

Changes in Public School Teachers' Certification Type

DATA POINT
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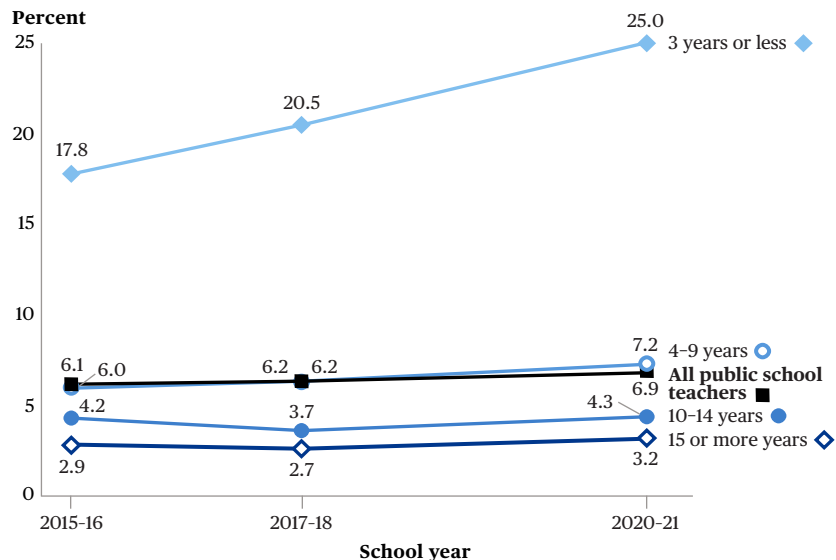
In recent years, some states have introduced or increased flexibility around public school teacher licensure requirements¹ as a tool for mitigating the teacher shortages that were intensified by the coronavirus pandemic.² This Data Point examines the prevalence of public school teachers who did not hold a teaching certificate or held only provisional or emergency teaching certificates in the state where they were teaching, as opposed to regular, standard, advanced, or probationary certificates. It looks at the prevalence over time, by selected school and teacher characteristics and by state, using data from the public school teacher files of the National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) for school years 2015-16, 2017-18, and 2020-21. The NTPS is a nationally representative sample survey of public and private K-12 schools, principals, and teachers. State-level estimates can also be produced for public schools, principals, and teachers.

Did the percentage of public school teachers who did not hold a teaching certificate or held only provisional or emergency certificates in the state where they were teaching change over time? Did the change in the percentage differ by school or teacher characteristics?

In 2020-21, some 6.9 percent of public school teachers did not hold a teaching certificate or held only provisional or emergency certificates in the state where they were teaching, hereafter referred to as “teachers without full teaching certification” (**Figure 1**). About 93.1 percent held regular, standard, advanced, or probationary certificates (not shown in the figure).

The percentage of teachers without full teaching certification was higher in 2020-21 than in 2017-18 (6.2 percent) and 2015-16 (6.1 percent).³ Across all survey years, the percentages among teachers in each of the four experience levels (3 years or less; 4-9 years; 10-14 years; and 15 or more years) exhibited statistically significant differences from one another. For instance, in 2020-21, the percentage of teachers without full teaching certification was higher for teachers with 3 years or less of teaching

Figure 1. Percentage of K-12 public school teachers who did not hold a teaching certificate or held only provisional or emergency teaching certificates in the states where they were teaching, by total years of teaching experience: School years 2015-16, 2017-18, and 2020-21



NOTE: Teachers could report up to two current teaching certificates in the state where they were teaching. Teachers who reported two certificates are only counted once in the analysis. This figure shows the percentage of public school teachers who did not hold a teaching certificate or held only provisional or emergency teaching certificates in the state where they were teaching at the time. A provisional certificate is a certificate that requires some additional coursework, student teaching, or passage of a test before regular certification can be obtained (in some states this is called a temporary certificate). An emergency certificate is a certificate issued to persons who must complete a certification program in order to continue teaching (in some states this is called a waiver certificate). SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), “Public School Teacher Data File,” 2015-16, 2017-18, and 2020-21.

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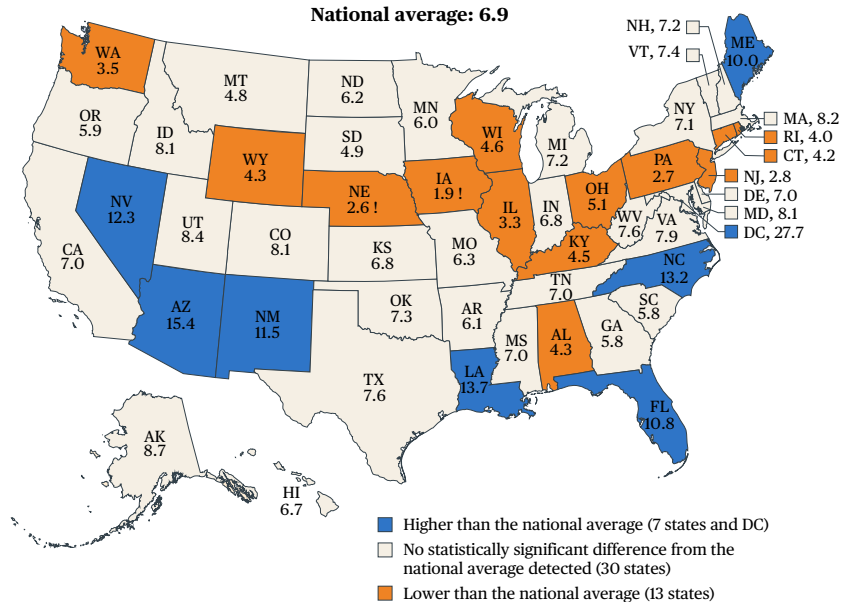
experience (25.0 percent), compared to teachers with more experience (ranging from 3.2 percent to 7.2 percent) (Figure 1).

In addition, the percentage for teachers with 3 years or less of teaching experience increased between 2015-16 (17.8 percent) and 2017-18 (20.5 percent), and then again between 2017-18 and 2020-21 (25.0 percent). The percentage also varied across years for other selected school and teacher characteristics, such as school classification and highest degree earned (not shown, please see <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2024088>).

What were the percentages of public school teachers who did not hold a teaching certificate or held only provisional or emergency certificates across states in 2020-21?

In 2020-21, there was variation across states in the percentage of teachers without full teaching certification in the state where they were teaching. The percentage ranged from 1.9 percent in Iowa to 27.7 percent in the District of Columbia. In 13 states, the percentage was lower than the national average of 6.9 percent. Meanwhile, seven states and the District of Columbia had a higher percentage than the national average (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Percentage of K-12 public school teachers who did not hold a teaching certificate or held only provisional or emergency teaching certificates in the state where they were teaching, by state: School year 2020-21



! 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).

NOTE: Teachers could report up to two current teaching certificates in the state where they were teaching. Teachers who reported two certificates are only counted once in the analysis. This figure shows the percentage of public school teachers who did not hold a teaching certificate or held only provisional or emergency teaching certificates in the state where they were teaching in 2020-21. A provisional certificate is a certificate that requires some additional coursework, student teaching, or passage of a test before regular certification can be obtained (in some states this is called a temporary certificate). An emergency certificate is a certificate issued to persons who must complete a certification program in order to continue teaching (in some states this is called a waiver certificate). Differences are only statistically significant compared to the national average if marked as such on the map.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), "Public School Teacher Data File," 2020-21.

Endnotes

¹ DeArmond, M., Goldhaber, D., and Payne, S. (2023). *COVID's Under-the-Radar Experiment With Teacher Licensure*. National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research (CALDER). <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED628853>.

² U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2022). *K-12 Education: Education Should Assess Its Efforts to Address Teacher Shortages* (GAO-23-105180). <https://www.gao.gov/assets/D23105180.pdf>.

³ Results may differ from years prior to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic as some states introduced new licensing procedures during the pandemic.