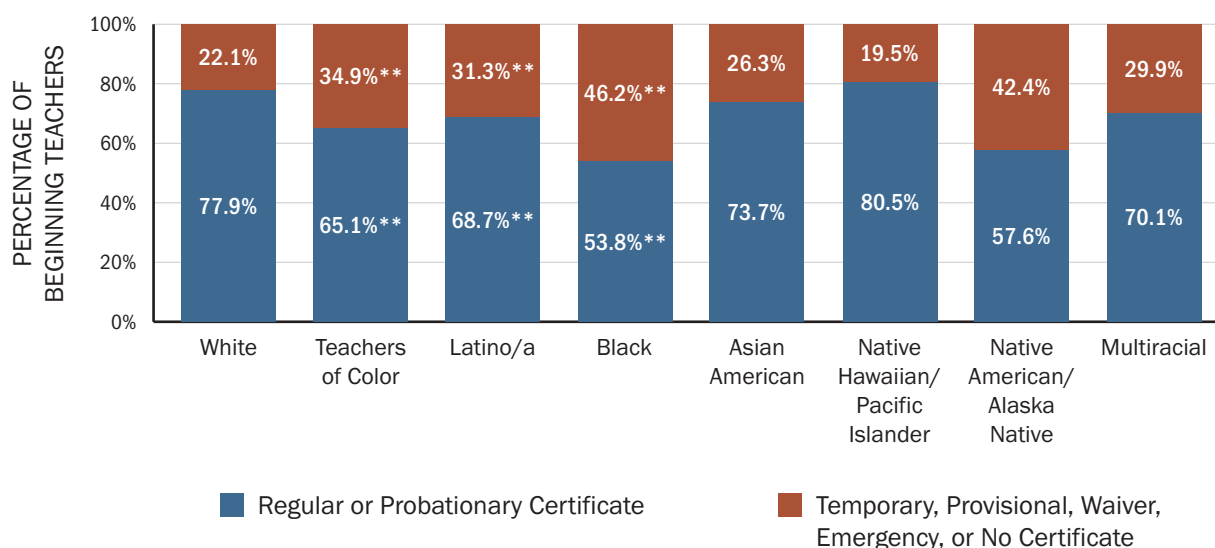
Table 1. Teacher Certification by Race/Ethnicity, 2020–21

Certification	White	Total Teachers of Color	Teachers of Color by Group					
			Latino/a	Black	Asian American	Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	Native American/ Alaska Native	Multiracial
Holds a regular or probationary certificate to teach in this state	94.2%	87.6%**	88.4%**	84.2%**	90.2%**	88.1%	89.5%	91.6%*

Notes: Sample includes teachers who are full time, part time, or itinerant in public schools. Statistical tests were conducted to compare teachers holding regular or probationary certificates from each racial group, as well as teachers of color overall, with White teachers. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of the 2020–21 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) microdata from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

Among all beginning teachers, just 75% were fully certified in 2020–21, a substantially lower proportion than the 82% of beginning teachers who were fully certified in 2017–18 (perhaps owed to the certification waivers that were common during the COVID-19 pandemic).⁵⁶ Just 65% of beginning teachers of color were fully certified, compared to 78% of beginning White teachers (see [Figure 13](#)). Looking at specific racial and ethnic groups, only 69% of beginning Latino/a teachers and 54% of beginning Black teachers were fully certified.

Figure 13. Teaching Certificates Held by Beginning Teachers, 2020–21

Notes: Sample includes teachers who are full time, part time, or itinerant in public schools. Beginning teachers are teachers with 3 or fewer years of experience. “Regular” certificate stands for “Regular or standard state certificate or advanced professional certificate.” Statistical tests were conducted to compare teachers holding regular or probationary certificates from each racial group, as well as teachers of color overall, with White teachers. Shares may not sum to 100 because of rounding. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of the 2020–21 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) microdata from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

Access to Preservice Coursework

Another result of more teachers of color obtaining certification through alternative programs is that most teachers of color had limited access to preservice coursework. To get the most accurate measure of this, we focused on beginning teachers (in their first 3 years of teaching), since teachers may have difficulty recalling details about their preservice preparation after some time has passed. We found that beginning teachers of color reported having less access to preservice coursework than did their White peers.

In 2020–21, just 49% of beginning teachers of color had taken any teaching classes before beginning teaching, compared to 59% of beginning White teachers (see [Table 2](#)). Just 37% of Black beginning teachers and 50% of Latino/a beginning teachers had taken any teaching classes before entering the classroom.

In 2020–21, just 49% of beginning teachers of color had taken any teaching classes before beginning teaching.

Of the beginning teachers of color who had taken teaching courses before their first year of teaching, about two thirds reported taking preservice coursework in classroom management, lesson planning, assessing student learning, serving students from diverse economic backgrounds, or serving students with special needs (see [Table 2](#)). Even fewer beginning teachers of color had taken preservice coursework on using student performance data to inform instruction or on teaching English learners. In particular, the differences between beginning Black and White teachers is very large: Beginning White teachers were 30%–50% more likely to have these experiences than beginning Black teachers. In contrast, however, beginning Asian American teachers were more likely than beginning White teachers to have taken preservice coursework (see [Box 5. Asian American Teachers in the Workforce.](#))

Participation in preservice teacher preparation was similar among beginning teachers in 2017–18, when just about half of teachers of color had taken any teaching courses before their first year of teaching (see [Table 3](#)). However, beginning Black and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander teachers seemed to have substantially higher preservice course-taking rates in 2017–18 than they did in 2020–21 (although these differences were not tested for statistical significance). The percentage of beginning Black teachers who had taken any preservice teaching courses dropped from about 47% in 2017–18 to 37% in 2020–21. Likewise, preservice course-taking dropped from 77% among beginning Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander teachers to 44% across the same years.

**Table 2. Beginning Teacher Preparation Experiences
by Race/Ethnicity, 2020–21**

Preparation Experience	White	Total Teachers of Color	Teachers of Color by Group					
			Latino/a	Black	Asian American	Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	Native American/ Alaska Native	Multiracial
Percentage who took any graduate or undergraduate teaching courses before the first year of teaching	58.7	49.1**	50.1**	36.8**	65.3	44.1	54.8	58.2
Of beginning teachers who took any graduate or undergraduate courses (before the first year of teaching), percentage who took courses that taught them:								
Classroom management techniques	75.4	66.8**	70.0*	53.3**	83.9**	85.4	70.7	64.1
Lesson planning	77.4	67.1**	70.2**	53.0**	87.1**	81.9	64.9	63.4*
How to assess learning	79.2	68.2**	71.5**	55.3**	86.5*	81.9	78.9	59.2**
How to serve students from diverse economic backgrounds	74.4	66.0**	69.4	50.5**	84.0**	81.9	84.9	64.9
How to serve students with special needs	74.0	66.3**	69.1	56.6**	77.3	81.9	68.6	64.3
How to teach English learners	57.9	56.7	62.9	43.5**	70.4**	81.9	53.3	42.3*
Percentage experiencing student teaching								
Had student teaching	77.4	69.1**	69.3**	60.2**	84.5*	85.4	71.5	71.7
Did not have student teaching	22.6	30.9**	30.7**	39.8**	15.5*	14.6	28.5	28.3
Had student teaching for 12 weeks or more	75.2	69.3**	70.7	64.3**	72.5	54.4	72.4	70.5

Notes: Sample includes teachers who are full time, part time, or itinerant in public schools. Statistical tests were conducted to compare teachers from each racial group, as well as teachers of color overall, with White teachers. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$. See Appendix [Table B2](#) for additional details on teacher preparation experiences for beginning teachers.

Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of the 2020–21 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) microdata from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

**Table 3. Beginning Teacher Preparation Experiences
by Race/Ethnicity, 2017–18**

Preparation Experience	White	Total Teachers of Color	Teachers of Color by Group					
			Latino/a	Black	Asian American	Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	Native American/ Alaska Native	Multiracial
Took any graduate or undergraduate teaching courses before the first year of teaching	56.3	50.7**	47.7**	47.2**	68.8**	76.8*	38.4	56.8

Notes: Sample includes teachers who are full time, part time, or itinerant in public schools. Statistical tests were conducted to compare teachers from each racial group, as well as teachers of color overall, with White teachers.

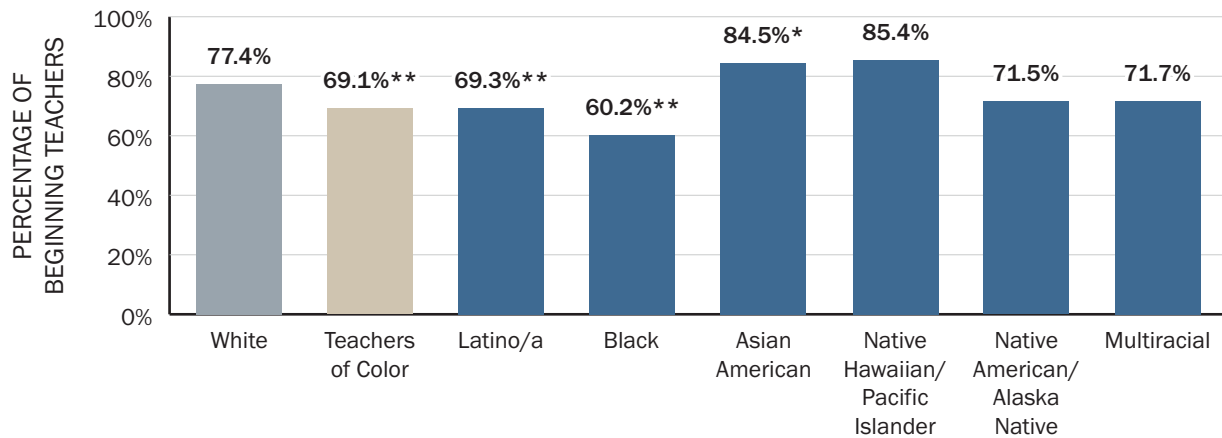
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$. See the [Teacher Diversity 2017–18 Online Supplement](#) for a more detailed table of beginning teacher preparation experiences in 2017–18.

Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of the 2017–18 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) microdata from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

Access to Student Teaching

Beginning teachers of color were less likely than beginning White teachers to have had access to any student teaching, with the lowest rates of participation in student teaching among Black and Latino/a teachers. About 69% of beginning teachers of color reported completing any student teaching, compared to 77% of beginning White teachers (see [Figure 14](#)). This included just 60% of beginning Black teachers completing any student teaching. Further, among those beginning teachers who student taught, teachers of color were less likely to have student taught for a considerable amount of time; 69% of beginning teachers of color with student teaching experience student taught for 12 or more weeks, compared to 75% of their White peers (see [Table 2](#)). As previously noted, teachers who enter the profession without comprehensive preservice preparation that includes coursework and clinical practice are more likely to leave the profession than those who enter fully prepared.⁵⁷ These disparities in access to comprehensive preparation are concerning given the relationship between turnover and less access to comprehensive preparation.

Figure 14. Percentage of Beginning Teachers With Access to Student Teaching, 2020–21



Notes: Sample includes teachers who are full time, part time or itinerant, in public schools. Beginning teachers are teachers with 3 or fewer years of experience. Statistical tests were conducted to compare teachers from each racial group, as well as teachers of color overall, with White teachers. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of the 2020–21 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) microdata from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

Box 5. Asian American Teachers in the Workforce

Previous research demonstrates the importance of disaggregating data related to Asian Americans, given the significant differences in socioeconomic status and access to opportunities across Asian American communities. Unfortunately, this is not possible with the National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) dataset used in this study. Although data show that Asian American teachers are among those with the most access to preservice preparation and positive working conditions, these overall data likely mask considerable variation across teachers of East Asian, Southeast Asian, and South Asian descent. Further, our analysis found that Asian American teachers have less access to some key aspects of professional development.

Compared to other teachers of color, Asian American teachers were far less likely to enter teaching through an alternative route, but they were more likely to do so compared to White teachers (23% of Asian American teachers entered through an alternative route vs. 17% of White teachers).

The share of Asian American teachers who completed any teaching courses before their first year of teaching was among the highest of all teachers at about 60%. This rate was even greater among beginning Asian American teachers, 70% of whom took teaching courses before entering the classroom. In 2020–21, Asian American teachers took courses on teaching methods at similar rates as their White peers on classroom management techniques, lesson planning,

learning assessment, or how to serve students with special needs, and at larger rates on the use of student performance data to inform instruction and how to teach students from diverse economic backgrounds.

Similar rates of Asian American and White teachers reported participating in most professional development activities, though these rates were low across the board. However, in 2020–21, a larger share of Asian American teachers reported not having acted as a coach or mentor (46% vs. 37%).

Source: Crandall, J. (December 13, 2017). [Pan-Asian student classifications in higher education: What the data do and don't tell us](#) [Blog post]. *Higher Education Today*, American Council on Education.

How Cost Limits Access to Preparation

Access to financial supports likely plays a role in whether teachers of color are able to access preservice teacher preparation. According to a study of college loan debt, undergraduate and graduate Black, Latino/a, and Asian American students were more likely than White students to report that loans limited their choice of educational institution, even at the same hypothetical level of debt burden and postgraduation salary. Latino/a students were most likely to report that loans limited their choice of educational institution.⁵⁸ Black students were more likely to report that they wished they had borrowed less to fund their postsecondary education, that they changed their career plans because of their loans, or that their loan payments were burdensome.

Given the persistent racial wealth gap for Black and Latino/a families in particular, it is not hard to imagine that even with the same debt and salary expectations as White students, the cost of college and debt can present a greater relative burden. In 2016, the median White family had a net worth about 10 times greater (\$171,000) than a median Black or Latino/a family.⁵⁹ Having less of a safety net to rely on may explain why Black and Latino/a college students are more likely to report feeling burdened by loans. In addition, loss of the need-based federal Perkins Loans beginning in 2017 resulted in reduced access to financial aid for teacher education.⁶⁰

In this study, Black teachers were more likely than other teachers to have taken out a student loan to pay for their undergraduate or graduate education (see [Table 4](#)). About 71% of Black teachers had taken out student loans, compared to about 60% of White teachers. Teachers of color, and Black teachers in particular, were also more likely to still owe all of the amount they had borrowed. Among

Among student loan borrowers, teachers of color overall were more than twice as likely as White teachers to still owe all of their loan.

student loan borrowers, teachers of color overall were more than twice as likely as White teachers to still owe all of their loan (32.2% vs. 15.6%). Nearly half (44%) of Black teachers who had taken out loans still owed all of their loan amount. Teachers of color overall (67%), and Black teachers in particular (72%), were far more likely to report that they experienced a high or very high level of stress regarding their student loan debt, compared to White teachers (58%).

Burdensome debt loads impact the positions teachers take on, potentially affecting their satisfaction in teaching and career longevity. More than a third of all teachers—about the same proportion for White teachers and teachers of color—took on multiple jobs because of their student loan debt. Further, teachers of color were more likely than White teachers, on average, to report taking a less desirable job due to their student debt. More than a quarter of teachers of color reported taking a less desirable job, compared to about 20% of White teachers. Nearly 30% of Black teachers reported taking a less desirable job due to their student loan debt. The survey does not investigate in what ways these roles are less desirable; however, if these positions are in schools that are not well run, offer fewer opportunities for mentoring, and have other challenging teaching conditions, taking a less desirable position due to student debt could lead to higher turnover rates.

**Table 4. Student Loans Borrowing, Repayment, and Consequences
Among Teachers by Race/Ethnicity, 2020–21**

Student Loan Experience	White	Total Teachers of Color	Teachers of Color by Group					
			Latino/a	Black	Asian American	Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	Native American/ Alaska Native	Multiracial
Did you take out any type of student loans for undergraduate or graduate education?	59.8	60.1	58.4	70.5**	37.4**	53.9	56.6	65.5*
(Of borrowers) Do you still owe all of the amount that you borrowed?	15.6	32.2**	18.9**	44.1**	15.5**	34.7	29.3*	26.7**
Level of stress regarding loan is high or very high	57.7	66.8**	65.1**	71.8**	48.9*	64.7	66.4	65.7*
Did you have to work at more than one job at the same time because of student loan debt?	36.5	37.5	35.8	39.0	33.2	42.8	40.5	42.8*
Did you take a less desirable job because of student loan debt?	20.5	26.6**	24.3**	28.6**	26.9*	31.6	28.1	29.7**

Notes: Sample includes teachers who are full time, part time, or itinerant in public schools. Statistical tests were conducted to compare teachers from each racial group, as well as teachers of color overall, with White teachers. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of the 2020–21 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) microdata from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

Overall, in terms of teacher preparation, our analyses show that teachers of color are less likely to have access to the kind of comprehensive preservice preparation that is associated with longevity in the profession. Although the enrollment of candidates of color has increased over the past decade, candidates of color are increasingly entering teaching through alternative certification programs—and non-IHE alternative programs in particular—that are associated with very little preservice preparation. Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, teachers of color were more likely than White teachers to be teaching on a temporary, provisional, or emergency permit, or with no state certification at all, rather than full certification. Likewise, teachers of color were less likely to have entered the profession having completed any preservice coursework or student teaching. Access to financial supports may play a role in these disparities in access to preparation, as teachers of color, and Black teachers in particular, were more likely to owe on student loans, causing a high level of stress.

What Matters for Retention: Sustaining Teaching Conditions

Even when teachers of color enter the profession fully prepared, challenging teaching conditions can discourage persistence in the classroom. In this section, we describe the conditions teachers of color experience on the job, including characteristics of the schools in which they teach and their experiences of stress and dissatisfaction in the workplace.

Where Teachers of Color Teach Matters

Prior research shows that school geography and school composition can influence the kinds of resources schools are able to provide. With fewer resources, more teachers leave the workforce. Therefore, the schools where teachers of color teach can have an influence on whether those teachers stay in the profession.

School Geographic Location

Teachers of color are not equally distributed across the nation. Instead, teachers of color tend to be concentrated in particular U.S. regions and types of communities that are associated with fewer school-based resources and greater accountability measures, including reconstituting staff or closing schools when student achievement is low (see [Table 5](#)). More than half of teachers of color teach in the South, compared to about one third of White teachers. Indeed, more than 72% of Black teachers teach in the South despite just about half of the U.S. Black population living in the South.⁶¹ Teachers of color are also more likely than White teachers to teach in the West. On the contrary, teachers of color are less likely than White teachers to teach in the Northeast or Midwest.

Given these variations in where teachers of color teach, they tend to be concentrated in regions that, on average, invest less in education. Northeast state education systems are among the highest spending in the nation, spending thousands more per pupil than the national average, after adjusting for cost of labor differences.⁶² Most Midwest states also spend more than the national average on education. In contrast, states in areas with higher proportions of teachers of color spend less, cost-adjusted, on education. Nearly every state in the South is among the lowest spending, and most states in the West also spend less than the national average on education.⁶³ This could have implications for access to early-career mentoring, ongoing professional learning, positive school teaching conditions, and competitive compensation. For example, as will be described, teachers of color earn lower incomes than do White teachers, after accounting for state-level differences in cost of living.

Teachers of color are also more likely to teach in cities than are White teachers and are less likely to teach in towns and rural communities. Overall, they are about as likely as White teachers to teach in suburban schools. Native American/Alaska Native teachers, however, are substantially less likely to teach in suburban schools and more likely to teach in town and rural schools. The urbanicity of teachers' schools may influence teaching conditions, including compensation and access to resources. The distribution of teachers of color in schools across U.S. regions and urbanicity types has remained relatively consistent since 2017–18 (see [Teacher Diversity 2017–18 Online Supplement](#)).

Table 5. Distribution of Teachers by Race/Ethnicity, School Region, and School Urbanicity, 2020–21

Locale	White	Total Teachers of Color	Teachers of Color by Group					
			Latino/a	Black	Asian American	Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	Native American/ Alaska Native	Multiracial
Region								
Northeast	21.0	11.9**	11.7**	10.5**	16.9*	5.4**	6.1**	12.9**
Midwest	26.4	9.5**	8.5**	10.3**	8.0**	3.7**	15.0*	14.2**
South	35.4	53.0**	50.0**	72.5**	27.0**	22.7*	42.7	42.0*
West	17.1	25.6**	29.9**	6.7**	48.1**	68.2**	36.3**	30.9**
Urbanicity								
City	24.3	42.0**	42.3**	42.1**	49.0**	38.7*	22.0	35.1**
Suburb	38.7	38.4	39.0	38.7	42.0	34.7	17.3**	34.8
Town	13.0	7.5**	7.3**	7.1**	4.0**	15.5	24.0*	10.5
Rural	24.0	12.0**	11.4**	12.1**	4.9**	11.1**	36.6*	19.6*

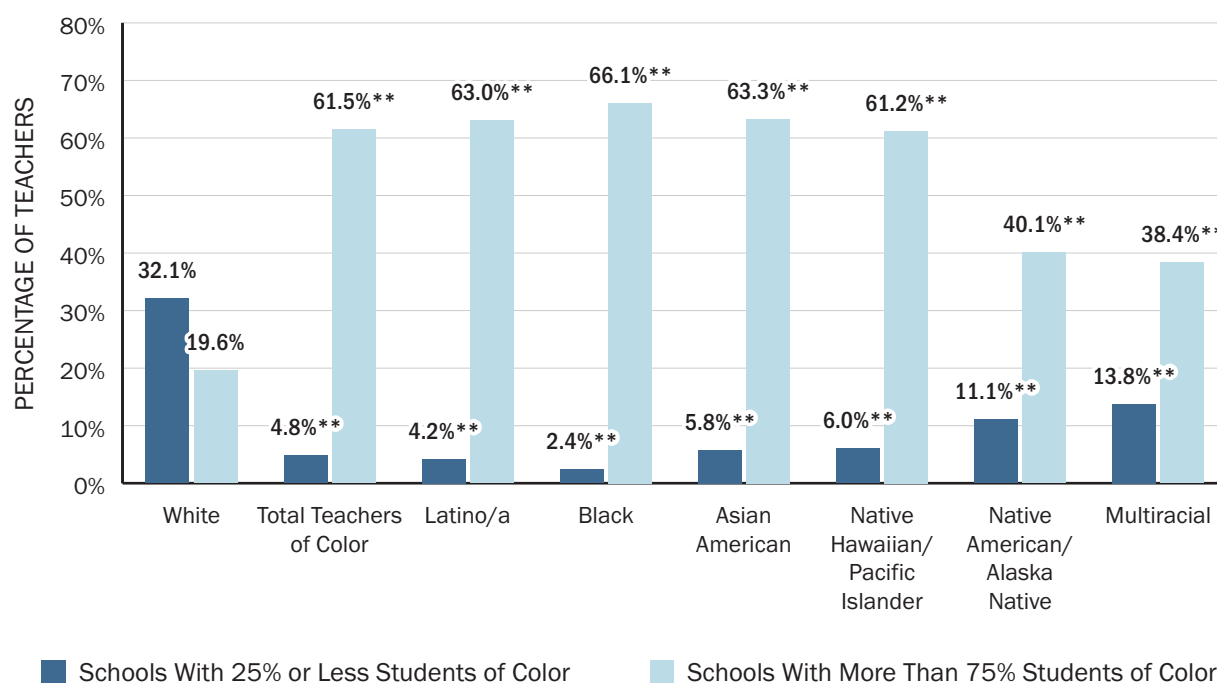
Notes: Sample includes teachers who are full time, part time, or itinerant in public schools. NCES classifies all territory in the United States into four types: rural, town, suburban, and city. NCES classifies all 50 states into four regions: Northeast (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont); South (Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia); Midwest (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin); and West (Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming). Statistical tests were conducted to compare school region and urbanicity for teachers from each racial group, as well as teachers of color overall, with White teachers. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of the 2020–21 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) microdata from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

School Demographic Composition

Although the NTPS data do not provide details on school funding levels, the data indicate that teachers of color, on average, are more likely to teach in settings that tend to receive inadequate resources. As noted, schools with more students of color and students from low-income families tend to receive inadequate funding relative to their need, and the magnitude of underfunding can be substantial.⁶⁴ For Black and Latino/a teachers, nearly 80% of students in their schools are students of color, compared to about 45% for White teachers. Notably, this overall average masks just how concentrated teachers of color are in a fraction of schools: More than 60% of teachers of color teach in schools with more than 75% students of color. By comparison, about 20% of White teachers teach in those settings. On the other end of the spectrum, just 5% of teachers of color teach in schools with 25% or less students of color, compared to 32% of White teachers (see Figure 15). Just about 2% of Black teachers teach in those settings.

Figure 15. Distribution of Teachers by Race/Ethnicity in Schools by Share of Students of Color, 2020–21

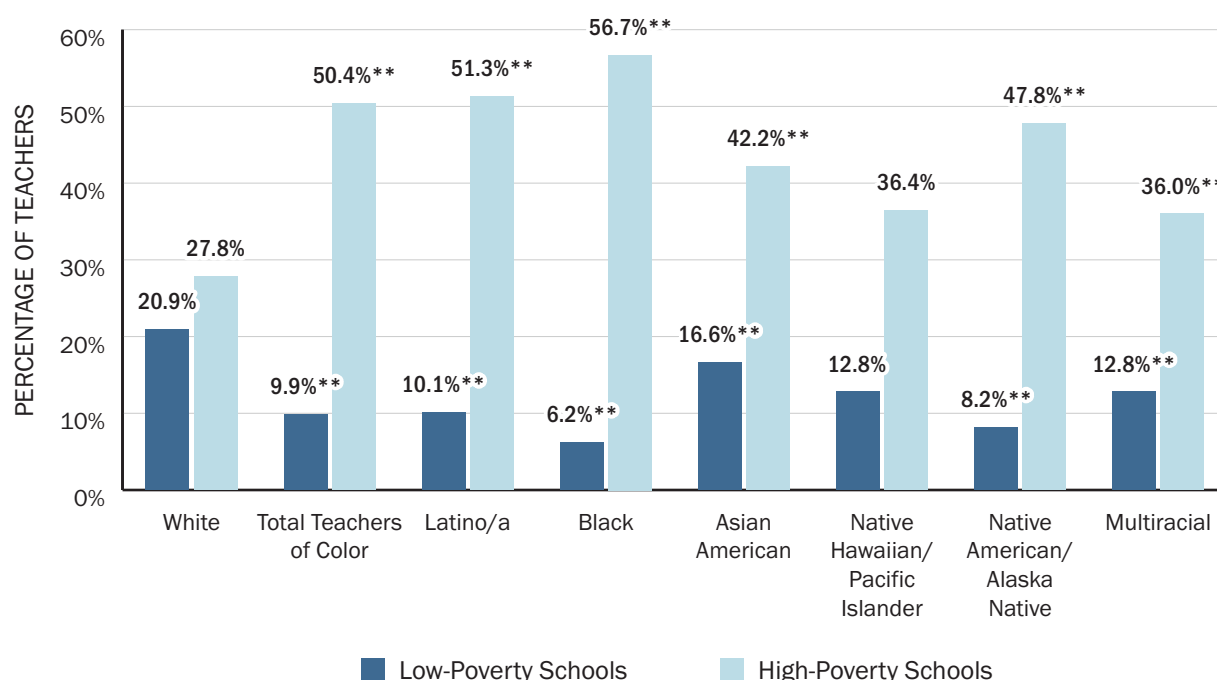


Notes: Sample includes teachers who are full time, part time, or itinerant in public schools. Statistical tests were conducted to compare teachers from each racial group, as well as teachers of color overall, with White teachers. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of the 2020–21 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) microdata from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

Teachers of color are also more likely to teach students from low-income families, as indicated by eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL). Across the board, teachers of color are far more likely to teach in schools where more than 75% of students are eligible for FRPL. Nearly 60% of Black teachers teach in those schools, compared to just 28% of White teachers (see Figure 16). About 51% of Latino/a and 48% of Native American/Alaska Native teachers work in those settings. Approximately 40% of Asian American, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and multiracial teachers teach in schools serving the most FRPL-eligible students. In contrast, teachers of color are very unlikely to teach in low-poverty schools—those that are likely to have disproportionately high resources. Just 10% of teachers of color overall taught in those low-poverty schools, compared to 21% of White teachers. Black teachers were the least likely to teach in low-poverty schools, at just 6%.

Figure 16. Distribution of Teachers by Race/Ethnicity in Schools by Share of Students Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch, 2020–21



Notes: Sample includes teachers who are full time, part time, or itinerant in public schools. A school is a low-poverty school if 25% or less students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. A school is a high-poverty school if more than 75% students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Statistical tests were conducted to compare teachers from each racial group, as well as teachers of color overall, with White teachers. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of the 2020–21 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) microdata from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

Some teachers of color were also more likely to teach more English learners.⁶⁵ Latino/a teachers were more likely to teach in the top quartile of schools serving English learners, at nearly 50%, compared to 18% of White teachers. Black, Asian American, and multiracial teachers were also more likely to teach in schools serving the most English learners. However, teachers of color were less likely than White teachers to teach in schools serving more students with individualized education plans (IEPs) who receive special education and related services to support their learning and development. Latino/a and Asian American teachers, in particular, were less likely than White teachers to teach in schools serving the greatest share of students with an IEP (see Table 6).

Table 6. Distribution of Teachers by Race/Ethnicity in Schools by Share of English Learners and Students With an IEP, 2020–21

School Characteristic	White	Total Teachers of Color	Teachers of Color by Group					
			Latino/a	Black	Asian American	Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	Native American/ Alaska Native	Multiracial
Percentage of students who are English learners (ELs)								
Percentage of teachers in low-EL schools (bottom quartile)	22.9	10.6**	7.3**	15.1**	8.0**	14.9	23.0	14.3**
Percentage of teachers in high-EL schools (top quartile)	17.7	40.1**	48.0**	30.4**	43.2**	24.3	17.6	29.7**
Percentage of students with an IEP								
Percentage of teachers in low-IEP schools (bottom quartile)	22.9	27.8**	29.2**	25.8	32.3**	27.8	20.5	21.7
Percentage of teachers in high-IEP schools (top quartile)	24.1	21.2**	21.0*	21.1	17.8**	26.6	25.2	25.9

Notes: Sample includes teachers who are full time, part time, or itinerant in public schools. IEP = individualized education plan. EL = English learners. A school's percentage of students with an IEP is based on the school's student body. A school's percentage of students who are ELs is based on the school's student body. A school is a low-IEP school if the school's percentage of IEP students is in the bottom quartile. A school is a high-IEP school if the school's percentage of IEP students is in the top quartile. A school is a low-EL school if the school's percentage of EL students is in the bottom quartile. A school is a high-EL school if the school's percentage of EL students is in the top quartile. Statistical tests were conducted to compare teachers from each racial group, as well as teachers of color overall, with White teachers. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of the 2020–21 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) microdata from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

Teachers of Color Experience Stress and Dissatisfaction in the Workplace

In 2020–21, teachers of color overall were more likely than White teachers to report experiencing stress and dissatisfaction. For example, teachers of color were more than 30% more likely to report that they worried about the security of their job because of the performance of their students or their school, compared to White teachers (see [Table 7](#)). In addition, teachers of color were more likely to somewhat or strongly agree that stress and disappointments at their school were not worth it, compared to White teachers (30% vs. 24%). Experiencing stress and disappointments in their roles could contribute to higher turnover rates.

Table 7. Teachers' Satisfaction Indicators by Race/Ethnicity, 2020–21

Satisfaction Indicator	White	Total Teachers of Color	Teachers of Color by Group					
			Latino/a	Black	Asian American	Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	Native American/ Alaska Native	Multiracial
I worry about the security of my job because of the performance of my students or my school								
Strongly disagree	42.1	35.4**	35.0**	35.8**	33.7**	38.0	35.0	38.8
Somewhat disagree	31.6	29.9*	29.1*	29.5	34.0	29.5	32.9	29.7
Somewhat agree	20.0	24.6**	25**	24.0**	24.8**	25.9	27.8*	23.2
Strongly agree	6.2	10.1**	10.9**	10.7**	7.5	6.6	4.3	8.3
Somewhat + strongly agree	26.3	34.7**	35.9**	34.7**	32.3**	32.6	32.1	31.6*
The stress and disappointments involved in teaching at this school aren't really worth it								
Strongly disagree	40.6	36.0**	38.0*	35.8**	29.4**	27.5*	38.3	35.0**
Somewhat disagree	35.5	34.5	33.1*	34.1	39.5	51.2**	33.8	35.1
Somewhat agree	19.9	23.3**	22.9**	23.2**	26.2**	18.8	19.3	22.8
Strongly agree	4.1	6.3	6.0**	6.9**	4.9	2.5	8.5	7.1**
Somewhat + strongly agree	23.9	29.5**	28.9**	30.1**	31.1**	21.3	27.9	29.9**

Notes: Sample includes teachers who are full time, part time, or itinerant in public schools. Statistical tests were conducted to compare teachers from each racial group, as well as teachers of color overall, with White teachers. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of the 2020–21 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) microdata from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

What Matters for Retention: Competitive Compensation

Based on a descriptive analysis of American Community Survey data from 2016 to 2020, the average non-teacher college graduate earned a salary of \$70,780 per year, while public school teachers earned less than \$52,000, on average. This means that teachers earn just 73% of average non-teacher wages after adjusting for state cost of living.⁶⁶

This wage disparity between teachers and other college graduates also varies by teacher race (see [Table 8](#)). White teachers earned slightly more than the average teacher, at about 74% of average non-teacher wages. However, teachers of color earned less, from as low as 61% of non-teacher wages for Native American/Alaska Native teachers to 72% for Latino/a teachers. As noted earlier, teachers of color are significantly more likely to teach in Southern and Western states that tend to invest less in education. Likewise, teachers of color are less likely to teach in higher-spending Northeast states.

Table 8. Ratio of Teacher to Other College-Educated Worker Wages by Race/Ethnicity, Average 2016–20 (in 2020 dollars)

Public school teachers	Annual income from wages and salaries	Wage ratio to other college-educated worker wages (\$70,780)
Overall	\$51,640	73.0%
By race/ethnicity		
White	\$52,090	73.6%
Teachers of color	\$50,120	70.8%
Black	\$50,095	70.8%
Latino/a	\$50,695	71.6%
Asian American/Pacific Islander	\$49,775	70.3%
Native American/Alaska Native	\$43,345	61.2%
Other race/ethnicity	\$49,335	69.7%

Notes: The sample includes individuals with a bachelor's degree or more, ages 22–64. Public school teachers are “elem, middle, secondary and special ed.,” in industry “elementary and secondary schools” and worker class “federal, state, and local government employee.” Other college graduates are all other individuals with a college degree or more (in any industry and sector). Amounts are annual income from wages and salaries, in 2020 dollars, adjusted for the state cost of living. Salaries are rounded to the nearest \$5.

Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of American Community Survey 2016–20 data, adjusted for cost of living using Bureau of Economic Analysis Regional Price Parities (average 2016–20).

Through sensitivity analyses, we find that larger pay gaps for teachers of color do not seem to be driven by either teacher age or teaching in a metropolitan area. In other words, larger wage gaps for teachers of color persist from the beginning of their careers through to retirement age. Similarly, they experience larger wage gaps than do White teachers whether or not they work in metropolitan areas. It is possible that the overrepresentation of teachers of color in underresourced schools serving larger shares of students from low-income backgrounds, or in lower-paying states, could be contributing to this wage gap disparity.

What Matters for Retention: Mentoring and Professional Development

Despite the value of mentoring in retaining teachers—and teachers of color in particular—few teachers received this support regularly. This was true for teachers of color overall and especially for early-career teachers of color, who were less likely than their White peers to receive mentoring and induction in their first year of teaching. Despite this, teachers of color tended to report generally positive attitudes toward the mentoring and other professional development support they received.

Few Teachers, Including Teachers of Color, Received Regular Mentoring

In 2017–18 (the most recent survey year that includes data on mentoring for all teachers), fewer than half of teachers overall (38%) or of teachers of color (44%) received regular mentoring (at least once a month), and even fewer received mentoring weekly (14% and 17%, respectively) (see [Table 9](#)). Some teachers of color had greater access to mentoring than White teachers did, but these rates were relatively low across the board. About 37% of White teachers received mentoring at least monthly, and 13% received coaching at least weekly. Black and Latino/a teachers in particular were more likely to have received regular mentoring than White teachers, though these rates were still low in absolute terms. Nearly 48% of Black teachers received mentoring at least monthly, and 19% received mentoring at least weekly.

One theory is that these differences in mentoring opportunities may be related to where teachers teach: Black and Latino/a teachers were more likely than White teachers to teach in cities, which may be able to offer greater access to professional learning and mentoring by leveraging economies of scale. Differences in access to mentoring for Asian American, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and Native American teachers were not statistically significant. When it came to acting as a coach or mentor, Black teachers were more likely than White teachers to report filling those roles on at least a weekly basis, whereas Asian American and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander teachers were less likely to have those leadership opportunities (see [Table 9](#)).

Table 9. Teachers' Access to Coaching and Mentoring by Race/Ethnicity, 2017–18

Coaching and Mentoring Experience	Teachers Overall	White	Total Teachers of Color	Teachers of Color by Group					
				Latino/a	Black	Asian American	Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	Native American/ Alaska Native	Multiracial
Received coaching or mentoring from other teachers or staff									
Once or a few times a week	13.5	12.6	16.9**	16.5**	19.2**	12.3	8.9	15.5	17.5*
Once or a few times a month	24.6	23.9	27.1**	26.3*	28.3**	27.4	23.2	29.0	26.4
Once or a few times a year	29.4	29.8	27.7**	28.6	24.8**	31.3	33.0	27.9	28.2
Did not participate	32.6	33.7	28.3**	28.6**	27.6**	29.0*	34.9	27.6	27.9**
Acted as a coach or mentor to other teachers or staff									
Once or a few times a week	19.3	19.0	20.2	19.4	23.0**	13.9**	11.7*	26.3	20.2
Once or a few times a month	21.7	21.9	21.0	20.9	21.1	20.8	21.5	21.6	21.4
Once or a few times a year	21.7	22.2	19.9**	19.4**	20.1*	19.8	36.4*	25.0	18.7
Did not participate	37.3	36.9	38.9**	40.2**	35.8	45.5**	30.5	27.1**	39.8

Notes: Sample includes teachers who are full time, part time, or itinerant in public schools. Statistical tests were conducted to compare teachers from each racial group, as well as teachers of color overall, with White teachers. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of the 2020–21 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) microdata from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

Less Mentoring and Induction Experienced Among Early-Career Teachers of Color

Access to mentoring is especially critical to the success and retention of *early-career* teachers. The 2020–21 NTPS included a series of questions that asked early-career teachers (teachers who began teaching in 2016–17 or later) about the induction and mentoring they received during their first year of teaching. Overall, early-career teachers of color were less likely to report working in schools or districts that provided induction programs or mentoring in their first year.

Induction programs are typically designed to offer systematic supports to beginning teachers, including mentoring, common planning time, and collaboration with other teachers.⁶⁷ Nearly 71% of early-career teachers of color participated in such a program in their first year of teaching, compared to 74% of early-career White teachers (see [Table 10](#)).

Despite being less likely to participate in a formal induction program, early-career teachers of color were more likely to report receiving several types of support in their first year, including a reduced teaching schedule; common planning time with same-subject teachers; seminars or classes for beginning teachers; extra class assistance, such as teaching aides; regular supportive communication with school leaders; observation and feedback on teaching practice; and release time to participate in beginning teacher support activities. For many of these supports, participation rates were low across the board, despite being greater for teachers of color. For example, 14% of early-career teachers of color reported having a reduced teaching schedule in their first year, compared to about 10% of early-career White teachers.

In addition to being less likely to participate in a formal induction program, early-career teachers of color were less likely than early-career White teachers to be assigned a mentor teacher in their first year (79% vs. 83%). At 76%, Black early-career teachers were even less likely to have reported being assigned a mentor in their first year of teaching. However, early-career teachers of color who were assigned a mentor in their first year were *more* likely than their White peers to report that their mentor provided several types of support, including help with paperwork or recordkeeping, demonstrating lessons, preparing standards-based lessons, and developing student assessment tools. Early-career teachers of color were about as likely as their White peers to have a mentor in their same subject area.

As with induction, access to some of these supports was low across the board. For example, about 60% of early-career teachers of color with mentors in their first year received help developing standards-based lessons, compared to about 50% for early-career White teachers. Overall, early-career teachers of color were more likely than their White peers to report that their mentor improved their first-year teaching to a great extent.

There are several factors that could contribute to differences in mentoring and induction experiences for teachers of color. The schools and districts where teachers of color teach may be less likely, overall, to offer mentoring and induction programs due to being underresourced. At the same time, those schools and districts that do offer those programs may be able to make them more robust by leveraging local resources and economies of scale that may be available in city environments. Teachers of color may also receive more regular support and report a greater impact of that support in some districts because they are more likely to enter the teaching profession with limited preservice preparation and need more substantial in-service support to be effective.

Table 10. Early-Career Teacher Access to Induction and Mentoring by Race/Ethnicity, 2020–21

Induction and Mentoring Experience	Teachers Overall	White	Total Teachers of Color	Teachers of Color by Group					
				Latino/a	Black	Asian American	Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	Native American/Alaska Native	Multiracial
Participated in a schoolwide or districtwide teacher induction program in the first year of teaching	73.3	74.1	70.7*	69.0*	72.2	74.7	65.9	69.6	69.6
Assigned a mentor teacher in the first year of teaching	82.0	83.1	78.9**	80.5	75.8**	80.8	83.2	67.2	79.4

Notes: Sample includes teachers who are full time, part time, or itinerant in public schools. Early-career teachers are those in their first 5 years of teaching. Statistical tests were conducted to compare teachers from each racial group, as well as teachers of color overall, with White teachers. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of the 2020–21 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) microdata from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

Teachers of Color Report Positive Professional Development Experiences

Although teachers of color, overall, had few opportunities to either act as mentors or receive mentoring, many reported positive attitudes toward other types of professional development (PD). In 2017–18 (the most recent year of data available), teachers of color, overall, were more likely than White teachers to report that they planned lessons with other teachers and collaborated with other teachers on issues of instruction at least weekly (see [Table 11](#)). Teachers of color were also more likely than White teachers to strongly agree that they had sufficient resources for PD, their PD aligned with the school’s performance goals, their PD would improve student achievement, and they felt capable of incorporating the techniques they are learning. Teachers of color were about as likely as White teachers to report receiving release time from teaching to attend PD. However, teachers of color were less likely than White teachers to strongly agree that they received about the same amount of PD resources as other teachers.

Table 11. Percentage of Teachers With Various Professional Development Experiences by Race/Ethnicity, 2017–18

Professional Development Experience	White	Total Teachers of Color	Teachers of Color by Group					
			Latino/a	Black	Asian American	Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	Native American/ Alaska Native	Multiracial
Planned lessons or courses with other teachers								
Once or a few times a week	40.3	43.8**	44.0**	47.1**	37.0	36.0	35.3	41.6
Once or a few times a month	26.5	28.7**	29.1*	25.4	35.1**	29.5	29.7	30.8
Once or a few times a year	24.5	20.5**	19.9**	20.3**	21.1	25.5	26.7	21.2
Did not participate	8.7	7.1**	7.0**	7.2*	6.8	9.0	8.2	6.5*
Collaborated with other teachers on issues of instruction (excluding administrative meetings)								
Once or a few times a week	46.0	48.4**	48.8*	50.7**	41.1*	36.5	47.6	48.6
Once or a few times a month	36.3	33.6**	32.3**	32.4**	40.0	47.0	34.6	34.9
Once or a few times a year	14.0	13.8	14.7	12.2*	15.2	14.8	14.2	13.0
Did not participate	3.8	4.2	4.2	4.8	3.7	1.7*	3.6	3.5
During the past 12 months, did you receive release time from teaching to attend professional development?								
Yes	64.3	65.2	67.1*	63.1	64.7	70.0	58.1	65.8
No	35.2	34.3	32.3*	36.6	34.9	30.0	41.7	33.4
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about YOUR PD as a teacher at THIS school?								
I have sufficient resources available for my PD								
Strongly agree	26.8	28.6*	28.7	30.3**	27.5	14.9**	18.0**	27.3
Somewhat agree	49.3	47.2**	46.1**	47.3	51.4	62.6*	53.1	44.0*
Somewhat disagree	16.9	16.2	16.9	13.9**	17.0	16.8	19.9	19.0
Strongly disagree	7.0	8.0*	8.3	8.5	4.1**	5.8	9.1	9.7*
I have access to about the same amount of resources for PD as other teachers								
Strongly agree	37.8	35.5**	35.3*	36.2	36.9	24.9**	24.4**	36.9
Somewhat agree	43.1	42.5	40.8*	43.9	45.0	49.3	47.8	40.9
Somewhat disagree	12.7	14.1*	15.6**	11.6	13.2	19.8	20.0	14.4
Strongly disagree	6.4	7.9**	8.3**	8.3*	4.9	6.0	7.8	7.8

Professional Development Experience	White	Total Teachers of Color	Teachers of Color by Group					
			Latino/a	Black	Asian American	Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	Native American/ Alaska Native	Multiracial
My PD opportunities are aligned with this school's performance goals								
Strongly agree	35.1	38.3**	37.5*	41.4**	39.0	32.3	24.2**	34.6
Somewhat agree	48.8	44.9**	45.5**	42.6**	46.2	52.7	50.1	46.4
Somewhat disagree	11.7	11.4	11.3	10.4	10.5	10.3	20.7**	14.1
Strongly disagree	4.4	5.4**	5.7*	5.7	4.2	4.7	5.1	4.8
The techniques I am learning about in my PD will help improve student achievement								
Strongly agree	31.4	39.9**	40.0**	41.1**	41.2**	30.9	29.8	36.8*
Somewhat agree	51.7	46.6**	46.5**	46.1**	48.0	55.7	52.1	44.8**
Somewhat disagree	12.7	8.9**	8.8**	8.0**	7.3**	8.1	16.2	13.2
Strongly disagree	4.2	4.6	4.7	4.8	3.4	5.3	1.9**	5.3
I feel capable of incorporating the kinds of techniques I am learning about in my PD								
Strongly agree	39.9	44.0**	45.8**	43.7**	41.2	41.7	29.3**	43.2
Somewhat agree	49.0	44.8**	42.9**	45.2**	49	50.4	52.4	44.5
Somewhat disagree	8.0	7.5	7.2	6.9	7.6	2.8**	16*	9.4
Strongly disagree	3.1	3.7*	4*.0	4.1	2.1	5.1	2.3	2.9

Notes: Sample includes teachers who are full time, part time, or itinerant in public schools. Statistical tests were conducted to compare teachers from each racial group, as well as teachers of color overall, with White teachers.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of the 2017–18 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) microdata from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

Notably, positive attitudes about PD tend to be driven by Black and Latino/a teachers. These positive attitudes might be related to their overrepresentation in city schools. We—and others—have found that teachers in city and suburban schools are more likely to report participating in PD than teachers in rural settings.⁶⁸ Native American/Alaska Native teachers, who are more likely to teach in rural settings, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander teachers were often less likely than White teachers to report having as much access to PD experiences or to report positive attitudes toward those experiences.

Summary of Findings

Through descriptive analysis of national teacher survey data, we find that successful increases in recruiting more new teachers of color have been insufficient to shift the overall composition of the teacher workforce in recent years. In addition, growth among Latino/a and Asian American teachers masks steady declines in the shares of Black and Native American/Alaska Native teachers. Our analyses offer insights into the experiences of teachers of color to inform ongoing efforts to improve the diversity of the U.S. teacher workforce.

- Teachers of color were more likely to want to transfer schools or leave the teaching profession compared to White teachers. Black teachers reported the highest rates of likely transfer and did leave their positions at higher rates than members of any other group.
- Teaching candidates of color increasingly enrolled in alternative certification programs that offer little preservice coursework and clinical practice, if any. Candidates of color were especially likely to enroll in non-IHE alternative certification programs and then were less likely to complete the program than candidates of color enrolled in traditional certification programs.
- Teachers of color, and beginning teachers of color in particular, were less likely to have been fully certified and more likely to have entered teaching through an alternative certification pathway. Teachers of color—especially Black teachers—had taken less preservice preparation coursework on skills like classroom management and lesson planning, and they were less likely to have completed student teaching than White teachers.
- Teachers of color were more likely to owe substantial debt from their undergraduate or graduate degrees and reported a high level of stress related to their debt.
- Teachers of color were far more likely than White teachers to teach in schools serving the most students of color and students from low-income families—schools that are less likely to have adequate funding resources. Teachers of color, overall, were also more likely to teach in schools serving the most English learners and less likely to teach in schools serving the most students with individualized education plans.
- Teachers of color were concentrated in the South, where salaries are generally lower, and they received lower average salaries than did White teachers, even after accounting for age and state cost of living.
- Fewer than half of teachers of color received coaching or mentoring at least once per month, and teachers of color were less likely to act as a coach or mentor at all compared to White teachers. However, many teachers of color reported positive attitudes about their professional development.

Policy Implications

With the growth of teachers of color in the workforce at a standstill in recent years, it is more important than ever that decision-makers make a concerted effort not only to recruit more candidates of color but to also better retain teachers of color. Our analyses demonstrate that, by and large, teachers of color often have less access to the conditions that improve teacher retention, including comprehensive teacher preparation and positive teaching conditions. Policymakers could work to provide more teachers, including teachers of color, with the resources that are shown to improve retention for all teachers.

Provide Greater Access to Comprehensive Preparation

When teachers receive comprehensive preservice preparation, they are more likely to stay in the teaching profession. Prior research shows that comprehensive preservice teacher preparation, including rigorous coursework and closely aligned clinical practice, influences the retention of teachers and the impact teachers have on student outcomes.⁶⁹ However, we found that teachers of color, especially Black and Latino/a teachers, were significantly less likely to have access to comprehensive preservice preparation that offers a complete body of coursework and supervised student teaching. Federal, state, and local agencies can increase access to comprehensive preparation by underwriting the cost of preparation. Financial support can encourage more students of color to pursue a teaching career—and to do so through a high-quality program that leads to greater retention.

Service Scholarships and Loan Forgiveness

Service scholarship and loan forgiveness programs can help teaching candidates, including candidates of color, enter the profession with comprehensive preparation. These programs cover or reimburse a portion of tuition costs in exchange for a commitment to teach in high-need schools or subject areas, typically for 3 to 5 years. Research indicates that loan forgiveness and service scholarship programs are effective at recruiting teachers, especially when they underwrite a significant portion of educational costs.⁷⁰ California's Golden State Teacher Grant (GSTG)

program, for example, was launched in 2020 and provides up to \$10,000 (and up to \$20,000 in its initial years) in scholarships to candidates enrolled in a teacher preparation or pupil personnel services program and who commit to working in a priority school (one in which students with identified needs—those who are English learners, in foster care, or from low-income families—constitute more than 55% of the student body).⁷¹ Based on a 2025 survey of grant recipients, nearly three quarters of survey respondents said the GSTG was influential in their decision to pursue teaching and two thirds said it was influential in their decision to teach in a priority school.⁷² Further, GSTG recipients tended to have significant financial need and were more likely to be candidates of color as compared to the California teacher workforce.

Service scholarship and loan forgiveness programs can help teaching candidates, including candidates of color, enter the profession with comprehensive preparation.

Additionally, some existing federal programs could be more effective if they were redesigned. The TEACH Grant Program provides scholarships of up to \$4,000 per year to undergraduate and graduate students who are preparing for a career in teaching and who commit to teaching a high-need subject in a

high-poverty school for 4 years.⁷³ It excludes early educators and contains a harsh loan conversion penalty for those who do not complete their service commitment, which can be a disincentive for postsecondary students to use the program and ultimately go into teaching. Congress could make the TEACH Grant Program more effective by ending the automatic cuts to the award and increasing it to cover full tuition at a public university (estimated at \$11,000 per year in 2024–25), reforming the loan conversion penalty, and ensuring early educators are eligible for benefits.⁷⁴

The Teacher Loan Forgiveness and Public Service Loan Forgiveness programs require teachers to toil through years of monthly payments on low salaries before having part or all of their federal student loan debt canceled. The Public Service Loan Forgiveness program, last significantly updated by Congress in 2007,⁷⁵ requires 10 years of monthly payments while serving in a public service position before completely retiring the remaining federal loan balance. These programs could be reconstituted to have the federal government make teachers' monthly loan payments until they meet the service requirement to retire their debts completely. Doing so would save teachers hundreds of dollars each month and thousands of dollars over time while delivering a much-needed boost to both recruitment and retention.

Teacher Residencies and Apprenticeships

Greater state and federal investments can support teacher residencies and apprenticeships. High-quality teacher residencies are partnerships between districts and universities that subsidize and improve teachers' training to teach in high-need schools and in high-demand subject areas.⁷⁶ Participants spend a year working as residents with highly effective mentor teachers while completing related credential coursework at partnering universities.

Research on teacher residency programs shows that they are effective both in bringing more teachers of color into the profession and in preparing them to stay for the long term.⁷⁷ Nationally, about 49% of residents are people of color, far more than the 20% of teachers of color nationally.⁷⁸ Principals find graduates of residency programs to be well prepared and, in many cases, better prepared than typical new teachers. In addition, a review of residency program evaluations shows that residents tend to have higher retention rates over time than nonresident teachers.⁷⁹

A registered apprenticeship is a new avenue for teacher preparation, approved by the federal government in 2021.⁸⁰ States and districts can create apprenticeship programs and receive federal funding that goes toward wages, textbooks, and other supports.⁸¹ States can also use the funds to support Grow Your Own programs that help high school students to begin earning college credit before completing their teacher preparation at a partnering university. Much like residency programs, the apprenticeship model addresses the student debt burden that disproportionately discourages potential teaching candidates of color from pursuing the profession, while providing the kind of comprehensive teacher preparation that builds the foundation for a successful career in teaching.⁸²

Improve Teaching Conditions

All teachers work within broader school communities, and these communities directly influence their access to resources and supports for their teaching. Teaching in a well-run and well-resourced school is a key factor in whether teachers want to continue teaching in their schools. In our analyses, we found that teachers of color overall were more likely than other teachers to agree that stress and disappointments

at their school were not worth it. All teachers, including the disproportionate number of teachers of color who teach in high-need schools, benefit from efforts that improve the teaching conditions they encounter. These efforts can include school funding supports, bolstering school leadership programs, and administering regular teacher working conditions surveys.

Equitable School Funding Formulas

Teachers of color, on average, are more likely to teach in schools serving more students of color and students from low-income families—schools that are often underresourced and that struggle with chronic teacher shortages. States can improve the conditions in high-need schools by developing equitable school funding formulas that both ensure an adequate and reliable base level of funding for all schools and provide additional funding to meet the needs of various student groups, such as students in poverty, foster youth, and English learners.⁸³ Evidence from California shows that shifting to an equitable funding formula was associated with improved student outcomes, including graduation rates and student achievement on standardized tests, while also improving school teaching conditions, including student–teacher ratios and teacher salaries.⁸⁴

School Leadership

Effective school leaders can influence several teaching conditions in a school and can help create environments in which teachers want to continue to teach. Research demonstrates that principal leadership and support are among the most important factors in teachers’ decisions about whether to stay in a school or in the profession.⁸⁵ School administrators are responsible for making hiring decisions, being instructional leaders, setting norms for students and staff, nurturing a positive and encouraging culture, keeping schoolwide systems running smoothly, and more.⁸⁶ When they are not able to do those things well, the consequences are teaching and learning environments that make it difficult for teachers of color to stay. Poor school leadership more than doubles the likelihood that teachers in general will move or leave their classrooms and schools.⁸⁷ In the quartile of schools with the most students of color—where teachers of color are more likely to teach—teachers were almost twice as likely to report severe dissatisfaction with their site leaders compared to teachers in schools with the fewest students of color.⁸⁸ Not surprisingly, then, principal quality disproportionately influences the attrition of teachers of color. Federal and state agencies can support teacher retention by supporting school leader development, particularly for schools with the greatest need.

States and districts can provide training for school administrators so they can create work environments that encourage teachers of color to stay. Strong preservice leadership preparation, as well as ongoing professional learning, can make a difference in teacher retention.⁸⁹ Several states have committed federal resources to strengthen school leadership in ways that can support efforts to recruit and retain high-quality educators.⁹⁰ Tennessee, for example, uses federal Title II, Part A funds to support the Tennessee Academy of School Leaders (TASL), which provides high-quality professional learning to principals, assistant principals, and instructional supervisors. TASL professional learning is aligned to Tennessee Instructional Leadership Standards, which require leaders to, for example, “induct, support, retain, and grow” effective educators, among several other standards for school leaders.⁹¹

Similarly, the 21st Century California School Leadership Academy (21CSLA) is a statewide program that provides professional learning through seven regional academies. Professional learning opportunities include communities of practice that bring together cohorts of leaders to work on a problem of practice, localized learning developed in response to regional needs, and individualized coaching by trained coaches.⁹² Early evidence indicates that 21CSLA regional academies influenced leaders' knowledge, skills, and practices, as well as positive changes for schools, teachers, and students. In particular, 21CSLA leaders reported that school leaders are changing how they think about equity in their work with students and their communities.⁹³

Teaching Conditions Surveys

Robust data on school teaching conditions and teacher job satisfaction would be instructive as states determine whether their schools are welcoming and supportive for all teachers. Regular statewide teaching conditions surveys could provide crucial information about how to improve those conditions. States can establish or improve annual working conditions surveys to collect information about factors that may influence teacher decisions to stay in or leave the field. For example, in North Carolina, state funding supports administration of a working conditions survey to teachers every 2 years, and some districts have used the results of these surveys to inform improvement efforts.⁹⁴ An evaluation of the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey found that schools that used working conditions data as a tool for improvement were more likely to have improved working conditions reports in the following survey year.⁹⁵ A number of other states, including Kentucky, Ohio, and Oregon, have used the New Teacher Center's Teaching, Empowering, Leading, and Learning (TELL) Survey for this purpose.⁹⁶

Increase Teacher Compensation

Teachers, on average, earn about three quarters of what other college-educated professionals earn, and teachers of color earn even less—between 61% and 71% of what other college-educated professionals earn, accounting for state cost of living. In addition to underwriting the cost of preparation, increased salaries can improve teacher retention efforts, especially in high-need schools and districts.

Increase Salaries at the District and State Levels

Districts can raise teacher salaries to be more competitive with other districts and within the local economy. A 2024 study on Oregon teacher salary data, for example, found that a 1 percentage point increase in district base salaries was associated with a 0.14 to 0.15 percentage point decrease in teacher turnover.⁹⁷ Given competing demands on limited budgets, districts could also consider reducing teacher expenses so their salaries can stretch further. Some districts, for example, are providing teacher housing, which can significantly subsidize teacher salaries in regions with high housing costs.⁹⁸ Districts can also consider providing additional compensation for teachers who earn National Board Certification or who take on other teacher leadership roles.

In some states, teacher salaries are set at the state level rather than at the district level. States can increase salaries, both for beginning and veteran teachers. States can also make their funding systems more equitable so that salaries can be competitive across the state, and they can add incentives, such as stipends for National Board Certified teachers teaching in high-need districts.⁹⁹

Increase Teacher Compensation at the Federal Level

Although teacher salaries are set at the district or state level, there are actions the federal government can take to help teacher incomes stretch further, including providing refundable tax credits and housing subsidies for teachers. The federal government could issue a refundable tax credit that provides a larger benefit to teachers in high-need public schools, while other K–12 public school educators receive a credit based on a sliding scale determined by how many students from low-income families are served in their schools.¹⁰⁰

In addition, the federal government could work to make federal housing supports readily available to teachers. The federal government could, for example, provide grants to states and districts to provide teachers with down payment assistance for purchasing a home. They could also help teachers access existing housing supports available to public servants through the Departments of Education, Housing and Urban Development, and Agriculture.¹⁰¹

Retain Teachers Through Access to Mentoring and Induction

Once teachers are prepared, comprehensive induction and mentoring can support their ongoing growth and development. However, we found that fewer than half of teachers of color received coaching or mentoring at least once per month. Likewise, early-career teachers of color were less likely than their White peers to report being provided mentoring or induction programs during their first year of teaching. Induction often includes being matched with a veteran mentor teacher and can also include seminars, classroom assistance, time to collaborate with other teachers, coaching and feedback from experienced teachers, and reduced workloads. Induction is especially effective when teachers participate in a comprehensive set of induction activities. First-year teachers who do not receive comprehensive induction are found to be twice as likely to leave teaching as those who receive comprehensive support.¹⁰² However, the number of states supporting mentoring and induction programs decreased during the Great Recession, and a 2016 state policy review found that just 16 states provide dedicated funding for teacher induction.¹⁰³

Induction is especially effective when teachers participate in a comprehensive set of induction activities.

An analysis of the Texas Beginning Educator Support System found that participants—who received a comprehensive program of instructional support, mentorship, and formative feedback—left teaching at significantly lower rates than did nonparticipating novice teachers in the state. The analysis also found improved retention rates among participants teaching in schools serving higher proportions of students of color and students from low-income families, where attrition rates tend to be higher and where teachers of color are most likely to teach.¹⁰⁴ The finding suggests that teachers of color in particular can benefit from participating in strong induction programs with support from federal, state, and local agencies.

Conclusion

Much of the effort to diversify the teacher workforce has been focused on recruiting more teachers of color. These efforts continue to be critical, as evidence suggests that the efforts to add teachers of color to the workforce have not kept pace with an expanding teacher workforce. At the same time, teacher retention plays an important role in building the share of teachers of color in the workforce. Comprehensive teacher preparation is critical to retaining teachers, but teachers of color are less likely to access these programs, likely due to their high costs and the availability of alternative certification options, which can typically be completed while earning a full teacher's salary. In addition to preparation, this analysis shows that, by and large, teachers of color have less access to key teaching conditions that are associated with greater longevity in the classroom, such as well-run schools, mentoring on a regular basis, and competitive compensation.

Improving the conditions influencing lackluster teacher diversity trends can improve teaching and learning conditions for teachers and students broadly. Federal, state, and district decision-makers will need to invest in the long game to improve access to top-notch preparation programs and improve the school environments in which teachers of color teach. While there is no quick fix to solve the long-standing and entrenched disparities that teachers of color often face all along the teacher workforce pipeline, evidence suggests that there are promising practices to build upon.

Appendix A: Data and Methodology

This study draws primarily on the 2020–21 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS). We also include some analyses from the 2017–18 NTPS. Further, we include Title II data from 2008–09 to 2020–21 on teacher preparation enrollment and completion, as well as data from the U.S. Census Bureau (2018) and the American Community Survey (2016–2020).

2017–18 and 2020–21 National Teacher and Principal Survey

The NTPS collects data on a nationally representative sample of public and private school teachers and principals. Its core topics include teacher and principal preparation, classes taught, school characteristics, and demographics of the teacher and principal labor force; surveys are conducted every 2 to 3 years. In addition, each administration of the NTPS contains rotating modules on important education topics such as professional development, working conditions, and evaluation. The NTPS is a redesign of the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), which the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) conducted from 1987–88 to 2011–12.

Our study is limited to the questions contained in the NTPS teacher and school questionnaires, and we also exclusively focus on public school teachers and schools. We mainly rely on the 2020–21 NTPS, which was conducted from October 2020 to August 2021 and released for analysis in the spring of 2023. We complement the analyses with data from the 2017–18 NTPS public school teacher file.

2020–21 NTPS

The 2020–21 NTPS includes 39,630 responses from teachers in K–12 public schools (traditional and charter) in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. We excluded long-term substitutes, administrators, librarians, support staff, and other professional staff, which together accounted for about 3.4% of the total respondents. Our final sample includes 38,350 respondents. In our analytic sample, we included respondents who identified as regular full-time teachers (97%), regular part-time teachers (1.4%), and itinerant teachers (1.3%). Below, we describe the variables used in this study. (Numbers of teachers are rounded to the nearest 10.)

Teacher Preparation. In analyzing variables related to teachers' preparation experiences, we disaggregated teachers by the type of teaching certificate they held at the time of the survey. We sorted teachers into two groups: those who held a regular or probationary certificate (93%) and those who held a temporary or emergency certificate or no certification at all (7%).

We also analyzed the information on routes into teaching, which distinguishes teachers who entered teaching through a traditional versus an alternative route to certification program (80% and 20%). Other information on preservice preparation includes courses taken (graduate or undergraduate) that taught the teacher “classroom management techniques,” “lesson planning,” “how to assess learning,” “how to serve students from diverse economic backgrounds,” “how to serve students with special needs,” and “how to teach English learners,” “access to student teaching,” and “length of student teaching”; as well as “access to coaching and mentoring.”

We also examined the information on the graduate or undergraduate courses the teacher had taken before the first year of teaching that taught them “classroom management techniques,” “lesson planning,” “how to assess learning,” “how to serve students from diverse economic backgrounds,” “how to serve students with special needs,” and “how to teach English learners.” Teachers were also asked about their student teaching (or practice teaching) experiences, and about how long it lasted. Options included: “4 weeks or less,” “5–7 weeks,” “8–11 weeks,” and “12 weeks or more.” Finally, teachers were asked: “How many undergraduate or graduate courses focused solely on teaching methods?” Answers included: “1 or 2 courses,” “3 or 4 courses,” “5 to 9 courses,” and “10 or more courses.”

School Demographics. The 2020–21 NTPS includes information on the share of students in teachers’ schools who are students of color, who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch programs, who have limited English proficiency (LEP), or who have an individualized education plan (IEP).

Job Satisfaction. The 2020–21 NTPS included several questions related to job satisfaction. In this study, the two variables selected are the degree of agreement or disagreement with the statement “I worry about the security of my job because of the performance of my students or my school” and “The stress and disappointments involved in teaching at this school aren’t really worth it.” Respondents could select “Strongly agree,” “Somewhat agree,” “Somewhat disagree,” or “Strongly disagree.”

Proxies for Turnover and Attrition.¹⁰⁵ This study utilizes two items in the survey to serve as proxies for teachers’ intention to leave their current school or leave teaching altogether. These items are: “I think about transferring to another school” and “If I could get a higher-paying job, I’d leave teaching as soon as possible.” Respondents could select “Strongly agree,” “Somewhat agree,” “Somewhat disagree,” or “Strongly disagree.” We analyzed the percentages of teachers who selected either “Strongly agree” or “Somewhat agree.”

Student Loans. Teachers participating in the 2020–21 survey were asked questions about their student loans, including whether respondents took out student loans, the amount still owed, and consequences of having student loans. These questions include: “Other than money you may have borrowed from family or friends, did you take out any type of student loans to help pay for your undergraduate or graduate education?”; “Do you still owe all, some, or none of the amount that you borrowed?”; “How much do you typically pay each month on your student loans?”; “Please indicate your level of stress regarding your student loan debt. Did you have to work at more than one job at the same time because of your student loan debt?”; and “Did you take a less desirable job because of your student loan debt?”

2017–18 NTPS

The 2017–18 NTPS includes 44,320 responses from teachers in K–12 public schools (traditional and charter) in the 50 states and District of Columbia. In our analytic sample, we included respondents who identified as regular full-time teachers (93%), regular part-time teachers (2%), and itinerant teachers (1%). We excluded long-term substitutes, administrators, librarians, support staff, and other professional staff, which together accounted for about 3% of the respondents. Our final sample includes 42,940 respondents. (Numbers of teachers are rounded to the nearest 10.)

Professional Development (PD). The 2017–18 NTPS survey includes an extensive module on teachers’ PD, including items related to research-based elements of effective professional development.¹⁰⁶

We focused on the subset of PD questions that relate to the research on effective professional development.¹⁰⁷ We describe variation by group on PD opportunities related to collaboration with other teachers (e.g., “Planned lessons or courses with other teachers”) and coaching/mentoring (“Received coaching or mentoring from other teachers or staff”). We also analyzed survey items related to resource access (e.g., “I have sufficient resources available for my PD”) and perceived value of PD (e.g., “The types of PD available to me are aligned with this school’s performance goals”).

Evaluation. The 2017–18 NTPS includes items on whether teachers thought their evaluation process was fair, transparent, evidence-based, and helpful for their teaching and students’ learning. In our analysis, we combine teachers who “strongly” and “somewhat” agree to various statements about their evaluation. Only teachers who were evaluated in the prior school year (2016–17) were included in the analyses.

Mentoring. The 2017–18 NTPS only included one item on coaching and mentoring, in which teachers were asked to indicate the frequency for which they received coaching or mentoring from other teachers or staff. Respondents were given the options to select “Once or a few times a week,” “Once or a few times a month,” “Once or a few times a year,” or “Did not participate.” We analyzed the percentages of teachers who selected each option separately.

Class Size. Due to the differences in how classes are constructed, we calculated class sizes separately for three groups of teachers: those in departmentalized instruction, elementary subject specialists, and those teaching self-contained classes. We excluded team teachers and push-in/pull-out teachers. We did not further distinguish by grade level. In the report, we present results of teachers of self-contained classes.

Job Satisfaction. The 2017–18 NTPS included several questions related to job satisfaction. In this study, the two variables selected are the degree of agreement or disagreement with the statement “I like the way things are run at this school.” Respondents could select “Strongly agree,” “Somewhat agree,” “Somewhat disagree,” or “Strongly disagree.”

For reference, we show results obtained with the 2017–18 data for variables on teacher preparation, school demographics, and proxies for turnover or attrition. These results are shown in the [Teacher Diversity 2017–18 Online Supplement](#).

Methods

This study uses descriptive analyses. Findings represent full-time, part-time, and itinerant public school teachers during the 2017–18 and 2020–21 school years. In all cases, teacher observations are weighted by both the teacher and the replicate weights, as requested by NCES.¹⁰⁸

For each survey item, we first generated the proportion of teachers who selected each response option, then repeated the process, disaggregating by teacher race/ethnicity. We conducted Wald tests to determine whether the means of responses from each race/ethnic group were significantly different (at the 95% and 99% confidence level) from the means of responses from White teachers and whether responses from teachers of color overall were significantly different from those of White teachers.

2008–09 to 2020–21 Title II National Teacher Preparation Data

The U.S. Department of Education Title II data include data on state-approved teacher preparation programs for all 50 states, plus the District of Columbia and U.S. territories. The data include the number of teacher preparation candidate enrollments and completers for 2008–09 to 2020–21. The enrollment data are disaggregated by state, gender (male/female), race/ethnicity, and program type (alternative, IHE-based, alternative non-IHE-based, and traditional). Title II teacher preparation data disaggregate program completers by race/ethnicity beginning in 2018–19. We limit these data to the 50 states plus the District of Columbia and count the total number of enrollees nationally by race/ethnicity and program type over time. The analyses in this report are based on the “All States” datafiles from the 50 states and District of Columbia. Individuals of color include individuals of all racial/ethnic groups and those who are multiracial. Individuals with unknown race/ethnicity are excluded. Enrollment series exclude completers, as per the Title II definition until academic year 2017–18. Due to changes in enrollment data collection practices, which resulted in a large change in reported enrollment, data prior to 2012–13 need to be interpreted with caution.¹⁰⁹

2018 Census

The U.S. population data in this report drew from the 2018 U.S. Census Bureau Main Projections Series for the United States, 2017–2060 Projected Population by Single Year of Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin for the United States: 2016 to 2060 (NP2017_D1). The analyses built on the 2017 National Population Projections, from which we selected population by age, sex, race, and Hispanic origin in 2020. The shares presented in the report are calculated from the population counts derived from this file.

2016–2020 American Community Survey

The American Community Survey (ACS) is an annual demographic survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. It relies on a sampling strategy that allows for national and state-specific estimates about demographics, employment, and education. We drew from the 2016–2020 ACS 5-year data to gain sufficient observations for our estimates. Our sample selection included individuals with a bachelor’s degree or more and of ages 22–64. Public school teachers are identified as individuals whose occupational code is “Elem, Middle, Secondary and Special Ed.,” in industry “Elementary and secondary schools,” and whose worker class is “Federal, state, and local government employee.” Other college graduates are all other individuals with a college degree or higher education, in any industry and sector.¹¹⁰

Complementarily, we also added breakdowns by age and by whether the individual is in a metropolitan area. For these, we created an age-bin variable that identifies individuals who are 18–34 years old, 35–49 years old, and 50–64 years old. With respect to location, we relied on the variable that identifies metropolitan status as being “in a metropolitan area (in a central/principal city, not in a central/principal city, and central/principal city status indeterminable [mixed]),” “not in metropolitan area,” and “metropolitan status indeterminable (mixed).”

The method followed also relies on a descriptive analysis, in which we compare the mean salaries for each race/ethnicity, for all individuals of color, and for all adults in teaching and not in teaching in the sample, using the replicate weights and the person’s weight, as indicated by ACS.¹¹¹ Yearly income drew from the “wages and salaries” variable, is rounded to the nearest 5, is expressed in 2020 dollars, and

is adjusted for state cost of living using Bureau of Economic Analysis for State Regional Price Parities (average 2016–2020).¹¹² Only the results for the main analyses—teacher wages and salaries compared to other college graduates—are included in this report. Complementary analyses are available upon request.

With regard to limitations and sensitivity analysis, the results of this analysis should be interpreted as the gap in wages and salaries per year between teachers and non-teachers. This measure is different from the gap in salaries in teaching compared to nonteaching for two reasons: The wages and salaries variable chosen earlier captures wages and salaries from all sources instead of the individual's primary occupation, and any work conducted during the summer, or lack of work during the summer, is accounted for in our estimates, for both teachers and non-teachers.

We conducted two additional sensitivity analyses. We estimated the annual wages and salaries for individuals in the labor force (employed or unemployed). This excludes some individuals who have zero wages and salaries in both groups from the samples. We also attempted to calculate weekly earnings for teachers and other college grads, using the continuous hours worked variable (ACS includes this information as an interval and as a continuous variable, `wkswork1` `wkswork2`). This approach was only considered as a sensitivity test of the observations remaining in the sample, as a full examination would require imputation of hours worked that is beyond the scope of the purposes of our illustration (the continuous hours worked variable includes a significant number of observations that are either zero or NA for individuals whose hours of work in the interval variable are different from zero). The results from both sensitivity analyses are eminently comparable to the results presented in this paper—they are, for the most part, leading to larger gaps between teachers and non-teachers. More information is available upon request.

Appendix B: Data Tables

Table B1. Teacher Preparation Experiences by Race/Ethnicity, 2020–21

Preparation Experience	White	Total Teachers of Color	Teachers of Color by Group					
			Latino/a	Black	Asian American	Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	Native American/ Alaska Native	Multiracial
Share of teachers who took any graduate or undergraduate courses (before the first year of teaching) that taught them:								
Classroom management techniques	75.5	69.7**	70.2**	65.4**	75.8	76.6	74.3	72.8
Lesson planning	80.1	72.5**	72.6**	67.8**	81.5	80.3	76.7	74.1**
How to assess learning	78.8	71.3**	71.9**	66.8**	79.8	71.3	76.9	71.7**
How to use student performance data to inform instruction	60.9	58.2**	58.0**	53.5**	70.4**	55.6	63.6	58.1
How to serve students from diverse economic backgrounds	64.3	64.1	65.6	58.3**	71.4**	70.0	73.4*	63.6
How to serve students with special needs	73.0	65.6**	65.5**	62.5**	70.4	65.2	68.9	70.2
How to teach English learners	42.3	52.7**	60.2**	39.6	61.2**	50.4	49.6	46.7
Share of teachers who took between zero and 10+ grad/undergrad courses focusing solely on teaching methods								
None	27.3	33.8**	37.8**	33.9**	27.1	23.3	34.4	21.3**
1 or 2 courses	14.0	12.4**	11.7**	12.4	13.9	14.5	11.1	14.2
3 or 4 courses	23.9	18.5**	17.6**	19.7**	18.5**	22.9	18.8	19.4**
5 to 9 courses	19.7	18.2**	17.5**	18.5	16.8*	18.1	18.7	23.9*
10 or more courses	15.1	17.0**	15.5	15.5	23.7**	21.2	17.0	21.3**
Share of teachers who had any student teaching/practice teaching	88.0	76.8**	74.9**	74.1**	86.1	85.7	81.5*	82.3**
Share of teachers who took grad or undergrad courses focusing on teaching methods, excluding student teaching and professional development	72.7	66.2**	62.2**	66.1**	72.9	76.7	65.6	78.7**

Preparation Experience	White	Total Teachers of Color	Teachers of Color by Group					
			Latino/a	Black	Asian American	Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	Native American/ Alaska Native	Multiracial
Did you spend time student teaching?								
No	12.0	23.2**	25.1**	25.9**	13.9	14.3	18.5*	17.7**
Yes	88.0	76.8**	74.9**	74.1**	86.1	85.7	81.5*	82.3**
In how many classrooms did you student teach?								
1	31.1	32.7	33.0	36.6**	24.5**	31.7	35.9	29.4
2	40.4	35.9**	36.1**	33.7**	37.9	36.6	33.4	40.1
3 or more	28.5	31.4**	30.9*	29.7	37.6**	31.7	30.7	30.5
How long did your student teaching last?								
4 weeks or less	1.7	4.7**	4.6**	5.3**	5.7**	5.9	0.6*	3.1
5–7 weeks	6.5	11.2**	9.7**	15.6**	10.2**	11.0	10.5	6.5
8–11 weeks	21.4	19.6**	19.3*	22.6	14.8**	15.9	25.9	17.0*
12 weeks or more	70.4	64.4**	66.4**	56.5**	69.4	67.3	62.9	73.5

Notes: Sample includes teachers who are full time, part time, or itinerant in public schools. Statistical tests were conducted to compare teachers from each racial group, as well as teachers of color overall, with White teachers. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of the 2020–21 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) microdata from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

Table B2. Beginning Teacher Preparation Experiences by Race/Ethnicity, 2020–21

Preparation Experience	White	Total Teachers of Color	Teachers of Color by Group					
			Latino/a	Black	Asian American	Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	Native American/ Alaska Native	Multiracial
Share of beginning teachers who took graduate or undergraduate courses								
Have not taken any courses ever	30.3	36.3**	37.2**	42.3**	24.0	38.7	31.7	31.3
Took any graduate or undergraduate courses before the first year of teaching	58.7	49.1**	50.1**	36.8**	65.3	44.1	54.8	58.2
Took any graduate or undergraduate courses, though not before the first year of teaching	11.0	14.6*	12.7	20.9**	10.7	††	13.4	10.4
Share of beginning teachers who had any student teaching/practice teaching								
Had some student teaching/practice teaching	77.4	69.1**	69.3**	60.2**	84.5*	85.4	71.5	71.7
How long did your student teaching last?								
4 weeks or less	2.6	6.2**	5.1	7.9*	6.7	0**	0**	8.1
5–7 weeks	5.2	9.9**	8.0	12.8**	12.0	39.9	9.8	5.7
8–11 weeks	17.0	14.6	16.2	15.0	8.8*	5.8	17.8	15.6
12 weeks or more	75.2	69.3**	70.7	64.3**	72.5	54.4	72.4	70.5

Notes: Sample includes teachers who are full time, part time, or itinerant in public schools. †† = Not reported because reporting standards are not met. Statistical tests were conducted to compare teachers from each racial group, as well as teachers of color overall, with White teachers. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of the 2020–21 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) microdata from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

Appendix C: Overall Teachers, 2020–21

Table C1. Percentage of Overall Teachers, 2020–21

Category	Response	Percentage of Teachers
Teacher Distribution		
Teachers by school region	Northeast	19.2%
	Midwest	23.0%
	South	39.0%
	West	18.8%
Teachers by school urbanicity	City	27.8%
	Suburb	38.6%
	Town	11.9%
	Rural	21.6%
Teachers agreeing they think about transferring to another school	Somewhat agree	20.9%
	Strongly agree	8.8%
	Agree or strongly agree	29.7%
Teachers agreeing they would leave teaching if they could get a higher-paying job	Somewhat agree	23.3%
	Strongly agree	14.6%
	Agree or strongly agree	37.9%
Teacher retention	Stayers	15.8%
	Leavers	7.9%
	Movers	7.9%
Teachers in schools with different shares of students of color	Schools with low shares of students of color	26.6%
	Schools with high shares of students of color	28.0%
Teachers in schools with different shares of students eligible for FRPL	Schools with low shares of FRPL students	18.7%
	Schools with high shares of FRPL students	32.3%
Teachers in schools with different shares of students with an IEP	Schools with high shares of students with an IEP	23.6%
	Schools with low shares of students with an IEP	23.8%
Teachers in schools with different shares of LEP students	Percentage of teachers in high LEP schools	21.8%
	Percentage of teachers in low LEP schools	20.6%

Category	Response	Percentage of Teachers
Teacher Satisfaction Indicators		
Teachers' agreement with: "I worry about the security of my job because of the performance of my students or my school"	Strongly disagree	40.8%
	Somewhat disagree	31.3%
	Somewhat agree	20.9%
	Strongly agree	7.0%
	Somewhat or strongly agree	27.9%
Teachers' agreement with: "The stress and disappointments involved in teaching at this school aren't really worth it"	Strongly disagree	39.7%
	Somewhat disagree	35.3%
	Somewhat agree	20.5%
	Strongly agree	4.5%
	Somewhat or strongly agree	25.0%
Teacher Preparation Experiences for All Teachers		
Teacher route into teaching	Traditional route to certification program	80.3%
	Alternative route to certification program	19.7%
Teacher certification	Certified	92.9%
	Uncertified	7.1%
Took any graduate or undergraduate courses (before first year of teaching) on:	Classroom management techniques	74.4%
	Lesson planning	78.6%
	How to assess learning	77.3%
	How to serve students from diverse economic backgrounds	64.3%
	How to serve students with special needs	71.5%
	How to teach English learners	44.4%
Length of student teaching	Had student teaching	85.7%
	Did not have student teaching	14.3%
	12 weeks or more	69.3%

Category	Response	Percentage of Teachers
Teacher Preparation Experiences for Beginning Teachers		
Teacher route into teaching	Traditional route to certification program	68.8%
	Alternative route to certification program	31.2%
Teacher certification	Certified	74.6%
	Uncertified	25.4%
Took any graduate or undergraduate courses (before the first year of teaching)	Did not take any courses (EVER)	31.8%
	Took any graduate or undergraduate courses before the first year of teaching	56.2%
	Took any graduate or undergraduate courses, though not before the first year of teaching	11.9%
Of those who took any graduate or undergraduate courses before the first year of teaching, took courses on:	Classroom management techniques	73.2%
	Lesson planning	74.8%
	How to assess learning	76.4%
	How to serve students from diverse economic backgrounds	72.3%
	How to serve students with special needs	72.1%
	How to teach English learners	57.6%
Length of student teaching	Had student teaching	75.3%
	Did not have student teaching	24.7%
	12 weeks or more	73.8%

Note: Sample includes teachers who are full time, part time, or itinerant in public schools.

Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of the 2020–21 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) microdata from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

Endnotes

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3. Comparisons made between results in 2017–18 and 2020–21 should be interpreted with caution. We do not test the significance of differences in results across these survey years.
4. It should be noted that prior research cautions against setting outcomes for White populations as the standard of comparison for the experiences of people of color, because doing so could imply a deficit orientation that assumes White populations represent the ideal. The comparisons we make between teachers of color and White teachers are not to suggest that outcomes for White teachers necessarily represent an ideal standard. In fact, throughout the study, we note where outcomes might be less than desirable for White teachers as well. Rather, this comparison aims to elucidate how conditions vary between groups that are underrepresented in the teacher workforce compared to those who are overrepresented. It happens that every group of teachers of color is underrepresented, while White teachers are the overrepresented group. Comparisons could also be made between teachers of color and teachers overall. We have provided these data in [Appendix C](#). However, because White teachers make up 80% of the teacher workforce, results for teachers overall are substantially similar to results for White teachers. Similarly, future analyses could investigate how conditions vary for groups of teachers of color that are increasing as a share of the workforce (e.g., Latino/a and Asian American teachers) and those that are unchanged or decreasing. The sample sizes in this study do not allow such analyses.
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