

DATA POINT

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Mental Health Staff in Public Schools, by School Racial and Ethnic Composition

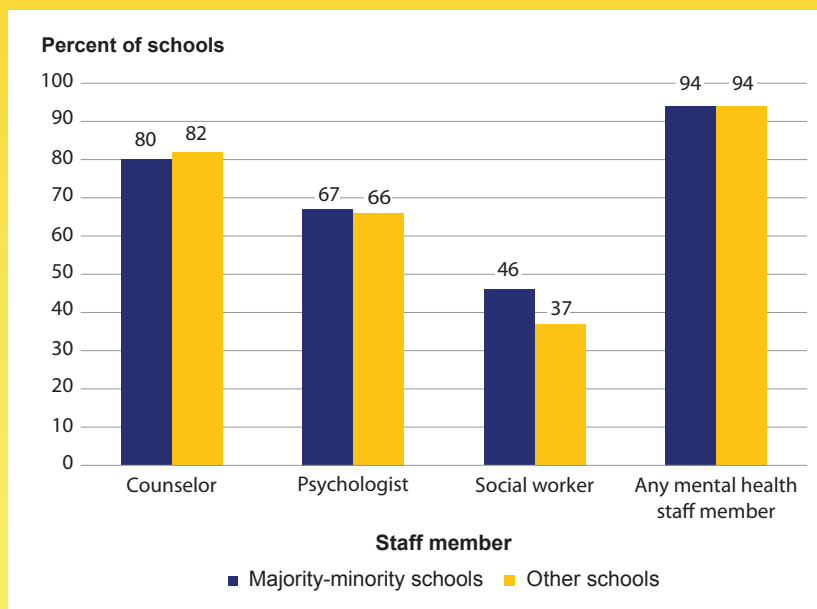
This Data Point uses data from the 2015–16 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) School Questionnaire. NTPS is a nationally representative sample survey of public K–12 schools, principals, and teachers in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. This Data Point compares levels of mental health staffing in schools in which more than half of the students are racial or ethnic minorities and schools in which at least half of the students are White and non-Hispanic.

How do types of mental health staff differ between schools where more than half of students are racial or ethnic minorities and schools where most students are White?

Minority students may be at higher risk for mental health issues than White students¹ while receiving less mental health care,² so it is important to examine differences in mental health staffing by student race and ethnicity. In this report, “majority-minority” schools are the 39 percent of public schools in which more than half of the students are racial or ethnic minorities. In about 53 percent of schools, at least half of the students are White and non-Hispanic. The 7 percent of schools for which this information is unknown are not included in these analyses.

Public schools reported whether any staff worked as counselors, psychologists, and social workers at their schools, either on a full-time or part-time basis. During the 2015–16 school year, 94 percent of both majority-minority and other schools had at least one type of mental health staff member (counselor, psychologist, or social worker) employed on at least a part-time basis (**Figure 1**).

FIGURE 1. Percentage of majority-minority and other public schools with at least one full-time or part-time counselor, psychologist, social worker, or any mental health staff member: 2015–16



NOTE: Majority-minority (more than half of the students are racial or ethnic minorities) and other (at least half of students are White and non-Hispanic) schools were classified based on the percentage of minority student enrollment. The 7 percent of responding schools for which data on student race/ethnicity were not available are excluded.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), “Public School Teacher Data File,” 2015–16.

A relatively larger percentage of majority-minority schools than schools in which at least half of students were White and non-Hispanic employed at least one full-time or part-time social worker (46 and 37 percent, respectively)

There was no significant difference in the percentage of schools with at least one counselor or psychologist by student body race (80 and 67 percent for majority-minority schools and 82 and 66 percent for other schools, respectively).

Data in this report are from the 2015–16 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS). To learn more, visit <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ntps>. To view this report online, go to <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2019020>.

How do levels of mental health staffing differ between schools where more than half of students are racial or ethnic minorities and schools where most students are White?

Among schools with any type of mental health staff (counselor, psychologist, or social worker), both majority-minority and other schools had a student to mental health staff ratio of 260 students per staff member (Figure 2).

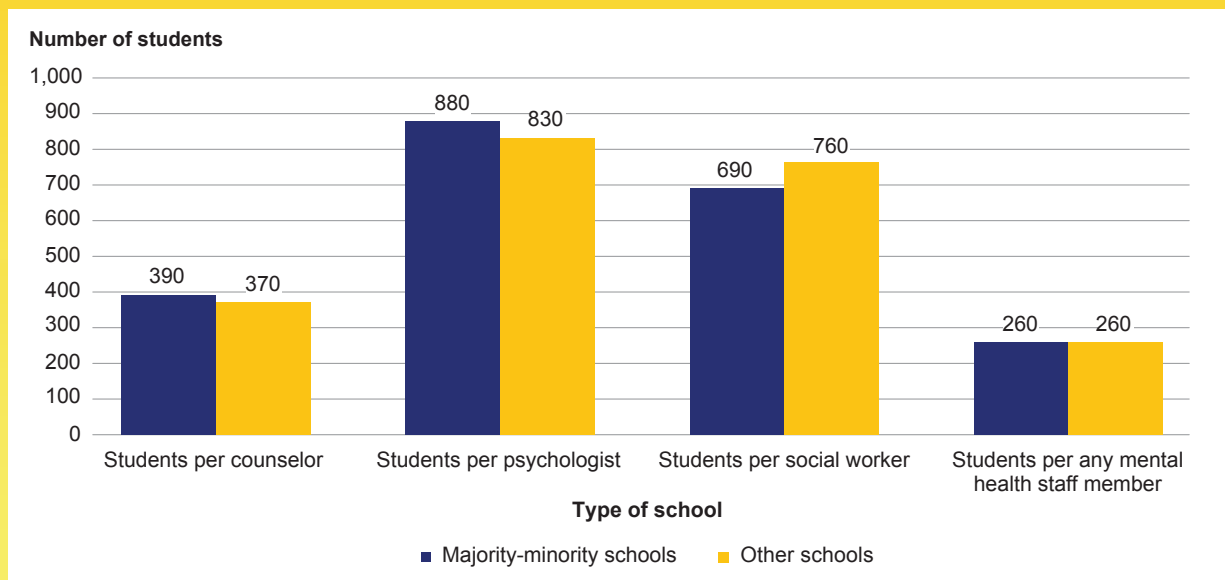
For schools with counselors and schools with psychologists, the student to staff ratio was higher in majority-minority schools than in schools where at least half of students were White and non-Hispanic. The average number of students per counselor was 390 in majority-minority schools and 370 in other schools. At the same time, the student to psychologist ratio was about 880 in majority-minority schools and 830 in other schools.

For schools with social workers, the student to staff ratio was lower in majority-minority schools

than other schools (690 and 760 students per social worker, respectively).

The American School Counseling Association recommends that school counselors oversee no more than 250 students each.³ In both majority-minority and other schools with counselors, the average student to counselor ratio was above 250 (390 and 370, respectively). In schools with any mental health staff member, the average student to mental staff ratio was also above 250 (260).

FIGURE 2. Among schools with counselors, psychologists, and social workers, average number of students per mental health staff member in majority-minority and other public schools: 2015–16



NOTE: Majority-minority (more than half of the students are racial or ethnic minorities) and other (at least half of students are White and non-Hispanic) schools were classified based on the percentage of minority student enrollment. The 7 percent of responding schools for which data on student race/ethnicity were not available are excluded. Ratios include only schools that reported staff in each position (i.e., any counselor, any psychologist, any social worker, any mental health staff member). In creating the full-time equivalent (FTE) of staff from counts of full-time and part-time staff, the assumption was made that each part-time staff member was equivalent to 0.5 FTE.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), "Public School Teacher Data File," 2015–16.

Endnotes

¹ Yeager, D.S., Purdie-Vaughns, V., Hooper, S.Y., & Cohen, G.L. (2017). Loss of Institutional Trust Among Racial and Ethnic Minority Adolescents: A Consequence of Procedural Injustice and a Cause of Life-Span Outcomes. *Child Development*, 88(2): 658-676.

² Marrast, L., Himmelstein, D.U., & Woolhandler, S. (2016). Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Mental Health Care for Children and Young Adults: A National Study. *International Journal of Health Services*, 46(4): 810-824.

³ American School Counselor Association. (2012). *ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs*. Alexandria, VA: American School Counselor Association.

This NCES Data Point presents information on education topics of current interest. It was authored by Megha Nagaswami of Avar Consulting and Maura Spiegelman of National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Estimates based on samples are subject to sampling variability, and apparent differences may not be statistically

significant. All stated differences are statistically significant at the .05 level without adjustments for multiple comparisons. In the design, conduct, and data processing of NCES surveys, efforts are made to minimize the effects of nonsampling errors, such as item nonresponse, measurement error, data processing error, or other systematic error.