



Educator Retention in Michigan: Unpacking the Data

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Educator Talent Roundtable

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Michigan's educator shortage has been a mainstay in news headlines across the state for several years

"Michigan school districts battle widespread teacher shortages"

The Detroit News, Sept 10, 2018

"The teacher shortage is getting worse and requires immediate action"

Lansing State Journal, Jan 19, 2020

"'Perfect storm' of events causing teacher shortage crisis in Michigan"

WXYZ Detroit, May 20, 2021

"Survey finds one-third of Michigan teachers plan to leave amid educator shortage"

Michigan Advance, Feb 14, 2022

"Michigan teacher vacancies double, applicants drop by half since pandemic"

K-12 Dive, Oct 12, 2023

"Black students, poor communities are hit hard by Michigan's teacher shortage, report says"

Chalkbeat Detroit, Jan 14, 2025



Along with examples of real ways these shortages are affecting students, educators, schools, and state policy

“Strapped for teachers, Detroit district looks to controversial teacher training programs”

Chalkbeat Detroit, Jul 9, 2018

“Class sizes raise concerns for Mich. parents, districts, teachers”

The Detroit News, Sept 10, 2018

“Staff shortages shutter more schools across Michigan: Are closures the new normal?”

Detroit Free Press, Oct 27, 2021

“Michigan schools running out of snow days due to teacher shortage”

WILX, Feb 2, 2022

“Hiring has become year-round effort for districts facing teacher shortages”

Michigan Public Radio, Aug 21, 2018

“Michigan leans on long-term substitutes as its schools struggle”

Bridge Michigan, Aug 7, 2019

“Short of teachers, Michigan schools may use bus drivers as subs under GOP bill”

Bridge Michigan, Dec 13, 2021

“\$10,000 sign-on bonus: New-teacher shortage has Michigan schools trying aggressive approaches”

MLive, Aug 30, 2022

“Virtual teachers are district backup plan for hard-to-fill special education, language jobs”

MLive, Aug 27, 2024



Not all sources paint the same narrative, and some reach different conclusions from different—or sometimes even the same—data

“Survey finds one-third of Michigan teachers plan to leave amid educator shortage”

Michigan Advance, Feb 14, 2022

“Michigan’s teacher shortage deepens as more teachers leave the profession”

WXYZ, Oct 15, 2022

“Michigan teacher retirements appear level, despite fear of huge exodus”

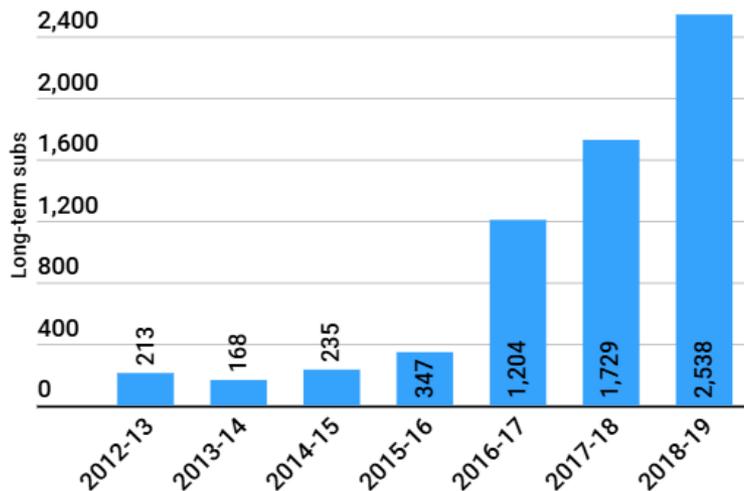
Bridge Michigan, Aug 15, 2022

“With school employment up this year, hard to see a statewide retention problem”

Citizens Research Council of Michigan, Mar 18, 2022

Long-term subs in

In five years, the use of long-term subs has jumped ten-fold in Michigan as districts scramble to fill classrooms. A person can be a substitute teacher with as little as two-years of college credit.



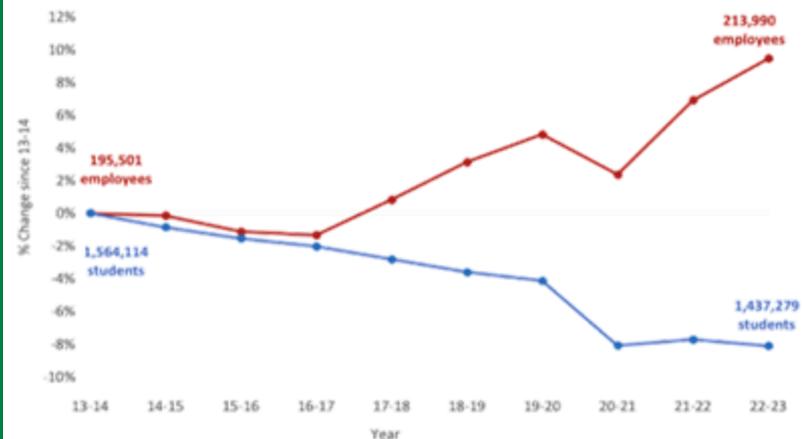
Bridge Michigan, Aug 7, 2019

EPIC

Staffing-enrollment mismatch spells big financial trouble ahead

With all these extra staff in schools and declining enrollment, a rightsizing is coming. These trends aren’t just afflicting large urban districts, either. Rather, in states where we have the data, the patterns are playing out statewide. Over the last decade, Michigan districts have grown staffing rolls by 9%, all while student enrollment fell by 8%.

Michigan: Staffing vs Enrollment Trends (Cumulative % change since 13-14)



Source: MI School Data (Staffing Count, Student Enrollment Counts Report)

EDUONOMICS
L.A.D. The State of Education Finance

UNPACKING THE DATA

Reasons for these differences in interpretations likely include:

- Complicated data
- Changes in the profession
- Changes in instructional needs

Our team has studied Michigan's statewide educator datasets extensively to understand what they do—and don't—tell us about the teacher workforce

Today I'll discuss the latest report from our ongoing teacher shortage study, along with relevant findings from some of our other recent work



Michigan Teacher Shortage Study: 2025 Report

Teacher vacancies, **retention**, and initial certification trends, 2012-13 through 2023-24

Tara Kilbride, Salem Rogers, Jennifer Moriarty, & Tyler Powell



The Shifting Landscape of Alternative-Route Teacher Certification in Michigan

Where and how alternative pathways to teaching are expanding throughout Michigan

Salem Rogers & Tara Kilbride



Tracking Progress Through Michigan's Teacher Pipeline

Progression and attrition across key teacher preparation, licensure, and career milestones

Tara Kilbride, Katharine Strunk, Salem Rogers, & Usamah Wasif

DATA SOURCES

Our analyses combine data from several state databases and publicly available resources



Michigan Student Data System (MSDS)

Courses taught as “teacher of record” (TSDL)

High school graduation status and district (GAD)

Undergrad enrollment, teacher ed coursework, student teaching (STARR)



Michigan Test for Teacher Certification (MTTC)

Licensure test participation & results



Registry of Educational Personnel (REP)

Employment status, duration, location, job assignment, reported vacancies, **year-to-year turnover**



Michigan Online Educator Certification System (MOECS)

Initial certificate, renewal/progression, temporary credentials, endorsement areas, prep institution, certification type/status



PIC-UIC Crosswalk

Connect information about teachers’ job placements to the locations of their hometowns & prep programs



Publicly Available Data Sources

Teacher prep program enrollment & completion data (Title II)

Educator preparation provider types (CAP/AACTE)

Subject area abbreviations and student teaching course codes (university course catalogs & program handbooks)



DEFINITIONS

We identify patterns of retention and its converse—attrition—based on changes in educators’ employment between two years

	Employment status/location		Attrition type(s)		
	Prior year	Current year	Left workforce	Left district	Left school
Entry into workforce	Not teaching	Teaching			
Exit from workforce	Teaching	Not teaching	X	X	X
Between-district transfer	Teaching	Teaching, different district		X	X
Within-district transfer	Teaching	Teaching, different school in same district			X

Notes: Under these definitions, “entry into workforce” includes some teachers re-entering after a lapse in employment and “exit from workforce” includes some who left temporarily and later returned. We only include teachers working in a single district or a single school in between-district and within-district transfer calculations, respectively.



SIZE AND STABILITY OF WORKFORCE

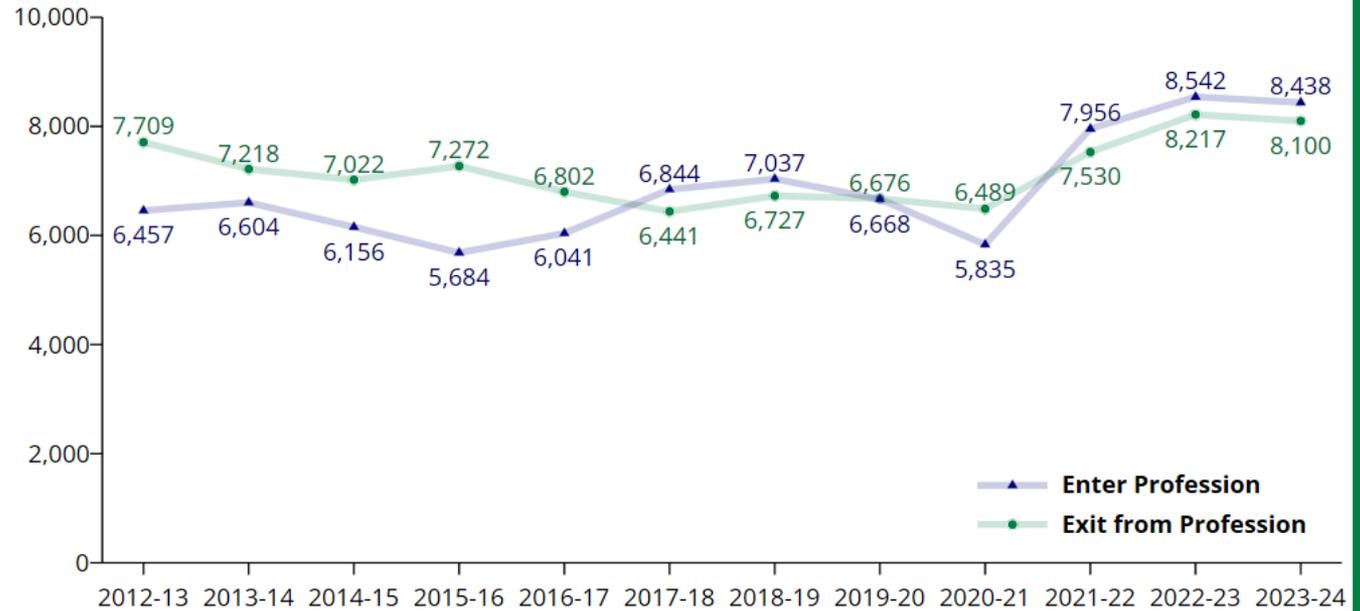
Since 2021-22, the workforce has been growing larger but facing unusually high turnover

In each of the last 3 years, new teachers entering the profession out-numbered those leaving

These heightened levels of mobility and attrition started to stabilize in 2023-24 but remain higher than before the pandemic



Number of Teachers

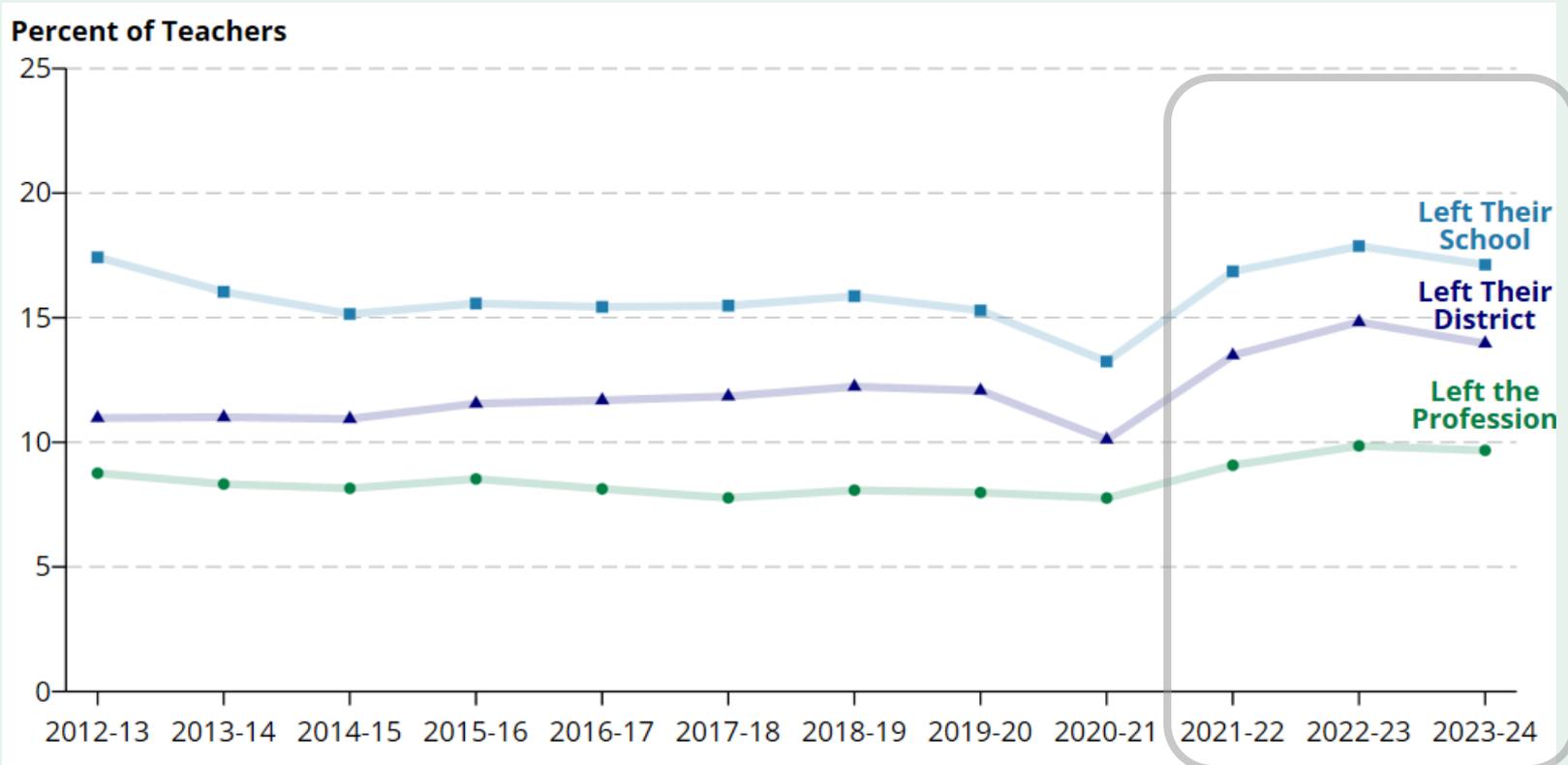


Number of Teachers



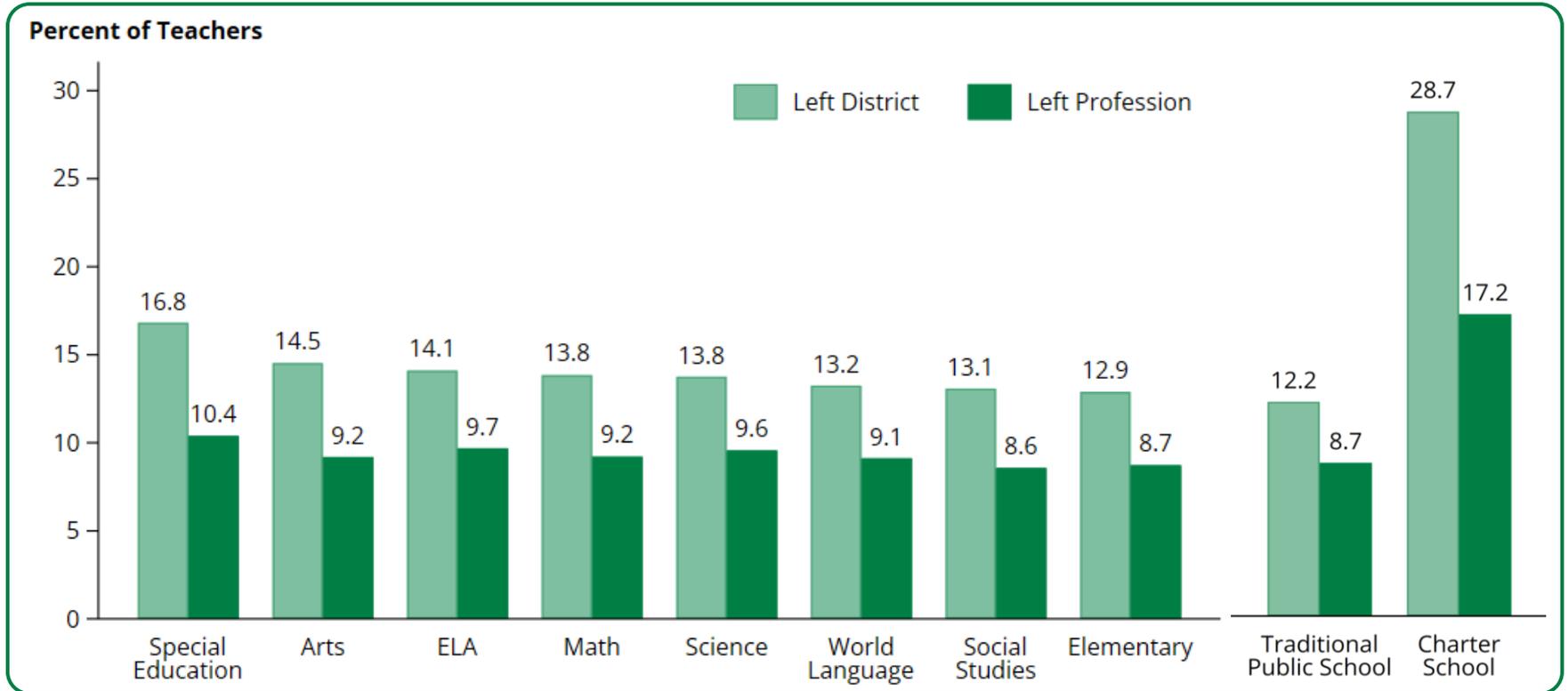
EDUCATOR ATTRITION OVER TIME

Overall rates of attrition increased sharply in 2021-22 and remained elevated above pre-pandemic levels through 2023-24



ATTRITION BY SPECIALIZATION AND SECTOR

Special education teachers and teachers in charter schools leave their districts and the profession at the highest rates



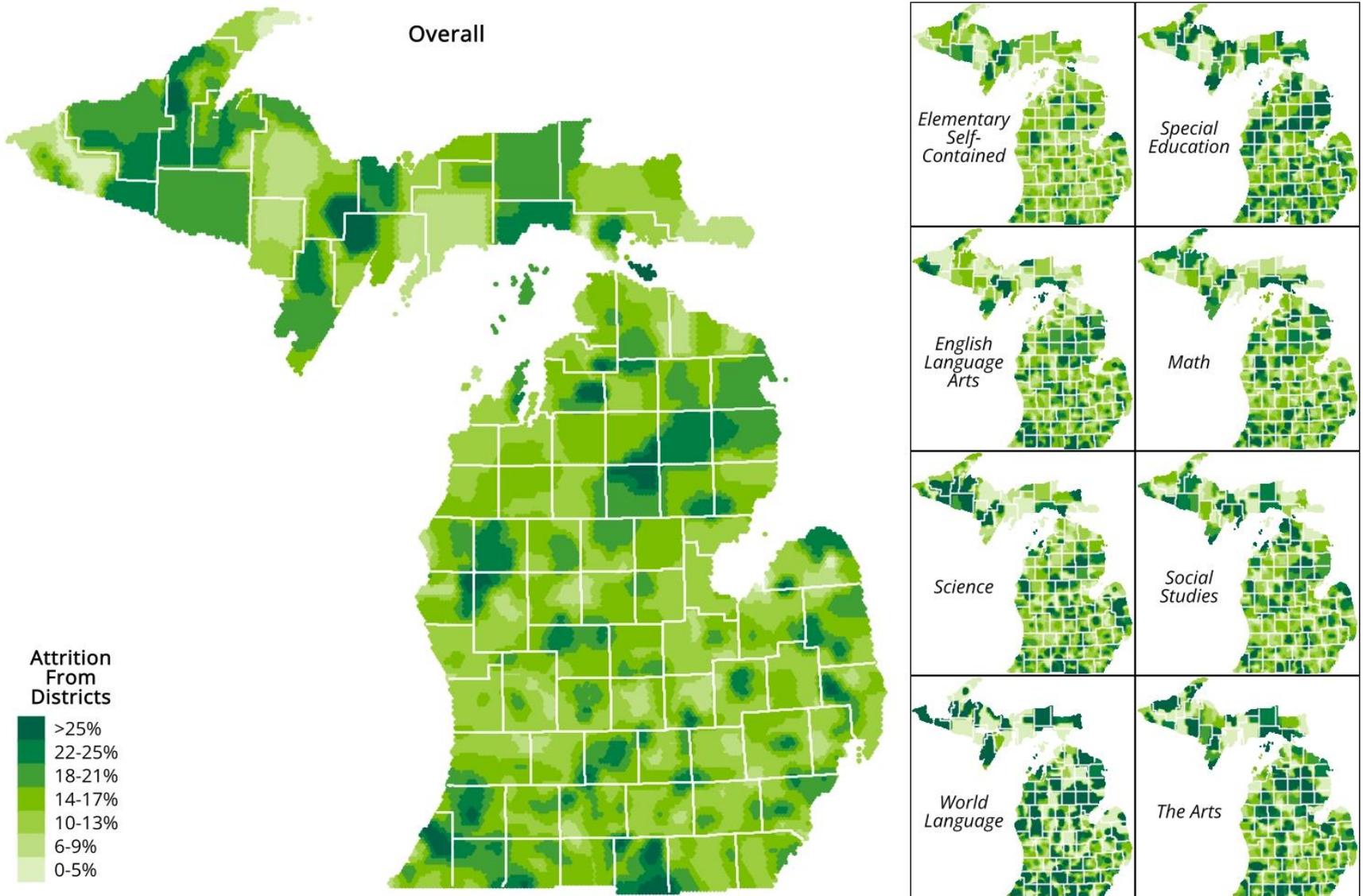
Special education also stands out as having particularly high vacancy rates and reliance on under-credentialed teachers

Michigan's most severe teacher shortages tend to be in areas with large **charter sectors**

Heightened attrition and **competition between districts** to hire from the same limited pool of teachers likely contribute to this pattern

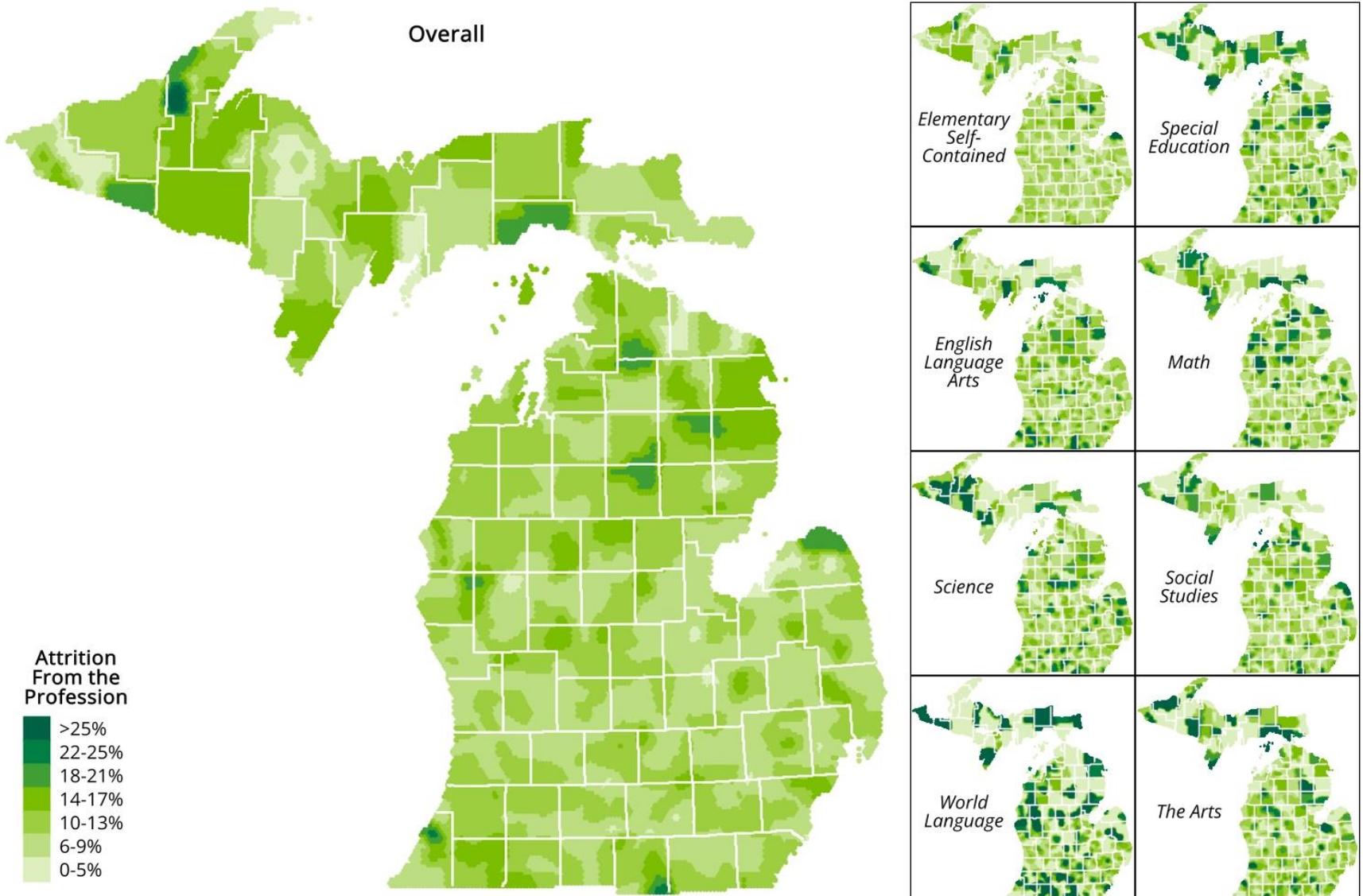
ATTRITION BY GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION

Very high levels of district attrition (>25%) are most common in remote areas overall and widespread for special education, world language, and the arts



ATTRITION BY GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION

Attrition from the profession rarely reaches levels this high (>25%) outside of a few very remote areas and hard-to-staff teaching specializations



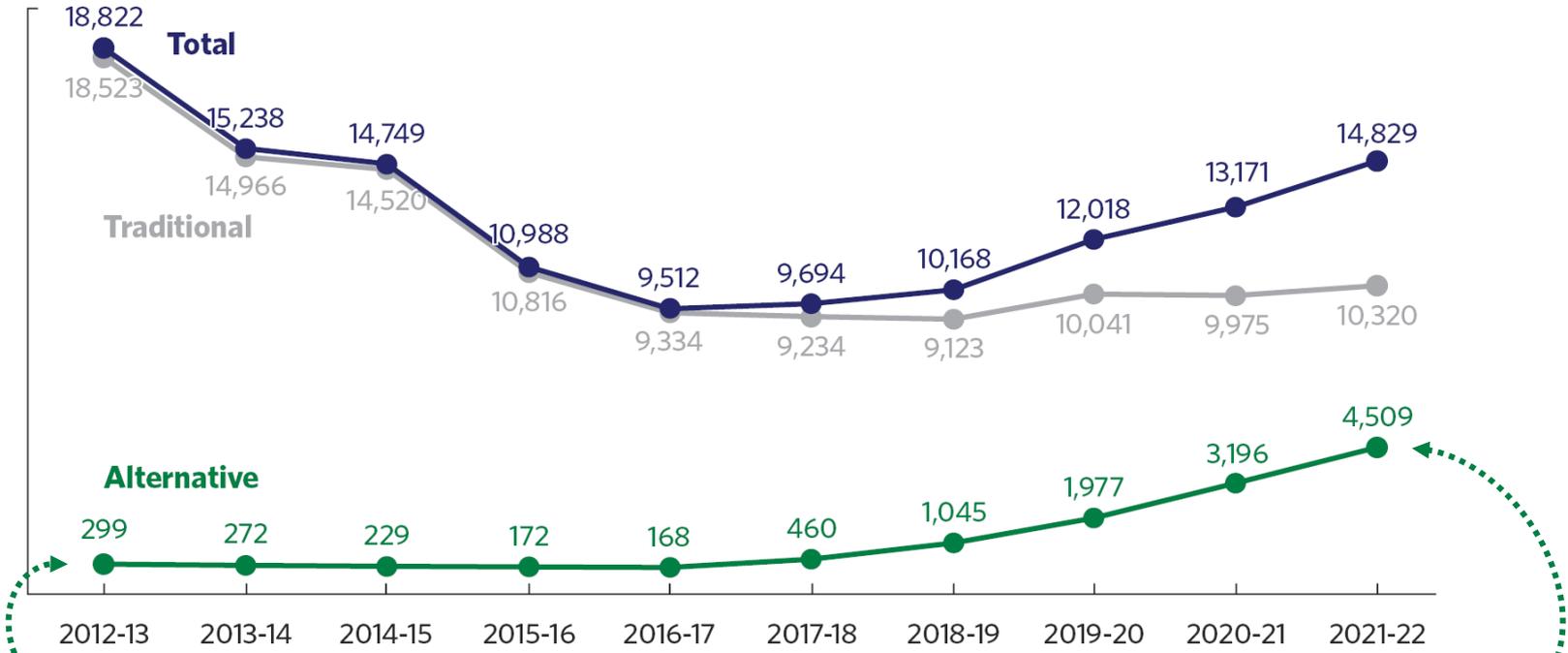
PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS

Recent increases in MI's teacher preparation program enrollment reflect growth in alternative-route programs

Traditional-route: concurrent with an undergraduate degree program

Alternative-route: candidates already have bachelor's degrees, work as teachers of record under interim certificate while completing training

Michigan TPP Enrollment



2% of total enrollment

(12% nationally)

30% of total enrollment

(30% nationally)



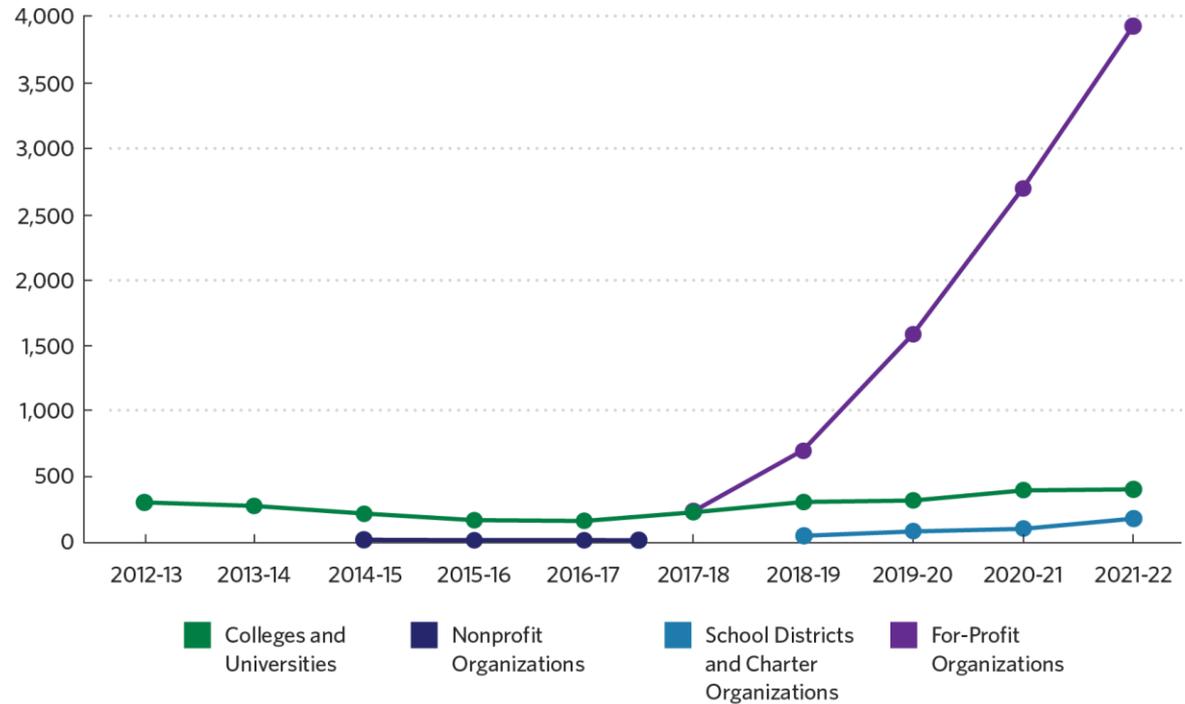
ALTERNATIVE CERTIFICATION

This growth in alternative-route enrollment is driven by two fully virtual programs

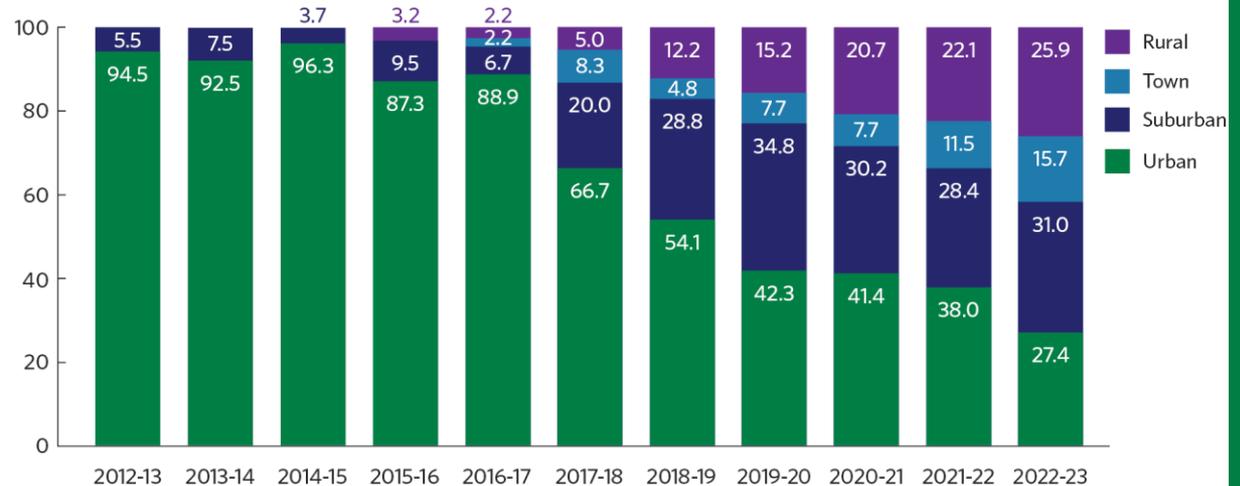
These programs are run by organizations outside of the higher education sector that offer virtual teacher preparation in multiple states

Fully virtual options have made alternative certification more accessible outside of urban areas

Alternative-Route Enrollment by Provider Type



Percent of New Alt-Route Teachers



EARLY-CAREER TEACHERS

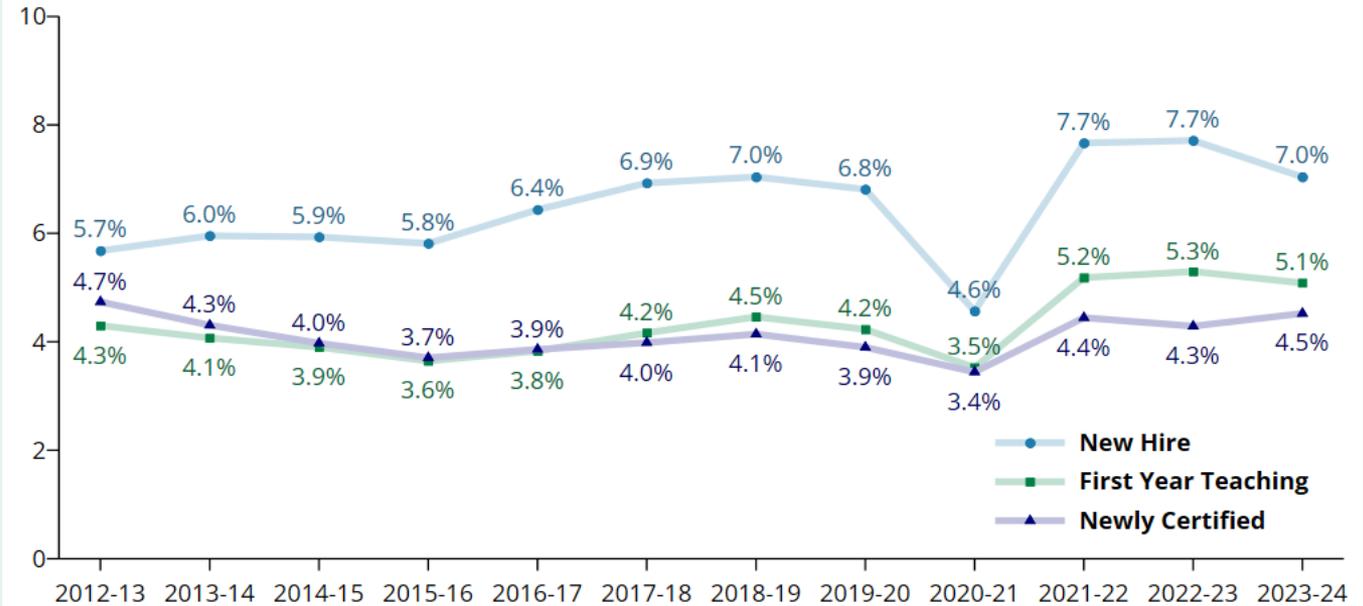
New teachers make up a larger share of the workforce than ever before

In 2023-24, the percentage of new Michigan teachers who had not yet completed a preparation program reached an all-time high of 7.6%

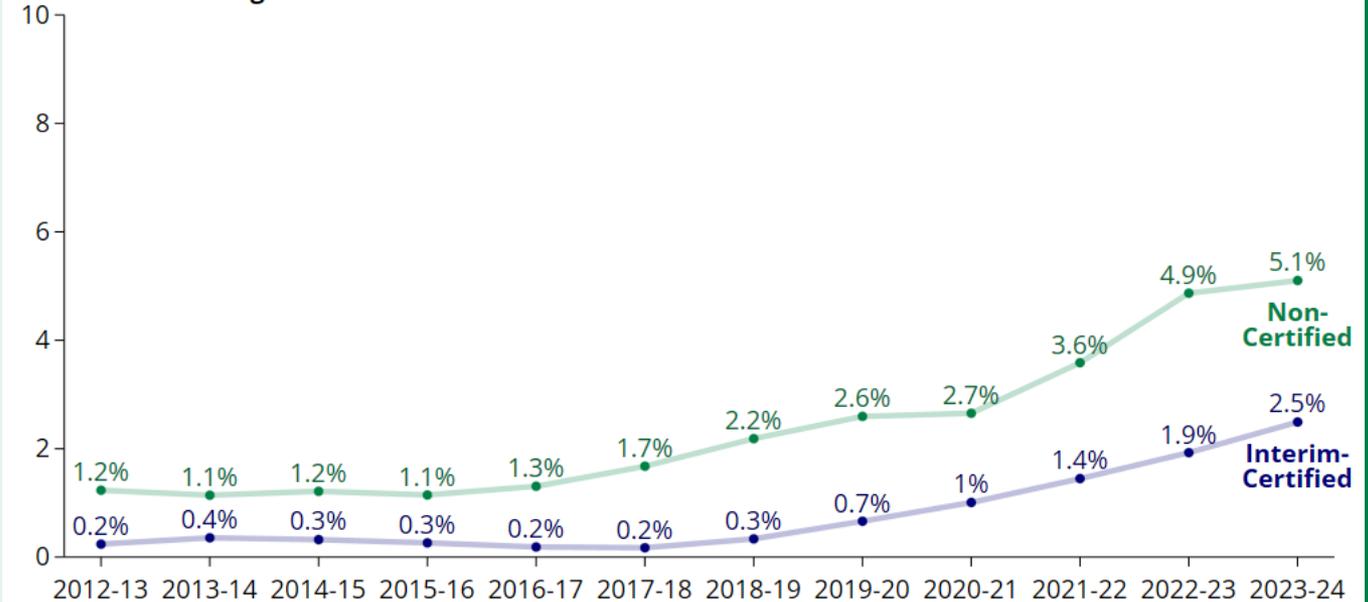
One-third of these teachers had interim certificates; the other two-thirds were not certified



Percent of Teachers



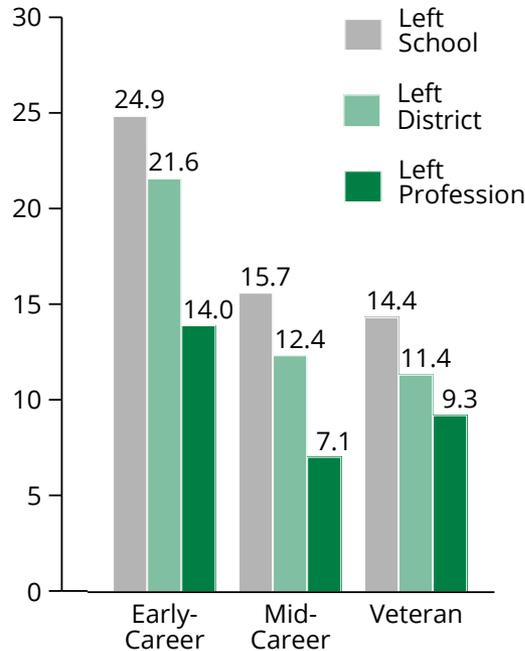
Percent of Teaching FTEs



IMPLICATIONS FOR RETENTION

Supporting and retaining new teachers, especially those who are still trainees, will be critical in the coming years

Percent of **all** teachers

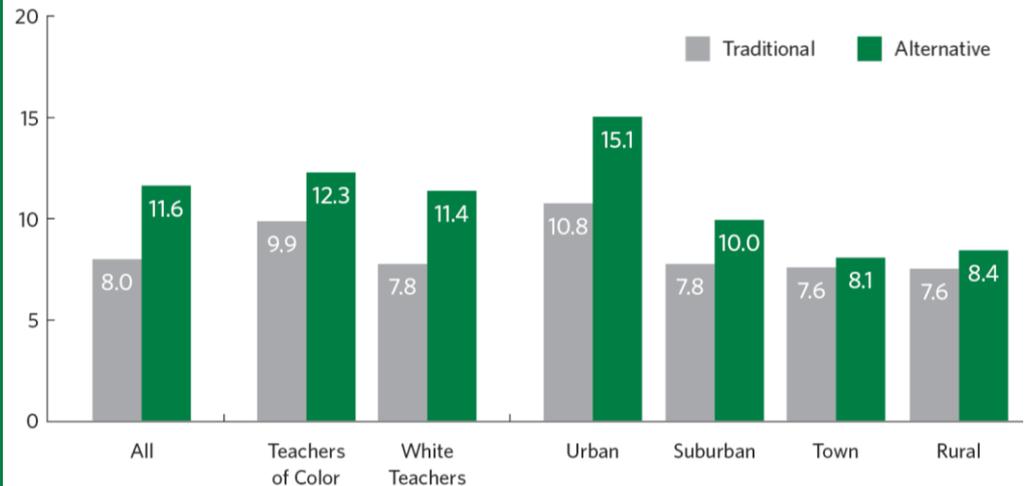


Early-career teachers leave their schools, districts, and the teaching profession altogether **at higher rates** than their colleagues

Across all subgroups, teachers who completed **alternative-route** programs **leave the profession at higher rates** than those from traditional programs

(Non-certified teachers, not shown below, leave at the highest rates)

Percent of **certified** early-career teachers who left the profession



THE “DRAW OF HOME”

Teachers who switch districts within their first 5 years typically move somewhere closer to their hometown

Job Placements of Graduates From In-State Teacher Preparation Programs					
	Overall	Hometown Urbanicity			
		Urban	Suburban	Town	Rural
Initial Job Placement					
Distance from TPP	50.1mi	43.6mi	46.7mi	65.1mi	53.5mi
Distance from hometown	39.5mi	31.8mi	34.5mi	56.0mi	47.1mi
Job Placement in 5th Year					
Same location	56.6%	58.6%	55.7%	56.4%	57.3%
Closer to home	15.9%	15.0%	15.6%	13.8%	18.7%
Further from home	8.9%	8.7%	9.4%	10.6%	6.6%
No longer teaching	18.6%	17.7%	19.2%	19.2%	17.4%
Number of Teachers					
	4,237	654	2,164	574	845

Notes: This analysis is based on employment data from 2015-16 through 2023-24 for teachers who earned their initial certification from a traditional-route program between 2014-15 and 2018-19.

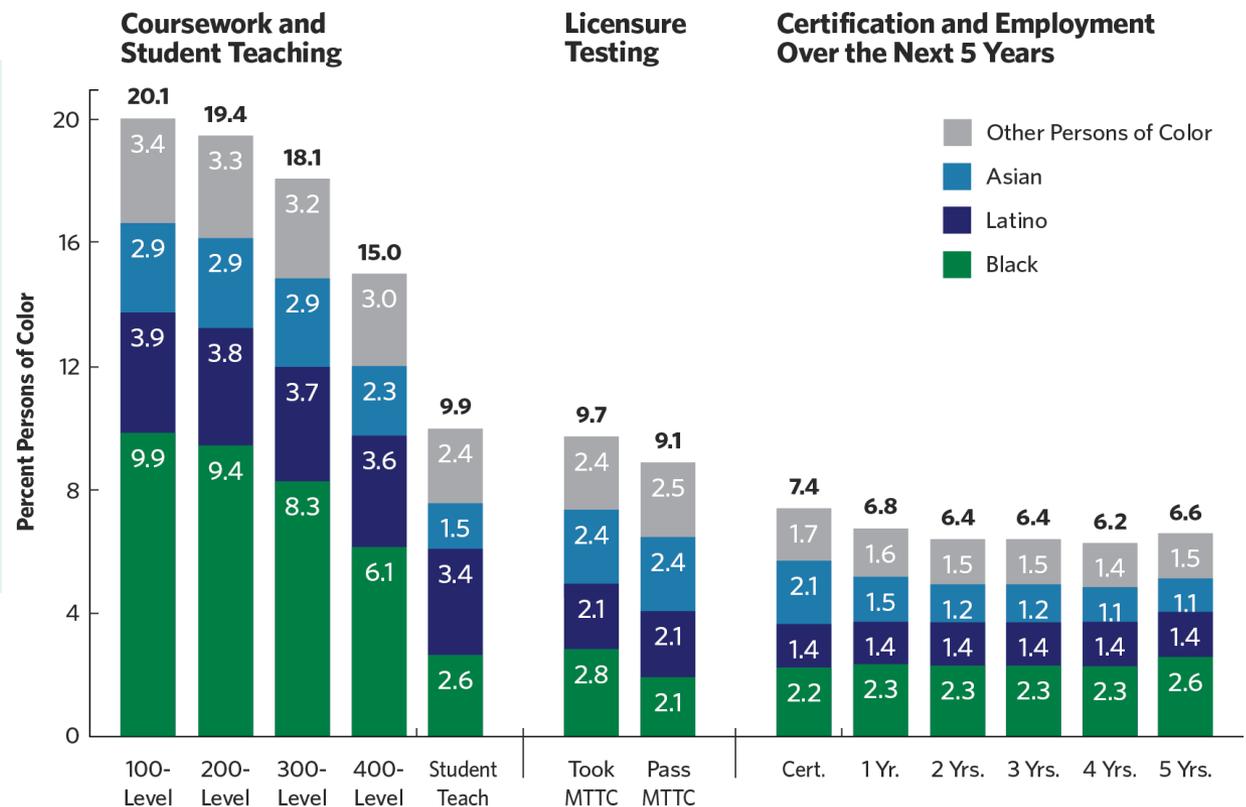


ATTRITION BEFORE ENTRY

Of the undergraduates who take introductory-level teacher education courses, only 56% continue to upper-level coursework and only 26% become student teachers

Students from underrepresented demographic groups are even less likely to continue pursuing teacher education after taking an introductory course. For instance, only 51% of male students and 47% of Black students continue to upper-level teacher education courses; only 16% and 7% become student teachers, respectively.

The pool of prospective Michigan teachers becomes **less diverse** as candidates progress through the pipeline. The most acute losses of diversity happen during the advanced coursework, student teaching, and licensure stages.





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