

How U.S. Teachers' Job Satisfaction Stacks Up Against Their Global Peers



By [Sarah D. Sparks](#) — October 28, 2025 ⌚ 4 min read



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Young teachers in the United States are among the most likely in industrialized countries to leave the profession, according to the world's largest survey of teachers and principals.

That's one of five findings from the survey conducted by the international Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, or OECD, which provides an unusual comparative look on the state of teaching worldwide.

The Teaching and Learning International Survey, or TALIS, in 2024 assessed teaching practices, attitudes, and working conditions for 280,000 lower secondary educators in 55 countries and educational systems, including in Europe, Asia, and the Americas. TALIS 2024 focused on lower secondary teachers, considered middle school or junior high in the United States. (It will release additional data on elementary and high school level teachers, as well as teacher content knowledge, in coming months.)

Nearly 30% of middle school U.S. educators under 30 said they planned to leave teaching in the next five years, compared to 20% on average in countries—putting the United States in the top five countries for risk of teacher attrition.

That's a concern, as the U.S. teaching workforce has become younger on average from 2018 to 2024, while the teaching pool across OECD countries aged. As of 2024, the average U.S. teacher was 43, versus 45 across OECD.

In part, this could be because the United States has a younger population generally than those in OECD countries, but Jackie Kreamer, the director of policy analysis and development for the nonprofit National Center on Education and the Economy, said the United States could also learn from ways other countries recruit and retain young teachers.

“In lot of the really top-performing countries, you see a much more cohesive approach to supporting new teachers and orienting them to the profession,” Kreamer said. “They often have a reduced teaching load [and] a range of mentorship at the school.”

The new data provide new insights into teacher satisfaction at home and abroad. Here's a look at four other key findings.

U.S. teachers' pay satisfaction similar to global peers'

Teachers in both the United States and in the overall international sample, were satisfied with their salaries in 2024. That figure has remained unchanged since 2018, though many U.S. states and districts have raised teacher pay since then.

By contrast, three-quarters of U.S. teachers and 68% of teachers overall were content with other terms of their employment, such as benefits or schedules.

Higher teacher workloads in the United States

U.S. teachers' workload, already higher than the average for OECD countries, increased from 2018 to 2024. U.S. teachers spent more than 45 hours a week on average on work, compared to fewer than 41 hours per week for OECD teachers overall.

U.S. teachers also spend about six hours a week more than their OECD peers actively teaching, suggesting that the higher workload isn't limited to preparation or administration.

"In countries where teachers spend far less of their time in front of a classroom, it's because the teacher's role is conceived of more broadly," Kreamer said. "Part of the job of a teacher is to work on curriculum development and work with other teachers and be part of the research. It's a broader role, which may make it more attractive to people over a longer period of their lifetime."

Longer hours may be crowding out collaboration time

Full-time U.S. middle school teachers spent more than three hours a week on collaboration and discussion with their peers.

That's about on par with the international average, yet the United States was the only country to see a slight decline from 2018 to 2024 in the time teachers spend working together. Most other education systems saw significant increases in teacher collaboration during that time.

U.S. teachers bring experience from outside the classroom

Nearly 80% of U.S. teachers in 2024 had work experience outside of teaching. That figure is 22 percentage points more than the OECD average, and more than 16% of U.S. teachers came to teaching as a second career.

The rest of the world seems to be catching up. Across OECD countries, the share of second-career teachers rose from just over 7% in 2018 to nearly 9% on average in 2024.

About 1 in 5 teachers across OECD countries who earned their first teaching qualification within the last five years completed an alternative, fast track preparation program, often used by teachers entering from other fields. Among more veteran teachers worldwide, only 1 in 10 teachers used alternative preparation.

School workplaces are evolving just as “other workplaces are changing. Younger people have ideas about potentially switching professions ... and there are new kinds of pathways for them into the profession,” Kreamer said. “That may be just part of how work itself is changing—not just an emergency response to the teaching shortage.”

Globally, teachers feel less valued by society

Only about 1 in 4 U.S. teachers believe that their profession is valued in society, a 10 percentage-point drop since 2018, though that figure is still higher than the OECD average of 22%.

While educators may feel that their communities value their work “in a general way,” Kreamer said, many are “not feeling like they have a lot of voice in education policy.”



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