

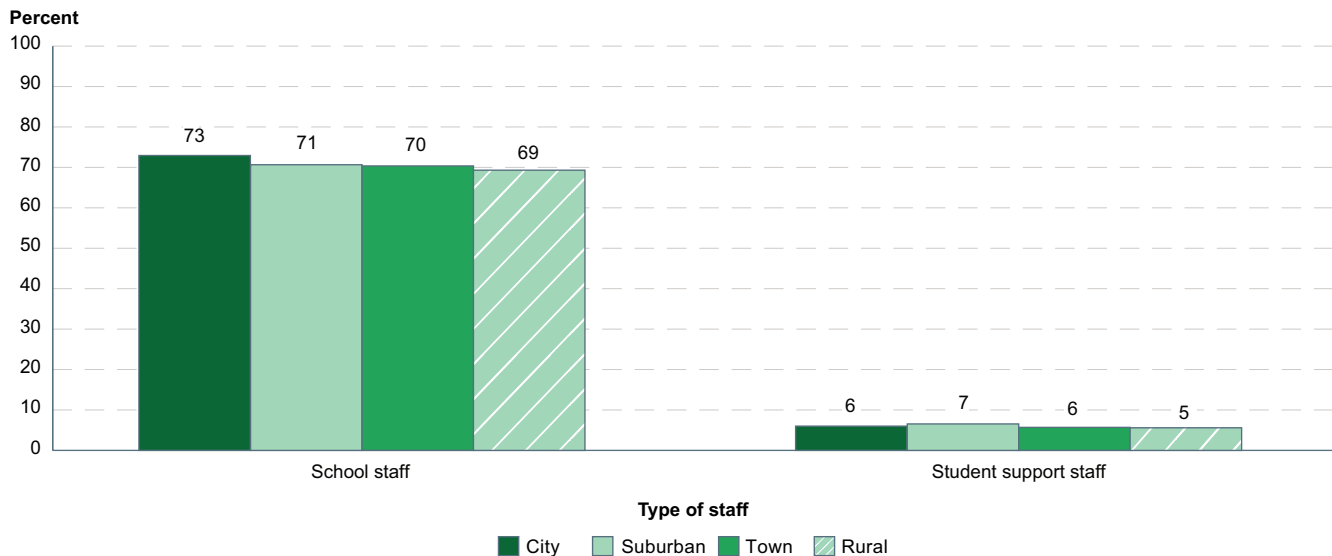
Staff in Rural Public Elementary and Secondary School Systems

In 2019, the percentages of staff employed in public elementary and secondary school systems who were school staff and student support staff were lower in rural areas than in other locales.

Public school districts employ a wide range of instructional and noninstructional staff in order to facilitate students' education. Factors such as the differing size and characteristics of student bodies across locales could lead districts to make different decisions about the type of staff to hire.¹ This indicator compares, by locale, the percentages of specific types of staff employed by districts and overall staffing levels—as measured by pupil/staff and pupil/teacher ratios—in public elementary and secondary schools and school systems using data reported by public schools and districts. Data for this indicator come from the Common Core of Data (CCD) and the Education Demographic and Geographic Estimates (EDGE).

Of the 1.1 million staff employed in rural public elementary and secondary school systems in fall 2019, some 56,500 (or 5 percent) were school district staff (including officials and administrators, administrative support staff, and instruction coordinators), 762,100 (or 69 percent) were school staff (including principals and assistant principals, school support staff, teachers and instructional aides, guidance counselors, and librarians and library support staff), and 55,600 (or 5 percent) were student support staff. The remaining 225,200 staff (or 20 percent) were employed as other support services staff.²

Figure 1. Percentage of staff employed in public elementary and secondary school systems, by selected type of staff and locale: Fall 2019

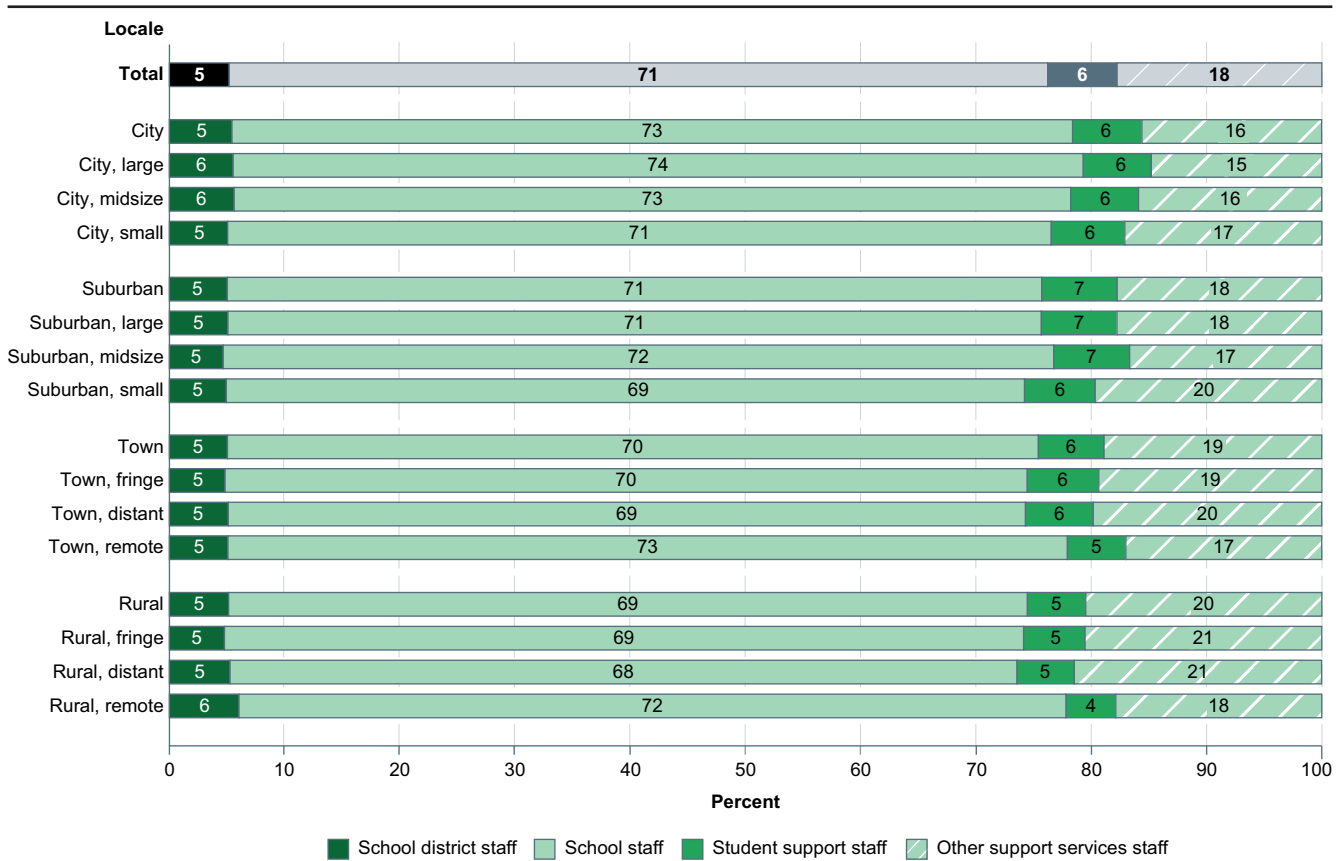


NOTE: Staff calculations are based on full-time equivalents. Data in this figure represent the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Data are based on locales of school districts rather than of individual schools. Includes all regular and other types of school districts reporting both enrollment and staff data. School staff includes principals and assistant principals, school support staff, teachers and instructional aides, guidance counselors, and librarians and library support staff. 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). Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "Local Education Agency Universe Survey," 2019–20; and Education Demographic and Geographic Estimates (EDGE), "Public District File," 2019–20. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 213.60.

In fall 2019, the percentages of staff employed in public elementary and secondary school systems who were school staff were lower in rural areas than in other locales. Sixty-nine percent of staff who were employed in rural areas were school staff, compared with 73 percent in cities, 71 percent in suburban areas, and 70 percent in towns. More specifically, among school staff, the percentage of teachers and instructional aides was lower in rural areas (60 percent) than in cities (63 percent) and in towns and suburban areas (61 percent each). The percentage of principals, assistant principals, and school support staff was lower in rural areas and in towns (6 percent each) than in cities and suburban areas (7 percent each). In each locale, 2 percent of staff were guidance counselors and 1 percent of staff were librarians and library support staff.

The percentage of staff who were student support staff was lower in rural areas than in other locales. 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). Five percent of staff employed in rural areas were student support staff, compared with 7 percent in suburban areas and 6 percent each in cities and towns. Twenty percent of staff employed in rural areas were other support services staff, higher than the percentages in towns (19 percent), suburban areas (18 percent), and cities (16 percent). In each locale, 5 percent of staff were school district staff.

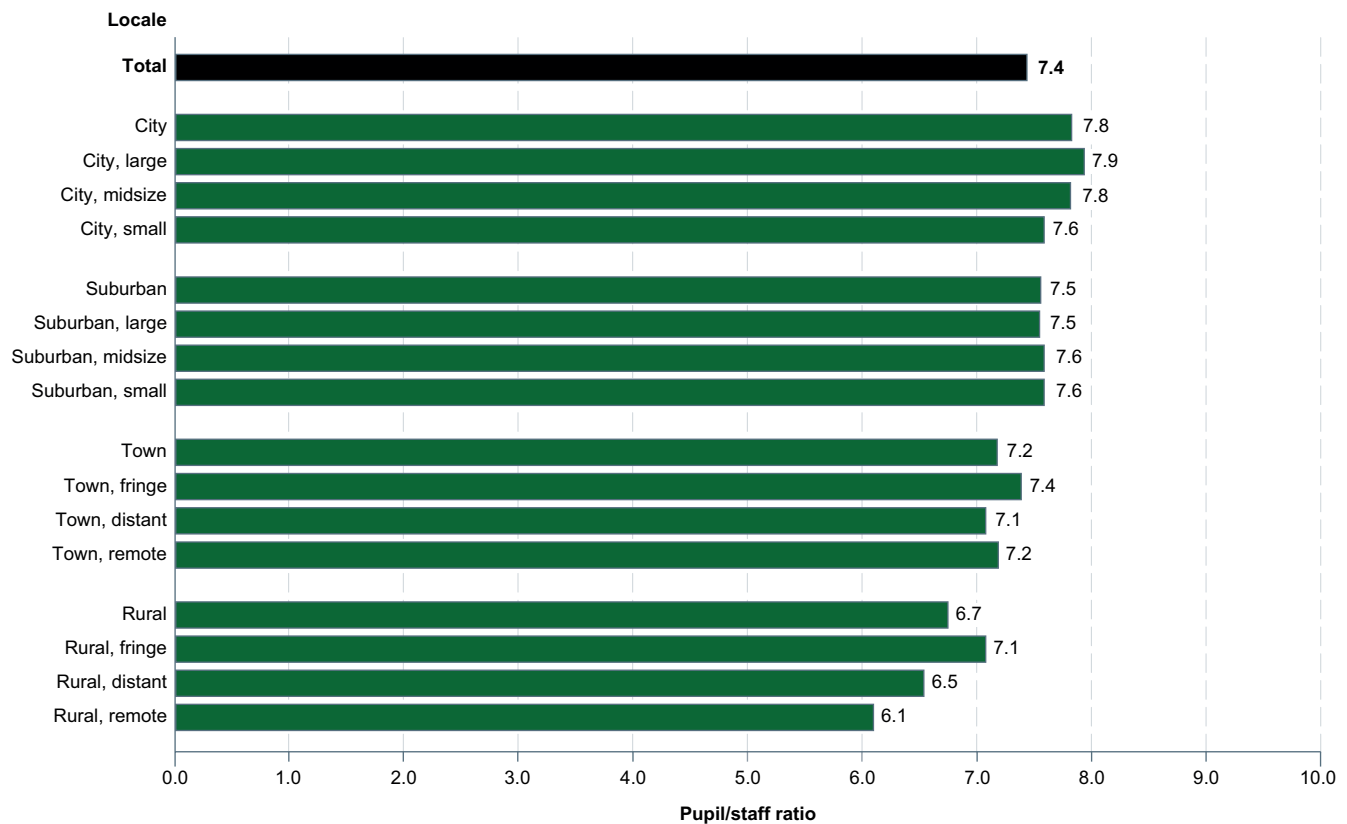
Figure 2. Percentage distribution of staff employed in public elementary and secondary school systems, by locale and type of staff: Fall 2019

NOTE: Staff calculations are based on full-time equivalents. Data in this figure represent the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Data are based on locales of school districts rather than of individual schools. Includes all regular and other types of school districts reporting both enrollment and staff data. School district staff includes officials and administrators, administrative support staff, and instruction coordinators. School staff includes principals and assistant principals, school support staff, teachers and instructional aides, guidance counselors, and librarians and library support staff. 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). Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "Local Education Agency Universe Survey," 2019–20; and Education Demographic and Geographic Estimates (EDGE), "Public District File," 2019–20. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 213.60.

At the sublocale level, the percentage of school staff was lower in distant rural areas than in all other sublocales in fall 2019. Sixty-eight percent of staff employed in distant rural areas were school staff, compared with

69 to 74 percent in the other sublocales. The percentage of student support staff was lower in remote rural areas (4 percent) than in all other sublocales, ranging from 5 to 7 percent.

Figure 3. Pupil/staff ratio in public elementary and secondary school systems, by locale: Fall 2019

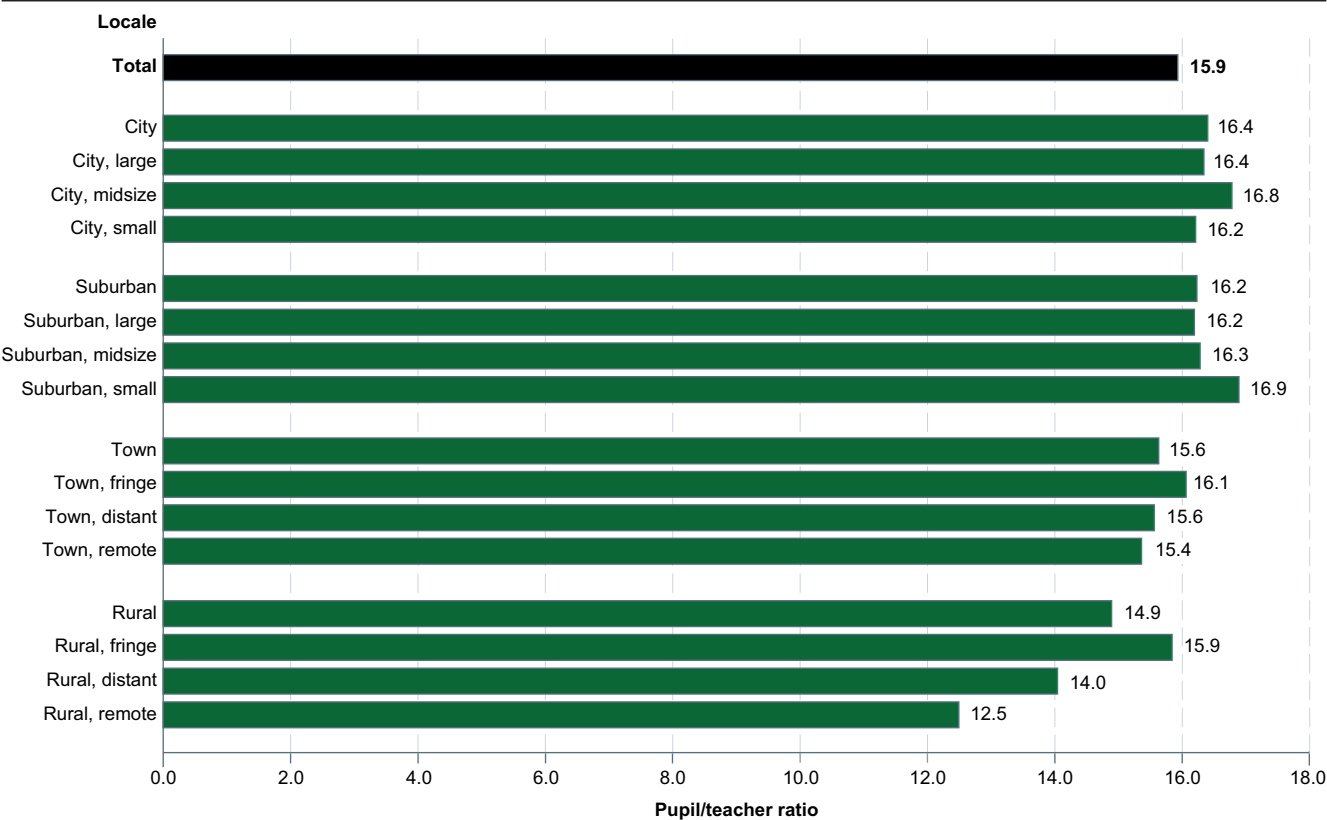
NOTE: Staff calculations are based on full-time equivalents. The pupil/staff ratio is calculated using the total number of staff across all staff categories. Data in this figure represent the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Data are based on locales of school districts rather than of individual schools. Includes all regular and other types of school districts reporting both enrollment and staff data. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "Local Education Agency Universe Survey," 2019–20; and Education Demographic and Geographic Estimates (EDGE), "Public District File," 2019–20. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 213.60.

The average pupil/staff ratio in public elementary and secondary school systems in fall 2019 was 7.4. The pupil/staff ratio was lowest in rural areas (6.7), followed by towns (7.2), suburban areas (7.5), and cities (7.8). At the

sublocale level, the ratios in remote rural areas (6.1) and distant rural areas (6.5) were lower than the ratios in all other sublocales (ranging from 7.1 to 7.9).

Figure 4. Pupil/teacher ratio in public elementary and secondary schools, by locale: Fall 2019



NOTE: Includes schools reporting both full-time-equivalent teachers and fall enrollment data. Includes imputations for teacher data for California. Ratios are based on data reported by schools and may differ from data reported in other tables that reflect aggregate totals reported by states. Data in this figure represent the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey," 2019–20; and Education Demographic and Geographic Estimates (EDGE), "Public School File," 2019–20. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 214.40.

The average pupil/teacher ratio in public elementary and secondary schools in fall 2019 was 15.9. Pupil/teacher ratios and pupil/staff ratios have similar patterns across different locales. The pupil/teacher ratio was lowest in rural areas (14.9), followed by towns (15.6), suburban areas

(16.2), and cities (16.4). At the sublocale level, the ratios in remote rural areas (12.5) and distant rural areas (14.0) were lower than the ratios in all other sublocales (ranging from 15.4 to 16.9).

Endnotes:

¹ Please visit NCES’s [Education Across America website](#) for the definition of locale.

² Other support services staff are support staff not reported in instructional or student support. This category includes employees such as plant and equipment maintenance, bus drivers, security, and food service workers.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, tables 213.60 and 214.40

Related indicators and resources: [Characteristics of Public School Principals](#) [*Condition of Education*]; [Characteristics of Public School Teachers](#) [*Condition of Education*]; [Principal Turnover: Stayers, Movers, and Leavers](#) [*Condition of Education*]; [Teacher Turnover: Stayers, Movers, and Leavers](#) [*Condition of Education*]

Glossary: Elementary school; Local codes; Public school or institution; Secondary/high school