

Start Time for U.S. Public High Schools

This Data Point examines the school start time for public high schools in the United States by selected characteristics and state. It uses data from the School Questionnaire of the 2017–18 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), which is both a state and nationally representative sample survey of public and private K–12 schools, principals, and teachers in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. The selected school samples include about 10,600 traditional and charter public schools and 4,000 private schools.

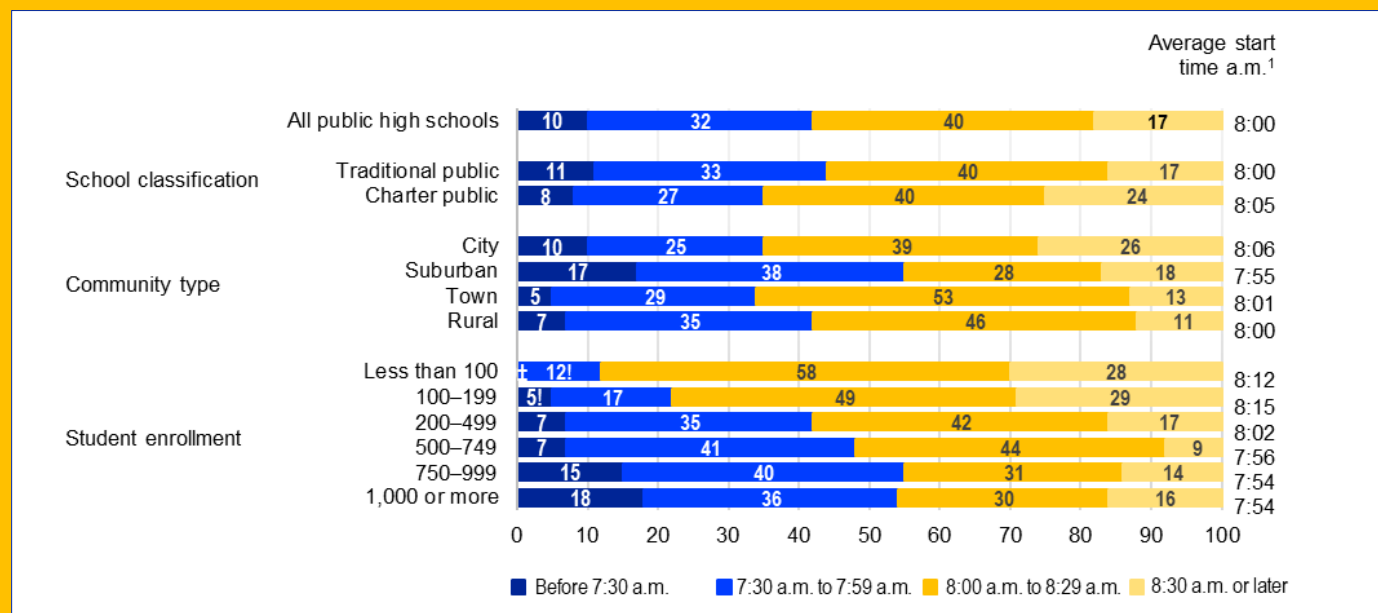
The American Academy of Pediatrics recommended in August 2014 that middle and high schools start at 8:30 a.m. or later to give students the opportunity to get a sufficient amount of sleep.¹

What was the average and percentage distribution of high school start times during the 2017–18 school year by school characteristics?

Schools were asked to report the official start time for most students at their school during the 2017–18 school year. The average start time for public high schools² was 8:00 a.m.³ Forty percent of schools had start times between 8:00 a.m. and 8:29 a.m. (figure 1).

While the average start time was 8:00 a.m., schools with certain characteristics had later average start times. Specifically, the average start time for schools with less than 100 students and those with 100–199 students had average start times of 8:12 a.m. and 8:15 a.m., respectively. These later averages were driven by larger percentages of start times at 8:30 a.m. or later. Similarly,

FIGURE 1. Public high school average start time and percentage distribution of start times, by school characteristics: 2017–18



¹ Interpret data with caution. The coefficient of variation (CV) for this estimate is between 30 percent and 50 percent (i.e., the standard error is at least 30 percent and less than 50 percent of the estimate).

[‡] Reporting standards not met. The coefficient of variation (CV) for this estimate is 50 percent or greater (i.e., the standard error is 50 percent or more of the estimate).

¹ Schools with afternoon start times were not included in the average.

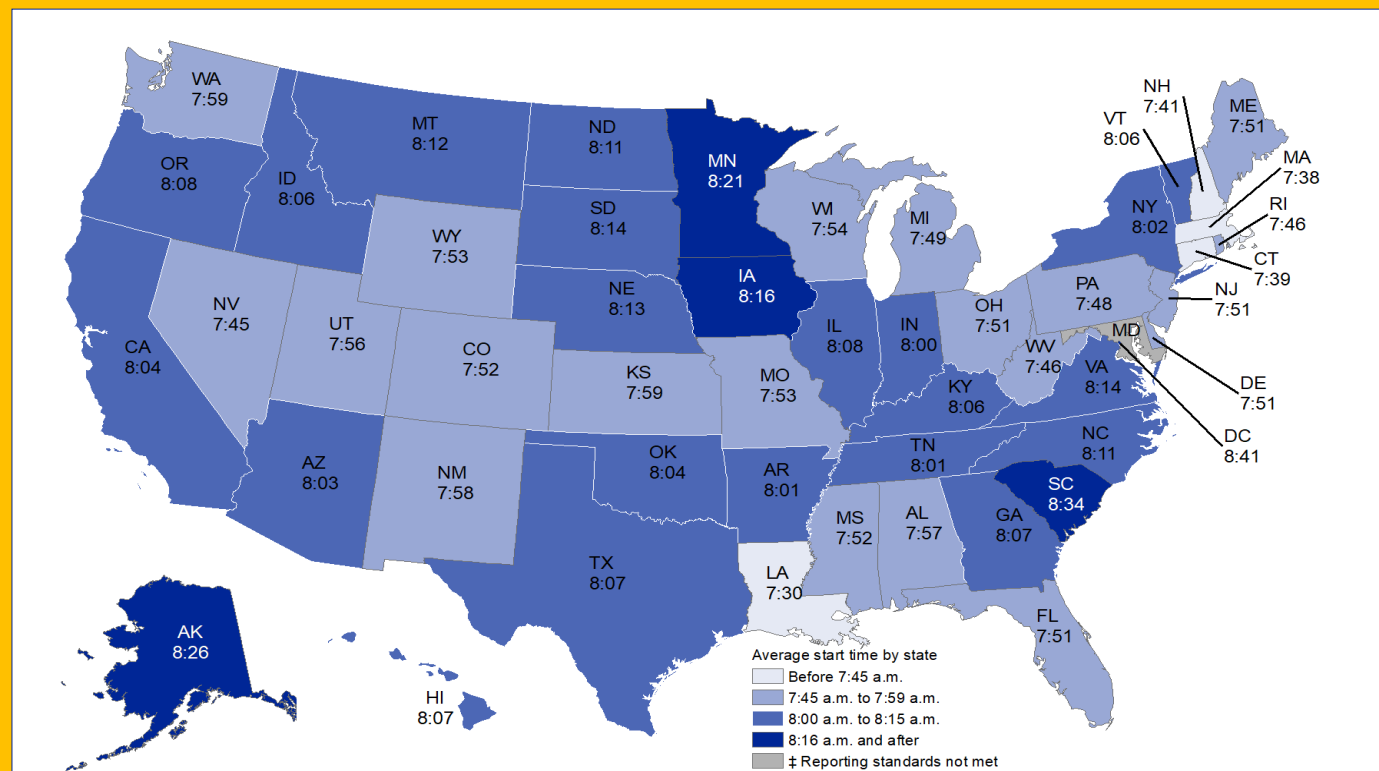
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), "Public School Documentation Data File," 2017–18.

Start Time for U.S. Public High Schools

charter schools had an average start time of 8:05 a.m. More than half (64 percent) of charter schools had a start time after 8:00 a.m.

Most high schools in suburbs (54 percent) had a start time before 8:00 a.m. More high schools in cities (26 percent) than in suburbs (18 percent), towns (13 percent), and rural areas (11 percent) had a start time of 8:30 a.m. or later.

FIGURE 2. Public high school average start time, by state: 2017–18



‡ Reporting standards not met. The response rate is below 50 percent.

NOTE: Schools with afternoon start times were not included in the average.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), "Public School Documentation Data File," 2017–18.

Do average high school start times vary across the 50 states and the District of Columbia?

High schools in the four states of Alaska, Iowa, Minnesota, and South Carolina and the District of Columbia reported their average starting time as 8:16 a.m. or later. High school began, on average, at

8:16 a.m. in Iowa, followed by 8:21 a.m. in Minnesota, 8:26 a.m. in Alaska, 8:34 a.m. in South Carolina, and 8:41 a.m. in the District of Columbia (**figure 2**).

High schools in four states (Connecticut, Louisiana, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire) reported their average starting time as being before 7:45 a.m.

High school began, on average, at 7:30 a.m. in Louisiana, followed by 7:38 a.m. in Massachusetts, 7:39 a.m. in Connecticut, and 7:41 a.m. in New Hampshire.

The average high school starting time in all other states fell between 7:45 a.m. and 8:15 a.m.

Endnotes

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2018). Schools Start Too Early. Retrieved September 12, 2019, from <https://www.cdc.gov/features/school-start-times/>.

² High schools have no grade lower than 7 and at least one grade higher than 8.

³ Schools with afternoon start times were not included in the average.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Data Point presents information on education topics of current interest. It was authored by Holly Sawyer and Soheyla Taie of Westat. Estimates based on samples are subject to sampling variability, and apparent differences may not be statistically significant. All stated differences are

statistically significant at the .05 level, with no adjustments for multiple comparisons. In the design, conduct, and data processing of NCES surveys, efforts are made to minimize the effects of nonsampling errors such as item nonresponse, measurement error, data processing error, or other systematic error.