

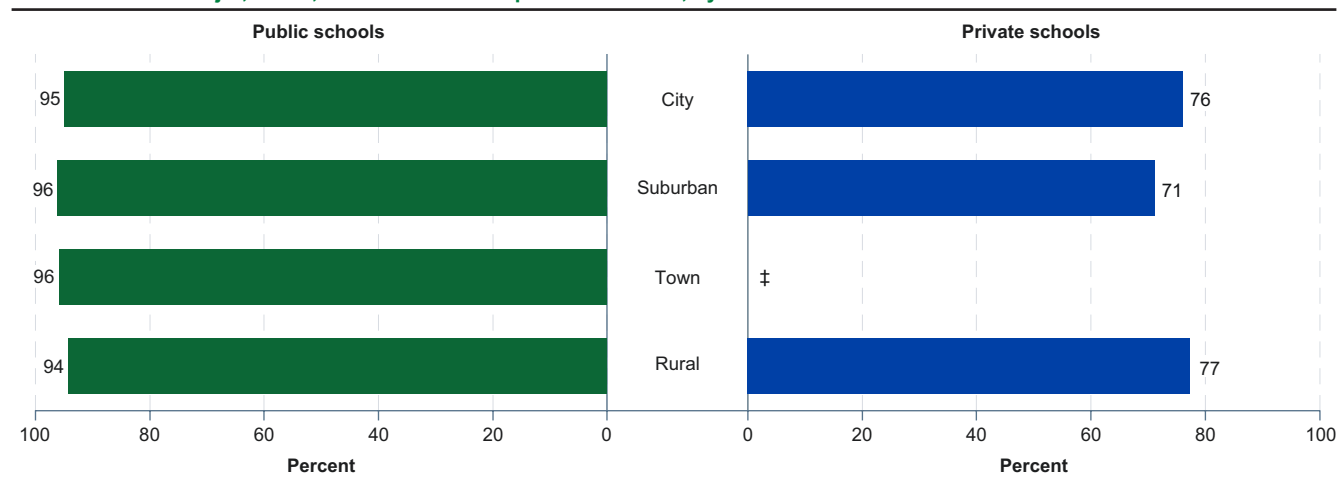
Teachers of Students With Disabilities in Rural Public and Private Schools

Special education was the main teaching assignment for 13 percent of public school teachers in rural areas in 2020–21. Among public school teachers whose main teaching assignment was special education, a lower percentage of teachers in rural areas than in suburban areas had a major, minor, or certification in special education (94 vs. 96 percent).

This indicator focuses on teachers who serve students with disabilities.¹ Using data from the 2020–21 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), this indicator examines, for public and private school teachers of students with disabilities, differences in their relevant qualifications by locale.² For information on how teacher credentials vary

by school locale overall, see [Characteristics, Credentials, and Experiences of Teachers in Rural Schools](#). For information on the enrollment of students with disabilities served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), see [English Learners and Students With Disabilities in Rural Public Schools](#).

Figure 1. Among public and private school teachers whose main teaching assignment was special education, percentage who had a major, minor, or certification in special education, by school control and school locale: 2020–21



‡ Reporting standards not met. Either there are too few cases for a reliable estimate or the coefficient of variation (CV) is 50 percent or greater.

NOTE: Data are based on a head count of full-time and part-time teachers rather than on the number of full-time-equivalent teachers. Includes teachers who reported a relevant major for any of various types of certificates or degrees (vocational certificate, associate's degree, bachelor's degree, second bachelor's degree, master's degree, second master's degree, education specialist/professional diploma, certificate of advanced graduate studies, or doctorate or first professional degree), a relevant minor for a bachelor's degree, or a relevant content area for a teaching certificate. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.

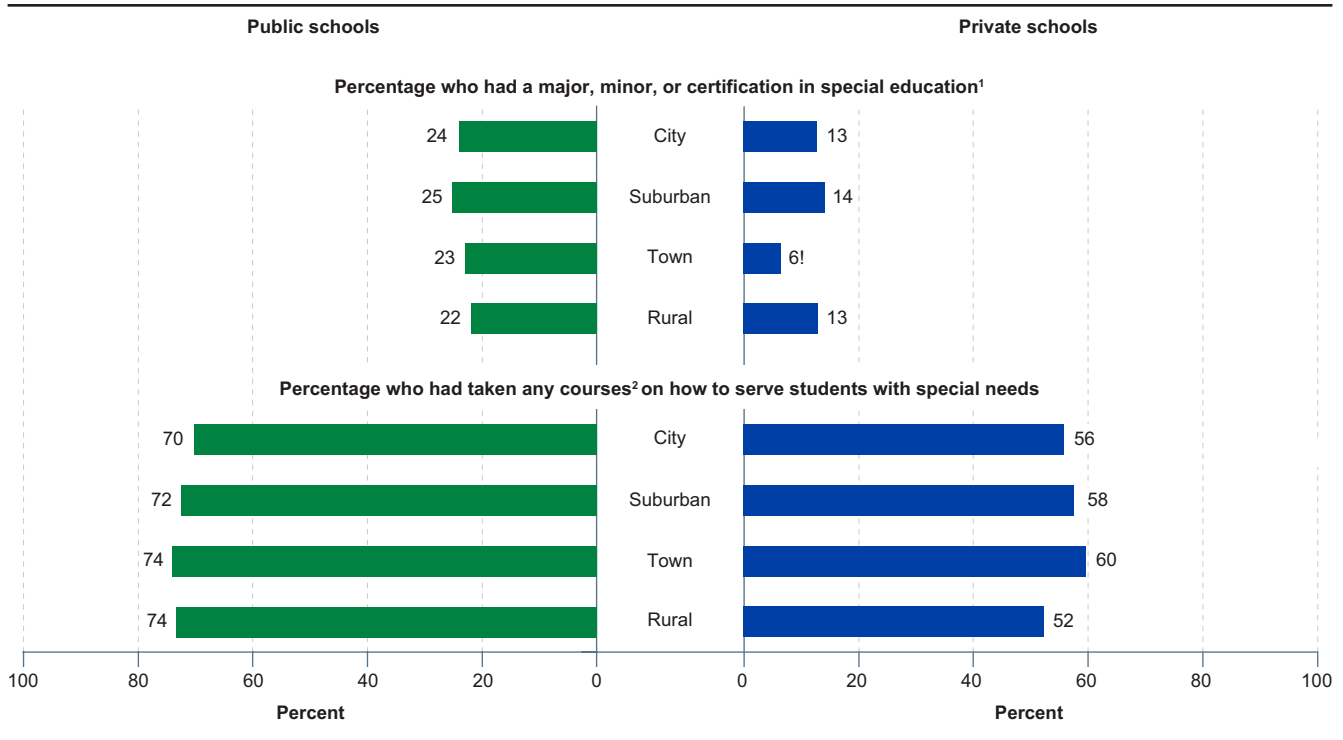
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), "Public School Teacher Data File" and "Private School Teacher Data File," 2020–21. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 209.42.

Special education was the main teaching assignment for 13 percent of public school teachers in rural areas in 2020–21. Among public school teachers whose main teaching assignment was special education, a lower percentage of teachers in rural areas than in suburban areas had a major, minor, or certification³ in special education (94 vs. 96 percent).

Special education was the main teaching assignment for 5 percent of private school teachers in rural areas in

2020–21. Among private school teachers in rural areas whose main teaching assignment was special education, 77 percent had a major, minor, or certification in special education. This percentage was lower than the percentage for public school teachers in rural areas (94 percent), but it was not measurably different from the percentages for private school teachers in other locales.

Figure 2. Among public and private school teachers who had at least one student with a disability in their class, percentage who had a major, minor, or certification in special education and percentage who had taken any courses (prior to their first year of teaching) on how to serve students with special needs, by school control and school locale: 2020–21



! Interpret data with caution. The coefficient of variation (CV) for this estimate is between 30 and 50 percent.
¹ Includes teachers who reported a relevant major for any of various types of certificates or degrees (vocational certificate, associate’s degree, bachelor’s degree, second bachelor’s degree, master’s degree, second master’s degree, education specialist/professional diploma, certificate of advanced graduate studies, or doctorate or first professional degree), a relevant minor for a bachelor’s degree, or a relevant content area for a teaching certificate.
² Includes both undergraduate and graduate courses. Includes only courses taken before the teacher’s first year of teaching.
 NOTE: Data are based on a head count of full-time and part-time teachers rather than on the number of full-time-equivalent teachers. For public school teachers, includes those who reported at least one student with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) because they have a disability or special needs. For private school teachers, includes those who reported at least one student with a formally identified disability. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), “Public School Teacher Data File” and “Private School Teacher Data File,” 2020–21. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 209.42.

In school year 2020-21, about 91 percent of public school teachers in rural areas had at least one student with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) in their class. Among public school teachers with at least one student with an IEP in their class, a lower percentage of teachers in rural areas (22 percent) than in cities (24 percent) and suburban areas (25 percent) had a major, minor, or certification in special education; however, a higher percentage of teachers in rural areas (74 percent) than in cities (70 percent) had taken any undergraduate or graduate courses on how to serve students with special needs.⁴

About 53 percent of private school teachers in rural areas had at least one student with a formally identified disability in their class in 2020-21. Among private

school teachers with at least one student with a formally identified disability in their class, teacher qualifications and coursework related to special education in rural areas were generally not measurably different from other locales. The only exception was that a higher percentage of private school teachers in rural areas than in towns had a major, minor, or certification in special education (13 vs. 6 percent). When compared with public school teachers in rural areas who had at least one student with an IEP in their class, lower percentages of private school teachers in rural areas who had at least one student with a formally identified disability in their class had a major, minor, or certification in special education (13 vs. 22 percent) and had taken courses on how to serve students with special needs (52 vs. 74 percent).

Endnotes:

¹ For general technical notes related to data analysis, data interpretation, rounding, and other considerations, please refer to the [Reader's Guide](#).

² Please visit the National Center for Education Statistics [Education Across America](#) website for the definition of locale.

³ In this indicator, teachers who had a “major, minor, or certification” refers to those who reported a relevant major for any of various types of certificates or degrees (vocational certificate, associate’s degree, bachelor’s degree, second

bachelor’s degree, master’s degree, second master’s degree, education specialist/professional diploma, certificate of advanced graduate studies, or doctorate or first professional degree), a relevant minor for a bachelor’s degree, or a relevant content area for a teaching certificate.

⁴ In this indicator, teacher coursework includes both undergraduate and graduate courses and includes only courses taken before the teacher’s first year of teaching.

Reference table: *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 209.42

Related indicators/resources: [Characteristics, Credentials, and Experiences of Teachers in Rural Schools](#); [Characteristics of Public School Teachers](#); [English Learners and Students With Disabilities in Rural Public Schools](#); [Students With Disabilities](#)

Glossary: [Disabilities, children with](#); [Locale codes](#); [Private school](#); [Public school or institution](#)