



RESEARCH REPORT

Teacher Compensation in Michigan: Recent Trends and Public Opinion

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In recent years, policymakers, educators, and advocates have elevated the topic of teacher pay as a policy issue, calling attention to the role that compensation can play in attracting individuals to the teaching profession and retaining experienced educators in the classroom. These efforts have largely been motivated by the intertwined issues of teacher shortages and academic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Michigan, like many other states, is experiencing significant teacher shortages, meaning that some schools have classrooms led by a teacher who is not certified in their grade/subject area or by a long-term substitute, while other schools have vacant teaching positions they are unable to fill.¹ This issue has become especially urgent in light of the state's efforts to help students recover academically from the disrupted learning experienced during COVID-19 pandemic.² Research has consistently shown that teachers are the most important in-school factor in determining student outcomes.³ However, the shortage of appropriately credentialed teachers in Michigan threatens to undermine academic recovery for many students. Ensuring that every classroom is led by an appropriately credentialed teacher is thus crucial to providing students with the support they need. In this context, teacher compensation has emerged as an important issue due to its potential to attract and retain qualified educators.

This report provides an overview of recent trends in teacher compensation and the current state of teacher compensation in Michigan. We begin by reviewing recent national and state-level efforts related to teacher compensation, providing context for the challenges Michigan faces. Next, we examine the current landscape of teacher compensation in Michigan.

Finally, we present findings from a survey of Michigan adults, offering insights into public opinion on teacher compensation.

As detailed in the following sections, we find that the average Michigan teacher's salary is slightly lower than the national average and similar to other Great Lakes states, but has declined significantly since 1999-2000 when adjusted for inflation. Regarding starting teacher salaries, Michigan lags other Great Lakes States and the country as a whole, and may fall further behind as other states enact policies to raise teacher pay. However, there is substantial public support in Michigan for increasing teacher salaries, particularly for early career educators. These findings can inform the ongoing conversation around teacher compensation in Michigan and its impact on the state's educational landscape.

RECENT TRENDS IN TEACHER COMPENSATION POLICY

The issue of teacher compensation has received significant attention from the executive and legislative branches of government at both the federal and state levels. At the federal level, President Biden, in his two most recent State of the Union addresses, specifically called for raising teacher pay.⁴ And in 2023, bills were introduced in both the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate that would have set a \$60,000 minimum salary for teachers nationwide.⁵ While these did not lead to changes at the federal level, there has been meaningful action at the state level from a bipartisan set of governors and legislatures.

According to FutureEd, an independent think tank, 18 Democratic and Republican governors representing states such as Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Indiana, and North Carolina, among others, specifically proposed raising teacher salaries in their 2023 State of the State addresses.⁶ During the 2023 legislative session, 26 states, including Tennessee, Texas, Utah, West Virginia, and Illinois, among others, saw standalone bills to increase teacher compensation. By the end of the legislative session, teacher pay laws were enacted in 9 states while more states increased teacher compensation through their budgeting process.⁷

Although Michigan has not introduced standalone bills to increase teacher pay, the last several budget cycles have included efforts to boost educator compensation. However, few of these proposals have been enacted. For the 2023 budget cycle, Governor Whitmer's budget proposal included retention bonuses that increased from \$2000 to \$4000 over a four-year period, citing the need to alleviate staffing shortages to support post-pandemic academic recovery.⁸ However, these bonuses were not included in the final budget. In the 2024 budget cycle, proposals in the legislature included setting a statewide minimum salary of \$50,000 and \$120 million in funding to increase teacher compensation.⁹ The final budget included \$63.8 million for districts to increase teacher compensation (approximately \$600-\$800 per teacher if distributed equally, though districts are not required to increase teacher compensation in any particular manner).¹⁰ Michigan also increased per-pupil funding by approximately 5% in the 2023 fiscal year and by 5% again in the 2024 fiscal year, which could be used to increase salaries, though districts are not required to increase teacher compensation with this funding.¹¹

Recent federal and state trends reveal a growing emphasis on teacher compensation as a way to attract and retain high-quality educators. Michigan has seen a range of proposals to increase teacher compensation, but the enacted measures have been modest compared to proposals put forth by the governor and in the legislature. Given these recent efforts around teacher compensation, it is crucial to examine the current landscape of teacher salaries in Michigan and how it compares to other states and the nation as a whole, a topic to which we turn in the next section.

TEACHER COMPENSATION IN MICHIGAN

In this section, we analyze how teachers in Michigan are compensated. To do this, we examine both average salaries overall and average starting salaries. Average salaries overall, which represent the typical salary among teachers of all experience levels, help to understand the broader landscape of teacher compensation. Average starting salaries generally refer to the typical salary for a teacher who is new to the profession and are especially informative in the context of teacher shortages as they can provide insight into why some may choose to enter or remain in the teaching profession. Given that these measures provide different insights into the issue of teacher compensation, and because data on average salaries overall are available for a longer period of time, we examine these separately below.

Average Salaries Overall

To place teacher compensation in a larger context, it is useful to compare teacher salaries with salaries in other professions. A recent analysis by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York shows that college graduates with degrees in elementary and secondary education, the degrees held by the vast majority of teachers, have early career salaries that are 18% and 20% lower, respectively, than for college graduates overall. Mid-career salaries for education majors are also lower than college graduates overall, with elementary and secondary education majors earning 31% and 35% less, respectively, than college graduates overall. Among 73 different majors examined, the five majors with the lowest mid-career earnings are all in education.¹²

The Economic Policy Institute estimates the extent to which teacher salaries exceed or fall below the wages of other college graduates with similar levels of experience and education, referred to as the teacher wage advantage and teacher wage penalty, respectively. They find that, nationally, teachers earn 26.4% less than similarly educated college graduates, though the teacher wage penalty ranges significantly from a low of 7.6% in New Jersey to a high of 37.4% in Colorado.¹³ Table 1 shows the teacher wage penalty in Michigan and the other Great Lakes States, which Michigan may compete with for teaching talent. This shows that Michigan's teacher wage penalty is 20.7%. While this is smaller than the national teacher wage penalty and smaller than the teacher wage penalty in most neighboring states, it nevertheless represents a significant

Elementary and secondary education majors earn 31% and 35% less than college graduates overall.

TABLE 1. Teacher Wage Penalties Across Great Lakes States

	Teacher Wage Penalty
Illinois	23.9%
Indiana	21.6%
Ohio	14.4%
Michigan	20.7%
Minnesota	27.7%
Wisconsin	22.9%

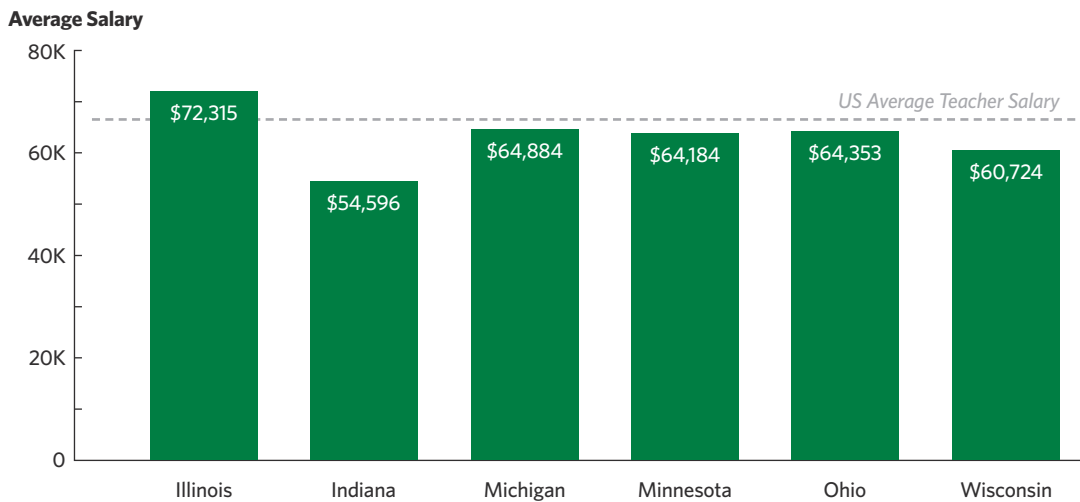
Note: The teacher wage penalty refers to how much less teachers earn than other college graduates with similar levels of education and experience. For example, in Michigan teachers earn 20.7% less than other college graduates with similar education and experience.

Source: Economic Policy Institute, 2023

disparity in compensation compared to other college graduates with similar education and experience.

To examine teacher salaries, we use data collected by the National Education Association (NEA), which has been compiling estimates of teacher salaries nationally and for each state for more than 50 years. To do this, the NEA works with its state affiliates and gathers information from state departments of education, district searches, and federal data. These data are regularly cited in media and reports on teacher compensation and also used by the National Center for Education Statistics in tabulations of teacher compensation.¹⁴ In the 2021-2022 school year, the most recent year for which data are available, the average teacher’s salary in Michigan was \$64,884, making Michigan the 16th ranked state in terms of average teacher salaries.¹⁵ This falls below the national average of \$66,745 but is similar to the average salary found in other Great Lakes states, illustrated in Figure 1. This shows that the average teacher’s salary in Michigan is lower than in Illinois, similar to the average salaries in Ohio and Minnesota, and higher than the average salaries found in Wisconsin and Indiana. We find similar comparisons when making comparisons that adjust for cost of living differences between states (see Appendix D).

FIGURE 1. Average Teacher Salaries Across Great Lakes States, 2021-2022

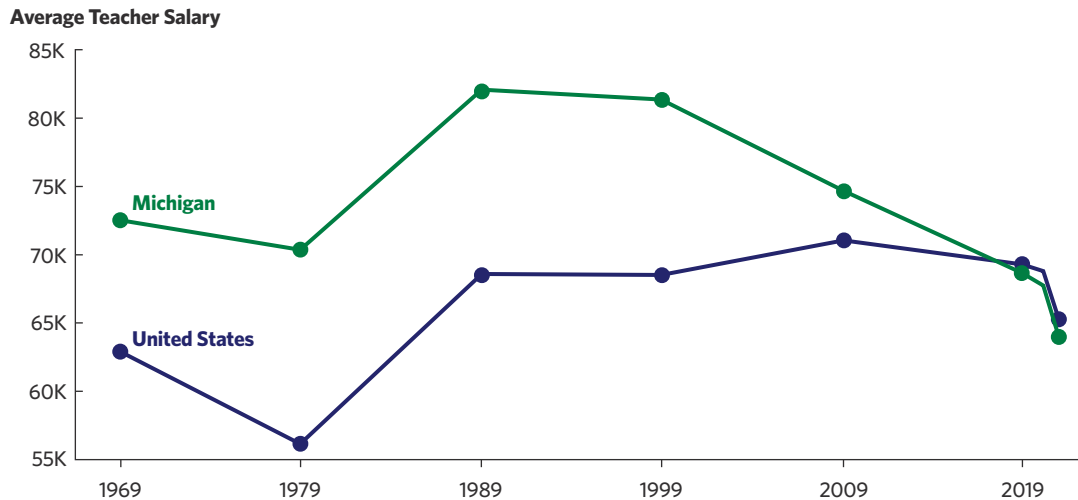


Note: Average salaries drawn from the National Education Association’s Salary Benchmark Report for 2021-2022

Although average overall salaries compare favorably with nearby states, average teacher salaries in Michigan have declined sharply over recent decades. Figure 2 plots the average teacher’s salary in Michigan and the United States from the 1969-1970 school year through the 2021-2022 school year, adjusted for inflation. From 1969 through 1999, the average teacher’s salary in Michigan was

significantly higher than the national average and moved in parallel with the country overall. During this period, Michigan ranked 4th-6th among states in terms of average teacher salaries. After 1999, however, average teacher salaries diverted from the national trend and declined significantly, falling to 16th among the states and below the national average.

FIGURE 2. Average Teacher Salaries Over Time, Adjusted for Inflation to Constant 2021-2022 Dollars



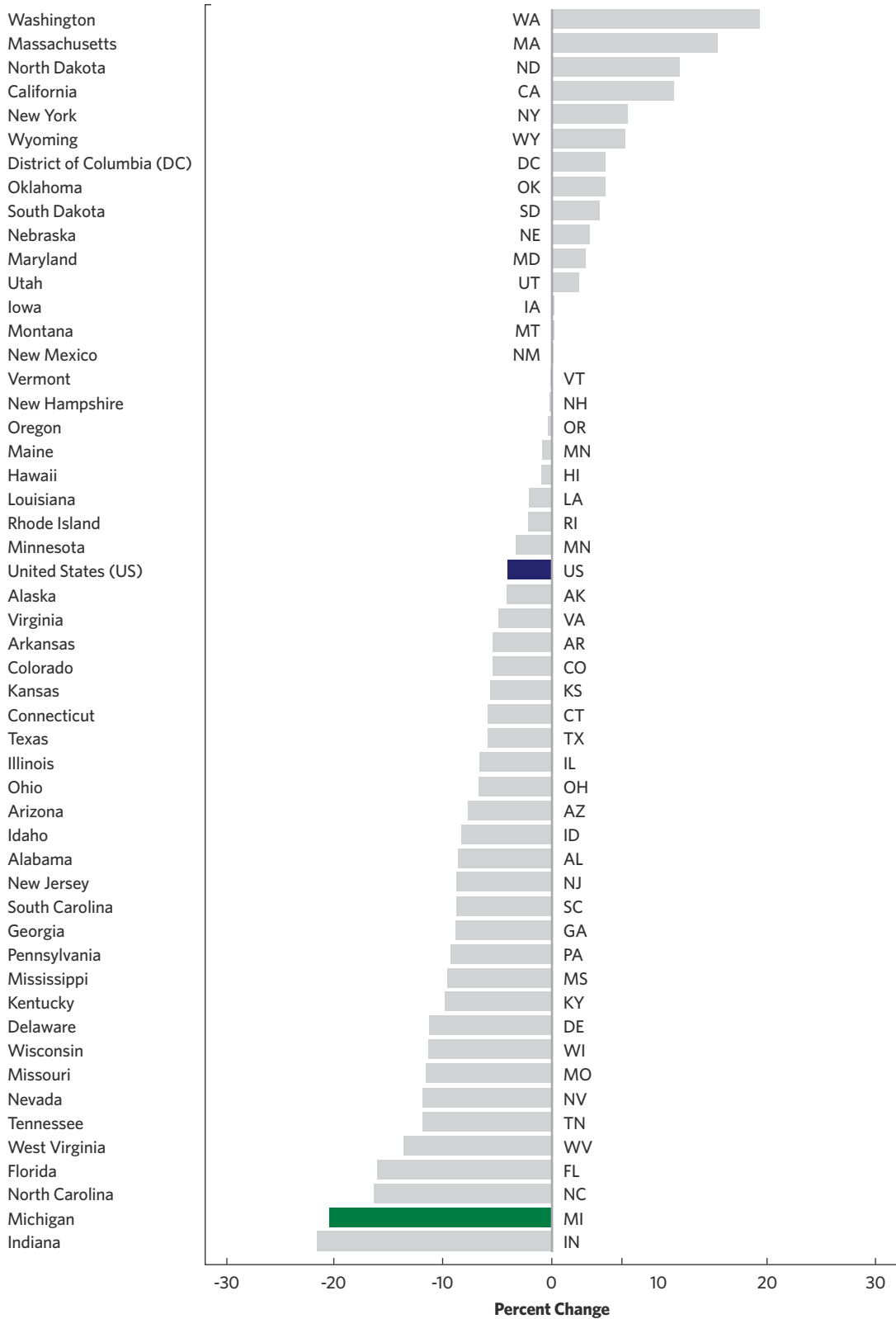
Note: the CPI does not account for differences in inflation rates from state to state.

Sources: a) Salary data through 2020-2021 taken from the National Center for Education Statistics Table 211.60, which draws data on nominal salaries taken from the National Education Association’s (NEA’s) Estimates of School Statistics, which includes early estimated salaries for 2021-2022. Corrected salary data for 2021-2022 taken from the National Education Association’s Salary Benchmark report. b) Average salaries adjusted to constant 2021-2022 dollars based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI), prepared by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, adjusted to a school-year basis.

If salaries had kept pace with inflation since 1999, the average Michigan teacher would have earned \$81,703 in the 2021-2022 school year. However, the average teacher’s salary in the 2021-2022 school year was \$64,884. Figure 3 shows the percentage change in inflation-adjusted salaries by state between 1999 and 2021. Here, a positive change means that teacher salaries increased in real dollars. For instance, the average teacher’s salary in Washington increased by 19.2% from 1999 through 2021 after accounting for inflation. In Figure 3, a negative change means that teacher salaries decreased after accounting for inflation. Over this period, the average Michigan teacher’s inflation-adjusted salary fell by 20.6%, a decline that was larger than the national average of 4.2% and among the largest decreases observed across all states.

If salaries had kept pace with inflation since 1999, the average Michigan teacher would have earned \$81,703 in the 2021-2022 school year.

FIGURE 3. Teacher Salary Changes 1999-2021, Adjusted for Inflation



Note: The CPI does not account for differences in inflation rates from state to state.

Sources: a) Salary data through 2020-2021 taken from the National Center for Education Statistics Table 211.60, which draws data on nominal salaries taken from the National Education Association's (NEA's) Estimates of School Statistics, which includes early estimated salaries for 2021-2022. Corrected salary data for 2021-2022 taken from the National Education Association's Salary Benchmark report. b) Average salaries adjusted to constant 2021-2022 dollars based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI), prepared by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, adjusted to a school-year basis.

In summary, while Michigan's average teacher salaries overall are similar to those in neighboring states, they are slightly below the national average and have declined significantly over the past two decades when adjusted for inflation. This decline has been more pronounced in Michigan than in most other states, with only one state experiencing a larger decrease in inflation-adjusted salaries between 1999 and 2021. Furthermore, when compared to other college graduates with similar levels of education and experience, Michigan teachers face a substantial wage penalty, earning 20.7% less on average. This wage penalty, while smaller than the national average and most neighboring states, still represents a significant imbalance in compensation.

These trends in average teacher salaries overall provide important context for understanding the broader landscape of teacher compensation in Michigan. Michigan's higher average salary for teachers, relative to most nearby states, means that teachers are unlikely to be drawn elsewhere for higher pay. Yet, significant declines in inflation-adjusted salaries over time mean that Michigan teachers have lower incomes now than at any time in more than 20 years. As a result, more experienced teachers may be less inclined to encourage their students to enter teaching or new teachers to remain in the profession. To gain a more comprehensive picture, particularly in light of concerns about teacher shortages and attracting new talent to the profession, it is also important to examine average starting salaries for teachers in the state. The following section will explore this aspect of teacher compensation in more detail.

Starting Teacher Salaries

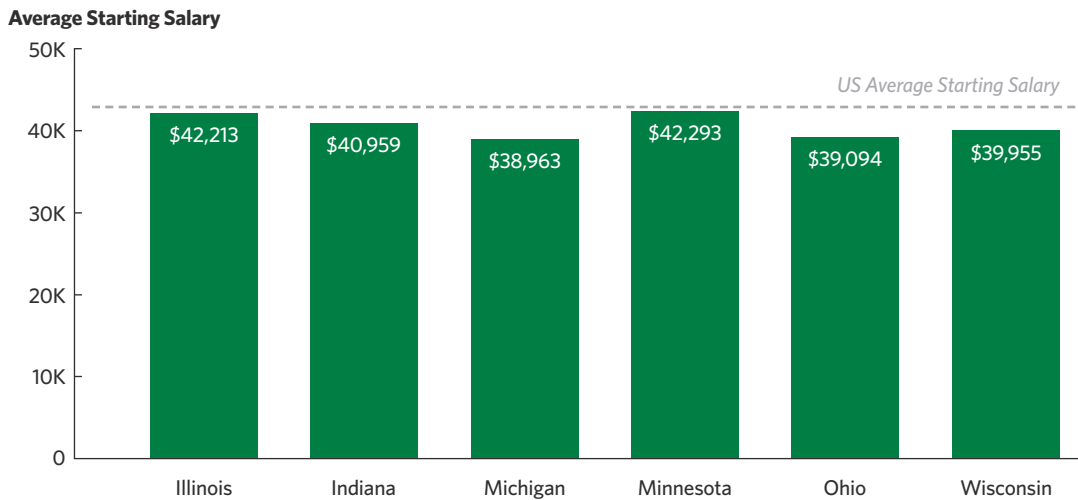
Starting salaries reflect the compensation offered to teachers who are new to the profession. In Michigan, districts sometimes honor few, or no, years of teaching experience outside that district when hiring new teachers, meaning that some teachers who switch districts also earn a starting teacher's salary.¹⁶ In the context of teacher shortages, the topic of starting salaries is especially important in light of state efforts to attract individuals into the teaching profession and district efforts to hire more teachers for their schools.

In the 2021-2022 school year, the most recent year for which data are available, the average starting teacher's salary in Michigan was \$38,963, shown in Figure 4, an increase of \$1408 over the average starting salary in the 2019-2020 school year. This places Michigan at 39th among the 50 states plus Washington D.C. in terms of starting teacher salaries. Michigan teachers also have the lowest starting salaries among the Great Lakes States, earning slightly less than new teachers in Ohio, roughly \$1000 less than new teachers in Wisconsin, just under \$2000 less than new

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teachers in Indiana, and more than \$3200 less than new teachers in Illinois and Minnesota. We also find similar comparisons after adjusting starting salaries for differences in the cost of living between states (see Appendix D).

FIGURE 4. Average Starting Teacher Salaries Across Great Lakes States, 2021-2022 School Year



Note: Average salaries drawn from the National Education Association's Salary Benchmark Report for 2021-2022

In light of efforts to raise teacher pay in other states since 2022, Michigan may fall further behind in terms of starting teacher salaries. Given recent salary increases in other states, it is likely that at least seven of the 12 states with lower starting salaries than Michigan in 2021-2022 now offer higher starting salaries. In 2022, Mississippi raised the state's minimum teacher's salary to \$41,500. In that same year, South Carolina raised the minimum salary to \$40,000, then increased it to \$42,500 in 2023, and is debating another increase in 2024 to \$47,000. The largest increase in starting salary occurred in Arkansas, which raised the minimum teacher's salary from \$36,000 for the 2022-2023 school year to \$50,000 starting with the 2023-2024 school year. See Appendix A for additional information on increases in teacher pay in other states with low starting salaries. Comparatively low starting salaries may have two important consequences for Michigan. First, they may discourage people from choosing teaching as a profession. Second, Michigan may face increased competition from other states in attracting and retaining new and early career teachers who are willing to relocate.

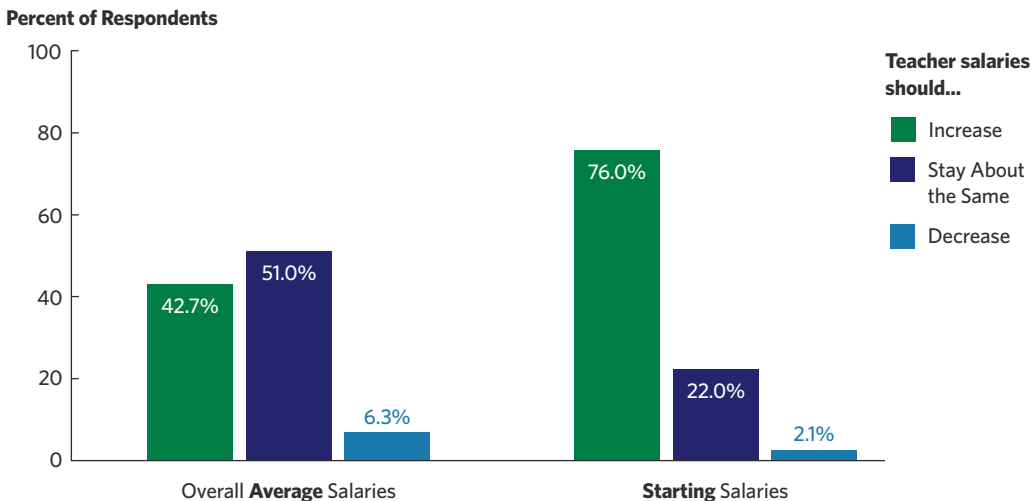
Starting teacher salaries in Michigan rank low compared to the rest of the country and to other Great Lakes States. As other states work to increase starting salaries, Michigan risks falling further behind in attracting and retaining teachers. Addressing this may involve state-level action(s) such as increasing funding for education, earmarking funding for teacher compensation, and/or setting minimum salaries. In debating these issues, it is important that policymakers and advocates consider public opinion. In the following section, we explore findings from a recent survey to measure what Michiganders think about teacher compensation in the state.

PUBLIC OPINION ON TEACHER COMPENSATION IN MICHIGAN

To gauge public opinion around teacher compensation in Michigan, we included several questions in a recent wave of the State of the State Survey (SOSS) from January 2024 (SOSS 88), which we provide more detail on below. We modeled two of these items on a question that has been asked in national surveys of educational issues by Education Next, a journal that focuses on public opinion and research related to education policy.¹⁷ In their survey, they provide respondents with the average salary of teachers in their state and ask whether it should increase, decrease, or stay about the same. We ask two versions of this question: one about starting teacher salaries and one about average teacher salaries overall. We also included follow-up questions to each of these that asked respondents what the average starting teacher’s salary should be and what the average overall teacher’s salary should be. The text of these items is included in Appendix B.

The SOSS is administered by the Institute for Public Policy and Social Research (IPPSR) at Michigan State University (MSU) and gathers data from a sample of 1000 Michigan adults. Characteristics of the sample from the most recent administration are provided in Appendix C. Because recent trends in polling suggest that individuals from some demographic groups and with some political affiliations may be less likely to respond to public opinion surveys, we use a process called weighting when calculating the results presented here. Weighting is a statistical technique that uses responses from one group to represent a larger group in the overall population. If one group is underrepresented in the sample, they receive a larger weight so that the results better reflect the views of the larger population. While the results we present here use weights, we examined results both with and without weights and find that using weights results in slightly lower support for increasing teacher salaries and lower figures for what teacher salaries should be, compared to the unweighted results.

FIGURE 5. Michiganders’ Views on Teacher Salaries



Note: Survey questions are included in Appendix B.

Michiganders broadly support raising teacher salaries, especially for new teachers. Figure 5 shows public opinion on whether average and starting teacher salaries should increase, decrease, or stay about the same. Just over half of Michiganders believe that the state’s average teacher’s salary should stay about the same. At the same time, 42.7% believe that the average teacher’s salary should increase, and 6.3% believe that the average teacher’s salary should decrease. Regarding

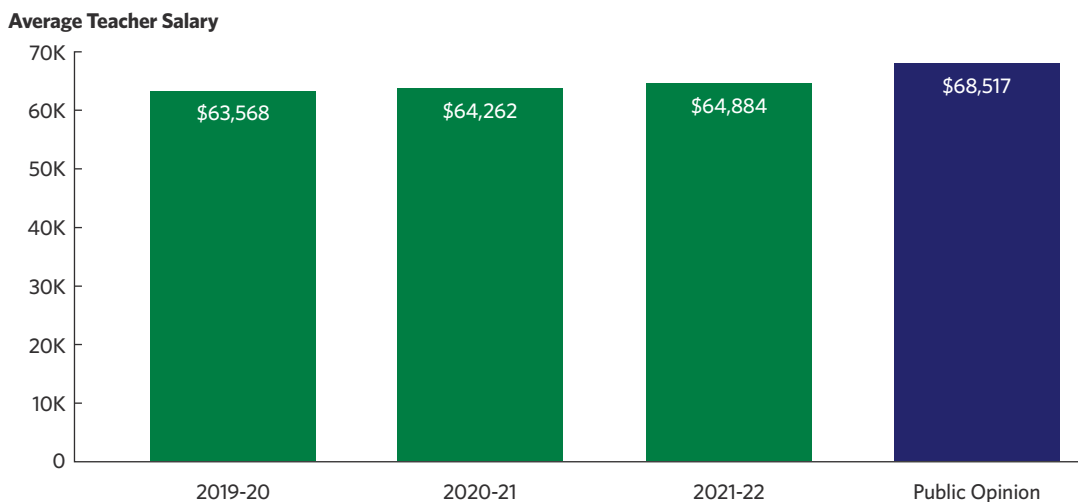
76% of Michiganders believe teachers' starting salaries should increase.

starting teachers’ salaries, public opinion seems to reflect that starting teacher salaries in the state compare much less favorably than average salaries overall. The vast majority of Michiganders, 76%, believe teachers’ starting salaries should increase while 22% responded that it should stay about the same and just 2.1% believe it should decrease.

Turning to what the public believes average and starting teacher salaries should be, Michiganders believe that average teacher salaries should increase modestly while

starting teacher salaries should increase substantially. The three bars on the left side of Figure 6 show the average Michigan teacher’s salary in the three most recent years for which data are available, while the bar on the right shows the average response to the question that asked what the average teacher’s salary should be. From the 2019-2020 school year through the 2021-2022 school year, the average teacher’s salary increased modestly from \$63,568 to \$64,884. However, public opinion suggests that the average Michigan teacher’s salary should be \$68,517, a figure that is \$3633 higher than in the most recent year of data.

FIGURE 6. Average Teacher Salaries in Michigan, Recent Trends and Public Opinion

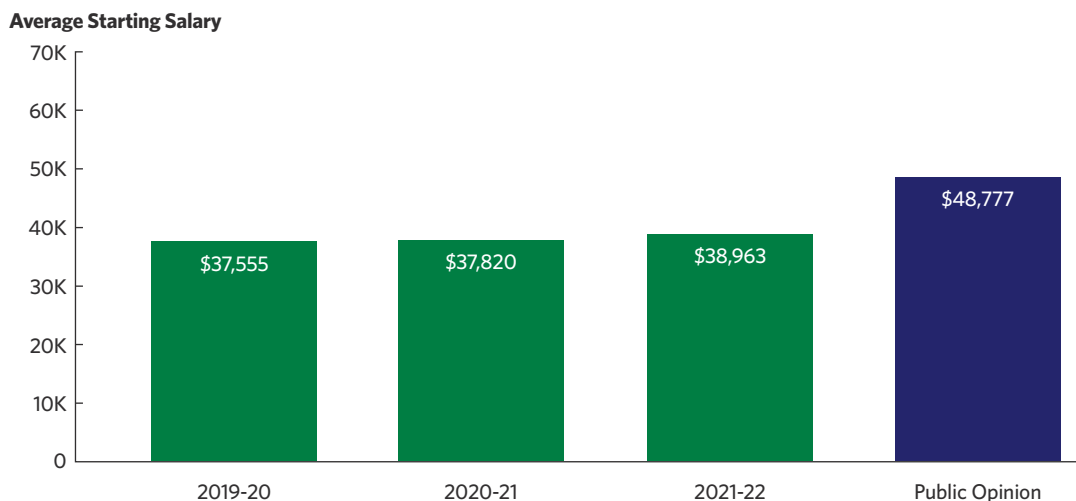


Note: Average teacher salaries obtained from the National Education Association’s Salary Benchmark data.

Michiganders believe that new teachers should see a much larger salary increase. As the three bars on the left of Figure 7 illustrate, the average starting teacher’s salary increased from \$37,555 in the 2019-2020 school year to \$38,963 in the 2021-2022 school year. Looking at the right side

of Figure 7, public opinion suggests that teachers in Michigan should have a starting salary of \$48,777, an increase of \$9,814 over the average starting salary in the most recent year of data.

FIGURE 7. Average Starting Teacher Salaries in Michigan, Recent Trends and Public Opinion



Note: Average teacher salaries obtained from the National Education Association’s Salary Benchmark data.

Our findings from the State of the State Survey reveal strong public support for increasing teacher salaries in Michigan, particularly for new teachers. A substantial majority of Michiganders believe that starting teacher salaries should be raised, with the average respondent indicating that the starting salary should be \$48,777, nearly \$10,000 higher than the current average starting salary in the state. While support for increasing average teacher salaries overall is more moderate, the public still believes that the average salary should be approximately \$3,600 higher than the most recent figures.

These results suggest that there is a significant appetite among the public for investing in teacher compensation, especially for those just entering the profession. Policymakers and advocates should take note of this public sentiment as they consider strategies for addressing teacher shortages and improving educational outcomes in Michigan. By aligning policy proposals with the public’s priorities, stakeholders can build broader support for initiatives aimed at strengthening the teacher workforce and ensuring that every student has access to a high-quality education.

CONCLUSION

Teacher compensation has emerged as a critical issue in Michigan and across the country, particularly in the context of teacher shortages and efforts to support students’ academic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. This report has examined recent trends in teacher compensation policy, analyzed the current state of teacher salaries in Michigan, and explored public opinion on the issue.

At both the federal and state levels, there has been a growing emphasis on teacher compensation and its role in attracting and retaining high-quality educators. While federal efforts to raise teacher salaries have not led to legislative changes, many states have taken action through standalone bills or the budget process. In Michigan, recent efforts to increase teacher compensation have focused on the budgeting process, but the enacted measures have been relatively modest compared to proposals put forth by the governor and in the state legislature.

Our analysis of teacher salaries in Michigan reveals that, while average salaries overall are similar to those in neighboring states, they have declined significantly over the past two decades when adjusted for inflation. This decline has been more pronounced in Michigan than in almost all other states. Furthermore, Michigan teachers face a substantial wage penalty compared to other college graduates with similar levels of education and experience. The situation is even more concerning for new teachers, as Michigan's starting salaries rank among the lowest in the nation and lag those of all neighboring states.

Despite these challenges, our survey findings indicate strong public support for increasing teacher salaries in Michigan, particularly for new teachers. Michiganders believe that starting salaries for teachers should be raised by nearly \$10,000, while there is more moderate support for increasing average salaries overall. As policymakers and advocates consider strategies to address teacher shortages and support student learning, it is crucial to recognize the important role of teacher compensation in these efforts. While the question of what constitutes an optimal salary for teachers is complex and often subjective, the data and public opinion presented in this report can inform constructive dialogue and policy decisions surrounding this critical issue. By aligning policy proposals with the priorities and values of Michigan residents, stakeholders can build broader support for initiatives that strengthen the teacher workforce and ensure that every student has access to a high-quality education.

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The range of \$600-800 per teacher arises from differences in the number of educators who would be identified as a teacher. EPIC's most recent shortage report (see endnote 1) lists slightly more than 80,000 FTE teachers in Michigan while the FTE count of teachers found on MISchoolData, which includes additional job descriptions in the category of "teacher," is slightly more than 100,000. While \$600-800 represents an average salary increase, the appropriation does not require that teacher salaries be increased in any particular way, meaning that raises could be distributed equally or with larger increases going to certain kinds of teachers (say by certification area, experience, etc.).
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This data includes adults who are full-time works and have a bachelor's degree only. That is, they do not hold a graduate degree. The majors with the lowest mid-career earnings are early childhood education (\$48,000), elementary education (\$52,000), general education (\$52,000), secondary education (\$55,000), and miscellaneous education (\$56,000). For reference, the typical mid-career salary for college graduates is \$80,000.
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APPENDIX A. RECENT INCREASES IN STARTING TEACHER SALARIES IN LOW-PAYING STATES

State	Average Starting Salary 2021-2022	Actions Taken That Impact Starting Teacher Salaries	Source(s)
Michigan	\$38,963	Appropriated \$63.8 million for a teacher compensation program to increase pay for all teachers. This is approximately \$600-\$800 per teacher depending on which individuals are counted as teachers, which ranges from approximately 80,000 to 100,000.	Michigan Department of Education. (2023, July 27). Michigan among nation's leaders in addressing teacher shortage [Press Release]. Retrieved from https://www.michigan.gov/mde/news-and-information/press-releases/2023/07/27/michigan-among-nation-leaders-in-addressing-teacher-shortage State Senator Darrin Camilleri. (2024, February 5). Education Budget Chair Camilleri Reminds Districts About Financial Supports Available for Michigan Educators [Press release]. Retrieved from https://senatedems.com/camilleri/2024/02/05/michigan-educators/
South Carolina	\$38,929	Raised the minimum starting teacher's salary to \$40,000 in 2022, then to \$42,500 in 2023, and may raise it again to \$47,000 in the 2024 legislative session.	Raven, J. (2023, March 15). Raises for SC teachers, state employees & law enforcement in \$13.8 budget plan. 7 News WSPA. https://www.wspa.com/news/state-news/raises-for-sc-teachers-state-employees-law-enforcement-in-13-8-budget-plan/ Stanley, N. (2024, February 21). How much could SC teachers get paid after new State House proposal. News 19 WTLX. https://www.wtlx.com/article/news/politics/teacher-pay-increase-south-carolina-money/101-a3cb3120-2eda-4b54-90e6-a69a75e65d65
Georgia	\$38,926	Raised the base salary to \$41,092 for the 2023-2023 school year and raised teacher salaries by \$2500 in 2024.	Amy, J. (2024, March 29). Georgia teachers and state employees will get pay raises as state budget passes. Associated Press. https://newschannel9.com/news/local/Georgia-teachers-and-state-employees-will-get-pay-raises-as-state-budget-passes# Georgia Department of Education. (2023). FY2024 State Salary Schedule. Retrieved from https://georgiainsights.gadoe.org/Data-Collections/Documents/CPI%20Documentation/FY2024/FY2024%20State%20Salary%20Schedule.pdf
Oklahoma	\$38,154	Raised the minimum teacher's salary to \$40,821 for the 2023-2024 school year.	Oklahoma Department of Education. (2023). 2023-2024 Salary Minimums. Retrieved from https://oklahoma.gov/content/dam/ok/en/careertech/educators/agricultural-education/program-funding/Salary%20Schedule%20for%202023-2024.pdf
West Virginia	\$38,052	Raised teacher pay by 5% in 2022 and by \$2340 in 2023, with proposals for an additional increase of up to \$5000 in 2024.	Beck, E. (2024, January 17). Lawmakers advance a \$5000 teacher pay raise that faces an uphill battle. https://mountainstatespotlight.org/2024/01/17/teacher-pay-raises-5000-proposed/ King, A. (2022, March 30). West Virginia educators can expect a pay raise. 13 News WOWK. https://www.wowktv.com/news/education/west-virginia-educators-can-expect-a-pay-raise/ Styf, J. (2023, March 30). West Virginia state employee, teacher pay raise signed into law. The Center Square. https://www.thecentersquare.com/west_virginia/article_d83a7614-c742-11ed-9f5f-abd0bad4bb5d.html#:~:text=The%20state%E2%80%99s%20budget%20bill%20included%20a%20%242%2C300%20pay,raise%20and%20cost%20the%20state%20%2484.8%20million%20annually
Mississippi	\$37,729	Raised the state minimum salary to \$41,500 in 2022.	Wagster Pettus, E. (2022, March 30). Mississippi Gov. Tate Reeves signs largest teacher pay raise in years. Associated Press. https://www.pbs.org/newshour/education/mississippi-gov-tate-reeves-signs-largest-teacher-pay-raise-in-years
North Carolina	\$37,676	A 2023 bill increasing the minimum salary to \$39,000 for the 2023-2024 school year and to \$41,000 for the 2024-2025 school year.	Vinueza McClellan, H. (2023, September 30). North Carolina has a new budget. Here's what educators need to know. EdNC. https://www.ednc.org/09-22-2023-north-carolina-has-a-new-budget-heres-what-educators-need-to-know/
Arkansas	\$37,168	Increased the minimum teacher's salary from \$36,000 in the 2022-2023 school year to \$50,000 starting with the 2023-2024 school year.	Zamarro, G., Camp, A., McGee, J., & Vernon, M. (2024, January 17). Teacher Salaries Under the Arkansas LEARNS Act. University of Arkansas Office for Education Policy. https://oep.uark.edu/teacher-salaries-under-the-arkansas-learns-act/

APPENDIX B. SURVEY QUESTIONS

- Public school teachers in Michigan are paid an average starting salary of \$37,280. Do you think public school teachers' starting salaries should increase, decrease, or stay about the same?
 - [if respondent selected increase or decrease] What do you think the average starting salary should be for a public school teacher in Michigan?
- Public school teachers in Michigan overall are paid an average salary of \$64,262. Do you think public school teachers' salaries should increase, decrease, or stay about the same?
 - [if respondent selected increase or decrease] What do you think the average salary should be for a public school teacher in Michigan?

Notes

Starting and average teacher salaries taken from the National Education Association's benchmark salary data for the 2020-2021 school year, the most recent year available when the questions were sent to the State of the State Survey for administration.

To ease response burden, if a respondent indicated that the average (starting) teacher's salary should stay about the same, they were not asked what they thought the average (starting) teacher's salary should be because their response indicated that they believe the average (starting) teacher's salary should resemble the current figure. To calculate public opinion on average (starting) teacher salaries, if a respondent indicated that the average (starting) teacher's salary should stay about the same, the value provided in the question was imputed as their preferred average (starting) teacher's salary. For instance, if a respondent indicated that the average teacher's salary of \$64,262 should stay about the same, their response to the question of what the average salary should be for a public school teacher in Michigan was assumed to be \$64,262.

When estimating public opinion on what starting and average teacher's salaries should be, we cleaned the data in several steps. First, we trimmed both high and low outliers that could skew the results. We also recoded a small number of responses we interpreted as indicating an amount by which the respondent believed the starting or average teacher's salary should increase or decrease. Together, these steps had the effect of decreasing our estimates of public opinion on what starting and average teachers' salaries should be, relative to the raw responses. Please contact the authors for additional information.

APPENDIX C. STATE OF THE STATE SURVEY SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	477	47.7
Female	523	52.3
Race/Ethnicity²		
African-American or Black	127	12.7
American Indian or Alaska Native	16	1.6
Asian	22	2.2
Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	4	0.4
Hispanic/Latinx/Spanish origin	37	3.7
White or Caucasian	836	83.6
Race - Other	25	2.5
Age		
18-25	68	6.8
26-30	107	10.7
31-40	138	13.8
41-50	167	16.7
51-60	188	18.8
61-70	193	19.3
71-80	105	10.5
81-90	34	3.4
Marital Status		
Married	509	50.9
Single	491	49.1
Number of Children in the Household		
None	749	75.35
1 child	110	11.07
2 children	79	7.95
3 children	42	4.23
4 children	6	0.6
5 children	5	0.5
6 children	2	0.2
7 children	1	0.1
Highest Level of Educational Attainment		
Did not go to school	3	0.3
Did not graduate high school	36	3.6
High school graduate or GED holder	350	35
Technical/junior college graduate	88	8.8
1st year college	74	7.4
2nd year college	113	11.3
3rd year college	35	3.5
College graduate (four years)	155	15.5
Some postgraduate	37	3.7
Graduate degree	109	10.9

	Frequency	Percent
Employment Status		
Work full-time	379	38.17
Work part-time	93	9.37
Work and go to school	11	1.11
Have a job, but not at work last week (on vacation, sick leave, etc.)	9	0.91
Unemployed, laid off, or looking for work	69	6.95
Retired	226	22.76
School full time	24	2.42
Homemaker	57	5.74
Disabled	90	9.06
Semi-retired/retired and working part-time	21	2.11
Other (please specify)	14	1.41
Household Income		
Less than \$10,000	76	7.73
\$10,000 to \$19,999	80	8.14
\$20,000 to \$29,999	102	10.38
\$30,000 to \$39,999	113	11.5
\$40,000 to \$49,999	125	12.72
\$50,000 to \$59,999	79	8.04
\$60,000 to \$69,999	72	7.32
\$70,000 to \$79,999	75	7.63
\$80,000 to \$89,999	36	3.66
\$90,000 to \$99,999	47	4.78
\$100,000 to \$149,999	114	11.6
\$150,000 or More	64	6.51
Voter Registration		
Registered	923	92.3
Not Registered	65	6.5
Don't know	12	1.2
Political Party Affiliation		
Republican	240	24.05
Independent	331	33.17
Democrat	373	37.37
Another party, third party, etc.	54	5.41
¹ Respondents were not required to answer all questions, meaning that the number of responses to any specific question may be less than 1000		
² Respondents are able to select more than one race/ethnicity, meaning that counts by race/ethnicity may sum to greater than 1000		

Note: State of the State 88 Sample Characteristics (n=1000)¹

APPENDIX D. STARTING AND AVERAGE SALARIES ADJUSTED FOR DIFFERENCES IN COST OF LIVING ACROSS STATES

Variation in the cost of living across states means that comparing nominal salaries may obscure differences in the quality of life teachers may enjoy in different places. Put simply, a given salary in a low cost of living state will allow a teacher to enjoy a higher standard of living than they would with the same salary in a higher cost of living state. As a result, accounting for differences in the cost of living across states may help to make more valid comparisons.

Different methods can be used to adjust for differences in the cost of living between states. Here, we use two different cost of living indices to adjust average and starting teacher salaries and then consider the extent to which they lead to different conclusions about the average and starting salaries of Michigan teachers relative to other states. In doing so, we find that adjusting for the cost of living has little impact on how to interpret teacher compensation in Michigan relative to other states. Adjusting for cost of living makes average teacher salaries in Michigan compare less favorably with neighboring states but more favorably relative to the country overall. On the other hand, while cost of living adjustments make starting teacher salaries in Michigan compare somewhat more favorably against other Great Lakes States, they lead to lower rankings among all states.

The first cost of living adjustment we use is Regional Price Parities (RPPs) developed by the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA).¹⁸ To calculate RPPs, the BEA compares the costs of a range of goods and services (e.g. housing and utilities, food, medical care, etc.) across states. Using RPPs to adjust teacher salaries provides an estimate of a teacher’s purchasing power in each state. A state with a lower cost of living than the national average will have an adjusted average salary that is higher than the nominal (unadjusted) salary while a state with a higher cost of living will have an adjusted salary that is lower than the nominal salary. A potential issue with RPPs is that they are calculated on a calendar year basis, while teachers are paid over an academic year that spans two calendar years. To address this, we follow the practice of Garcia et al. (2023) and take the average RPP for the two calendar years of an academic year.¹⁹ To adjust 2021-2022 salaries, we took the average of each state’s RPP from 2021 and 2022.

The second cost of living adjustment we use is the Comparable Wage Index for Teachers (CWIFT), which is calculated by the National Center for Education Statistics.²⁰ This index accounts for the cost of labor across states by comparing the earnings of college-educated workers in a range of professions with the national average and using that to estimate the cost of hiring teachers. For instance, if accountants and social workers in Michigan earn 10% more than the national average, one could expect that teachers would command 10% higher salaries as well. A potential advantage of this approach is that, in addition to the price of goods and services, it can capture factors such as access local amenities (weather/climate, cultural experiences, low crime, etc.), or lack thereof, which may lead workers to either demand higher salaries or accept lower salaries. Here, too, states with lower-than-average costs will have adjusted salaries that are higher than their nominal, unadjusted salaries. We adjust 2021-2022 starting and average teacher salaries using values from the 2021 CWIFT, the most recent year for which estimates are available.²¹

Table A1. Nominal and Cost of Living Adjusted Teacher Salaries in Great Lakes States, 2021-22 School Year

State	Average Starting Salary			Average Teacher Salary		
	Nominal Salaries	Adjusted Using CWIFT	Adjusted Using RPP	Nominal Salaries	Adjusted Using CWIFT	Adjusted Using RPP
Michigan	38,963	42,305	41,534	64,884	70,450	69,165
Illinois	42,213	41,548	41,688	72,315	71,176	71,416
Indiana	40,959	46,650	44,445	54,596	62,182	59,243
Minnesota	42,293	41,833	43,131	64,184	63,486	65,456
Ohio	39,094	43,198	42,587	64,353	71,108	70,103
Wisconsin	39,955	43,907	43,071	60,724	66,730	65,460

Sources: a) Average salaries drawn from the NEA’s Salary Benchmark Report. b) Wages adjusted for cost of labor using the Comparable Wage Index for Teachers (CWIFT) from the National Center for Education Statistics. c) Wages adjusted for cost of goods and services using Regional Price Parities (RPPs) from the Bureau of Economic Analysis.

Looking at average teacher salaries using both cost of living adjustments, shown in columns d-f in Table A1, we find that the adjusted average teacher’s salary is higher than the nominal salary, meaning that Michigan has a lower cost of living than the national average. Comparing adjusted average salaries in Michigan with those in other Great Lakes States, we find that Michigan falls behind two other states, Illinois and Ohio, using both cost of living adjustments. This means Michigan compares less favorably using adjusted salaries than when using nominal salaries, a measure on which Michigan lags only Illinois. At the same time, Michigan’s ranking among all states, shown in Table A2, improves slightly, from 16th in terms of nominal salaries to 14th using either cost of living adjustment.

Table A2. Ranks of Michigan’s Nominal and Cost of Living Adjusted Teacher Salaries Among the 50 States + Washington, D. C., 2021-2022 School Year		
	Starting Salaries	Average Salaries
Nominal	39 th	16 th
Adjusted for the cost of goods and services (RPP)	42 nd	14 th
Adjusted for the cost of labor (CWIFT)	40 th	14 th

Sources: a) Average salaries drawn from the NEA’s Salary Benchmark Report. b) Wages adjusted for cost of labor using the Comparable Wage Index for Teachers (CWIFT) from the National Center for Education Statistics. c) Wages adjusted for cost of goods and services using Regional Price Parities (RPPs) from the Bureau of Economic Analysis.

Examining starting salaries after adjusting for cost of living differences reveals a more complicated picture. Michigan ranks last among the Great Lakes States in nominal starting salaries, shown column a in Table A1, a pattern that holds when adjusting salaries for the cost of goods and services using RPPs (column b). However, after adjusting for the cost of labor using CWIFT, starting salaries in Michigan slightly exceed those of both Illinois and Minnesota. Comparing adjusted starting salaries in Michigan with the rest of the country, shown in Table A2, Michigan falls from a rank of 39th in terms of nominal salaries to 40th when adjusted using CWIFT and 42nd using RPPs.

Notes

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