

# Characteristics of 2020-21 Public and Private K-12 School Principals in the United States

Results From the National Teacher and Principal Survey

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# Characteristics of 2020–21 Public and Private K–12 School Principals in the United States

Results From the National Teacher and Principal Survey

First Look—Summary Report

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# Introduction

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The 2020-21 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS)<sup>1</sup> is a nationally representative survey of public<sup>2</sup> and private<sup>3</sup> K-12 schools, principals, and teachers in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. State-level data are also available for public schools, principals, and teachers. NTPS collects data on core topics including teacher and principal preparation, classes taught, school characteristics, and demographics of the teacher and principal labor forces. The survey is developed by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) within the U.S. Department of Education, and data are collected by the U.S. Census Bureau. This report presents basic estimates from the Public School Principal and Private School Principal Data Files of the 2020-21 NTPS, of the third collection of NTPS.

The purpose of NTPS is to collect data to provide a detailed picture of U.S. elementary and secondary schools and their staff. Data are collected through school, principal, and teacher surveys. Data on the three surveys can be linked using the school identification number (see the *User's Manual for the 2020-21 National Teacher and Principal Survey Volumes 1-4*, Petraglia et al. 2022).

The 2020-21 NTPS used a school-based sample of public and private schools. The selected samples included about 9,900 traditional and charter public schools and their principals, 68,300 public school teachers, 3,000 private schools and their principals, and 8,000 private school teachers.

Data were collected between October 2020 and August 2021. Items about how schools first adapted to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic during the spring of 2020 were included in the school, principal, and teacher questionnaires. See Berger et al. (2022) for an initial look at results from these items using preliminary NTPS data. In addition, an item was included at the beginning of each questionnaire asking about the current effect of COVID-19 on instruction at the school at the time the survey was completed during the 2020-21 school year. Other topics in the 2020-21 NTPS school principal survey included

- General demographic information about the school principal, such as race/ethnicity, salary, and birth year;
- Principal's education and professional experience, such as highest degree earned, years as a principal at the current school and at any school, and number of years teaching before becoming and while serving as a principal;
- Goals and decisionmaking, including importance of various educational goals for students, and perceived influence on decisions about various activities at the school;

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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 charter schools.

<sup>3</sup> While SASS included both public and private sector schools, principals, and teachers, the 2015-16 administration of NTPS only included the public sector. The 2017-18 and 2020-21 administrations of NTPS included both public and private sector schools.

- School climate and safety, such as occurrence of different types of problems at the school, and parent participation in different activities; and
- Working conditions and perceptions of their job as a principal, such as total weekly hours spent on school related activities, average time spent on different activities, agreement with various statements about their job, and plans to remain a principal.

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 in the 2020-21 NTPS Public School Principal and Private School Principal data files. Findings presented in the text do not include all differences in the tables and do not emphasize any one issue.

This First Look highlights findings from the NTPS public school principal and private school principal surveys. Findings from the school and teacher surveys are presented in two companion First Look reports:

- *Characteristics of 2020-21 Public and Private K-12 Schools in the United States: Results From the National Teacher and Principal Survey First Look (NCES 2022-111)*; and
- *Characteristics of 2020-21 Public and Private K-12 School Teachers in the United States: Results From the National Teacher and Principal Survey First Look (NCES 2022-113)*.

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 NTPS can be found at <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ntps>.

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=2022112>.

## Selected Findings

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- Among public K-12 school principals during the 2020-21 school year, 77 percent were non-Hispanic White, 10 percent were non-Hispanic Black or African American, 9 percent were Hispanic, and 3 percent were another race/ethnicity. Among private K-12 school principals, 83 percent were non-Hispanic White, 6 percent were non-Hispanic Black or African American, 6 percent were Hispanic, and 5 percent were another race/ethnicity (table A-1).
- Overall, 56 percent of public K-12 school principals and 63 percent of private K-12 school principals were female. A higher percentage of public elementary school principals were female (69 percent) than were middle, secondary/high, or combined/other school principals (44 percent, 36 percent, and 52 percent, respectively). At private schools, a higher percentage of elementary/middle school principals were female (75 percent) than were principals at secondary/high or combined/other schools (45 percent and 62 percent, respectively). Among public school principals, 33 percent were younger than 45 years old, 44 percent were 45 to 54 years old, and 22 percent were 55 years or older. Among private school principals, 30 percent were younger than 45 years old, 30 percent were 45 to 54 years old, and 40 percent were 55 years or older (table A-2).
- The most common highest degree reported for public K-12 school principals was a master's degree (62 percent), compared to those reporting an education specialist or professional diploma (25 percent), a doctorate or first professional degree (11 percent), and a bachelor's degree or less (2 percent). For private K-12 school principals, the most common highest degree reported was also a master's degree (52 percent), compared to those reporting a bachelor's degree or less (28 percent), an education specialist or professional diploma (11 percent), or a doctorate or first professional degree (9 percent) (table A-3).
- Public K-12 school principals reported an average annual salary of \$105,900. Public school principals in secondary/high schools reported higher average salaries (\$111,100) than principals in middle schools, elementary schools, and combined/other schools (\$108,700, \$103,900, and \$98,800, respectively). Private K-12 school principals reported an average annual salary of \$78,600. Private school principals in secondary/high schools reported higher average salaries (\$111,500), than principals in combined/other schools and elementary/middle schools (\$76,700, and \$65,400, respectively) (table A-4).
- Public K-12 school principals spent an average of 58.3 hours per week on all school-related activities.<sup>4</sup> On average, public school principals spent about 30 percent of their time on internal administrative tasks, 29 percent on curriculum and teaching-related tasks, 24 percent on student interactions, and 15 percent on parent interactions. Private K-12 school principals spent an average of 54.5 hours per week on all school-related activities. On average, private school principals spent about 33 percent of their time on internal administrative tasks,

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<sup>4</sup> Includes hours spent during the school day, before and after school, and on the weekends.

28 percent on curriculum and teaching-related tasks, 20 percent on student interactions, and 16 percent on parent interactions (table A-5).

- Public K-12 school principals reported having an average of 6.9 years of experience as a principal, of which an average of 4.5 years was spent as a principal at their current school. Private K-12 school principals reported having an average of 9.0 years of experience as a principal, of which an average of 6.7 years was spent as a principal at their current school (table A-6).
- Among public K-12 school principals, about 9 out of 10 reported having a major influence on evaluating teachers (93 percent) and hiring new full-time teachers (89 percent). Among private K-12 school principals, 86 percent reported having a major influence on hiring new teachers and 83 percent reported having a major influence on evaluating teachers (table A-7).
- Among public K-12 school principals, 94 percent agreed that they were generally satisfied with being principal at their school. However, 34 percent agreed that they did not seem to have as much enthusiasm as they did when began their job, and 25 percent agreed that if they could get a higher paying job they would leave their job as soon as possible. Among private K-12 school principals, 92 percent agreed that they were generally satisfied with being principal at their school, while 30 percent agreed that they did not seem to have as much enthusiasm as they did when they began their job, and 16 percent agreed that if they could get a higher paying job they would leave their job as soon as possible (table A-8).



## References

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Berger, M., Kuang, M., Jerry, L., and Freund, D. (2022). *Impact of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic on Public and Private Elementary and Secondary Education in the United States: Results From the 2020-21 National Teacher and Principal Survey* (NCES 2022-019). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved February 22, 2022, from <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2022019>.

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