

# Highlights From School Resources and Staffing

Rural schools often face difficulties hiring new staff—particularly high-quality teachers—and experience high turnover rates.<sup>1,2</sup> Prior research has shown that student outcomes are associated with staff characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors.<sup>3,4,5,6</sup> Indicators from this

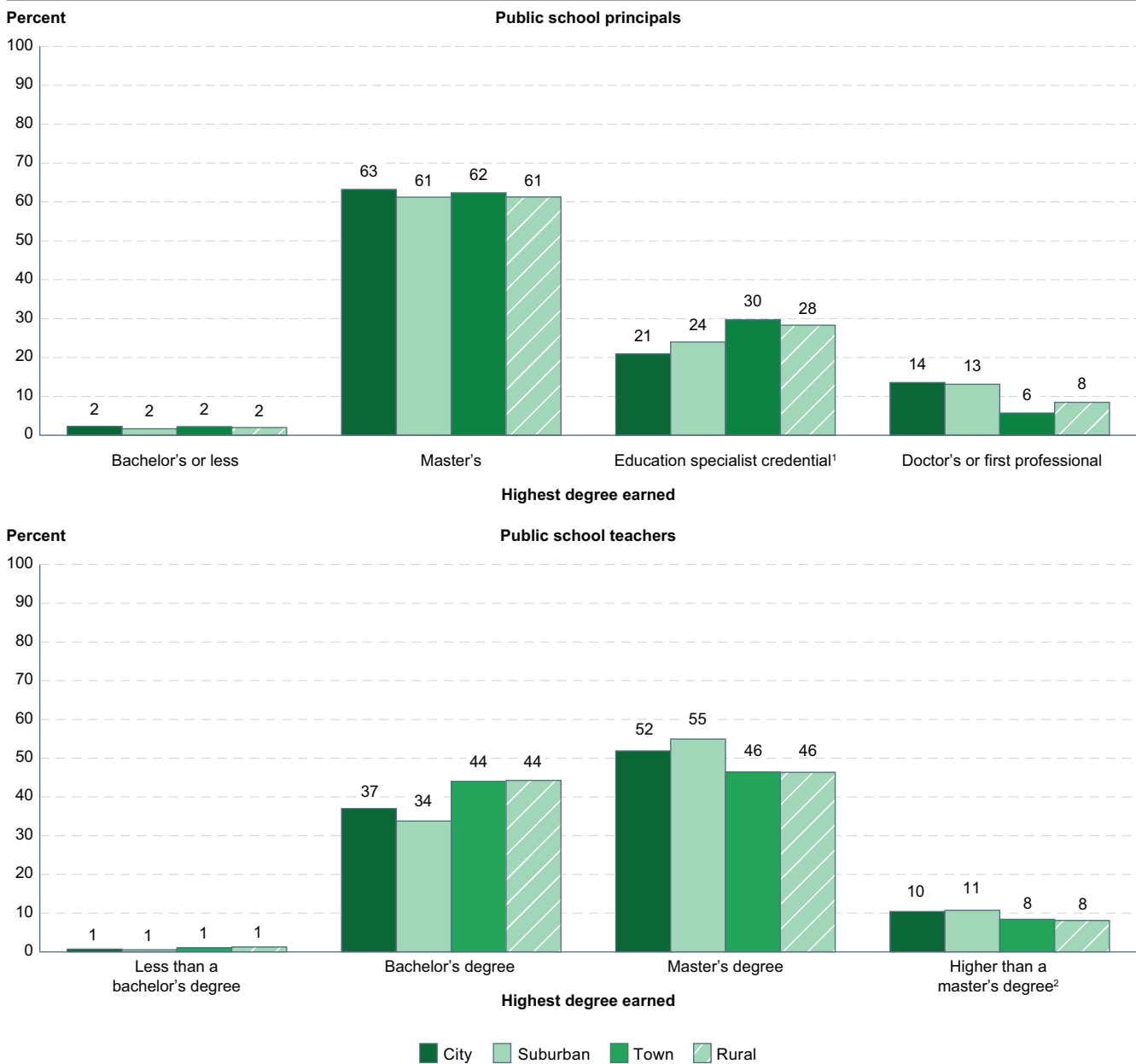
section provide a snapshot of characteristics of school principals, teachers, and staff in rural areas, examining differences in these characteristics by locale to better understand variations that can affect student outcomes.

## Highlights

- In 2020-21, the most commonly held highest degree for public school principals in rural areas was a master's degree. For both public and private schools, the percentage of principals with fewer than 3 years of experience as principal at their current school was higher in rural areas than in cities.
- In 2020-21, teachers in rural areas generally had lower levels of educational attainment and fewer years of teaching experience than did teachers in suburban areas.
- In 2020-21, of public schools that had teaching vacancies in specific fields, a higher percentage of those in rural areas than of those in suburban areas or cities found it very difficult to fill or were not able to fill teaching vacancies in the following three fields: foreign languages, English or language arts, and social studies.
- In 2020-21, among public school teachers who had at least one English learner (EL) student in their class, lower percentages of those in rural areas than of those in cities and suburban areas had a major, minor, or certification in English as a Second Language. Among public school teachers who had at least one student with a disability in their class, lower percentages of those in rural areas than of those in cities and suburban areas had a major, minor, or certification in special education.
- In fall 2019, the pupil/teacher and pupil/staff ratios in public elementary and secondary schools were lower in rural areas than in other locales.

## Key Findings by Indicator

**Figure 1. Percentage distribution of principals and teachers in public schools, by highest degree earned and school locale: School year 2020–21**



<sup>1</sup> At least 1 year beyond the master's degree level.

<sup>2</sup> Higher than a master's degree is defined as a teacher who completed any of the following: an educational specialist or professional diploma, a certificate of advanced graduate studies, or a doctorate or first professional degree.

NOTE: Teachers include both full-time and part-time teachers. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are plotted based on unrounded data.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), "Public School Principal and Private School Principal Data Files," 2020–21, "Public School Teacher and Private School Teacher Data Files," 2020–21, and *Characteristics of Public and Private Elementary and Secondary School Teachers in the United States: Results From the 2020–21 National Teacher and Principal Survey—First Look*, tables 3 and 4.

### Characteristics, Attitudes, and Behaviors of Principals in Rural Schools

In 2020-21, the most commonly held highest degree for public school principals in rural areas was a master's degree. For both public and private schools, the percentage of principals with fewer than 3 years of experience as principal at their current school was higher in rural areas than in cities.

- In 2020-21, the most commonly held highest degree for public school principals in rural areas was a master's degree (61 percent). The percentage of public school principals who held an education specialist credential as their highest degree was higher in rural areas (28 percent) than in suburban areas (24 percent) and cities (21 percent). In contrast, the percentage of public school principals who held a doctor's or first professional degree as their highest degree was lower in rural areas (8 percent) than in suburban areas (13 percent) and cities (14 percent) but higher in rural areas than in towns (6 percent).
- In 2020-21, for both public and private schools, the percentage of principals with fewer than 3 years of experience as principal at their current school was higher in rural areas than in cities. For example, the percentage of public school principals with fewer than 3 years of experience was 43 percent in rural areas,

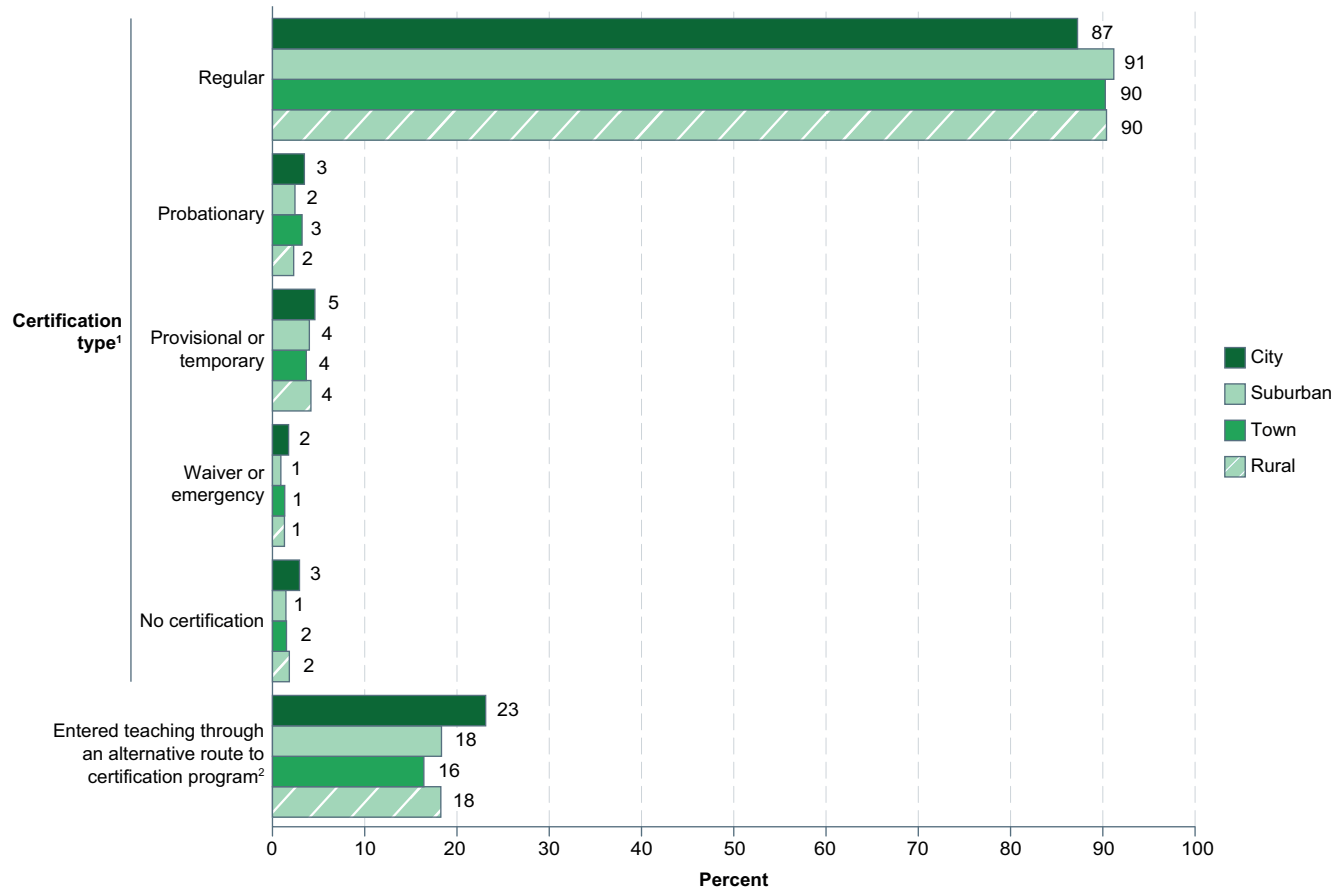
compared with 38 percent in cities. In contrast, the percentage of public school principals with 3 to 9 years of experience was lower in rural areas (43 percent) than in towns (48 percent) and cities (49 percent).

- In 2020-21, higher percentages of public school principals in rural areas reported thinking they had a major influence on certain decisions concerning various activities at their school than did those in cities and suburban areas. Specifically, higher percentages of public school principals in rural areas thought they had a major influence on setting discipline policy (67 percent) and establishing curriculum (44 percent) than did those in suburban areas (57 and 29 percent, respectively) and cities (55 and 30 percent, respectively).
- In 2020-21, compared with public school principals in rural areas, private school principals in rural areas reported earning a lower annual salary (\$63,600 vs. \$90,700) and working fewer hours per week (48 vs. 57 hours). The most commonly held highest degree for public school principals in rural areas was a master's degree (61 percent), whereas the most commonly held highest degree for private school principals in rural areas was a bachelor's degree or lower (44 percent).

**Data Source:** National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS: 2020-21)

**Figure 2. Percentage distribution of teachers in public schools who held each type of certification and percentage of teachers who entered teaching through an alternative route to certification program, by school locale: School year 2020–21**

**Certification type and route to certification program**



<sup>1</sup> Refers to certification of teachers to teach in the state where they are currently teaching. A teaching certificate is probationary if all requirements have been satisfied except completion of a probationary period. It is provisional or temporary if additional coursework, student teaching, or passage of a test is required to obtain regular certification. It is a waiver or emergency certificate if a certification program must be completed to continue teaching.

<sup>2</sup> Teachers were asked whether they entered teaching through an alternative route to certification program, which is a program that was designed to expedite the transition of nonteachers to a teaching career (for example, a state, district, or university alternative route to certification program).

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. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding. 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 209.26.

### **Characteristics, Credentials, and Experiences of Teachers in Rural Schools**

In 2020-21, teachers in rural areas had lower educational attainment and fewer total years of teaching experience in general than teachers in suburban areas.

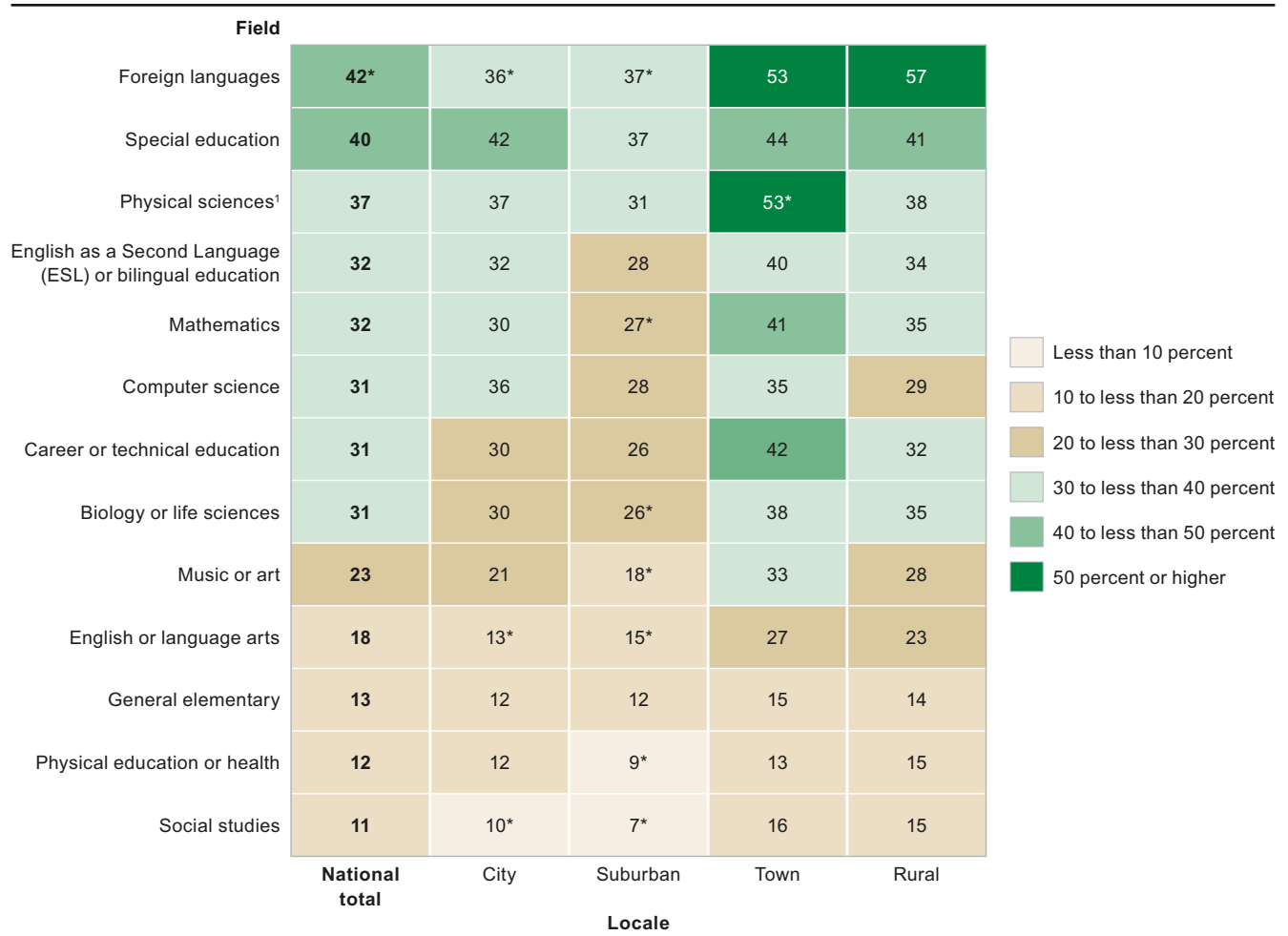
- In general, public school teachers in rural areas tended to have lower educational attainment than did teachers in cities and suburban areas in 2020-21. For example, the percentages of public school teachers who held a master's degree (46 percent) or a degree higher than a master's (8 percent) as their highest degree were lower than the corresponding percentages in cities (52 and 10 percent, respectively) and suburban areas (55 and 11 percent, respectively). In contrast, the percentage of public school teachers who held a bachelor's degree as their highest degree was higher in rural areas (44 percent) than in cities (37 percent) and suburban areas (34 percent).
- In 2020-21, the percentage of public school teachers who had a regular certification was higher in rural

areas (90 percent) than in cities (87 percent), and the percentage who had no certification was lower in rural areas (2 percent) than in cities (3 percent).

- On average, public school teachers in rural areas had fewer years of total teaching experience (14.5 years) than public school teachers in suburban areas (14.9 years) and more years of total teaching experience than public school teachers in cities (13.8 years) in 2020-21.
- In 2020-21, a lower percentage of private school teachers in rural areas than of public school teachers in rural areas took courses on selected topics related to effective teaching. For example, lower percentages of private school teachers in rural areas took courses on assessing learning (64 percent), classroom management techniques (65 percent), and lesson planning (66 percent) than did public school teachers in rural areas (78, 76, and 79 percent, respectively).

**Data Source:** National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS: 2020-21)

**Figure 3. Of public schools that had teaching vacancies in a specific field for the current school year, percentage of schools that found it very difficult to fill or were not able to fill those teaching vacancies, by school locale and teaching field: School year 2020–21**



\*Significantly different from rural areas ( $p < .05$ ).

<sup>1</sup> Physical sciences includes chemistry, physics, and earth science.

NOTE: For each teaching field, estimates are reported for schools that offered a teaching position in that field and were hiring for at least one open teaching position in that field in the 2020–21 school year. Although rounded numbers are displayed, each cell's fill gradient (i.e., the degree of blue that is displayed) is based on unrounded data. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), "Public School Principal and Private School Principal Data Files," 2020–21, *Characteristics of Public and Private Elementary and Secondary School Teachers in the United States: Results From the 2020–21 National Teacher and Principal Survey First Look*, table 7.

### Difficulty Hiring Teachers in Rural Areas

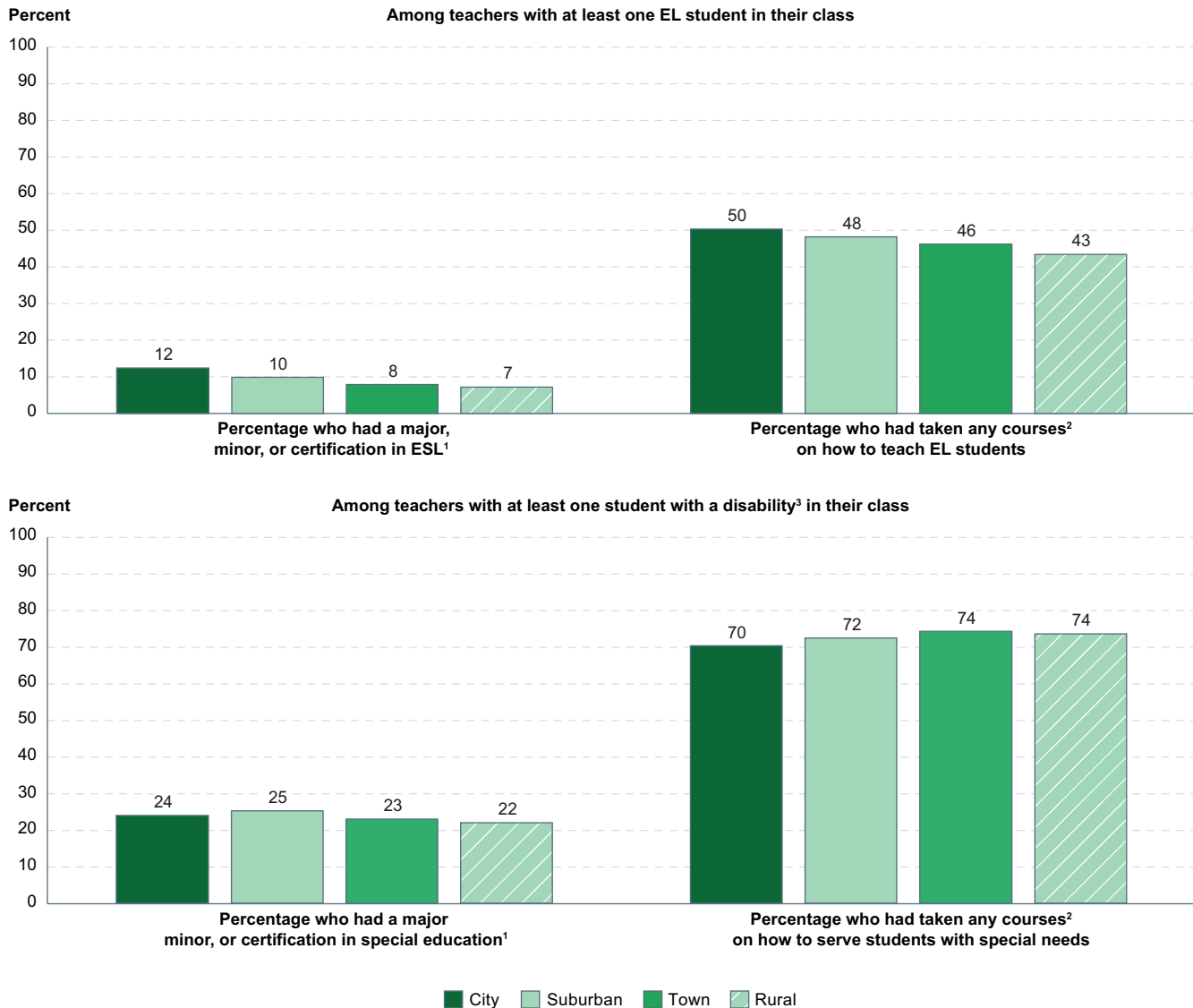
In 2020–21, of public schools that had teaching vacancies in specific fields, a higher percentage of those in rural areas than of those in suburban areas and cities found it very difficult to fill or were not able to fill teaching vacancies in the following three fields: foreign languages, English or language arts, and social studies.

- In 2020–21, of public schools in rural areas that had teaching vacancies in specific fields, 57 percent found it very difficult to fill or were not able to fill foreign language teaching positions, compared with 37 percent in suburban areas and 36 percent in cities.

- In 2020–21, of private schools in rural areas that had teaching vacancies in specific fields, 44 percent found it very difficult to fill or were not able to fill vacancies in physical education or health, compared with 17 percent in cities and 12 percent in suburban areas.
- In 2020–21, a higher percentage of public schools in rural areas (57 percent) than of private schools in rural areas (28 percent) found it very difficult to fill or were not able to fill vacancies in foreign languages.

**Data Source:** National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS: 2020–21)

**Figure 4. Among public school teachers who had at least one English learner (EL) student or at least one student with a disability in their class, percentage who had a major, minor, or certification in English as a Second Language (ESL) or in special education and percentage who had taken any courses on how to teach EL students or serve students with special needs, by school locale: 2020–21**



<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> Includes both undergraduate and graduate courses. Includes only courses taken before the teacher's first year of teaching.

<sup>3</sup> 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.

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. Figures are plotted 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.

### Teachers of English Learners in Rural Public and Private Schools

In 2020-21, among public school teachers who had at least one English learner (EL) student in their class, lower percentages of those in rural areas and towns than of those in cities and suburban areas had a major, minor, or certification in English as a Second Language (ESL).

- In 2020-21, among public school teachers who had at least one EL student in their class, the percentage who had a major, minor, or certification in ESL was lower in rural areas (7 percent) and towns (8 percent) than in suburban areas (10 percent) and cities (12 percent).
- In 2020-21, among private school teachers in rural areas who had at least one EL student in their class, 29 percent had taken any courses on how to teach EL students. This percentage was lower than the percentage for public school teachers in rural areas who had at least one EL student in their class (43 percent).

**Data Source:** National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS: 2020-21)

### Teachers of Students With Disabilities in Rural Public and Private Schools

In 2020-21, among public school teachers who had at least one student with a disability in their class, lower percentages of those in rural areas than of those in cities and suburban areas had a major, minor, or certification in special education.

- In 2020-21, among public school teachers with at least one student with a disability in their class, the percentage who had a major, minor, or certification in special education was lower in rural areas

(22 percent) than in cities (24 percent) and suburban areas (25 percent).

- In 2020-21, among teachers in rural areas who had at least one student with a disability in their class, lower percentages of private school teachers than of public school teachers 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).

**Data Source:** National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS: 2020-21)

### Staff in Rural Public Elementary and Secondary School Systems

In fall 2019, the pupil/teacher ratio and pupil/staff ratio in public elementary and secondary schools were lower in rural areas than in other locales.

- In fall 2019, the percentage of public school staff who were teachers and instructional aides was lower in rural areas (60 percent) than in cities (63 percent), towns (61 percent), and suburban areas (61 percent). Some 5 percent of staff employed in rural areas were student support staff,<sup>7</sup> compared with 7 percent in suburban areas and 6 percent each in cities and towns.
- In fall 2019, the pupil/staff ratio and the pupil/teacher ratio were lower in rural areas than in other locales. For example, the pupil/teacher ratio in public elementary and secondary schools was lowest in rural areas (14.9), followed by towns (15.6), suburban areas (16.2), and cities (16.4).

**Data Sources:** Common Core of Data (CCD) and Education Demographic and Geographic Estimates (EDGE)

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#### Endnotes:

- <sup>1</sup> Sutchter, L., Darling-Hammond, L., and Carver-Thomas, D. (2019). Understanding Teacher Shortages: An Analysis of Teacher Supply and Demand in the United States. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 27(35). Retrieved September 29, 2022, from <https://epaa.asu.edu/index.php/epaa/article/view/3696>.
- <sup>2</sup> Gagnon, D.J., and Mattingly, M.J. (2015). State Policy Responses to Ensuring Excellent Educators in Rural Schools. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 30(13): 1-14. Retrieved July 23, 2019, from <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/9b8a/5b3f54b63758b27bfe0d5fte0983aa1611a8.pdf>.
- <sup>3</sup> Bastian, K.C., and Henry, G.T. (2015). The Apprentice: Pathways to the Principalship and Student Achievement. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 51(4): 600-639. Retrieved October 18, 2022, from <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X14562213>.
- <sup>4</sup> Bartanen, B. (2020). Principal Quality and Student Attendance. *Educational Researcher*, 49(2): 101-113. Retrieved October 18, 2022, from <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X19898702>.
- <sup>5</sup> Boyd, D.J., Grossman, P.L., Lankford, H., Loeb, S., and Wyckoff, J. (2009). Teacher Preparation and Student Achievement. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 31(4): 416-440. Retrieved October 10, 2022, from <https://doi.org/10.3102/0162373709353129>.
- <sup>6</sup> Clotfelter, C.T., Ladd, H.F., and Vigdor, J.L. (2007). Teacher Credentials and Student Achievement: Longitudinal Analysis With Student Fixed Effects. *Economics of Education Review*, 26(6): 673-682. Retrieved September 27, 2022, from <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2007.10.002>.
- <sup>7</sup> Student support staff includes those whose activities involve the direct support of students but who do not instruct students (e.g., school nurses, school psychologists, athletic coaches).