

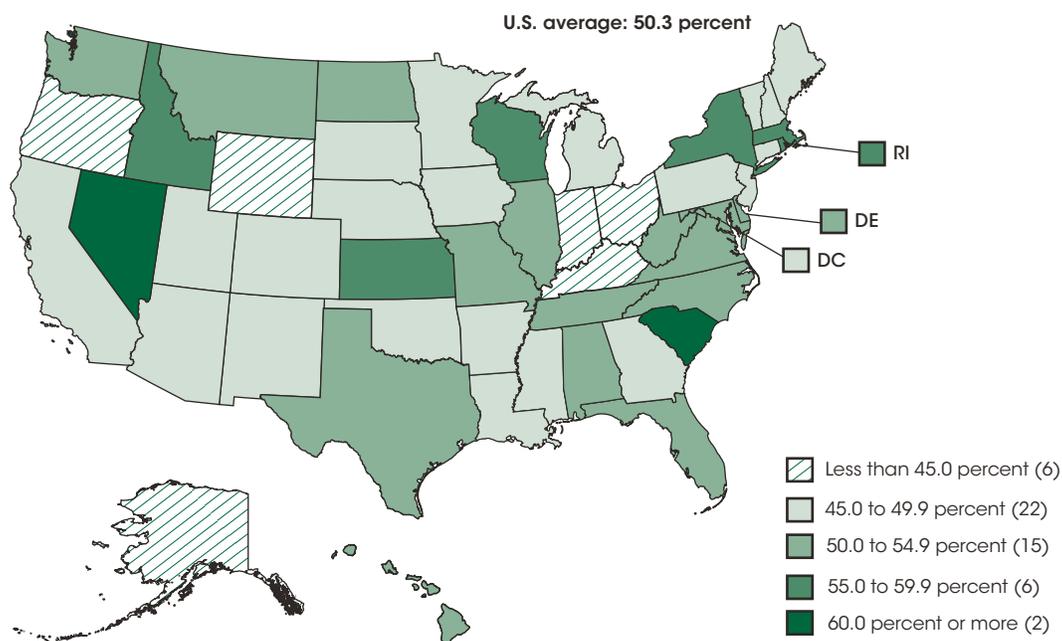
Teachers and Pupil/Teacher Ratios

Of the 6.2 million staff members in public elementary and secondary schools in fall 2012, some 3.1 million, or 50 percent, were teachers. The pupil/teacher ratio in public schools decreased over time from 26.9 students per teacher in 1955 to 17.9 in 1985, and then further declined to 15.3 in 2008. In the most recent years, the pupil/teacher ratios in 2010, 2011, and 2012 (all 16.0) were higher than the ratio in 2009 (15.4).

Of the 6.2 million staff members in public elementary and secondary schools in fall 2012, some 3.1 million, or 50 percent, were teachers. In addition, there were 0.7 million instructional aides, such as teachers' assistants, who made up another 12 percent of total staff. The percentages of public school staff have changed little in recent years. For example, between fall 2002 and

fall 2012 the percentage of staff members who were teachers decreased from 51 to 50 percent, while the percentage of staff members who were instructional aides increased from 11 to 12 percent. By comparison, in fall 1969 teachers represented 60 percent of public school staff, and instructional aides represented 2 percent of public school staff.

Figure 1. Teachers as a percentage of staff in public elementary and secondary school systems, by state: Fall 2012

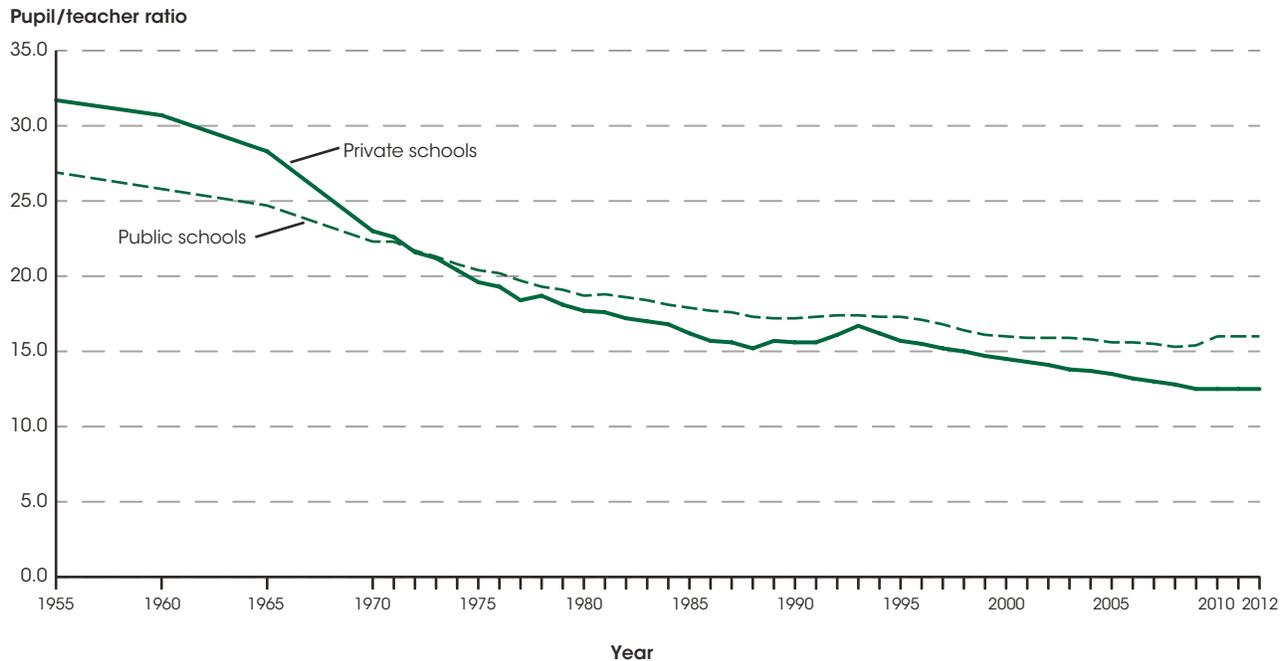


NOTE: The U.S. average includes imputations for underreporting and nonreporting states. The calculations of teachers as a percentage of staff for Alabama, Alaska, California, Idaho, Illinois, Montana, Nevada, New Jersey, and West Virginia include imputations for underreporting.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "State Nonfiscal Survey of Public Elementary/Secondary Education," 2012-13. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2014*, table 213.40.

In 36 states and the District of Columbia, between 45 and 55 percent of public school staff members in 2012 were teachers. There were, however, six states where teachers made up less than 45 percent of public school staff (Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio, Oregon, Wyoming,

and Alaska) and eight states where they made up more than 55 percent of public school staff (Idaho, New York, Massachusetts, Kansas, Wisconsin, Rhode Island, Nevada, and South Carolina).

Figure 2. Public and private elementary and secondary school pupil/teacher ratios: Selected years, fall 1955 through fall 2012



NOTE: Data for teachers are expressed in full-time equivalents (FTE). Data for public schools include prekindergarten through grade 12. Data for private schools include prekindergarten through grade 12 in schools offering kindergarten or higher grades. The pupil/teacher ratio includes teachers for students with disabilities and other special teachers. Ratios for public schools reflect totals reported by states and differ from totals reported for schools or school districts. Some data have been revised from previously published figures. Data for private schools are projected for 2012.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Statistics of Public Elementary and Secondary Day Schools, 1955–56 through 1980–81*; Common Core of Data (CCD), “State Nonfiscal Survey of Public Elementary/Secondary Education,” 1981–82 through 2012–13; and Private School Universe Survey (PSS), 1989–90 through 2011–12. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2014*, table 208.20.

The number of students per teacher, or the pupil/teacher ratio,¹ has been generally decreasing for more than 50 years at both public and private schools. In fall 1955, there were 1.1 million public and 145,000 private elementary and secondary school teachers in the United States. By fall 2012,² these numbers had nearly tripled for both public school teachers (to 3.1 million) and private school teachers (to 414,000). However, increases in student enrollment were proportionally smaller over this period: from 31 million to 50 million public school students (a 62 percent increase) and from 4.6 million to 5.2 million private school students (a 13 percent increase). (See also Public School Enrollment and Private School

Enrollment.) For public schools, the resulting decline in the pupil/teacher ratio was concentrated in the period between 1955 and 1985. During this period, the public school pupil/teacher ratio fell from 26.9 to 17.9. Over the next 23 years, the public school pupil/teacher ratio declined to 15.3 in 2008. In the most recent years, the pupil/teacher ratios in 2010, 2011, and 2012 (all 16.0) were higher than the ratio in 2009 (15.4). The private school pupil/teacher ratio decreased more steeply than the public school ratio over the period of 1955 to 2012, from 31.7 students per teacher to 12.5. The pupil/teacher ratio has been lower for private schools than for public schools since 1972.

Endnotes:

¹ The pupil/teacher ratio measures the number of students per teacher. It reflects teacher workload and the availability of teachers’ services to their students. The lower the pupil/teacher ratio, the higher the availability of teacher services to students. The pupil/teacher ratio is not the same as class size, however. Class size can be described as the number

of students a teacher faces during a given period of instruction. The relationship between these two measures of teacher workload is affected by a variety of factors, including the number of classes a teacher is responsible for and the number of classes taken by students.

² Data for private schools are projected for 2012.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2014*, tables 208.20, 213.10, and 213.40

Related indicators: Public School Enrollment (indicator 8), Private School Enrollment (indicator 10)