

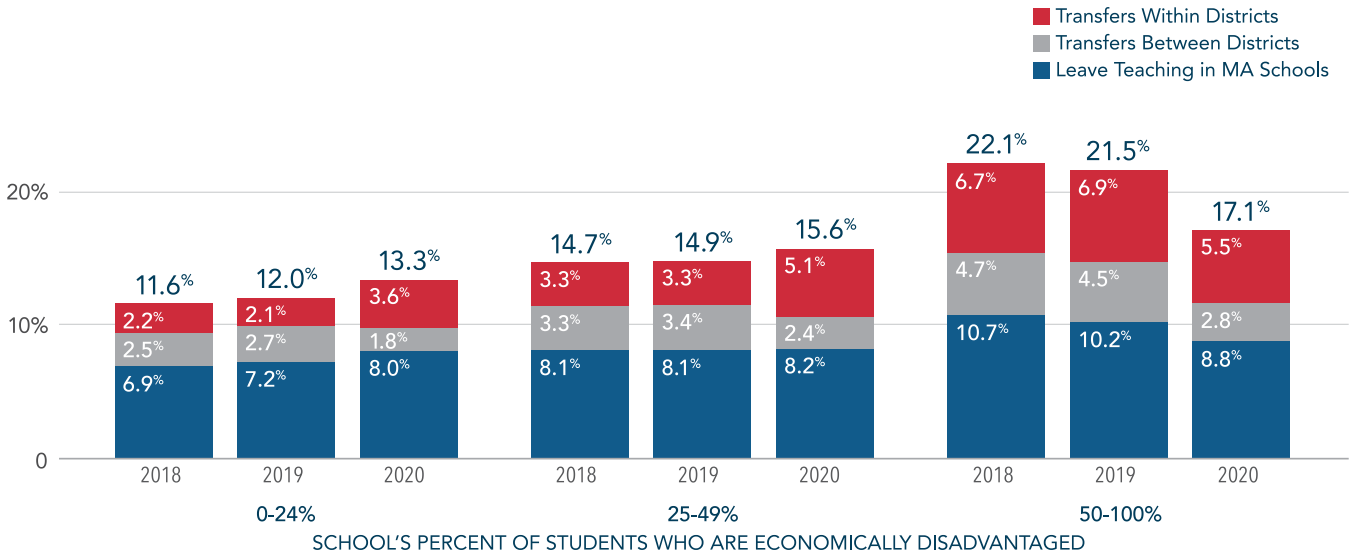




**FINDING 2: School and teacher characteristics affected teacher turnover during the pandemic.**

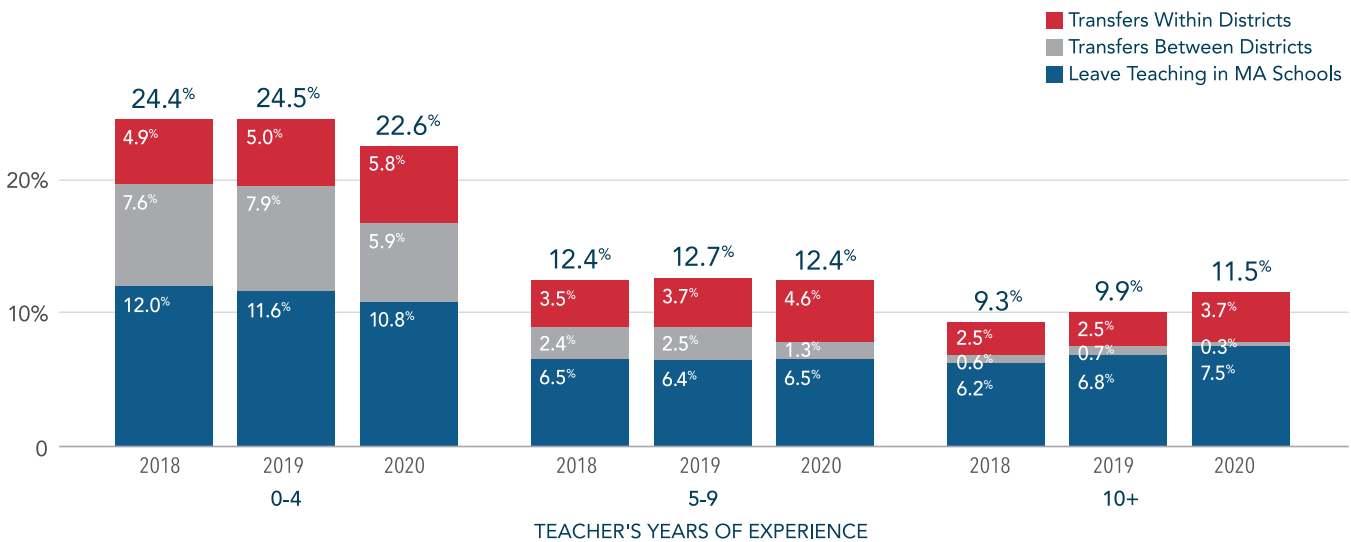
**School characteristics.** In the years prior to the pandemic, teacher turnover was substantially higher in schools where more than 50% of students are economically disadvantaged.<sup>5</sup> However, these gaps tightened over the summer of 2020 when turnover in these schools *decreased*. By contrast, turnover increased slightly between the spring and fall of 2020 in schools serving more economically advantaged students (see Figure 3). A similar pattern emerged between schools serving high and low concentrations of Black or Hispanic/Latinx students, such that schools with high concentrations of Black or Hispanic/Latinx students saw lower teacher turnover during the first year of the pandemic compared to prior years, while schools serving predominantly White students saw increases in teacher turnover (See Appendix Figure A1).

**FIGURE 3: Spring to Fall Teacher Turnover By Economically Disadvantaged and School Year**



**Teacher characteristics.** In the years prior to the pandemic, turnover was typically higher among teachers in the early stages of their career than among more experienced educators. However, this gap also tightened during the pandemic. Figure 4 shows that turnover among teachers in the first 5 years of their career decreased in 2020 compared to prior years, whereas turnover among teachers with 10 or more years of experience increased slightly.

**FIGURE 4: Spring to Fall Teacher Turnover By Experience Category and School Year**



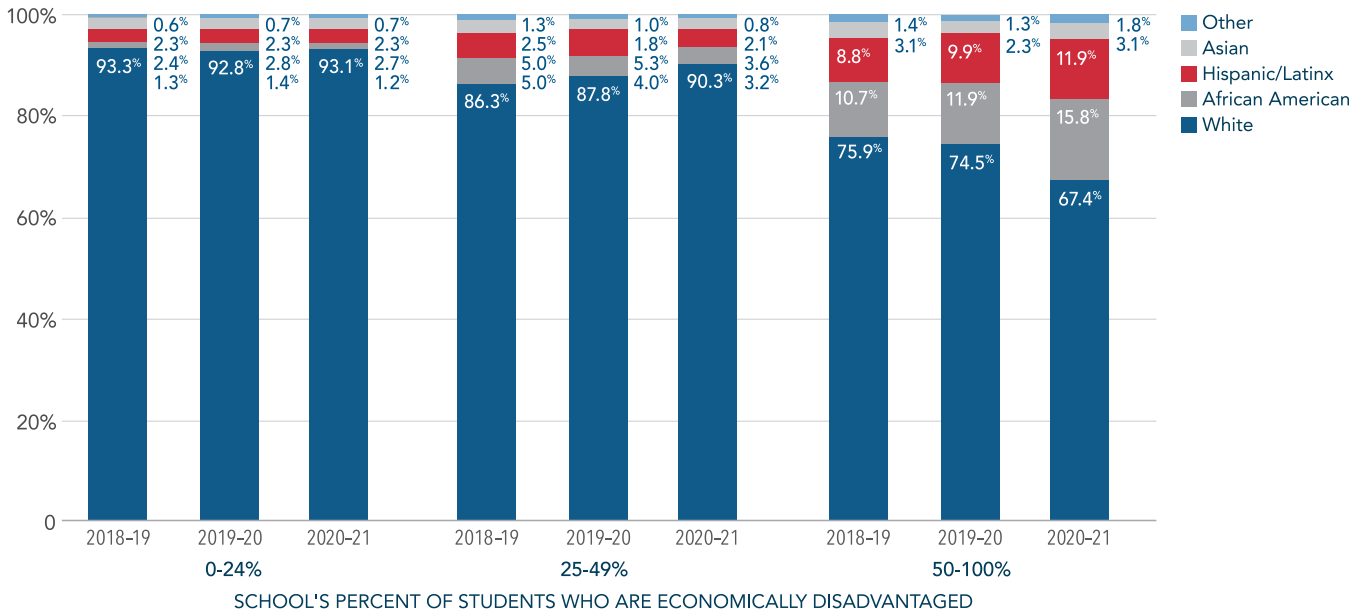
**FINDING 3: Diversity continues to increase among newly hired teachers.**

More than 7,000 newly hired teachers joined the workforce in the fall of 2020, comprising approximately 9% of the 2020-2021 teacher workforce. While the overall number of newly hired teachers has continued to decline slightly in recent years, there has been a consistent upward trend in the racial and ethnic diversity of the teacher workforce in Massachusetts.

The percentage of newly hired teachers who are Black or Hispanic/Latinx increased over the past 5 years from 7.6% in 2015-2016 to 13.8% in 2020-2021 (see Appendix Figure A2). As shown in Figure 5, this trend is most prominent among schools serving high concentrations of economically disadvantaged students. The same patterns exist among schools serving high concentrations of Black or Hispanic/Latinx students (see Appendix Figure A3).

Moreover, turnover among Black and Hispanic/Latinx teachers decreased during the pandemic, while turnover among White teachers increased slightly (See Appendix Figure A4). The result of these two forces—increased ethnic-racial diversity among new hires and increased retention of teachers of color—is that Black and Hispanic/Latinx teachers comprised an increasing share of the teacher workforce in Massachusetts going into the 2020-2021 school year.

**FIGURE 5: Race/Ethnicity of New Hires By Economically Disadvantaged and School Year**

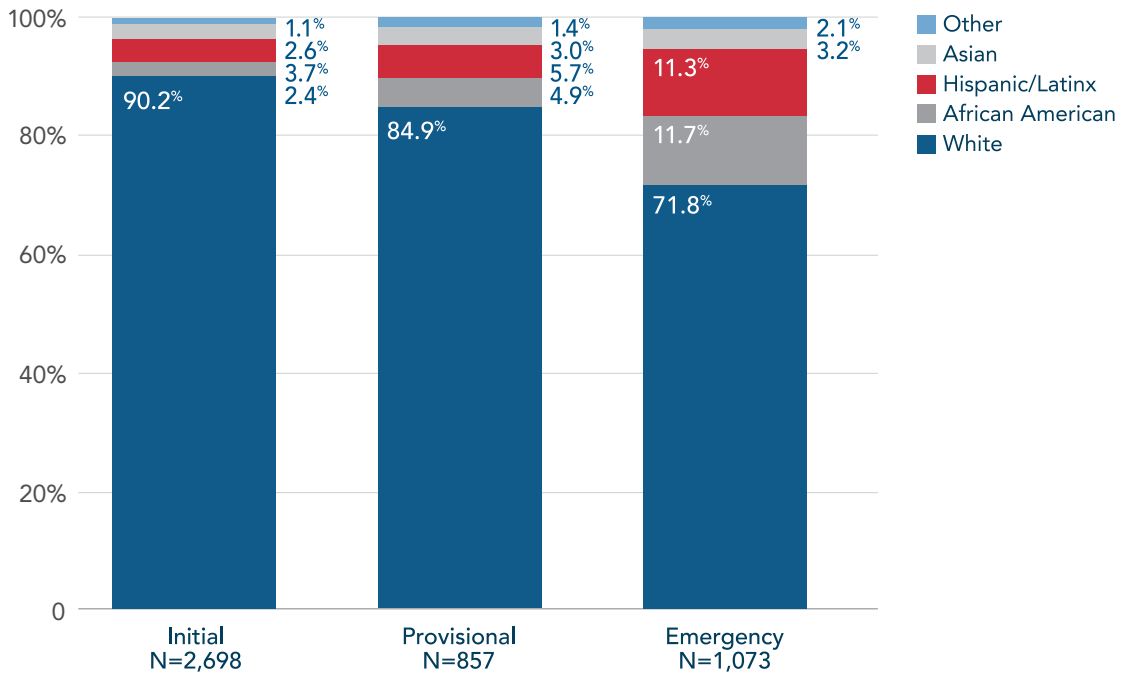


Note: The category “Other” includes American Indian, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and multiracial teachers.

**Emergency License.** One contributing factor to the increased racial and ethnic diversity among newly hired teachers is the offering of emergency teaching licenses. In response to the unique challenges raised by the pandemic that prevented many individuals from fulfilling the requirements for traditional teacher licensure, DESE created the emergency teacher license, for which individuals need a bachelor’s degree and “sound moral character” to qualify.<sup>6</sup> Among newly hired teachers in 2020-2021, approximately 15% held an emergency license.

Figure 6 shows that newly hired teachers holding an emergency license were substantially more likely to be Black or Hispanic/Latinx than other newly hired teachers. Approximately 30% of newly hired teachers in 2020-2021 who held emergency teaching licenses were people of color. By contrast, 10% of newly hired teachers who held initial licenses and 15% of those who held provisional licenses were people of color in 2020-2021.

FIGURE 6: Race/Ethnicity of New Hires By License Type



Note: The category "Other" includes American Indian, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and multiracial teachers.

## Conclusion

This research brief presents an analysis of the changes in the Massachusetts teacher workforce during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, we find that fears of substantial increases in turnover were not realized by the fall of 2020. On average, teachers who were employed in Massachusetts during the onset of the pandemic in the spring of 2020 were just as likely to remain in teaching as in prior years.

Nonetheless, there were modest changes among certain teacher and school populations. These patterns—perhaps surprisingly—worked in the direction of decreasing turnover among teacher populations and schools that historically had high levels of attrition. In other words, there were modest reductions in turnover gaps during the pandemic. While it is too early to tell if these patterns will persist in future years, these findings suggest that there may be important lessons to learn from these schools that were able to lower turnover during the pandemic.

We also find a continuing trend of increased racial and ethnic diversity among the Massachusetts teaching workforce. The results show continued increases in the percentage of newly hired teachers of color in the fall of 2020, which may also reflect the offering of emergency licenses. We also find sizeable increases in the share of teachers of color hired in schools serving predominantly students of color. Taken together, these patterns of increasing racial and ethnic diversity in the teacher workforce suggest that students of color in the state likely had greater access to teachers of color during the pandemic than in prior years.

Although these stable overall turnover rates and promising increases in racial and ethnic diversity among the teacher workforce are reassuring, an important limitation to these findings is that they only present trends for the teacher workforce through the fall of 2020. It is still too early to tell how the workforce responded into the fall of the 2021-2022 school year, which is a topic that we plan to address in future analysis. Additional work underway, in continued partnership with the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, will also examine more comprehensively the impact of the emergency licensure on the composition of the workforce and on teaching and learning.

Note: The authors are grateful to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for providing data access, feedback, and comments throughout the research process, with particular thanks to Claire Abbott, Matt Deninger, Liz Losee, Elana McDermott, and Aubree Webb. We also thank everyone at the Wheelock Educational Policy Center for comments that improved this work.

## References

- Aldeman, C., Goldhaber, D., Theobald, R. (2021). *Examining the Dimensions of Teacher Turnover*. (CALDER Flash Brief No. 24-0421). Arlington, VA: National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research.
- Bastian, K. C., & Fuller, S. C. (2021). *Teacher and Principal Attrition During the COVID-19 Pandemic in North Carolina*. Chapel Hill, NC: Education Policy Initiative at Carolina.
- Irons, M. E. (2020, June 23). *More than 2,000 Massachusetts educators have received layoff or nonrenewal notices*. The Boston Globe. [www.bostonglobe.com/2020/06/23/metro/more-than-2000-massachusetts-educators-have-received-layoff-or-nonrenewal-notices/](http://www.bostonglobe.com/2020/06/23/metro/more-than-2000-massachusetts-educators-have-received-layoff-or-nonrenewal-notices/)
- Page, S. (2020, May 26). *Back to school? 1 in 5 teachers are unlikely to return to reopened classrooms this fall, poll says*. USA Today. [www.usatoday.com/story/news/education/2020/05/26/coronavirus-schools-teachers-poll-ipsos-parents-fall-online/5254729002/](http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/education/2020/05/26/coronavirus-schools-teachers-poll-ipsos-parents-fall-online/5254729002/)
- Richards, E. (2020, May 28). *'Going to see massive cuts': Without more coronavirus relief, school slash budgets, prep layoffs*. USA Today. [www.usatoday.com/story/news/education/2020/05/28/coronavirus-school-second-stimulus-teacher-layoffs/5244563002/](http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/education/2020/05/28/coronavirus-school-second-stimulus-teacher-layoffs/5244563002/)
- Rogers, K., & Spring, B. (2020, October 9). *A shortage of teachers and Covid-19 create a perfect storm for the education system*. CNBC. [www.cnbc.com/2020/10/09/teacher-shortage-and-covid-19-create-challenge-for-education-system.html](http://www.cnbc.com/2020/10/09/teacher-shortage-and-covid-19-create-challenge-for-education-system.html)

## Figure Notes

### FIGURE 1

2016: N=79,869  
2017: N=79,746  
2018: N=81,360  
2019: N=83,067  
2020: N=83,671

### FIGURE 3

Percent Ec. Disadv. 0-24% 2018: N=40,207  
Percent Ec. Disadv. 0-24% 2019: N=39,851  
Percent Ec. Disadv. 0-24% 2020: N=36,454  
Percent Ec. Disadv. 25-49% 2018: N=23,906  
Percent Ec. Disadv. 25-49% 2019: N=24,497  
Percent Ec. Disadv. 25-49% 2020: N=24,949  
Percent Ec. Disadv. 50-100% 2018: N=16,937  
Percent Ec. Disadv. 50-100% 2019: N=18,379  
Percent Ec. Disadv. 50-100% 2020: N=21,770

### FIGURE 4

Experience 0-4 2018: N=26,021  
Experience 0-4 2019: N=25,770  
Experience 0-4 2020: N=25,631  
Experience 5-9 2018: N=16,170  
Experience 5-9 2019: N=17,866  
Experience 5-9 2020: N=18,731  
Experience 10+ 2018: N=39,169  
Experience 10+ 2019: N=39,429  
Experience 10+ 2020: N=39,309

### FIGURE 5

Percent Ec. Disadv. 0-24% 18-19: N=2,980  
Percent Ec. Disadv. 0-24% 19-20: N=2,618  
Percent Ec. Disadv. 0-24% 20-21: N=2,427  
Percent Ec. Disadv. 25-49% 18-19: N=2,157  
Percent Ec. Disadv. 25-49% 19-20: N=2,109  
Percent Ec. Disadv. 25-49% 20-21: N=1,748  
Percent Ec. Disadv. 50-100% 18-19: N=2,513  
Percent Ec. Disadv. 50-100% 19-20: N=2,655  
Percent Ec. Disadv. 50-100% 20-21: N=2,712

### FIGURE 6

Initial: N=2,698  
Provisional: N=857  
Emergency: N=1,073

## APPENDIX

FIGURE A1: Spring to Fall Teacher Turnover By Black and Hispanic/Latinx Students and School Year

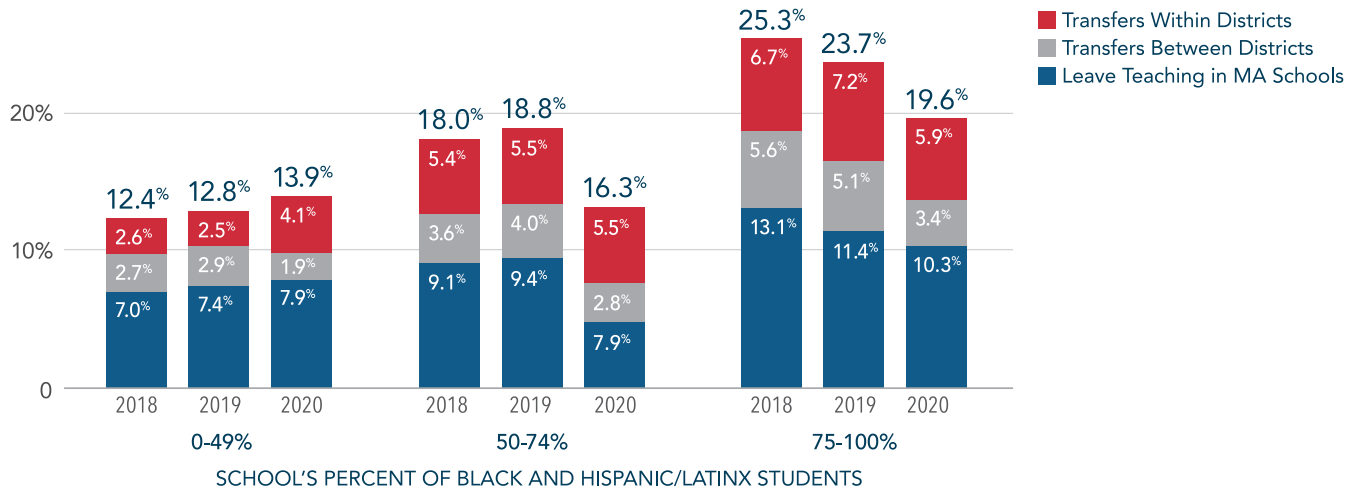
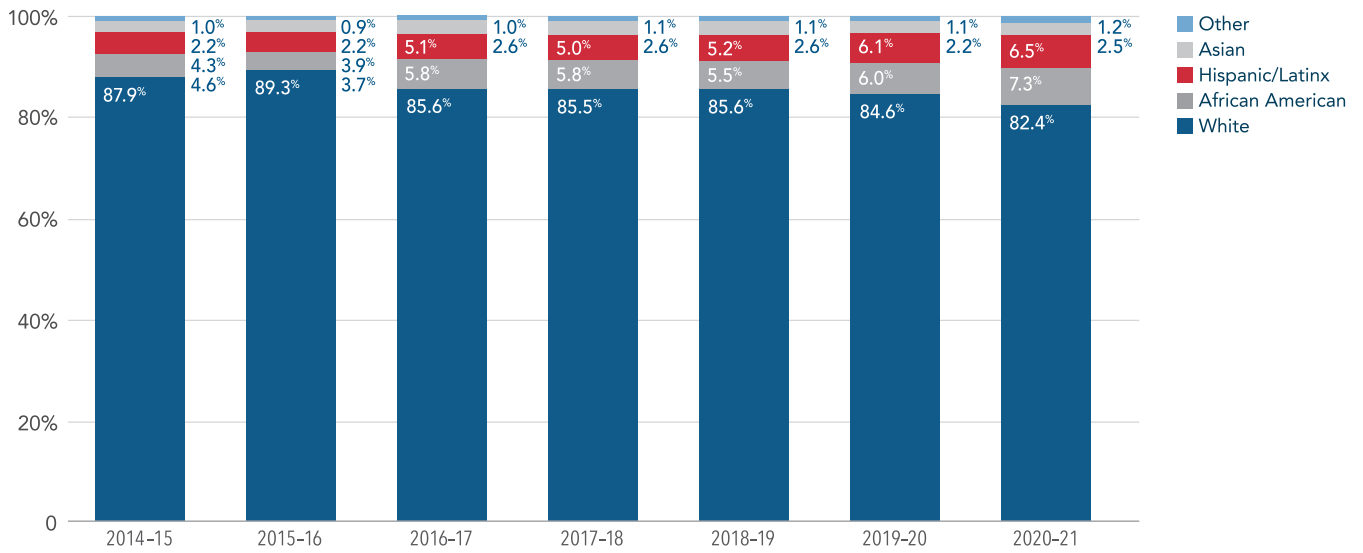
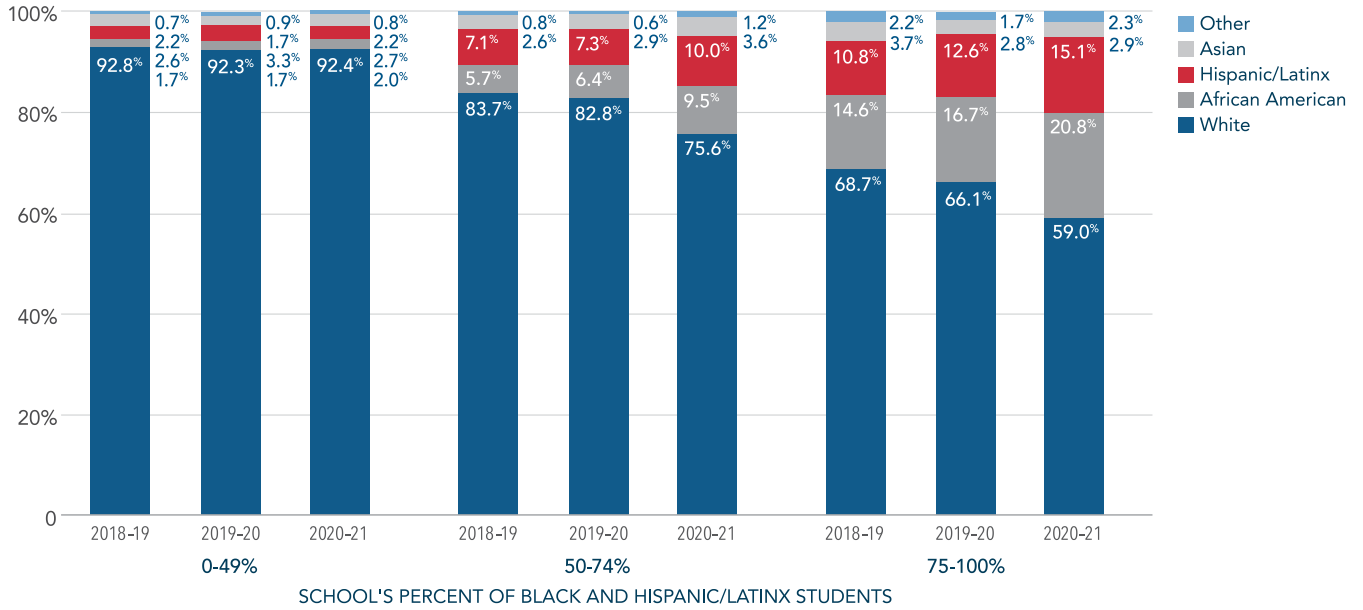


FIGURE A2: Race/Ethnicity of New Hires By School Year



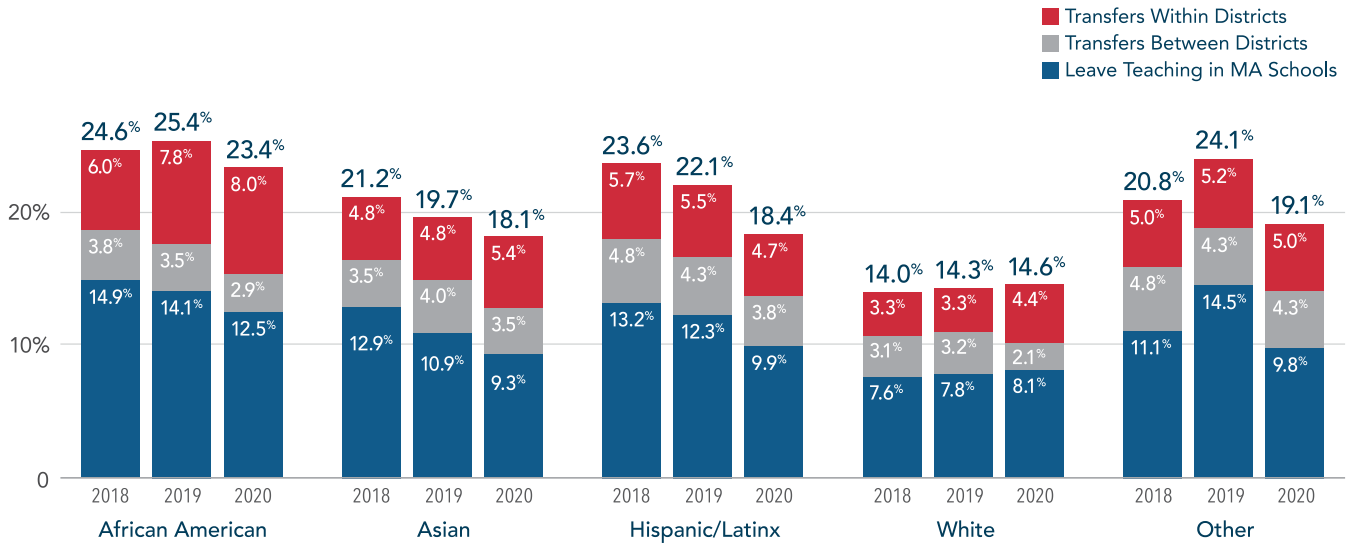
Note: The category "Other" includes American Indian, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and multiracial teachers.

FIGURE A3: Race/Ethnicity of New Hires By Black and Hispanic/Latinx Students and School Year



Note: The category "Other" includes American Indian, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and multiracial teachers.

FIGURE A4: Spring to Fall Teacher Turnover By Race/Ethnicity and School Year



Note: The category "Other" includes American Indian, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and multiracial teachers.



## Appendix Figure Notes

### Figure A1

Percent Black and Hispanic/Latinx 0-49% 2018: N=61,642  
Percent Black and Hispanic/Latinx 0-49% 2019: N=61,954  
Percent Black and Hispanic/Latinx 0-49% 2020: N=61,721  
Percent Black and Hispanic/Latinx 50-74% 2018: N=8,548  
Percent Black and Hispanic/Latinx 50-74% 2019: N=9,343  
Percent Black and Hispanic/Latinx 50-74% 2020: N=9,785  
Percent Black and Hispanic/Latinx 75-100% 2018: N=10,860  
Percent Black and Hispanic/Latinx 75-100% 2019: N=11,430  
Percent Black and Hispanic/Latinx 75-100% 2020: N=11,667

### Figure A2

14-15: N=8,051  
15-16: N=6,988  
16-17: N=7,605  
17-18: N=8,754  
18-19: N=7,700  
19-20: N=7,482  
20-21: N=7,047

### Figure A3

Percent Black and Hispanic/Latinx 0-49% 18-19: N=4,710  
Percent Black and Hispanic/Latinx 0-49% 19-20: N=4,580  
Percent Black and Hispanic/Latinx 0-49% 20-21: N=4,393  
Percent Black and Hispanic/Latinx 50-74% 18-19: N=1,062  
Percent Black and Hispanic/Latinx 50-74% 19-20: N=1,070  
Percent Black and Hispanic/Latinx 50-74% 20-21: N=829  
Percent Black and Hispanic/Latinx 75-100% 18-19: N=1,878  
Percent Black and Hispanic/Latinx 75-100% 19-20: N=1,732  
Percent Black and Hispanic/Latinx 75-100% 20-21: N=1,665

### Figure A4

African American 2018: N=2,465  
African American 2019: N=2,585  
African American 2020: N=2,678  
Asian 2018: N=1,211  
Asian 2019: N=1,274  
Asian 2020: N=1,290  
Hispanic/Latinx 2018: N=2,458  
Hispanic/Latinx 2019: N=2,602  
Hispanic/Latinx 2020: N=2,759  
White 2018: N=74,668  
White 2019: N=76,020  
White 2020: N=76,371  
Other 2018: N=558  
Other 2019: N=586  
Other 2020: N=573

## More Information & Additional Resources

For more information, visit [wheelockpolicycenter.org](http://wheelockpolicycenter.org).

### ENDNOTES

- 1 Authors' names listed in alphabetic order.
- 2 For examples, see Page (2020) and Rogers & Spring (2020).
- 3 For examples, see Richards (2020) and Irons (2020).
- 4 Stability in teacher attrition during the onset of the pandemic has similarly been observed in other states, such as Washington and North Carolina (Aldeman et al., 2021; Bastian & Fuller, 2021).
- 5 The "economically disadvantaged" designation is based on a student's participation in one or more of the following programs: the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); the Transitional Assistance for Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC); the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families' (DCF) foster care program; and MassHealth (Medicaid).
- 6 Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (n.d.). *Academic Overview of Emergency Licenses*. [www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/licensure/academic-overview-for-emergency-license.docx](http://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/licensure/academic-overview-for-emergency-license.docx).

### OUR MISSION

The Wheelock Educational Policy Center (WEPC) conducts and disseminates rigorous, policy-relevant education research in partnership with local, state, and federal policymakers and stakeholders to improve educational opportunities and holistic outcomes for underserved students.

[www.wheelockpolicycenter.org](http://www.wheelockpolicycenter.org)  
[wheelockpolicy@bu.edu](mailto:wheelockpolicy@bu.edu)



**Boston University** Wheelock College of Education & Human Development  
Wheelock Educational Policy Center

