

# the condition of education 2008



## INDICATOR 31

# Teacher Turnover

The indicator and corresponding tables are taken directly from *The Condition of Education 2008*. Therefore, the page numbers may not be sequential.

Additional information about the survey data and supplementary notes can be found in the full report. For a copy of *The Condition of Education 2008*, visit the NCES website (<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2008031>) or contact ED PUBS at 1-877-4ED-PUBS.

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# Teachers and Staff

## Teacher Turnover

*Teacher turnover is higher in high-poverty than in low-poverty public schools.*

At the end of the 2003–04 school year, 17 percent of the elementary and secondary teacher workforce (or 621,000 teachers) left the public and private schools where they had been teaching (see supplemental tables 31-1 and 31-2). Almost half of this teacher turnover was due to transfers: 8 percent of the teacher workforce (or 289,000 teachers) transferred to a different school. The remainder (9 percent of the teacher workforce or 333,000 teachers) was due to teachers who left teaching: teachers who took a job in a field other than elementary or secondary teaching (4 percent), returned to school for further education (0.3 percent), left for family reasons (e.g., to raise children or take care of other family members) (1 percent), retired (2 percent), and left for miscellaneous “other”<sup>1</sup> reasons (1 percent).

percentages of teachers in these categories at the end of 2003–04 were not measurably different from the earlier school years. Virtually all of this relative increase was due to increases in the percentages of teachers who retired (which was greater at the end of 2003–04 than 1987–88, 1990–91, or 1993–94) and teachers who took another job or left teaching for miscellaneous other reasons (both of which were greater at the end of 2003–04 than 1987–88 or 1990–91).

In public schools, the turnover rate for high-poverty schools was greater than for low-poverty schools at the end of 2003–04 (21 vs. 14 percent) (see supplemental table 31-3). Schools were considered high poverty if 75 percent or more of their students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, and low poverty if less than 15 percent of their students were eligible.<sup>2</sup> Much of the difference between the two turnover rates is due to the higher transfer rate among teachers in high- versus low-poverty schools (11 vs. 6 percent). This same difference in transfer rates was observed for teachers in high- and low-poverty schools in 1991–92, 1993–94, and 1999–2000, but no difference was measurable in 1987–88.<sup>3</sup>

# Rounds to zero.

! Interpret data with caution (estimates are unstable).

<sup>1</sup> Leavers in this category left teaching for a variety of personal reasons, ranging from “starting their own business” to becoming “a member of a contemplative religious community.” However, the most common reason reported by leavers who left for “other” reasons was to take a year-long sabbatical or leave of absence from teaching.

<sup>2</sup> Poverty differences in private schools are not examined because a large proportion of private schools do not participate in the free or reduced-price lunch program. Public schools for which data are missing or that do not participate in the program were excluded.

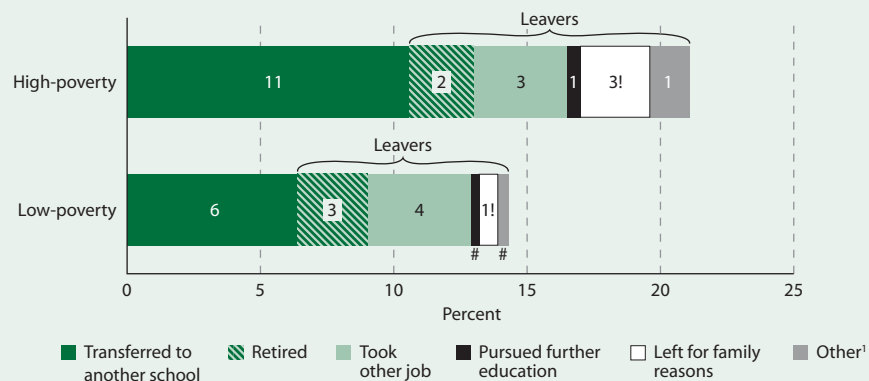
<sup>3</sup> High- and low-poverty schools can only be identified in 1990–91 based on the percentage of students who receive free or reduced-price lunches and not on the percentage eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunches.

NOTE: Figure created from unrounded data. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), “Public School Data File,” 2003–04, and Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS), “Current Teacher Data File” and “Former Teacher Data File,” 2004–05.

The percentage of teacher turnover at the end of 2003–04 was larger than at the end of 1987–88, 1990–91, and 1993–94 but was not measurably different from that at the end of 1999–2000. This relative increase in turnover from earlier years was not due to changes in the percentages of teachers who transferred, pursued further education, or left for family reasons: the per-

**TEACHER TURNOVER: Percentage of 2003–04 public K–12 teachers who did not teach in the same school the following school year, by poverty level of school and the reason teachers left**



FOR MORE INFORMATION:  
 Supplemental Note 3  
 Supplemental Tables 31-1,  
 31-2, 31-3  
 NCES 2005-114

## Teacher Turnover

**Table 31-1. Number of 1987–88, 1990–91, 1993–94, 1999–2000, and 2003–04 public and private K–12 teachers who did not teach in the same school the following school year, by turnover category and reason for leaving**

Turnover category and reason for leaving	1987–88	1990–91	1993–94	1999–2000	2003–04
<b>Total turnover at the end of the year</b>	<b>391,000</b>	<b>383,000</b>	<b>418,000</b>	<b>546,000</b>	<b>621,000</b>
Transfers at the end of the year	218,000	209,000	205,000	269,000	289,000
Leavers	173,000	174,000	213,000	278,000	333,000
Took other job	64,000	56,000	90,000	126,000	141,000
Pursued further education	11,000	13,000	8,000	12,000	12,000
Left for family reasons	48,000	33,000	35,000	47,000	45,000
Retired	35,000	47,000	50,000	67,000	87,000
Other <sup>1</sup>	14,000	25,000	30,000	26,000	47,000

<sup>1</sup> Leavers in this category left teaching for a variety of personal reasons, ranging from “starting their own business” to becoming “a member of a contemplative religious community.” However, the most common reason reported by leavers who left for “other” reasons was to take a year-long sabbatical or leave of absence from teaching.

NOTE: Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) teachers who died or left the country are excluded. Retired category includes all teachers who reported retiring between the SASS and Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS) school year including those 45 years old or younger who were excluded in earlier estimates. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS), “Current Teacher Data File” and “Former Teacher Data File,” 1988–89, 1991–92, 1994–95, 2000–01, and 2004–05.

## Concentration of Public School Enrollment by Locale and Race/Ethnicity

**Table 31-2. Percentage distribution of 1987–88, 1990–91, 1993–94, 1999–2000, and 2003–04 public and private K–12 teachers who did not teach in the same school the following school year, by turnover category and reason for leaving**

Turnover category and reason for leaving	1987–88	1990–91	1993–94	1999–2000	2003–04
<b>Total turnover at the end of the year</b>	<b>14.5</b>	<b>13.2</b>	<b>14.2</b>	<b>15.9</b>	<b>16.9</b>
Transfers at the end of the year	8.1	7.2	7.0	7.8	7.8
Leavers	6.4	6.0	7.3	8.1	9.0
Took other job	2.4	1.9	3.1	3.7	3.8
Pursued further education	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.3
Left for family reasons	1.8	1.1	1.2	1.4	1.2
Retired	1.3	1.6	1.7	1.9	2.4
Other <sup>1</sup>	0.5	0.9	1.0	0.8	1.3

<sup>1</sup> Leavers in this category left teaching for a variety of personal reasons, ranging from “starting their own business” to becoming “a member of a contemplative religious community.” However, the most common reason reported by leavers who left for “other” reasons was to take a year-long sabbatical or leave of absence from teaching.

NOTE: Denominator used to calculate the percentage is the weighted number of Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) teachers surveyed during the Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS) year; SASS teachers who died or left the country are excluded. Retired category includes all teachers who reported retiring between the SASS and TFS year, including those 45 years old and younger who were excluded in earlier estimates. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS), “Current Teacher Data File” and “Former Teacher Data File,” 1988–89, 1991–92, 1994–95, 2000–01, and 2004–05.

## Teacher Turnover

**Table 31-3. Percentage of 1987–88, 1990–91, 1993–94, 1999–2000, and 2003–04 public K–12 teachers who did not teach in the same school the following school year, by poverty level of school and the reason teachers left**

Reason teachers left	1987–88		1990–91 <sup>1</sup>		1993–94		1999–2000		2003–04	
	High-poverty	Low-poverty	High-poverty	Low-poverty	High-poverty	Low-poverty	High-poverty	Low-poverty	High-poverty	Low-poverty
<b>Total turnover</b>	<b>14.9</b>	<b>11.9</b>	<b>15.9</b>	<b>10.1</b>	<b>17.3</b>	<b>12.6</b>	<b>18.4</b>	<b>14.0</b>	<b>21.1</b>	<b>14.2</b>
Transferred to another school	8.7	6.2	10.4	5.7	9.7	5.9	10.0	5.7	10.6	6.4
Took other job	3.2	2.1	1.9	1.0	3.3	2.0	3.1	4.2	3.5	3.9
Pursued further education	0.3	0.4	0.8!	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.5	0.3	0.5	0.3!
Left for family reasons	0.4	1.7	0.1	1.1	0.6	1.4	0.4	1.2	2.6!	0.7!
Retired	1.6	1.0	1.7	1.4	2.1	2.4	3.1	2.0	2.4	2.6
Other	0.7	0.5	0.9	0.7	1.4	0.7	1.4	0.6!	1.5	0.4

! Interpret data with caution (estimates are unstable).

<sup>1</sup> High- and low-poverty schools can only be identified in 1990–91 based on the percentage of students who receive free or reduced-price lunches and not on the percentage *eligible* to receive free or reduced-price lunches. NOTE: Schools were considered high poverty if 75 percent or more of their students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, and low poverty if less than 15 percent of their students were eligible. Public schools for which data are missing or that do not participate in the program were excluded. Estimates for 1999–2000 have been revised. Denominator used to calculate the percentage is the weighted number of Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) teachers surveyed during the Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS) year; SASS teachers who died or left the country are excluded. Retired category includes all teachers who reported retiring between the SASS and TFS year, including those 45 years old and younger who were excluded in earlier estimates. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), “Public School Data File,” 1987–88, 1990–91, 1993–94, 1999–2000, and 2003–04, “Charter School Data File,” 1999–2000, and Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS), “Current Teacher Data File” and “Former Teacher Data File,” 1988–89, 1991–92, 1994–95, 2000–01, and 2004–05.

## Teacher Turnover

**Table S31-1. Standard errors for the number of 1987–88, 1990–91, 1993–94, 1999–2000, and 2003–04 public and private K–12 teachers who did not teach in the same school the following school year, by turnover category and reason for leaving**

Turnover category and reason for leaving	1987–88	1990–91	1993–94	1999–2000	2003–04
<b>Total turnover at the end of the year</b>	<b>10,400</b>	<b>12,700</b>	<b>13,100</b>	<b>17,800</b>	<b>19,900</b>
Transfers at the end of the year	9,900	9,000	9,300	13,600	16,400
Leavers	7,400	9,300	8,500	11,300	19,200
Took other job	3,700	4,500	7,100	9,100	14,300
Pursued further education	1,100	2,400	1,000	1,800	1,900
Left for family reasons	4,800	5,100	4,800	4,600	8,300
Retired	3,800	4,100	3,600	5,000	6,500
Other	2,300	3,100	4,500	4,300	5,600

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS), "Current Teacher Data File" and "Former Teacher Data File," 1988–89, 1991–92, 1994–95, 2000–01, and 2004–05.

## Teacher Turnover

**Table S31-2. Standard errors for the percentage distribution of 1987–88, 1990–91, 1993–94, 1999–2000, and 2003–04 public and private K–12 teachers who did not teach in the same school the following school year, by turnover category and reason for leaving**

Turnover category and reason for leaving	1987–88	1990–91	1993–94	1999–2000	2003–04
<b>Total turnover at the end of the year</b>	<b>0.43</b>	<b>0.44</b>	<b>0.44</b>	<b>0.51</b>	<b>0.53</b>
Transfers at the end of the year	0.38	0.31	0.31	0.39	0.45
Leavers	0.29	0.32	0.29	0.32	0.51
Took other job	0.14	0.15	0.24	0.26	0.38
Pursued further education	0.04	0.08	0.04	0.05	0.05
Left for family reasons	0.18	0.17	0.16	0.13	0.23
Retired	0.14	0.14	0.12	0.14	0.17
Other	0.09	0.11	0.16	0.13	0.15

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS), "Current Teacher Data File" and "Former Teacher Data File," 1988–89, 1991–92, 1994–95, 2000–01, and 2004–05.

## Teacher Turnover

**Table S31-3. Standard errors for the percentage of 1987–88, 1990–91, 1993–94, 1999–2000, and 2003–04 public K–12 teachers who did not teach in the same school the following school year, by poverty level of school and the reason teachers left**

Reason teachers left	1987–88		1990–91		1993–94		1999–2000		2003–04	
	High-poverty	Low-poverty	High-poverty	Low-poverty	High-poverty	Low-poverty	High-poverty	Low-poverty	High-poverty	Low-poverty
<b>Total turnover</b>	<b>2.21</b>	<b>0.97</b>	<b>2.00</b>	<b>0.75</b>	<b>1.70</b>	<b>0.94</b>	<b>1.82</b>	<b>1.38</b>	<b>1.79</b>	<b>1.15</b>
Transferred to another school	1.33	0.79	1.54	0.60	1.31	0.75	1.45	0.80	1.32	0.66
Took other job	1.22	0.33	0.58	0.20	0.83	0.29	0.83	0.83	0.72	0.75
Pursued further education	0.13	0.08	0.57	0.11	0.11	0.02	0.16	0.11	0.22	0.14
Left for family reasons	0.18	0.50	0.06	0.40	0.21	0.35	0.12	0.34	1.30	0.44
Retired	0.79	0.11	0.56	0.15	0.48	0.38	1.04	0.20	0.84	0.39
Other	0.27	0.23	0.30	0.31	0.55	0.26	0.68	0.42	0.52	0.12

NOTE: Estimates for 1999–2000 have been revised.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), "Public School Data File," 1987–88, 1990–91, 1993–94, 1999–2000, and 2003–04, "Charter School Data File," 1999–2000, and Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS), "Current Teacher Data File" and "Former Teacher Data File," 1988–89, 1991–92, 1994–95, 2000–01, and 2004–05.