This Data Point uses data from the 2015–16 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) School Questionnaire. NTPS is a nationally representative sample survey of public K–12 schools, principals, and teachers in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. This Data Point compares levels of mental health staffing in schools in which more than half of the students are racial or ethnic minorities and schools in which at least half of the students are White and non-Hispanic.

How do types of mental health staff differ between schools where more than half of students are racial or ethnic minorities and schools where most students are White?

Minority students may be at higher risk for mental health issues than White students1 while receiving less mental health care,2 so it is important to examine differences in mental health staffing by student race and ethnicity. In this report, “majority-minority” schools are the 39 percent of public schools in which more than half of the students are racial or ethnic minorities. In about 53 percent of schools, at least half of the students are White and non-Hispanic. The 7 percent of schools for which this information is unknown are not included in these analyses.

Public schools reported whether any staff worked as counselors, psychologists, and social workers at their schools, either on a full-time or part-time basis. During the 2015–16 school year, 94 percent of both majority-minority and other schools had at least one type of mental health staff member (counselor, psychologist, or social worker) employed on at least a part-time basis (Figure 1).

A relatively larger percentage of majority-minority schools than schools in which at least half of students were White and non-Hispanic employed at least one full-time or part-time social worker (46 and 37 percent, respectively) and at least one counselor or psychologist (80 and 67 percent for majority-minority schools and 82 and 66 percent for other schools, respectively). There was no significant difference in the percentage of schools with at least one counselor or psychologist by student body race (80 and 67 percent for majority-minority schools and 82 and 66 percent for other schools, respectively).

Data in this report are from the 2015–16 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS). To learn more, visit http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ntps. To view this report online, go to http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2019020.
How do levels of mental health staffing differ between schools where more than half of students are racial or ethnic minorities and schools where most students are White?

Among schools with any type of mental health staff (counselor, psychologist, or social worker), both majority-minority and other schools had a student to mental health staff ratio of 260 students per staff member (Figure 2).

For schools with counselors and schools with psychologists, the student to staff ratio was higher in majority-minority schools than in schools where at least half of students were White and non-Hispanic. The average number of students per counselor was 390 in majority-minority schools and 370 in other schools. At the same time, the student to psychologist ratio was about 880 in majority-minority schools and 830 in other schools.

For schools with social workers, the student to staff ratio was lower in majority-minority schools than other schools (690 and 760 students per social worker, respectively).

The American School Counseling Association recommends that school counselors oversee no more than 250 students each.3 In both majority-minority and other schools with counselors, the average student to counselor ratio was above 250 (390 and 370, respectively). In schools with any mental health staff member, the average student to mental staff ratio was also above 250 (260).

FIGURE 2. Among schools with counselors, psychologists, and social workers, average number of students per mental health staff member in majority-minority and other public schools: 2015–16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of school</th>
<th>Students per counselor</th>
<th>Students per psychologist</th>
<th>Students per social worker</th>
<th>Students per any mental health staff member</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Majority-minority schools</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>880</td>
<td>690</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other schools</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>830</td>
<td>760</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Majority-minority (more than half of the students are racial or ethnic minorities) and other (at least half of students are White and non-Hispanic) schools were classified based on the percentage of minority student enrollment. The 7 percent of responding schools for which data on student race/ethnicity were not available are excluded. Ratios include only schools that reported staff in each position (i.e., any counselor, any psychologist, any social worker, any mental health staff member). In creating the full-time equivalent (FTE) of staff from counts of full-time and part-time staff, the assumption was made that each part-time staff member was equivalent to 0.5 FTE.


Endnotes