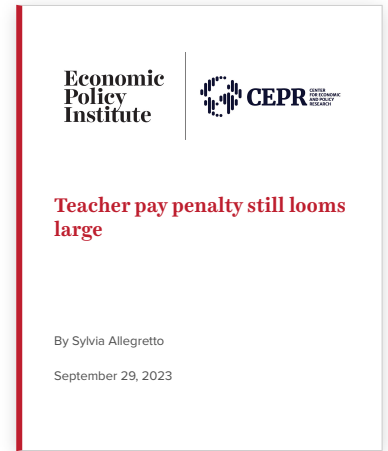


Teacher pay penalty still looms large

Trends in teacher wages and compensation through 2022

Summary: Teacher pay has suffered a sharp decline compared with the pay of other college-educated workers. On average, teachers made 26.4% less than other similarly educated professionals in 2022—the lowest level since 1960.



Read the full report
epi.org/274103

Key findings

- The pay penalty for teachers—the gap between the weekly wages of teachers and college graduates working in other professions—grew to a record 26.4% in 2022, a significant increase from 6.1% in 1996.
- Although teachers tend to receive better benefits packages than other professionals do, this advantage is not large enough to offset the growing wage penalty for teachers.
- On average, teachers earned 73.6 cents for every dollar that other professionals made in 2022. This is much less than the 93.9 cents on the dollar they made in 1996.

Why this matters

Teachers have one of the most consequential jobs in the country—they have the future of the U.S. in front of them every day. But teaching is becoming a less appealing career choice for new college graduates. Not only are levels of compensation low, but teaching is becoming increasingly stressful as teachers are forced to navigate battles over curriculum and COVID-19 related mandates as well as rising incidence of violence in schools.

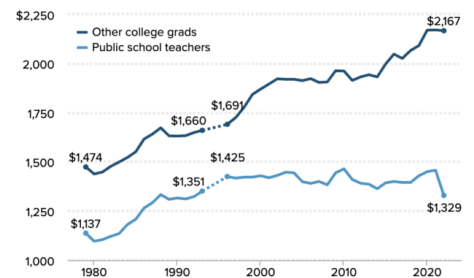
Low pay makes recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers difficult. A lack of well-qualified teachers means we cannot equip future tech innovators, researchers, and educators with the training they need to emerge as leaders.

How to fix it

The downward trend in teacher pay must be reversed. Local and state politicians and community members can show respect for the profession by significantly boosting teacher pay. Targeted policy action is needed on school funding as well. State and local governments will require federal support to maintain and improve resources for schools. Finally, public-sector collective bargaining should be expanded since unions can advocate for improved job quality and a higher level of resources.

Charting the problem

Average weekly wage of public school teachers plummets in 2022
Average weekly wages of public school teachers and other college graduates (2022\$), 1979–2022



“The teaching profession once had a somewhat captive labor pool of women to depend on. That is no longer the case.”