

Diversity of LIS School Students: Trends Over the Past 30 Years

JungWon Yoon and Kathleen de la Peña McCook

Using the Association for Library and Information Science Education (ALISE) 2018 statistical reports, this study reports the current diversity status of LIS students. The findings are as follows: (1) overall LIS graduates' diversity has improved from 6.79% to 17.47% over the past 30 years, and particularly, the increase in the number of Hispanic graduates is noticeable; (2) however, LIS graduates' diversity does not follow the trends of the US population diversity: whereas 37% of the US population is minority, 17.43% of LIS graduates are minority students; (3) the ratio of LIS minority graduates (17.43%) is lower than the ratio of LIS minority students (20.70%); (4) larger disparities among LIS students are noticed in the most ethnically diverse states; and (5) the rate of minority students among the top ten LIS schools is lower than those of overall LIS schools, except the Asian group.

Keywords: diversity, ethnic minority, LIS students, LIS education

The Association for Library and Information Science Education (ALISE) Diversity Statement, adopted in 2013, makes a strong case for the centrality of diversity to the Association's mission. It states, "[r]ecognizing and valuing diversity means recognizing that as LIS educators and students, we are all shaped by numerous and varied factors, making each of us uniquely qualified to contribute to the collective mission of ALISE, the field of library and information science, and our respective institutions in a multicultural, multilingual and globalized society" (ALISE, 2013). The special issue of *Library Trends* in summer 2018, titled "Race and Ethnicity in Library and Information Science: An Update," addressed current racial and ethnic diversity issues in LIS and provided "calls-to-actions" for supporting librarians of color. Diversity of librarians has been a key issue of LIS education. However, since [McCook and Lippincott \(1997\)](#) reported the diversity of LIS graduates using the ALISE statistical report, there has been lack of research demonstrating the current diversity status of LIS students. In 2011, Jaeger, Subramaniam, Jones, and Bertot wrote, "there still is abundant space for progress especially in the areas of recruitment and retention of librarians from diverse communities and assimilating the knowledge of diversity into LIS curriculum." (p. 169). This assertion holds true today. It has been underscored by [Mehra and Gray \(2020\)](#), who urge LIS to reflect on "owning up" the historical and contemporary White-IST trends considered "normative" in LIS for authentic transformations to expand diversity and social justice within its privileged canon and ranks.

KEY POINTS:

- Overall LIS graduates' diversity has improved over the past 30 years, but LIS graduates' diversity does not follow the trends of US population diversity.
- The ratio of LIS minority graduates is lower than the ratio of LIS minority students.
- The rate of minority students among the top ten LIS schools is lower than those of overall LIS schools, except the Asian group.

This study updates the following studies, which analyzed the diversity of LIS schools: “Diversity Deferred: Where Are the Minority Librarians?” (McCook & Geist, 1993), “Library Schools and Diversity: Who Makes the Grade?” (McCook & Lippincott, 1997), and “The Diversity Mandate” (Adkins & Espinal, 2004). Using the ALISE 2018 statistical reports (ALISE, 2018), this study analyzed the current diversity status of LIS students and the trends of LIS students’ diversity over the past 30 years. We believe that this study demonstrates the need for greater commitment to recruit people from all ethnicities.

ALISE Statistical Reports and Databases include data about LIS programs in ALISE Institutional members. Of the five sections in that report,¹ this study analyzed the Student section. In addition to ALISE 2018 statistical reports, an article by McCook and Lippincott (1997) reporting LIS schools and minority graduate rates by comparing 1984/85 and 1994/95 data sets, the 2018 Census data set (US Census Bureau, 2018), and the 2017 U.S. News & World Report “Best Library and Information Studies Programs” rankings are used for analyzing LIS students’ diversity trends over 30 years.

In this study, minority is defined as Black/African American, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and Hispanic. The Student section of the ALISE 2018 Statistical Reports includes the status of students at 58 LIS schools. By excluding seven LIS schools in Canada, this study analyzed 51 US LIS schools’ student diversity. According to the 2018 ALISE report, the total number of US LIS students is 13,461. The composition of LIS students is White (67.85%), Hispanic (8.73%), Black/African American (5.21%), International students (4.54%), Asian (3.77%), 2 or more race (2.47%), American Indian/Alaskan Native (0.52%), Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (0.13%), and Unknown (6.80%) (Figure 1).

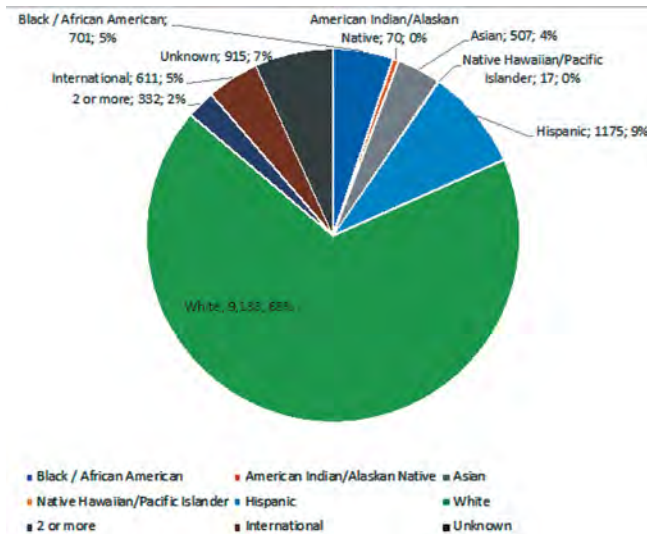


Figure 1: LIS students’ distribution (2016/2017)

For comparison with previous data sets (1984/85 and 1994/95) and Census data, International (611 students) and Unknown (915 students) categories were removed from the analysis of this study. The total number of LIS students without these two groups is 11,935.

Findings

Table 1 shows the numbers of LIS students and LIS graduates by ethnic groups. Whereas the ratio of LIS minority students is 20.70%, that of LIS minority graduates is 17.47%.

Comparing graduates' diversity from 1984/85 to 2016/17 (**Table 2**), graduates' overall diversity has improved from 6.79% to 17.47%. The increase in the number of Hispanic students (from 1.07% to 7.83%) is the most noticeable.

Although the percentage of LIS minority graduates has increased, as shown in **Table 3**, LIS graduates' diversity does not follow the trends of the US population diversity. Whereas 37% of the US population is minority (US Census Bureau, 2018), 17.43% of LIS graduates are minority and 20% of librarians are ethnic minorities. This disparity is found in all ethnic minority groups.

Table 4 presents the top ten most diverse states (based on 2018 census data) and LIS student diversity within those states. Larger disparities are noticed in the most diverse states. For example, 60% of the Washington, D.C., population is minority, but only 17.5% of students in the area LIS schools are minority students. This disparity is due mainly to the lower rate of Black/African American LIS students in the D.C. area (difference = 33.75%). In addition to D.C., Maryland, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Georgia show differences between the states' Black/African American population and the number of LIS students, while Texas, New York, Illinois, California, and Florida present differences between these states' Hispanic population and the number of LIS students. A table of LIS students' diversities in all states having LIS schools is located in the Appendix.

Table 5 presents the top 20 LIS schools according to the rate of minority students. Comparing with **Table 1**, where the overall minority rate of LIS students is 20.7%, the average rate

Table 1: LIS students' and graduates' diversity

	2016/17 LIS Students		2016/17 LIS Graduates	
	Num.	%	Num.	%
Black / African American	701	5.87	277	5.83
American Indian/Alaskan Native	70	0.59	18	0.38
Asian	507	4.25	156	3.28
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	17	0.14	7	0.15
Hispanic	1,175	9.84	372	7.83
White	9,133	76.52	3,780	79.55
2 or more	332	2.78	142	2.99
Total graduates	11,935	100.00	4,752	100.00
Total minority	2,470	20.70	830	17.47

Table 2: LIS graduates' diversity

	1984/85		1994/95		2016/17	
	Num.	%	Num.	%	Num.	%
Black / African American	96	3.66	184	4.24	277	5.83
American Indian/Alaskan Native	6	0.23	7	0.16	18	0.38
Asian*	48	1.83	149	3.44	156	3.28
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander					7	0.15
Hispanic	28	1.07	94	2.17	372	7.83
White	2,445	93.21	3,901	89.99	3,780	79.55
2 or more					142	2.99
Total graduates	2,623	100.00	4,335	100.00	4,752	100.00
Total minority	178	6.79	434	10.01	830	17.47

Note. In 1984/85 and 1994/95, Asian and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander are in one group.

Table 3: Comparison between US population diversity and LIS graduates' diversity

	1984/85		1994/95		2016/17		Librarian (%) ^a
	Census (%)	Graduates (%)	Census (%)	Graduates (%)	Census (%) ^a	Graduates (%)	
Black / African American	11.66	3.66	12.00	4.24	12.00	5.83	6.8
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0.65	0.23	0.70	0.16	1.00	0.34	
Asian	2.23	1.83	3.50	3.44	6.00	3.28	4.6
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander					<.01	0.15	
Hispanic	7.72	1.07	10.20	2.17	18.00	7.83	8.6
White	77.73	93.21	73.60	89.99	60.00	79.58	77.0
2 or more					3.00	2.99	
Total minority	22.27	6.79	26.40	10.01	37.00	17.43	20.0

Note. In 1984/85 and 1994/95, Asian and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander are in one group.

^a2018 Census data

of minority students in the top 20 most diverse schools is 28.92%. The differences between the overall minority rate and the top 20 most diverse schools are observed in all ethnic minority groups: Black/African American (5.87% vs. 9.42%), American Indian/Alaskan Native (0.59% vs. 0.68%), Asian (4.25% vs. 6.39%), Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (0.14% vs. 0.47%), and Hispanic (9.84% vs. 11.96%). LIS schools with higher rates of Hispanic students

Table 4: LIS students' diversities in diverse states

State	Black / African American			Asian			Hispanic			Total minority					
	CS (%)	GR (%)	Diff.	State	CS (%)	GR (%)	Diff.	State	CS (%)	GR (%)	Diff.	State	CS (%)	GR (%)	Diff.
DC	45	11.25	-33.75	HI	38	30.51	-7.49	TX	40	21.97	-18.03	DC	60	17.50	-42.50
MS	38	17.61	-20.39	CA	15	10.48	-4.52	CA	39	21.76	-17.24	TX	57	30.23	-26.77
LA	32	18.29	-13.71	NJ	10	12.08	2.08	FL	26	12.80	-13.20	MD	45	19.44	-25.56
GA	31	14.86	-16.14	WA	9	8.71	-0.29	NJ	21	5.62	-15.38	NY	42	16.59	-25.41
MD	29	5.56	-23.44	NY	9	3.44	-5.56	NY	19	6.42	-12.58	SC	34	8.70	-25.30
SC	26	7.97	-18.03	IL	6	2.18	-3.82	IL	17	5.15	-11.85	GA	45	20.27	-24.73
AL	26	10.45	-15.55	MD	6	5.00	-1.00	RI	16	3.30	-12.70	IL	37	14.04	-22.96
NC	21	12.11	-8.89	MN	5	3.28	-1.72	WA	13	11.41	-1.59	CA	59	37.75	-21.25
TN	17	4.29	-12.71	TX	5	2.42	-2.58	KS	12	8.79	-3.21	MS	42	21.13	-20.87
FL	15	6.91	-8.09	GA	4	2.25	-1.75	DC	11	3.75	-7.25	FL	44	23.17	-20.83
				PA	4	1.29	-2.71								
				DC	4	2.50	-1.50								

Note. CS = Census; GR = Graduates; Puerto Rico is excluded.

Table 5: Top 20 LIS schools according to the percentage of minority students

School	Black / African American		American Indian / Alaskan Native		Asian		Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander		Hispanic		Total Minority		
	State	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
1. Hawaii (2; 42.62%) ^a	HI	2	3.39	0	0.00	18	30.51	5	8.47	2	3.39	27	45.76
2. North Carolina – Central (3; 35.42%)	NC	35	41.18	0	0.00	1	1.18	0	0.00	2	2.35	38	44.71
3. Southern California	CA	7	10.45	2	2.99	6	8.96	0	0.00	12	17.91	27	40.30
4. San Jose State (5; 17.86%)	CA	80	4.34	20	1.09	193	10.47	2	0.11	405	21.98	700	37.98
5. Long Island	NY	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	5	33.33	5	33.33
6. California – Los Angeles	CA	0	0.00	0	0.00	12	11.65	0	0.00	21	20.39	33	32.04
7. North Texas	TX	31	4.65	2	0.30	16	2.40	2	0.30	157	23.57	208	31.23
8. Texas Woman's	TX	28	5.67	1	0.20	11	2.23	0	0.00	114	23.08	154	31.17
9. St. John's	NY	7	10.61	1	1.52	4	6.06	0	0.00	6	9.09	18	27.27
10. Michigan (9; 13.22%)	MI	13	6.67	0	0.00	31	15.90	0	0.00	8	4.10	52	26.67
11. Washington	WA	10	3.00	9	2.70	29	8.71	2	0.60	38	11.41	88	26.43
12. Rutgers	NJ	21	5.90	2	0.56	43	12.08	0	0.00	20	5.62	86	24.16
13. Florida State	FL	10	5.46	0	0.00	5	2.73	0	0.00	29	15.85	44	24.04
14. Dominican	IL	24	13.71	0	0.00	1	0.57	0	0.00	16	9.14	41	23.43
15. Texas – Austin	TX	11	6.88	2	1.25	5	3.13	0	0.00	19	11.88	37	23.13
16. Louisiana State (7; 17.19%)	LA	32	18.29	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	8	4.57	40	22.86
17. South Florida (8; 15.97%)	FL	24	7.77	4	1.29	8	2.59	0	0.00	34	11.00	70	22.65
18. Southern Mississippi	MS	25	17.61	1	0.70	0	0.00	0	0.00	4	2.82	30	21.13
19. Valdosta State	GA	33	14.86	2	0.90	5	2.25	0	0.00	5	2.25	45	20.27
20. Pratt (4; 32.47%)	NY	10	7.94	0	0.00	8	6.35	0	0.00	7	5.56	25	19.84
Average		20.15	9.42	2.30	0.68	20.84	6.39	0.55	0.47	45.60	11.96	88.40	28.92

Note. Puerto Rico is excluded

^aRank order according to minority rate and % of minority (1994/95)

are Long Island University, University of North Texas, Texas Women's University, San Jose State University, and University of California – Los Angeles. Schools with higher rates of African American students are North Carolina Central University, Louisiana State University, University of Southern Mississippi, Valdosta State University, and Dominican University. Schools with higher rates of Asian students are University of Hawaii, University of Michigan, Rutgers University, University of California – Los Angeles, and San Jose State University.

Table 6 shows the results of an analysis of the status of minority students in the top 10 LIS schools, based on U.S. News & World Report (2017). The rate of minority students among the top 10 LIS schools is 17.25%, which is lower than the overall rate of LIS minority students (20.70%). After an examination of ethnic groups, Asian shows higher rates in the top ten LIS schools compared to overall LIS school rates (4.25% vs. 6.04%), whereas Black/African American (5.87% vs. 4.64%), American Indian/Alaskan Native (0.59% vs. 0.56%), Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (0.14% vs. 0.06%), and Hispanic (7.83% vs. 5.95%) showed lower rates in the top 10 LIS schools.

Discussion and conclusion

This study reports the current diversity status of LIS students, using the ALISE (2018) statistical reports. Although LIS graduates' diversity has improved overall from 6.79% to 17.47% over the past 30 years, LIS students' and graduates' diversity does not follow the trends of the population diversity of the United States. Particularly, larger disparities among LIS students are noticed in the most ethnically diverse states. More strategic recruiting for educating ethnic minorities who can serve their communities should be established based on population data. Disparities in library support among states should be shown up vividly in public library funding, which may be viewed as emblematic of the differential in graduation results (McCook & Bossaller, 2018). Also, it is remarkable that the ratio of LIS minority graduates (17.43%) is lower than the ratio of LIS minority students (20.7%). The failure to substantively increase graduation rates of African Americans stands out. This suggests that the LIS community should put their efforts not only into recruiting minority students but also into supporting minority students and increasing retention rates.

These findings indicate the need to continue financial supports for minority students, such as the ALA Spectrum Scholarship initiative (ALA, 2018), which has funded 1,063 Master's degree scholarships for students from minority groups (Whitwell, 1998). Recruitment of diverse faculty members (Cooke & Sánchez, 2019), LIS faculty members' more active and consistent participation with the ethnic caucuses, and their community engagements, particularly with diverse and cultural communities, would be beneficial for recruiting and educating ethnically diverse LIS students. In addition, as Cooke and Jacobs (2018) have urged, diversity-related courses should be integrated as a consistent part of LIS curriculum, and diversity components should be included in overall course contents. Cooke and Jacobs state that "[t]his infusion process requires systemic changes in curricula, textbooks, instructors, and ultimately the larger educational (organization) culture" (p.14).

We agree with the anonymous reviewer's suggestions for future studies that compare LIS education rates for minorities with general graduate studies, so that we can understand the diversity status of LIS education within a bigger picture. We suggest that future studies

Table 6: LIS top-ranked schools' minority students

School	1994/1995		2016/2017											
	Total minority		Black / African American		American Indian / Alaskan Native		Asian		Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander		Hispanic		Total minority	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Illinois	19	9.48	19	4.08	0	0.00	13	2.79	0	0.00	17	3.65	49	10.52
Michigan	10	13.22	10	3.00	9	2.70	29	8.71	2	0.60	38	11.41	88	26.43
NC-Chapel Hill	42	1.85	3	1.91	0	0.00	6	3.82	0	0.00	4	2.55	13	8.28
Syracuse	40	2.22	15	7.89	1	0.53	5	2.63	0	0.00	6	3.16	27	14.21
Pittsburgh	20	9.38	13	6.67	0	0.00	31	15.90	0	0.00	8	4.10	52	26.67
Indiana	27	7.55	11	6.88	2	1.25	5	3.13	0	0.00	19	11.88	37	23.13
Rutgers	24	8.05	21	5.90	2	0.56	43	12.08	0	0.00	20	5.62	86	24.16
Wisconsin-Madison	39	2.67	10	5.56	1	0.56	9	5.00	0	0.00	15	8.33	35	19.44
Texas	12	11.38	1	0.76	0	0.00	5	3.82	0	0.00	5	3.82	11	8.40
Drexel	36	4.00	3	3.75	0	0.00	2	2.50	0	0.00	4	5.00	9	11.25
Average	26.9	6.98	10.6	4.64	1.5	0.56	14.8	6.04	0.2	0.06	13.6	5.95	40.7	17.25

might begin with the Haas and Hadjar (2020) review of quantitative research, which examines students' trajectories through higher education.

JungWon Yoon, *Department of Library and Information Science, Jeonbuk National University*, is an associate professor at the Jeonbuk National University in South Korea. Her research areas include information behaviors of underserved populations (elderly, immigrants, linguistically isolated populations), multimodal information, social media, and health information behaviors. Email: jyoona@jbnu.ac.kr

Kathleen de la Peña McCook, *School of Information, University of South Florida*, is distinguished university professor at the School of Information, University of South Florida. She is a past-president of ALISE and was honored by the American Library Association with the Lippincott Award in 2019. Her current research is on the erasure of historical memory and radio communication. Email: kmccook@usf.edu

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Note

1. In the Student section, Table II-4-c-2-ALA (Enrollment (Number) by Gender, Ethnicity, and Race, Master's – ALA-Accredited, Fall 2017) is used for analyzing LIS students, and TableII-3-c-2-ALA (Degrees and Certificates Awarded by Gender, Ethnicity, and Race, Master's – ALA-Accredited, 2016–2017) is used for LIS graduates.

Appendix: LIS school minority students by states

STATE	Black/African American			American Indian/Alaska Native			Asian			Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander			Hispanic			Total minority		
	Census (%)	Graduates (%)	Difference	Census (%)	Graduates (%)	Difference	Census (%)	Graduates (%)	Difference	Census (%)	Graduates (%)	Difference	Census (%)	Graduates (%)	Difference	Census (%)	Graduates (%)	Difference
	AL	26	10.45	-15.55	0.5	0.00	-0.50	1	0.00	-1.00	0	0.00	0.00	4	4.48	0.48	31	14.93
CA	5	4.32	-0.68	0.5	1.09	0.59	15	10.48	-4.52	0.5	0.10	-0.40	39	21.76	-17.24	59	37.75	-21.25
DC	45	11.25	-33.75	0.00	0.00	0.00	4	2.50	-1.50	0	0.00	0.00	11	3.75	-7.25	60	17.50	-42.50
FL	15	6.91	-8.09	0.5	0.81	0.31	3	2.64	-0.36	0	0.00	0.00	26	12.80	-13.20	44	23.17	-20.83
GA	31	14.86	-16.14	0.5	0.90	0.40	4	2.25	-0.75	0.5	0.00	-0.50	10	2.25	-7.75	45	20.27	-24.73
HI	2	3.39	1.39	0.00	0.00	0.00	38	30.51	-7.49	10	8.47	-1.53	10	3.39	-6.61	60	45.76	-14.24
IA	3	0.00	-3.00	0.5	1.19	0.69	3	3.57	0.57	0	0.00	0.00	6	3.57	-2.43	12	8.33	-3.67
IL	14	6.71	-7.29	0.5	0.00	-0.50	6	2.18	-3.82	0	0.00	0.00	17	5.15	-11.85	37	14.04	-22.96
IN	9	2.78	-6.22	0.5	0.00	-0.50	2	1.94	-0.06	0	0.00	0.00	7	3.33	-3.67	18	8.06	-9.94
KS	5	2.20	-2.80	1	0.00	-1.00	3	0.00	-3.00	0	0.00	0.00	12	8.79	-3.21	21	10.99	-10.01
KY	8	2.31	-5.69	0.5	0.00	-0.50	1	0.00	-1.00	0	0.00	0.00	4	1.73	-2.27	13	4.05	-8.95
LA	32	18.29	-13.71	1	0.00	-1.00	2	0.00	-2.00	0	0.00	0.00	5	4.57	-0.43	40	22.86	-17.14
MA	1	1.54	0.54	0.5	0.00	-0.50	1	2.15	1.15	0	0.00	0.00	2	4.62	2.62	4	8.31	4.31
MD	29	5.56	-23.44	0.5	0.56	0.06	6	5.00	-1.00	0	0.00	0.00	10	8.33	-1.67	45	19.44	-25.56
MI	14	9.63	-4.37	0	0.41	0.41	3	6.56	3.56	0	0.20	0.00	5	3.89	-1.11	22	20.70	-1.30
MIN	6	0.82	-5.18	1	0.00	-1.00	5	3.28	-1.72	0	0.00	0.00	5	0.82	-4.18	17	4.92	-12.08
MO	11	0.94	-10.06	0.5	0.00	-0.50	2	1.89	-0.11	0.5	0.00	-0.50	4	2.83	-1.17	17	5.66	-11.34
MS	38	17.61	-20.39	0.5	0.70	0.20	1	0.00	-1.00	0	0.00	0.00	3	2.82	-0.18	42	21.13	-20.87
NC	21	12.11	-8.89	1	0.50	-0.50	3	1.62	-1.38	0.5	0.37	-0.13	10	2.37	-7.63	35	16.98	-18.02
NJ	13	5.90	-7.10	0.5	0.56	0.06	10	12.08	2.08	0	0.00	0.00	21	5.62	-15.38	44	24.16	-19.84
NY	14	6.10	-7.90	0.5	0.63	0.13	9	3.44	-5.56	0	0.00	0.00	19	6.42	-12.58	42	16.59	-25.41
OH	12	3.90	-8.10	0.5	0.19	-0.31	2	0.78	-1.22	0	0.00	0.00	4	1.75	-2.25	18	6.63	-11.37
OK	7	3.43	-3.57	8	3.43	-4.57	2	1.71	-0.29	0	0.57	0.57	11	8.00	-3.00	28	17.14	-10.86
PA	10	6.81	-3.19	0.5	0.00	-0.50	4	1.29	-2.71	0	0.00	0.00	8	5.71	-2.29	22	13.81	-8.19
PR		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	99	100.0	1.00	99	100.0	1.00
RI	6	2.20	-3.80	0.00	0.00	0.00	3	3.30	0.30	0	1.10	0.00	16	3.30	-12.70	25	9.89	-15.11
SC	26	7.97	-18.03	0.5	0.36	-0.14	2	0.36	-1.64	0	0.00	0.00	6	0.00	-6.00	34	8.70	-25.30
TN	17	4.29	-12.71	0.5	0.00	-0.50	2	0.61	-1.39	0	0.00	0.00	5	1.23	-3.77	24	6.13	-17.87
TX	12	5.30	-6.70	0.5	0.38	-0.12	5	2.42	-2.58	0.5	0.15	-0.35	40	21.97	-18.03	57	30.23	-26.77
WA	4	3.00	-1.00	1	2.70	1.70	9	8.71	-0.29	1	0.60	-0.40	13	11.41	-1.59	28	26.43	-1.57
WI	6	2.43	-3.57	1	0.93	-0.07	3	2.80	-0.20	0	0.00	0.00	7	1.87	-5.13	17	8.04	-8.96