

# Teacher Attrition and Mobility

Results From the 2021-22 Teacher Follow-up Survey to the  
National Teacher and Principal Survey

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National Teacher and Principal Survey

First Look-Summary Report

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## Introduction

This report presents selected findings from the Current Teacher and Former Teacher questionnaires of the 2021-22 Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS). The TFS is a longitudinal component of the National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS),<sup>1</sup> which is a nationally representative survey of public<sup>2</sup> and private K-12 schools, principals, and teachers in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Both the NTPS and the TFS are developed by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) of the Institute of Education Sciences within the U.S. Department of Education, and data are collected by the U.S. Census Bureau on behalf of NCES.

The 2021-22 TFS followed up with a sample of 2020-21 NTPS teachers in the school year after the NTPS data collection and included those who left teaching, as well as those who continued to teach. When examined together, the results of the TFS and NTPS can provide insight on many different educational issues related to teachers, including the retention of teachers in public and private schools and teachers' job satisfaction. The major objectives of the 2021-22 TFS were to

- measure the 1-year attrition rate for teachers;
- examine the characteristics of teachers who stayed in the teaching profession and those who changed professions or retired;
- obtain activity or occupational data for those who left the position of a K-12 teacher;
- obtain reasons for moving to a new school or leaving the K-12 teaching profession; and
- collect data on job satisfaction.

The 2021-22 TFS sampling frame consisted of teachers who completed a Teacher Questionnaire during the 2020-21 NTPS. The sample of teachers selected for the 2021-22 TFS included former teachers (NTPS teachers who left the teaching profession within the year after the NTPS, or “leavers”), current teachers who remained at their 2020-21 NTPS school during the 2021-22 school year (“stayers”), and current teachers who moved to a different school than their 2020-21 NTPS school for the 2021-22 school year (“movers”). The 2021-22 TFS sample included a total of about 10,300 current and former teachers. Data collection activities with current and former teachers were conducted from January to July 2022. The response rate for TFS was approximately 80 percent. For additional information on TFS sampling and response rates, see appendix B.

Because all of the teachers in the TFS sample responded to the NTPS Teacher Questionnaire in the previous school year, some questions (e.g., on age, sex, race/ethnicity) are not repeated in the TFS questionnaire. In addition, school characteristics are based on the teachers' NTPS schools regardless of their teaching status in 2021-22. For these reasons, some of the data in this report are drawn from the 2020-21 NTPS. They are termed “base-year” data because the NTPS responding

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<sup>1</sup> NTPS is a redesign of the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS). NTPS was introduced in the 2015-16 school year and administered again in 2017-18 and 2020-21.

<sup>2</sup> Public schools include traditional public and public charter schools.



teachers form the base for the teachers who are selected for TFS. TFS data can be linked with NTPS data files (school, principal, and teacher) to provide a detailed picture of U.S. elementary and secondary schools and their staff.<sup>3</sup>

The purpose of this First Look is to provide summaries of the new data collected using tables of descriptive information. Selected findings presented in the tables and text show the range of information available on the 2021-22 TFS data files. Findings presented in the text do not include all differences between groups and do not emphasize any one issue. Results shown in this report are not causal. Many of the variables in the report relate to one another, but only simple comparisons are presented, which do not account for all possible relationships. More information about TFS can be found at <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ntps/overview.asp?OverviewType=3>.

For readers interested in appendixes with estimate and standard error tables, definitions of terms used in the findings and tables, and additional information about the survey from which the findings are drawn, please see the “View full report” link at <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2024-039>.

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<sup>3</sup> See volume 1 of the *User’s Manual for the 2020-21 National Teacher and Principal Survey*, Petraglia et al. 2023, for detailed information about merging data files and selecting the appropriate unit of analysis on merged files.

## Selected Findings

- Among public school teachers who were teaching during the 2020-21 school year, 84 percent remained at the same school during the 2021-22 school year (“stayers”), 8 percent moved to a different school (“movers”), and 8 percent left the teaching profession (“leavers”). Among private school teachers who were teaching during the 2020-21 school year, 82 percent remained at the same school during the 2021-22 school year (“stayers”), 6 percent moved to a different school (“movers”), and 12 percent left the teaching profession (“leavers”) (table A-1).
- Among public school teachers whose total teaching experience at any school in 2020-21 was 3 years or less, 80 percent remained at the same school during the 2021-22 school year, 13 percent moved to another school, and 7 percent left teaching. Among public school teachers with 15 or more total years of teaching experience at any school in 2020-21, some 86 percent remained at the same school during the 2021-22 school year, 6 percent moved to another school, and 9 percent left teaching (table A-2).
- Among private school teachers whose total teaching experience at any school in 2020-21 was 3 years or less, 74 percent remained at the same school during the 2021-22 school year, 11 percent moved to another school, and 15 percent left teaching. Among private school teachers with 15 or more total years of teaching experience at any school in 2020-21, some 84 percent remained at the same school during the 2020-21 school year, 4 percent moved to another school, and 12 percent left teaching (table A-2).
- Among public school teachers who were teaching at schools where less than 35 percent of K-12 students were approved for free or reduced-price lunch in the 2020-21 school year, 85 percent remained at the same school during the 2021-22 school year, 7 percent moved to another school, and 8 percent left teaching. Among public school teachers who were teaching at schools where 75 percent or more of K-12 students were approved for free or reduced-price lunch in the 2020-21 school year, 82 percent remained at the same school during the 2021-22 school year, 9 percent moved to another school, and 9 percent left teaching (table A-3).
- Among public school teachers in 2020-21 who moved to another school for the 2021-22 school year, 51 percent moved to another public school in the same district, 46 percent moved to a public school in another public school district, and 4 percent moved to a private school (table A-4a). Among private school teachers in 2020-21 who moved to another school for the 2021-22 school year, 46 percent moved from a private school to a public school, and 54 percent moved from one private school to another private school (table A-4b).
- Among teachers in 2020-21 who moved to another school for the 2021-22 school year, 19 percent of public school teachers and 16 percent of private school teachers changed schools involuntarily. Among teachers in 2020-21 who were no longer teaching in the 2021-22 school year, 3 percent of public school teachers and 9 percent of private school teachers left teaching involuntarily. Reasons that teachers left teaching or changed schools

involuntarily included that their contract was not renewed, they were laid off, or their school closed or merged (table A-5).

- Among teachers in 2020-21 who voluntarily moved to another school for the 2021-22 school year, 20 percent indicated that their most important reason for moving was because they wanted a job that was more conveniently located or because they had moved, 10 percent indicated that their most important reason was because they wanted the opportunity to teach at their current school, and 9 percent indicated that their most important reason for moving was because they wanted or needed a higher salary. In addition, 6 percent of teachers indicated that their most important reason for moving was because they were dissatisfied with the way their school or district supported them during the COVID-19 pandemic (table A-6).
- Among teachers in 2020-21 who were voluntarily no longer teaching in the 2021-22 school year, 16 percent indicated that their most important reason for leaving was because they decided to retire or receive retirement benefits from the previous year's school system, 15 percent indicated that their most important reason for leaving was because of other personal life reasons (e.g., health, pregnancy/childcare, caring for family), 13 percent indicated that their most important reason was because they decided to pursue a position other than that of a K-12 teacher, and 9 percent indicated that their most important reason for leaving was because they wanted or needed a higher salary (table A-7).
- Among teachers in 2020-21 who were no longer teaching in the 2021-22 school year, 39 percent of public school teachers and 26 percent of private school teachers were working for a school or school district in a position in the field of K-12 education, but not as a regular K-12 classroom teacher. About 12 percent of public school teachers and 19 percent of private school teachers who were no longer teaching in 2021-22 were working in an occupation outside the field of education, including military service (table A-8).
- Among teachers in 2020-21 who were working but no longer teaching in the 2021-22 school year,<sup>4</sup> 66 percent indicated that the ability to balance personal life and work was better in their current position than in teaching, 60 percent indicated that autonomy or control over their own work was better in their current position than in teaching, and 58 percent indicated that both manageability of their workload and professional prestige were better in their current position than in teaching (table A-9).
- Among teachers who reported agreeing somewhat or strongly with the statement that they were generally satisfied being a teacher at their school in the 2020-21 school year, 86 percent remained at the same school in the 2021-22 school year, 7 percent moved to a different school, and 8 percent left the teaching profession (table A-10).

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<sup>4</sup> Teachers in 2020-21 who were working but no longer teaching in 2021-22 included former teachers who were working for a school or school district in a position in the field of K-12 education, but not as a regular K-12 classroom teacher; former teachers working in the field of K-12 education but not in a school/district; former teachers working in the field of pre-K or postsecondary education; and former teachers working outside the field of education, including military service. Data on leavers who reported an occupational status of "other than the above" are not included.



- Among teachers who reported that they had a moderate or great deal of control over various areas of planning and teaching in their classrooms in the 2020-21 school year, most (84 to 85 percent for the various areas of planning and teaching) remained at the same school in the 2021-22 school year, 6 to 8 percent moved to another school, and 8 percent left the teaching profession (table A-11).

## References

Petraglia, E., Green, J., Taie, S., Ferg, R., Hubbell, K., Salinas, V., Greene, A., and Lewis, L. (2023). *User's Manual for the 2020-21 National Teacher and Principal Survey Volumes 1-4* (NCES 2022-061rev through 2022-064rev). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.