

DATA POINT

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Shortened School Weeks in U.S. Public Schools

The School Questionnaire was administered as part of the 2017–18 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), which is 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. This Data Point examines the characteristics of public schools in the United States where students attend classes fewer than 5 days per week.¹

In an effort to attract high-quality teachers and to reduce costs, some schools and districts have been reducing the student school week to four days.^{2,3} Despite the increased use of this strategy, there is little substantive research that examines the effect of a shortened school week on students. Skeptics have indicated concerns with lack of access to meals, the impact on families' child care needs, and student performance.^{4,5}

What types of public schools have shortened school weeks, with fewer than 5 days per week?

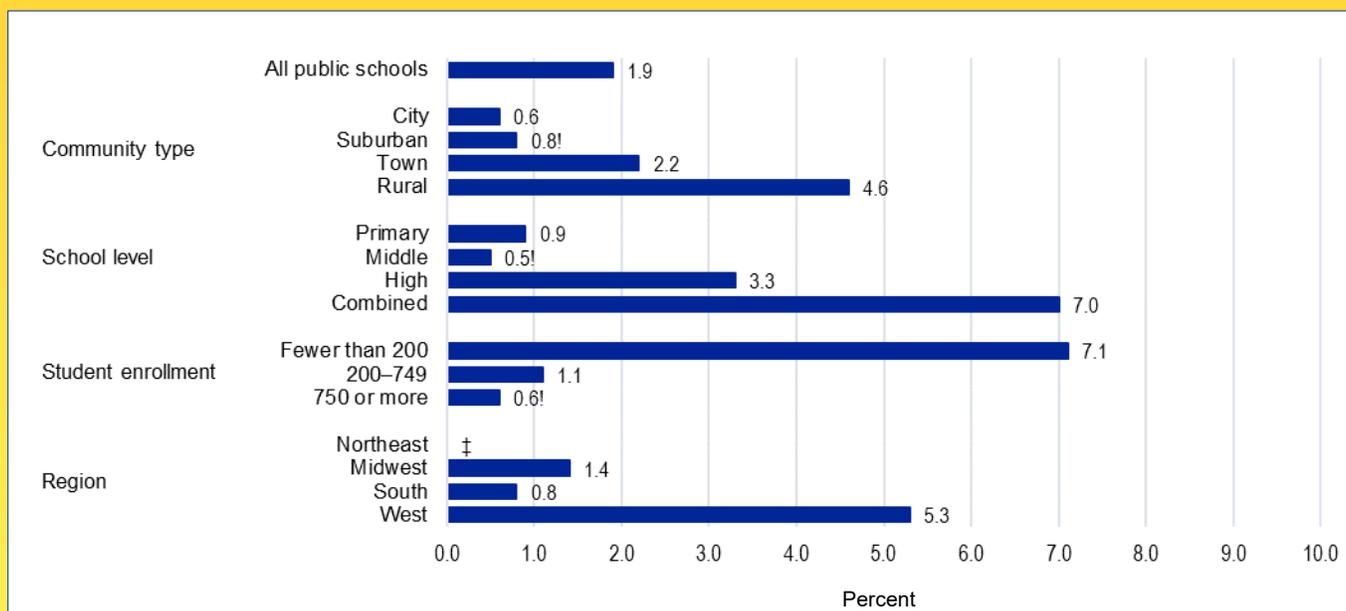
Schools were asked how many days were in a typical school week for students in grades 1–12. Nationally, about 1.9 percent of public schools

have fewer than 5 days per school week (**figure 1**). This was more common at alternative/other schools than regular schools (7.3 and 1.6 percent, respectively; not shown in figure, see supplemental tables).

Shortened school weeks were more prevalent at rural, western, and smaller schools.

A larger percentage of schools in rural areas (4.6 percent) than schools in towns, suburbs, and cities (2.2, 0.8, and 0.6 percent, respectively) had shortened school weeks.

FIGURE 1. Percentage of public schools with fewer than 5 days in the average school week, by selected school characteristics: 2017–18



! 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 fewer 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).

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

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Schools in the West (5.3 percent) were more likely to have a shortened school week than schools in the Midwest or South (1.4 and 0.8 percent, respectively).⁶

A larger percentage of schools with fewer than 200 students (7.1 percent) than schools with 200–749 students or schools with 750 or more students (1.1 and 0.6 percent, respectively) reported a shortened school week.

Shortened school weeks were more prevalent at combined schools (7.0 percent) than at primary, middle, or high schools (0.9, 0.5, and 3.3 percent, respectively).

In what states did at least 10 percent of schools have a shortened student school week, with fewer than 5 days per week?

Although the national percentage of public schools with a shortened school week was about 1.9 percent, there were eight states, largely located in the western United States, where more than 10 percent of schools had a shortened school week: Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, and Wyoming (**table 1**). Among all schools in the United States with a shortened school week, about 66.8 percent were in the West and about 67.9 percent were in these eight states.

Furthermore, in two of these eight states—Idaho (17.5 percent) and Wyoming (19.5 percent)—more than 15 percent of schools had a shortened school week.

In five states, the percentage of schools with a shortened school week ranged from 2.5 percent (Missouri) to 8.4 percent (Nevada).

In all other states, it was estimated that fewer than 1 percent of schools had a shortened school week or data did not meet National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) standards for reporting.

Table 1. Percentage of public schools with shortened school weeks, by state: 2017–18

State	Percent of public schools with fewer than 5 days per week
Wyoming	19.5
Idaho	17.5
Colorado	14.4
New Mexico	13.0
Oregon	12.7 !
South Dakota	12.2
Arizona	12.0
Oklahoma	11.1
Nevada	8.4 !
Montana	5.9 !
Minnesota	3.3 !
North Dakota	3.2 !
Missouri	2.5 !
California	0.8 !

! 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 fewer than 50 percent of the estimate).

NOTE: For states not shown, either the estimate rounds to 0 or reporting standards are not met because 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) or the response rate is below 50 percent.

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

Endnotes

¹ Although about 1.9 percent of public schools and 2.6 percent of private schools had fewer than 5 days in a typical school week, this report focuses on public schools. For more information on private schools, please see the supplemental table at <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ntps/>.

² Walker, T. (2019). After Moving to a Four-Day School Week, There May Be No Going Back. *neaToday*. Retrieved September 12, 2019, from <http://neatoday.org/2019/03/29/4-day-school-week-here-to-stay/>.

³ National Conference of State Legislatures. (2019). *Four-Day School Week Overview*. Retrieved September 12, 2019, from <http://www.ncsl.org/research/education/school-calendar-four-day-school-week-overview.aspx>.

⁴ Heyward, G. (2018). What Do We Actually Know About the Four-Day School Week? Center on Reinventing Public Education. Retrieved September 12, 2019, from <https://www.crpe.org/sites/default/files/crpe-what-do-we-know-about-four-day-week.pdf>.

⁵ Long, C. (2019). Four-Day School Weeks More Popular, But Impact on Students and Educators Unclear. *neaToday*. Retrieved September 12, 2019, from <http://neatoday.org/2016/01/14/four-day-school-week-pro-con/>.

⁶ Data for Northeast schools did not meet NCES reporting standards.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Data Point presents information on education topics of current interest. It was authored by Rebecca Goldring 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.