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Teachers' Pay Lags Farthest Behind Other Professionals in U.S., Study Finds

By Sarah D. Sparks on [September 12, 2017 5:00 AM](#)

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Young college graduates have a lot less incentive to become K-12 teachers in the United States than in other countries, according to the latest data from the Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation. While American educators out-earn teachers in other countries, they trail those with similar education levels in other professions more than teachers in any other OECD country.

That was part of the OECD's annual "Education at a Glance" report—a nearly 500-page compendium of educational indicators across more than two dozen industrialized countries, which was released this morning.

Teachers start with a higher average salary in the United States, about \$42,500 at the elementary level, compared to under \$31,000 for new teachers on average in the OECD. They also have, on average, faster pay increases after 15 years in the classroom than their international counterparts, with salary bumps of more than \$18,000 for U.S. teachers versus roughly \$12,000 for the OECD average.

But U.S. teachers make less than 60 cents on every dollar made by others with their education level, the biggest gap of any OECD country. And at every grade level, U.S. teachers work longer hours than their international counterparts. In America, for example, a 7th grade teacher puts in 1,366 hours at school each year, including more than 980 hours of teaching—which is nearly 270 more hours of teaching than the international average.

Teachers working with historically disadvantaged students face an even bigger gap. The OECD data come on the heels of a study last month that found that over a decade, [educators who taught at high-poverty schools and those with mostly students of color](#) were paid significantly less in salary and benefits than teachers at mostly white and affluent schools.

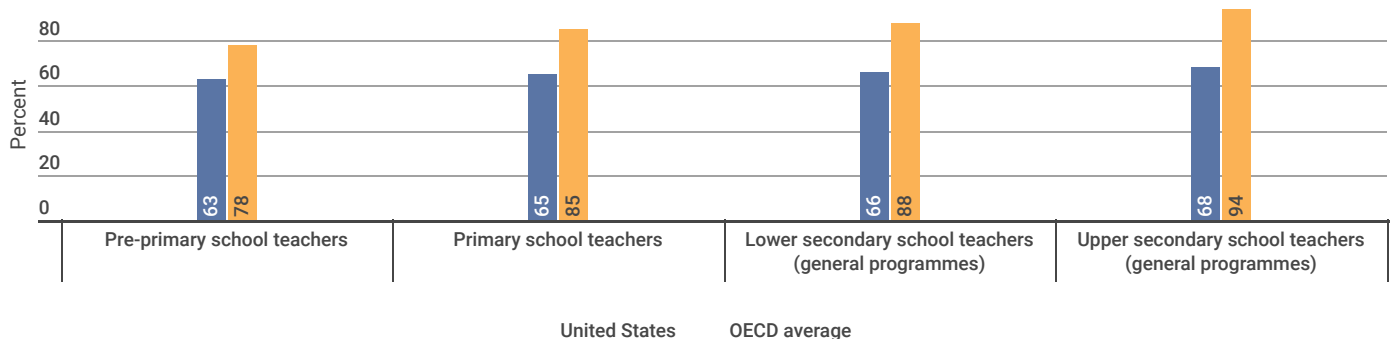
"While the rest of the world has prioritized teaching and learning, and is investing heavily in equity and teacher preparation, 36 U.S. states are spending less on education than before the Great Recession," said Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers, in a statement on the findings. "If we want to make every school a school where parents want to send their kids, where teachers want to teach and where kids are engaged, then we have to make investing in education a priority and start treating teachers like the professionals they are."

One bright spot: America's teaching force seems to be greying a bit more slowly than their global counterparts. The share of U.S. teachers over 50 dropped in the last decade, from 33 percent in 2005 to 31 percent in 2015. By contrast, the global teaching force aged during that same period, from 30 percent over 50 in 2005 to 33 percent of teachers over 50 in 2017.

Teaching, By the Global Numbers

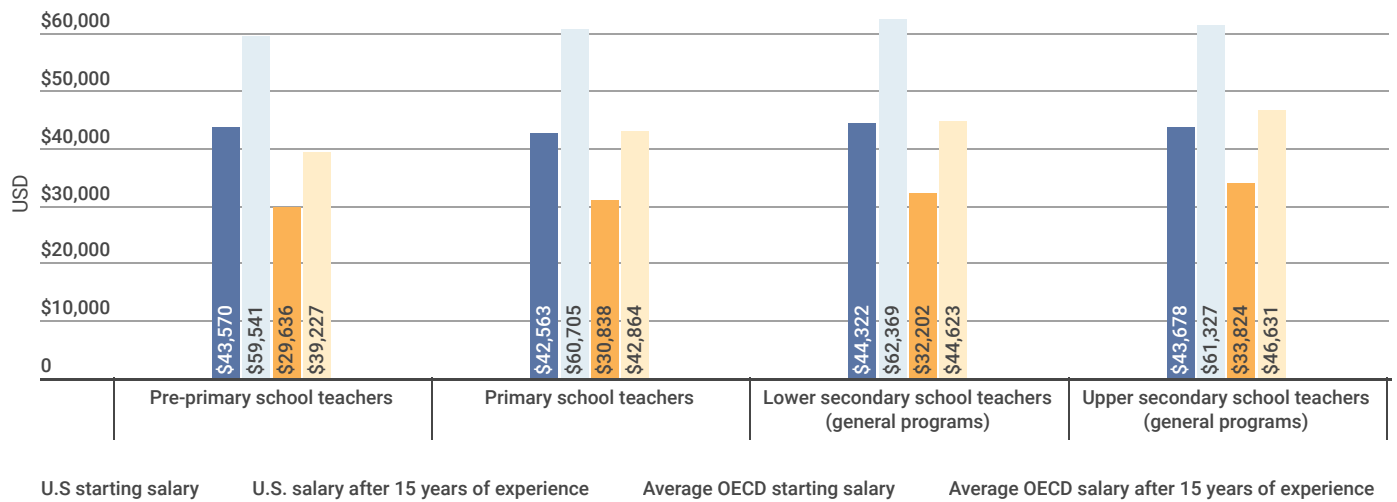
American teachers earn more on average than their international peers in the latest study by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. But gaps between salaries of teachers and those of other professions could hurt district efforts to recruit college-educated instructors.

Actual salaries of public school teachers trail wages of full-time workers with postsecondary education



Annual statutory salaries of teachers in public institutions, based on typical qualifications, at different points in teachers' careers (in U.S. dollars)

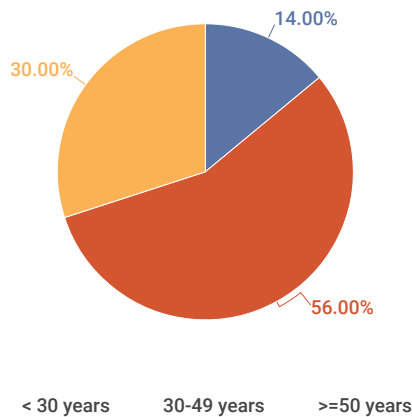
TEACHERS' CAREERS (in U.S. dollars)



The global teaching force continues to age

2005

2015



SOURCE: OECD (2017)

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