

# Teachers Are Paid Less Than Similar Professionals. See the Breakdown by State

By Madeline Will on April 24, 2019 12:14 AM



In the last two decades, the average weekly wages of public school teachers, adjusted for inflation, have decreased, while the weekly wages of other college graduates have risen.

That's [according to an analysis by Economic Policy Institute](#), a nonpartisan think tank supported partially by teachers' unions. The teacher weekly wage penalty reached a record 21.4 percent in 2018.

Teachers do get better benefits than other college-educated workers—but even after factoring those into the analysis, the total teacher compensation penalty was 13.1 percent in 2018.

"We think the eroding teacher compensation is making it harder to attract people into teaching and to retain teachers, and this is bad for students and our nation," said Lawrence Mishel, a distinguished fellow at EPI and a co-author of the report.

He noted that because the analysis looks at weekly wages, it accounts for teachers having summer breaks off.

Low pay has driven many of the teacher strikes and walkouts that have [taken place this year and last](#). Teachers in North Carolina are planning a protest on May 1 for, among other things, a 5 percent pay raise. Several school districts, including the state's four largest, have already announced they will be closed due to a high number of expected teacher absences. A grassroots

group in South Carolina **is also organizing a teacher protest on May 1** to advocate for a 20 percent pay raise, according to The State. (Teachers are already scheduled to get at least a 4 percent raise next year under a proposed budget.) It's not yet clear how many teachers will walk out of their classrooms that day.

Meanwhile, in Mississippi, teachers are unhappy with a \$1,500 pay raise passed by the legislature this year, and some are weighing the possibility of a walkout. In a **survey of more than 1,500 teachers** by the Mississippi Association of Educators, more than a third of respondents said they are willing to strike for higher pay.

The EPI analysis finds that the teacher weekly wage penalty is greater than 20 percent in 21 states and the District of Columbia—including in several of the states that have seen teacher activism, like **Arizona, Colorado, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Virginia, and Washington.**

The EPI analysis uses data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The think tank has conducted **similar analyses in the past**, but this is the first time the analysis includes regression-adjusted estimates of the teacher weekly wage penalty for each state (meaning, the analysis controls for education, experience, and other factors that affect wage levels). Also, this time, the researchers have made a few methodological changes, including restricting the sample to workers with at least a bachelor's degree.

Wage penalties have grown significantly for both male and female teachers, the researchers found. Still, male teachers are hit harder: In 2018, men teaching in a public school made 31.5 percent less in wages than their male peers in other comparable professions. (Female public school teachers made 15.1 percent less in wages than their peers.) This is because men tend to make more than women in private-sector jobs.

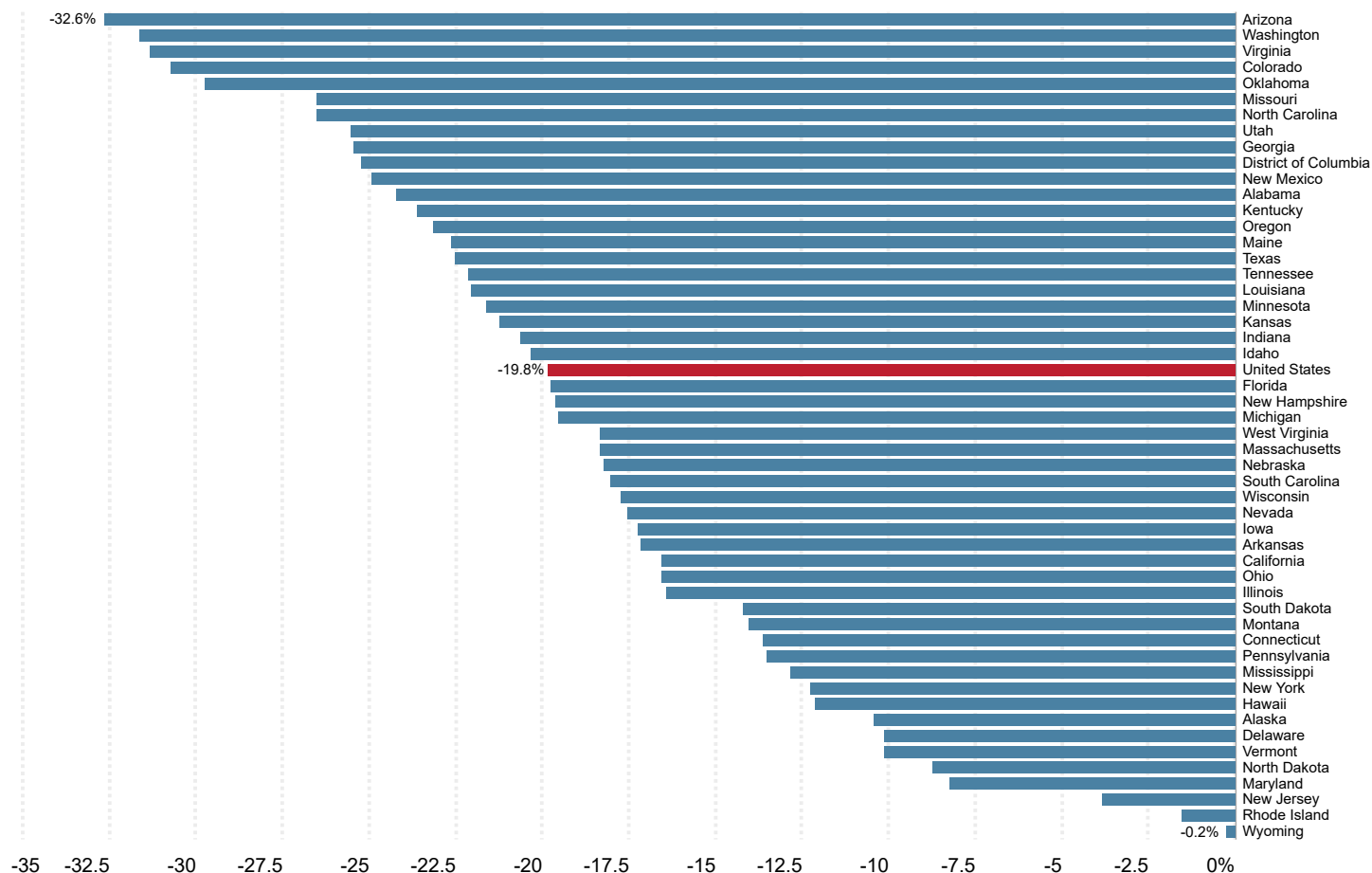
Overall, adjusted for inflation, the average weekly wage of public school teachers has decreased \$21 from 1996 to 2018, while the weekly wages of other college graduates rose by \$323.

"A generation of teachers have lost out on improvements in wages, relative to inflation," Mishel said.

*Image: Roughly 50 teachers, parents, and other education advocates participated in a demonstration at Tennessee's Capitol on April 9. —Mark Humphrey/AP*

## The teacher weekly wage penalty is greater than 20% in 21 states and D.C.

Teacher weekly wage penalty, by state, pooled data from 2014–2018



**Notes:** Figure reports state-specific regression-adjusted teacher weekly wage penalties of public school teachers (elementary, middle, and secondary) relative to other college graduates within each state. Dependent variable is (log) weekly wages with indicator controls on public school teacher, private school teacher, gender, and married, along with indicator sets on education (M.A., professional degree, Ph.D.) and race/ethnicity (black, Hispanic, other); also included are age as a quartic and state fixed effects (see Appendices A and C for more detail).

**Source:** Authors' analysis of pooled 2014–2018 Current Population Survey Outgoing Rotation Group data