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Islamic Schools League of America
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STAFFING TRENDS IN FULL-TIME ISLAMIC SCHOOLS

*Demographics, salaries,
qualifications and more*

ISLA's 
**DATABASE
PROJECT**

FEBRUARY 2025

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INTRODUCTION



Introduction

Full-time K-12 Islamic schools have existed in the U.S. for nearly a century, yet there is little data on their growth and performance. To address this gap, the Islamic Schools League of America (ISLA) launched the ISLA Database Project in 2021 in order to create a comprehensive directory of U.S. Islamic schools and to gather data on various aspects of these Islamic schools, including staffing, finances, governance, and educational practices. This data was collected through ISLA's Islamic School Profile Survey. This report shares results related to school staffing, which includes data on teacher demographics, compensation and benefits, qualifications, and retention.

The ISLA Database Report Goals

All of the reports generated through the ISLA Database Project, including this one, aim to provide insights for Islamic school stakeholders, including board members, administrators, teachers, parents, educational researchers, and the broader community, in order to accomplish several goals:

1. Understand the Educational Landscape

The findings fill a gap in our understanding about Islamic schools by providing data that can help educators, researchers, parents, and supporters understand the landscape of Islamic schools in the United States and gain insights into the challenges and opportunities within the Islamic school ecosystem.

2. Baseline Data for Benchmarking

Islamic school stakeholders can use these reports to begin to benchmark their school's performance in comparison to other Islamic schools in key areas such as staffing, teacher compensation and school governance.

3. Decision Making and Resource Allocation

By identifying and understanding trends in areas such as teacher retention, student enrollment, and financial structures, Islamic school stakeholders can enhance their decision-making processes, implement best practices that align with their educational and organizational goals, and allocate resources more strategically.

4. Community and Policy Development

The reports offer greater transparency on the operations and governance of Islamic schools, helping inform conversations amongst Muslim communities to ensure they are utilizing resources in a manner that their stakeholders support, while developing policies that address areas of interest and concern.

5. Strategic Planning

The reports empower constituents to make informed decisions on critical issues and proactively address future challenges, such as shifts in student demographics or changes in funding requirements, ensuring long-term success and sustainability.

BACKGROUND



Background

The Islamic School Profile Survey builds on two previous studies aimed at providing a comprehensive overview of full-time Islamic schools in the U.S. The first study, published by the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) in 1989, identified around 50 full-time Islamic schools in the country. The second study, conducted in 2011 by Karen Keyworth, the founding executive director of ISLA, reported 235 Islamic schools. Since then, no further studies have been conducted on the broader landscape of U.S. Islamic schools.

In response to this gap, ISLA launched the Database Project in 2021 with two key objectives: (1) Update the directory of U.S. full-time Islamic schools, and (2) Develop a data-based “profile” of these schools. By profile, we mean that we sought to create a data-based description of key characteristics of Islamic schools derived from an analysis of the survey data.

At the time of publication, ISLA identified and verified 290 full-time Islamic schools through systematic validation efforts, including online research, phone calls to schools, in-person and individual outreach to Islamic school administrators and staff. Yet, based off of other reports, such as the ISPU 2020 American Mosque Study, and data that points to the emergence of dozens of new Islamic schools being established every year, we estimate that the actual number could be closer to 400 full-time Islamic schools in the United States.



ISLA's DATABASE PROJECT

- Staffing
- Student Demographics & Enrollment
- Finance & Operations
- Teaching & Learning



Survey Development

To achieve the second objective of the Database Project, i.e. to create a data-based profile of Islamic schools, ISLA began by developing a survey through a three-phase process. First, we reviewed relevant literature and surveys that were used previously in U.S. full-time Islamic schools and private schools more generally. This step informed the creation of the initial draft of the survey.

In the second phase, we reached out to diverse stakeholders, including researchers, Islamic school leaders, and the project advisors to ensure the survey questions were comprehensive and would yield insights that are aligned with community needs.

The third phase involved inputting the survey questions to Qualtrics, an online software for survey development and administration. It was then shared with selected school administrators, parents, Muslim educators, and researchers for feedback. Based on their feedback, further modifications were made to refine the questions, content, length and format of the survey.

The final version of the survey that was administered to the Islamic school community contained 48 items, divided into two parts. Part I acquired information about each school that is available on ISLA's online Directory of Islamic Schools. Part II gathered data organized into five sections: 1) Student Demographics and Enrollment, 2) Teaching and Learning, 3) Staffing, 4) Finance and Operations, and 5) Governance and Leadership. An optional open-ended question at the end allowed for general feedback. Data from Part II was aggregated and anonymized for dissemination.

This report focuses specifically on the responses from Part II related to Staffing, which included 18 items covering areas such as teacher qualifications, compensation, and retention.



SURVEY ADMINISTRATION



Survey Administration

The survey was administered between November 2021– May 2022 to ensure that all responses captured data related to the same academic year. Only full-time Islamic schools providing instruction for grades KG–12 in the United States were eligible to participate; schools solely offering KG were not included. Each school was instructed to have the school administrator, such as the principal or superintendent, fill out and submit one survey per school.

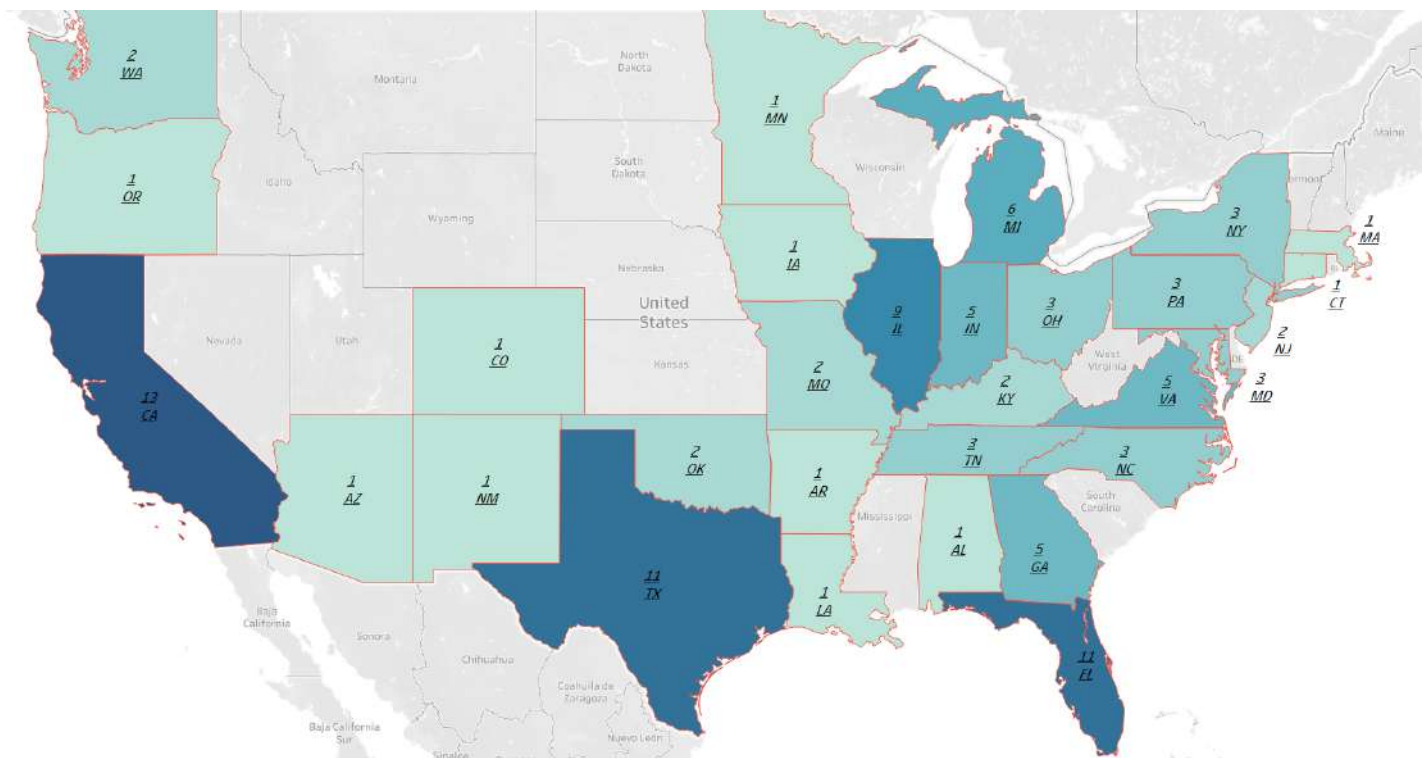
The survey was initially distributed via email and WhatsApp. Several other methods to increase the response rate were engaged. Multiple emails were sent to Islamic school administrators and staff, which explained the rationale for the survey. Phone calls were made to school administrators and office staff, followed by targeted emails to non-responders. A soft copy of the survey and a certificate of confidentiality were emailed to schools upon request so that they could preview the survey questions. There was also in-person recruitment at two Islamic educational conferences, one in Illinois and the other in California, at which educators were told about the importance of having their school participate in the survey.

The survey closed in May 2022 with 104 valid and complete responses after the removal of duplicates and incomplete entries. The map below shows the distribution of responses, with the darker colors indicating a greater concentration of schools' responses in that state.

TOTAL RESPONSES

104

FULL-TIME U.S.
ISLAMIC SCHOOLS



Distribution of Responses from Islamic Schools (N=104).

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS



General Characteristics of Survey Sample

In this section, we describe the general characteristics of the sample, including the schools' geographic distribution, student enrollment size and grade bands offered.

Geographic Distribution

The 104 responses to the survey came from full-time Islamic schools across 30 states. The map reveals that responses to this survey were received in the highest concentration from those located in California (13), Texas (11), and Florida (11), with notable clusters in the Northeast (e.g., New York, New Jersey, Maryland) and the Midwest (e.g., Illinois, Michigan).

States like Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Arkansas, and Minnesota each had only one Islamic school response included in our sample. Additionally, entire regions such as the Mountain West and parts of the Great Plains have little to no representation in our findings. Central and northern states like Wyoming, Montana, and the Dakotas have no schools represented. This absence could be because ISLA had limited connection to schools in these regions and states, leading to underrepresentation in the data, and/or because few Islamic schools exist there.

Student Enrollment

The average number of students in Islamic schools that participated in the survey was 228. The mode, or the most commonly entered number in the sample, was 160 students. The difference between the smallest and largest schools was 925 students. The smallest school had 10 students, while the largest had 935. This wide gap highlights the range of student enrollments found in Islamic schools across the country.

AVERAGE STUDENTS

228

AT ISLAMIC SCHOOLS

Grades Offered

The majority of schools offered a full spectrum of education, from elementary through high school. About one third of the schools offered only elementary and middle school levels, while only one responding school in the data set provided only high school education.

School Configurations by Grade Band Provided	Percentage of Responding Schools
Elementary, Middle & High Schools	62%
Elementary & Middle School Only	31%
Middle & High Schools Only	1%
Elementary School Only	6%
Middle School Only	0%
High School Only	1%

Table 1: School Configurations by Grade Band Provided



Findings and Discussion

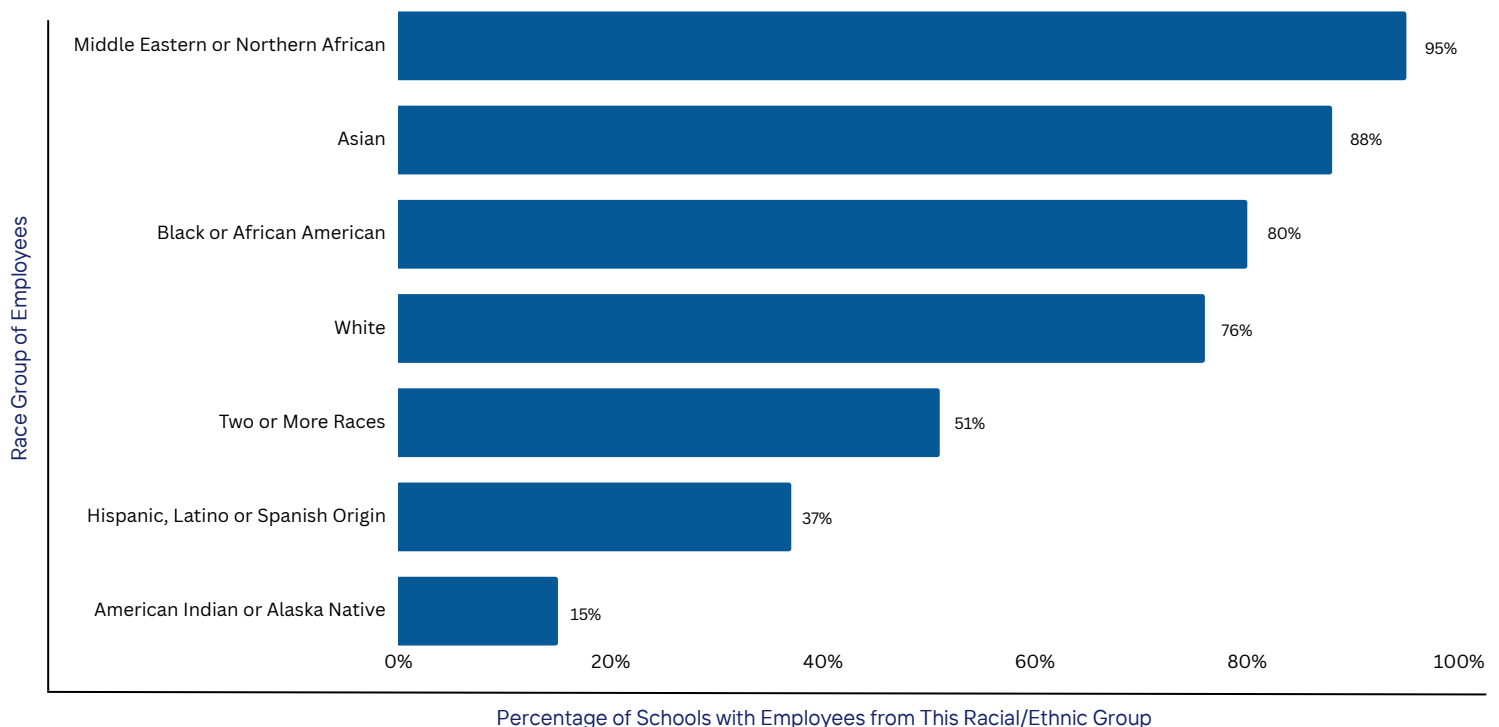
Racial/Ethnic Demographics of Employees in Islamic Schools

Based off of the responses collected from the principals and heads of schools who responded to our survey, the racial and ethnic demographics of their employees were reported and represented in the two graphs. The racial and demographic categories were derived from the U.S. Census Bureau, with the inclusion of the recommended category of Middle Eastern or North African (MENA).

In the first graph, we see that among the surveyed schools, 95% reported having employees who are Middle Eastern or Northern African (MENA), while 88% reported having Asian employees. Additionally, 80% of schools indicated having Black or African American employees, and 76% reported employing White staff members. Employees of Two or More Races were present in 51% of the surveyed schools, whereas 37% reported having employees of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin. The lowest representation was among American Indian or Alaska Native employees, with only 15% of schools reporting their presence.

The presence of different racial groups among employees varied across schools, with some schools reporting a higher concentration of certain racial groups while others had little to no representation. As the second chart illustrates, the distribution of employees by race is not uniform, reflecting diverse hiring patterns and demographic compositions across surveyed schools.

Chart 1: Employees' Racial / Ethnic Demographics Represented in Islamic Schools



DEMOGRAPHICS



Employees of Middle Eastern or North African (MENA) background were the most prevalent in the majority of the Islamic schools that were surveyed. Specifically, 52% of schools reported between 26–50% of their staff were of MENA background, while another 24% indicated that over half their staff were of MENA background.

Staff of Asian descent were also prevalent. Among the responding schools, 40% reported that 1%–25% of their employees identified as Asian. Another 36% indicated that 26%–50% of their staff fell into this category, while 12% reported that more than half of their employees were of Asian descent. Meanwhile, 12% of schools reported having no employees identified as Asian.

The majority of schools in this sample, 62%, indicated that 1%–25% of all of their employees were Black or African American, while 20% of schools reported having no Black or African American employees. Only 6% indicated that 76% or more of their employees fell in this category.

Sixty-four percent of responding schools identified 1–25% of their employees as White. In 37% of schools, 1%–25% of employees were identified as Hispanic, while in 63% of the schools there were no employees identified as such. Islamic schools were least likely to have employees identified as American Indian and Alaska native, appearing to be largely absent in Islamic schools, with 85% of schools reporting none. Employees of Two or More Races were represented in smaller percentages across the schools.

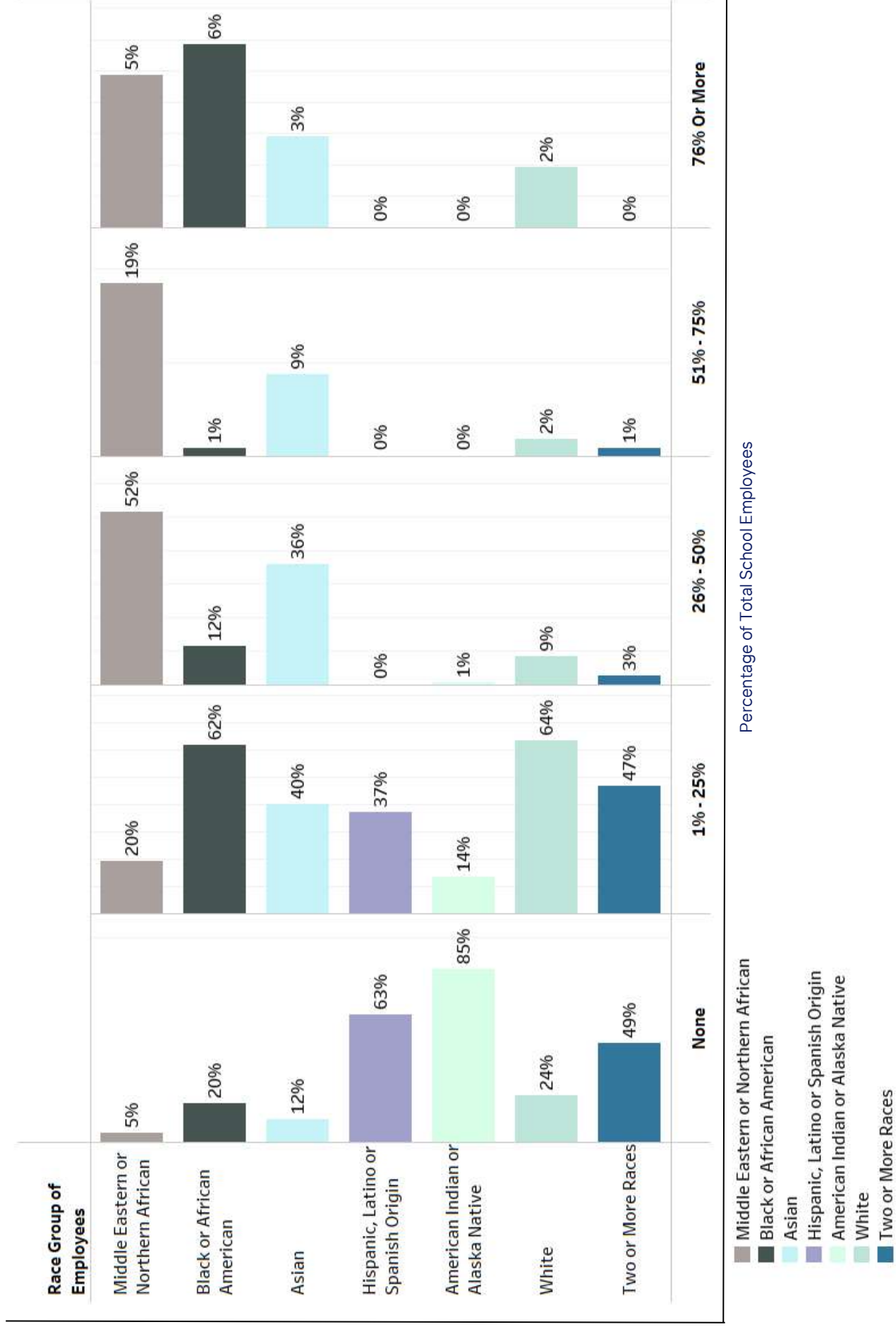
What Can We Learn From Racial/Ethnic Demographic Data?

To answer this survey item, respondents had to estimate the percentage of their total staff that belonged to each racial or ethnic category. Their estimations were likely based on observations and inferences. Therefore, we acknowledge that there is still a strong need to gather accurate demographic data so that administrators and prospective staff and families can understand how racially and ethnically diverse Islamic schools really are. This data can then serve as the foundation for correlational studies exploring other important facets of Islamic schools, such as healthy school culture, sense of belonging, academic achievement, and more.

As Muslims, we understand that diversity is a gift from Allah and we are encouraged “to know one another” (Surah Hujurat, verse 13). However, what we have seen is that, too often, our masajid and schools may not be the inclusive, welcoming spaces that our religion compels us to cultivate. While some of this is due to historical factors that influence the current residential patterns that we see in various cities across this country, there is also reason to believe that other causes for racially/ethnically segregated Islamic schools may be due to our own ignorance or lack of prioritizing the work needed to build educational institutions that welcome and support the well-being of all of our staff, students and families— no matter their racial, ethnic backgrounds.

We hope that this data provides some beginning insight into the racial/ethnic demographic composition of our schools in order to ground these important conversations in research-based insights.

Chart 2: What percentage of the school's employees falls into each of the following racial/ethnic categories? Make a selection for every row 1





Teaching Staff in Islamic Schools

Respondents were asked to enter the total number of teachers that were hired either as full-time or part-time employees. Schools generally employed more full-time than part-time teachers, with an average of 22 full-time teachers and six part-time teachers. It is important to note that there was significant variation across schools, particularly with larger schools, which ultimately skewed the average upwards. The mode, meaning the most commonly entered number by the respondents, was 18 full-time and 4 part-time teachers.

AVERAGE FULL-TIME

22
TEACHERS
AT ISLAMIC SCHOOLS

Non-Teaching Staff In Islamic Schools

To better understand trends related to staffing of non-teaching roles at Islamic schools, the roles were categorized into three groups: Administration and Operations, Academic Support, and Health and Wellness Staff. Respondents were asked whether these roles are filled by Full-Time or Part-time staff, Volunteers, or Job Not Available.

Administrative & Operational Roles

The chart below displays data regarding several key administrative and operational roles in the surveyed schools, including Accountants, Administrative Assistants, Custodians, IT Specialists, Legal Counsel, and Operational Managers.

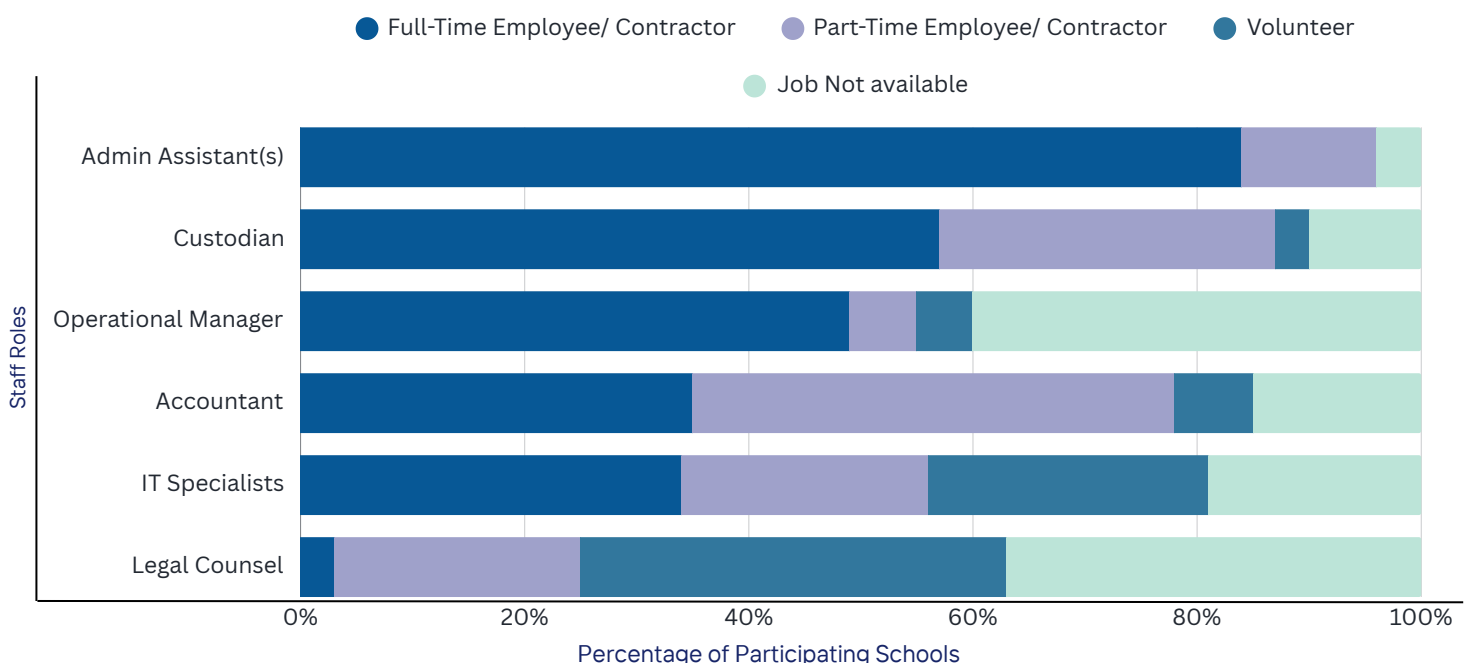


Chart 3: Select the employment status for each of the following roles at your school.
Select "Not Applicable" if the school does not have someone for that role.

NON-TEACHING STAFF



FULL-TIME STAFF AT ISLAMIC SCHOOLS

84%



F-T
ADMIN ASSISTANTS

57%



F-T
CUSTODIANS

49%



F-T OPERATIONS
MANAGER

Administrative Assistants were the most common non-teaching role with full-time employment in 84% of the responding Islamic schools. Fifty-seven percent of the schools indicated that custodians were full-time employees/contractors, though 30% of schools reported custodians as part-time. Operational Managers were also primarily full-time at 49%, although notably, 40% did not have this position available at their school.

IT Specialists were full-time at 34% of schools; 22% had a part-time employee or contractor and 25% had volunteers for this position. There was a notable part-time presence for Accountants, with 43% part-time versus 35% full-time.

The hiring patterns suggest that private schools strategically allocate resources by employing full-time staff for essential roles due to their daily importance in school operations. In contrast, roles like Accountants often have part-time positions (43%), as their responsibilities may be more seasonal and not require full-time employment.

Academic Support Roles:

Academic support roles encompass positions more directly linked to students' coursework and academic success, including College Counselors, Librarians, Curriculum Directors, Deans of Students, and Instructional Coaches.

The survey responses indicate that a significant number of Islamic schools lacked employees or volunteers in key academic support roles. For example, 53% did not have an Instructional Coach, 49% of the responding Islamic schools did not have a Curriculum Director, and 45% of the schools did not have College Counselors. In addition, 58% of schools also did not have a Dean of Students.

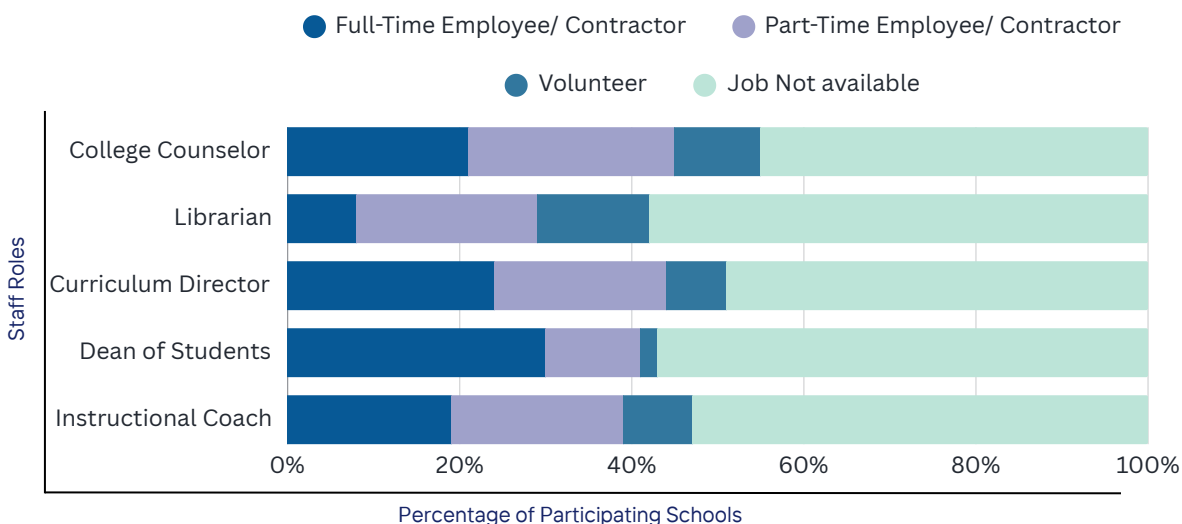


Chart 4: Select the employment status for each of the following roles at your school. Select "Not Applicable" if the school does not have someone for that role.

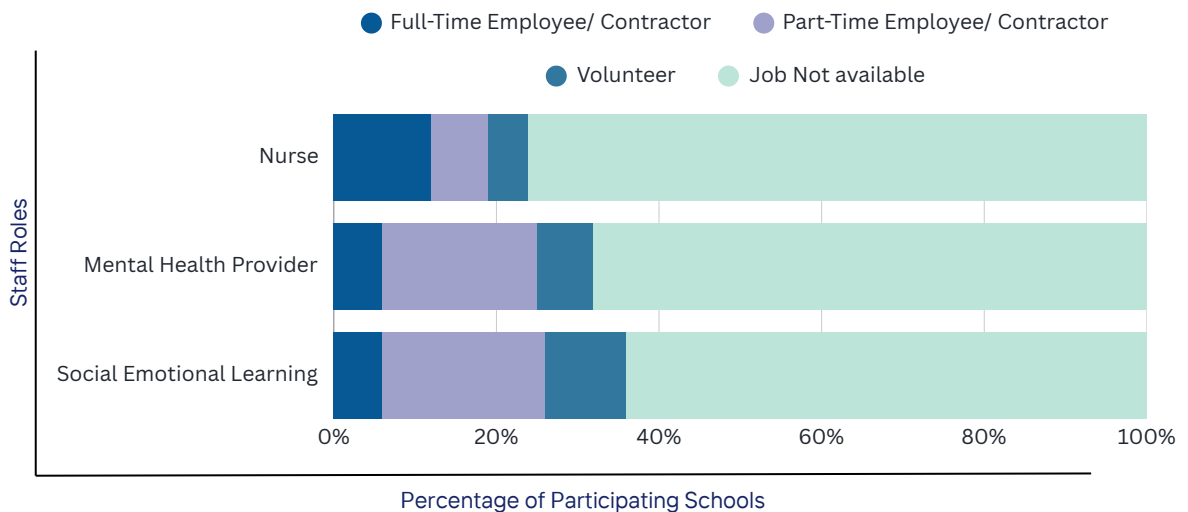
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION



Health and Wellness

The chart below illustrates the availability of health and wellness roles, such as Mental Health Providers, Nurses, and Social Emotional Learning (SEL) support staff in the surveyed schools.

Chart 5: Select the employment status for each of the following roles at your school.
Select "Not Applicable" if the school does not have someone for that role.



The lack of full-time employees or contractors for health and wellness roles is a revealing data point, one that requires further inquiry and investigation. Only 12% of the schools had a nurse employed full-time. In fact, in an overwhelming percentage of schools, 76%, the nurse position was a job that was not available. While a mental health provider was available in 32% of schools, only 6% had one employed or contracted full-time, while another 19% were part-time and 7% volunteers. Staff dedicated to social emotional learning were full-time only in 6% of the schools.

It is important to understand the possible impact that the absence of these personnel may have in Islamic schools, especially at a time when mental health issues are on the rise and physical health-related issues, such as COVID-19, have recently caused prolonged school closures. Students who do not have access to social emotional programs, college counselors, instructional coaches, librarians or a dean of students are most likely experiencing unnecessary stress as a result.

More generally speaking, non-teaching staff is not consistent across schools and is not adequate for the magnitude of schooling that Islamic schools aspire to. Tasks that need to be done in managing a school and supporting the administration and the academic programs often cannot wait and do not go away. These tasks most likely have to be done by someone and may leave teaching staff to perform many tasks outside their purview.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION



Teacher Qualifications

The following section presents a detailed breakdown of teachers' qualifications across various categories of teachers: Elementary School, Middle School, High School, and Quran, Arabic and Islamic Studies. This data offers insights into the educational and professional credentials of educators in the surveyed schools.

Elementary School Teachers

Below, elementary school teachers' qualifications are shown across three types of qualifications that we surveyed for: Teacher State Certification, Bachelors' Degree in Education, Masters Degree

Chart 6: Teacher State Certificate

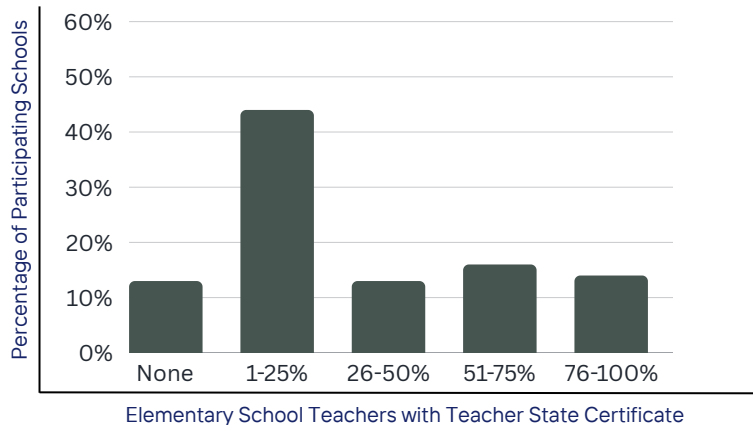


Chart 7: Bachelor's Degree in Education

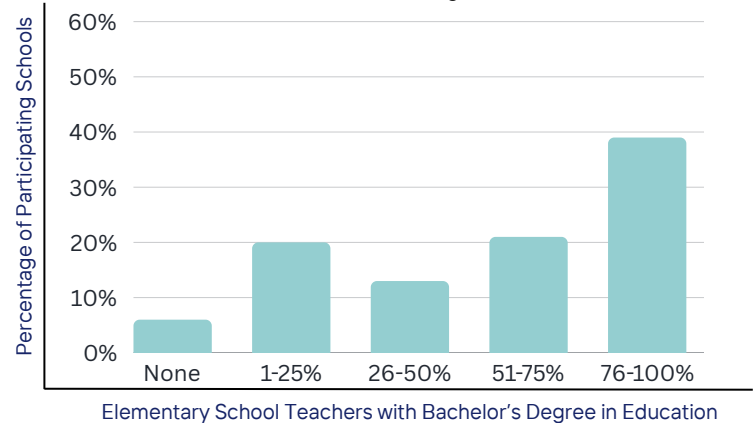


Chart 8: Masters Degree or Higher

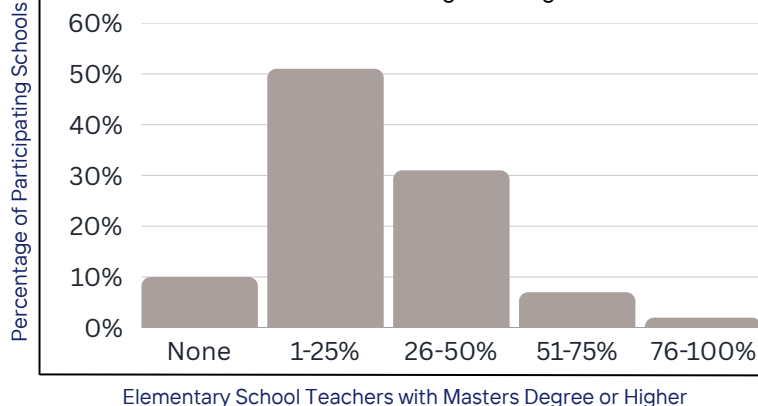


Chart 6-8: Indicate what percentage of your elementary teachers have: State Teacher Certification (Chart 6); Bachelor's Degree in Education (Chart 7), Master's Degree or Higher (Chart 8). For each qualification, respondents could select one of the following percentage ranges: None, 1-25%, 26-50%, 51-75%, or 76-100%.

Forty-four percent of schools reported that only 1-25% of their elementary school teachers were state-certified, indicating low certification rates across many schools. In addition, the majority of elementary school teachers (over 51%) were state-certified in only 30% of the schools. Sixty percent of schools had the majority of elementary school teachers with a Bachelor's Degree in Education. However, a large majority of schools, 82%, reported that less than half of the teachers had a Master's Degree or higher.

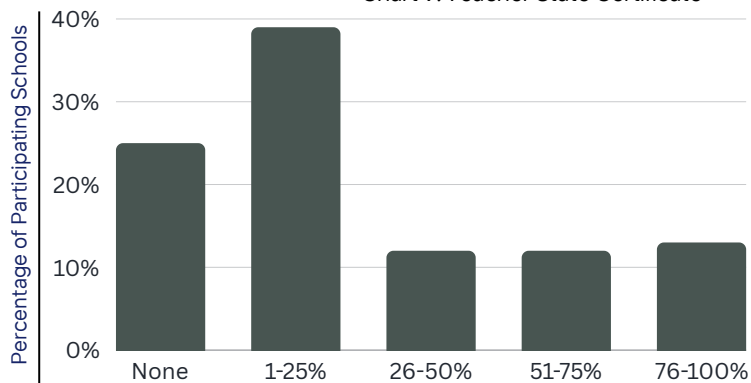
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION



Middle School Teachers' Qualifications

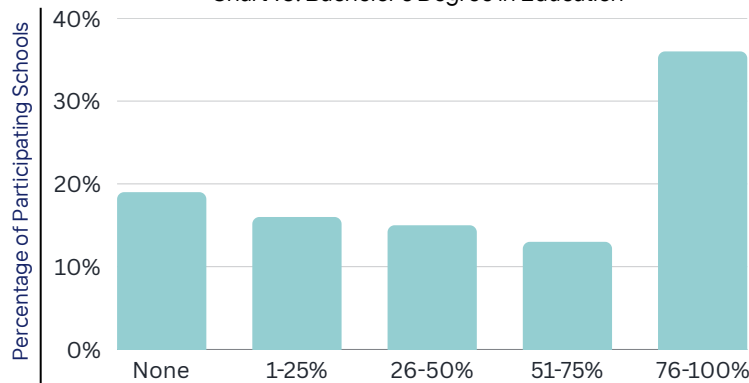
The charts below provide data on the qualifications of middle school teachers across the surveyed schools.

Chart 9: Teacher State Certificate



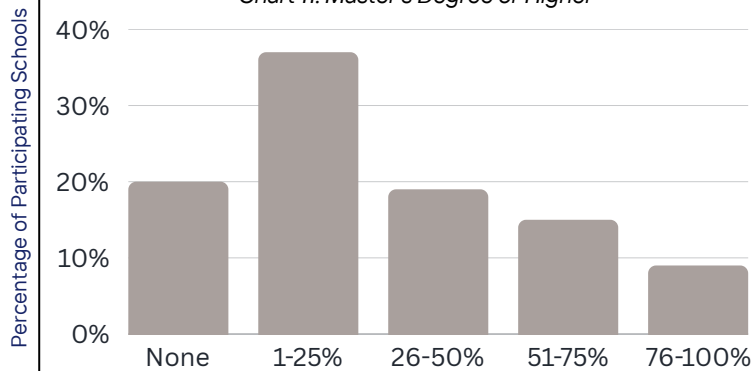
Middle School Teachers with Teacher State Certificate

Chart 10: Bachelor's Degree in Education



Middle School Teachers with Bachelor's Degree in Education

Chart 11: Master's Degree or Higher



Middle School Teachers with Master's Degree or Higher

Chart 9-11: Indicate what percentage of your middle school teachers have: State Teacher Certification (Chart 9), Bachelor's Degree in Education (Chart 10), Master's Degree or Higher (Chart 11). For each qualification, respondents could select one of the following percentage ranges: None, 1-25%, 26-50%, 51-75%, or 76-100%.

Similar to elementary school teachers, middle school teachers also had low certification rates across many schools; 25% reported that none of their middle school teachers were state certified, while 39% of schools reported that only 1%-25% of their middle school teachers had state certification. However, 25% reported that the majority of their middle school teachers (over 50%) were state certified. Forty-nine percent of schools reported that the majority of their middle school teachers (over 50%) had a Bachelor's Degree in Education. Only 29% of schools reported that the majority of their middle school teachers had a Master's Degree or higher; more commonly, schools reported that 1-25% of their middle school staff had a Master's or higher.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION



High School Teachers' Qualifications

The charts below provide data on the qualifications of high school teachers across the surveyed schools.

Chart 12. Teacher State Certificate

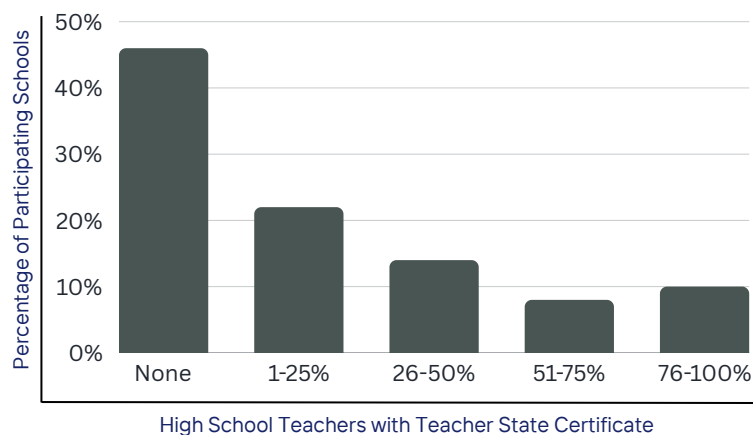


Chart 13. Bachelor's Degree in Education

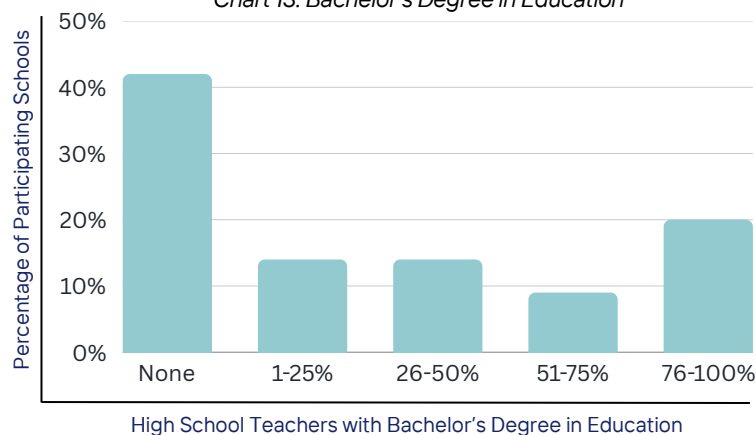


Chart 14. Master's Degree or Higher

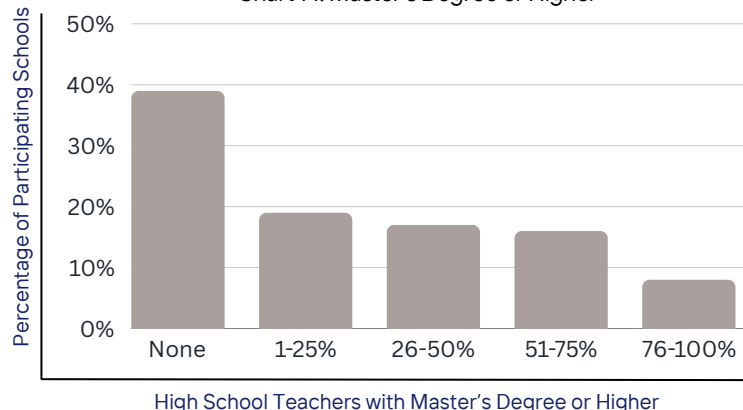


Chart 12-14: Indicate what percentage of your high school teachers have: State Teacher Certification (Chart 12), Bachelor's Degree in Education (Chart 13), Master's Degree or Higher (Chart 14). For each qualification, respondents could select one of the following percentage ranges: None, 1-25%, 26-50%, 51-75%, or 76-100%.

High school teachers were the second least likely group to be state certified teachers. Specifically, 46% reported that none of their high school teachers were state certified, while only 18% of schools had a majority of high school teachers (over 51%) state certified. Forty-two percent of the schools reported that none of the high school teachers held a Bachelor's Degree in Education, while 29% stated that the majority of their high school teachers had a Bachelor's. Moreover, 39% of schools reported that none of the high school teachers had a Master's Degree, though 24% indicated that the majority of their high school teachers had a Master's or higher.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION



Quran, Arabic and Islamic Studies

The charts below provide data on the qualifications of Quran, Arabic and Islamic Studies (QAIS) teachers across the surveyed schools.

Chart 15. Teacher State Certificate

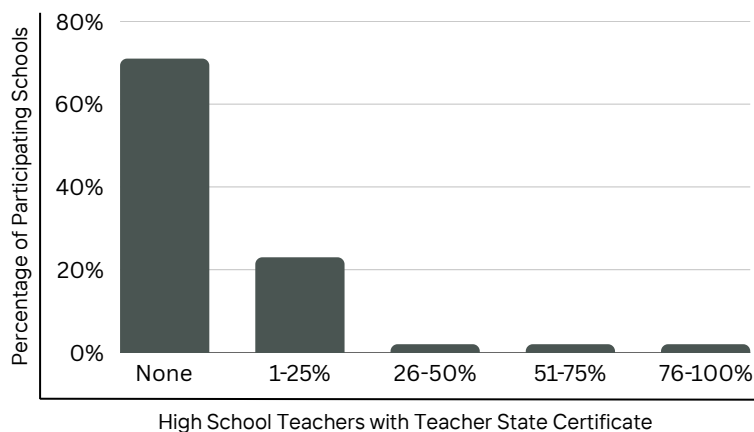


Chart 16. Bachelor's Degree in Education

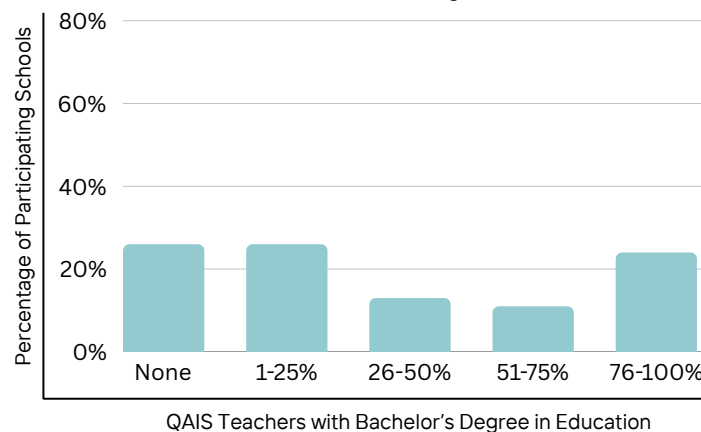


Chart 17. Master's Degree or Higher

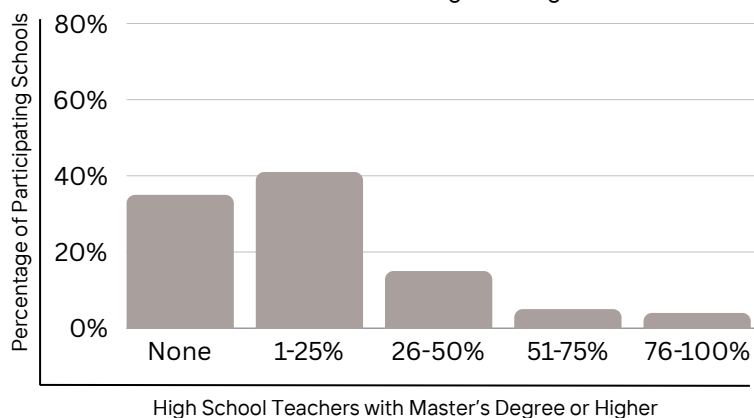


Chart 15-17: Indicate what percentage of your Quran, Arabic and Islamic Studies teachers (across all grades) have: State Teacher Certification (Chart 15), Bachelor's Degree in Education (Chart 16), Master's Degree or Higher (Chart 17). For each qualification, respondents could select one of the following percentage ranges: None, 1-25%, 26-50%, 51-75%, or 76-100%.

In 71% of schools, none of the QAIS teachers were state-certified teachers; rather only 4% of the schools reported that the majority (more than 50%) of their QAIS teachers were state-certified. The survey also revealed that teacher qualifications were almost evenly distributed across different categories in terms of holding a Bachelor's Degree in Education. Specifically, 26% of schools reported having no QAIS teachers with a Bachelor's Degree, 26% had up to one quarter of their teachers with a Bachelor's Degree, 24% had 26-75% with a Bachelor's Degree, and 24% of schools reported that more than 75% of their teachers held a Bachelor's Degree. Forty-one percent of the schools reported that 1%-25% of their QAIS teachers had a Master's Degree or higher, while 35% of schools reported that none of their QAIS teachers had Master's Degrees.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION



Because QAIS staff require specialized training not offered in traditional higher educational institutions, the survey also asked respondents to list additional qualifications held by QAIS staff, with the most common qualification being Quran Ijazah, or a formal permission to teach the Quran to others.

Table 2: Describe any additional credentials held by Islamic Studies, Arabic and Quran teachers (if applicable)

Additional Credentials Held by QAIS Teachers	Response Count
Quran Ijazah	8
Qaida Noorania certification	2
Formal Islamic Studies Degree i.e Alim Program, Al Azhar Degree...etc	2
Informal Islamic Studies training	2

We know that Islamic schools exist to impart knowledge of Islamic studies and the accurate reading and memorization of the Quran, yet the data on teacher qualifications indicates that QAIS teachers had the lowest rates of educational attainment related to the indicators we measured (i.e. State Teacher Certification, Bachelors Degree in Education, Masters or Higher). In addition, only 14 entries of additional credentials were reported, such as Quran Ijazah, Qaida Noorania certification, and only two with Islamic Studies higher degrees, such as an Alim program.

What insights do we gain from the teacher qualifications data?

What is the importance of understanding teacher qualifications? On the one hand, private schools have more flexibility in terms of who they employ and the qualifications they may hold. Because private schools may be more specialized and hold a unique focus compared to public schools, they may seek out teachers who have non-traditional educational backgrounds. In other words, having a Bachelor's Degree in Education may not be as pressing for private schools as it is for public schools. Rather, they may seek teachers with specialized credentials in teaching Arabic, Quran or Islamic studies, or someone who has industry experience in a STEM field to teach Science, Technology, Engineering or Math.

There is much to be gained from this approach. Specialized training in a particular subject can yield deeper insights and practical experience that the teachers can bring to the classroom and enliven the subject for students. However, what may be missing is training in pedagogy, or teaching techniques, curriculum development and lesson planning.

While some may argue that this type of training is best provided through a degreed program in Education, others may suggest that ample professional development and mentorship can ensure that schools are helping teachers employ effective instructional strategies in the classroom. Organizations like ISLA provide professional development specific to Islamic schools, so that it is culturally relevant and attuned to the constraints and opportunities available to our private schools.

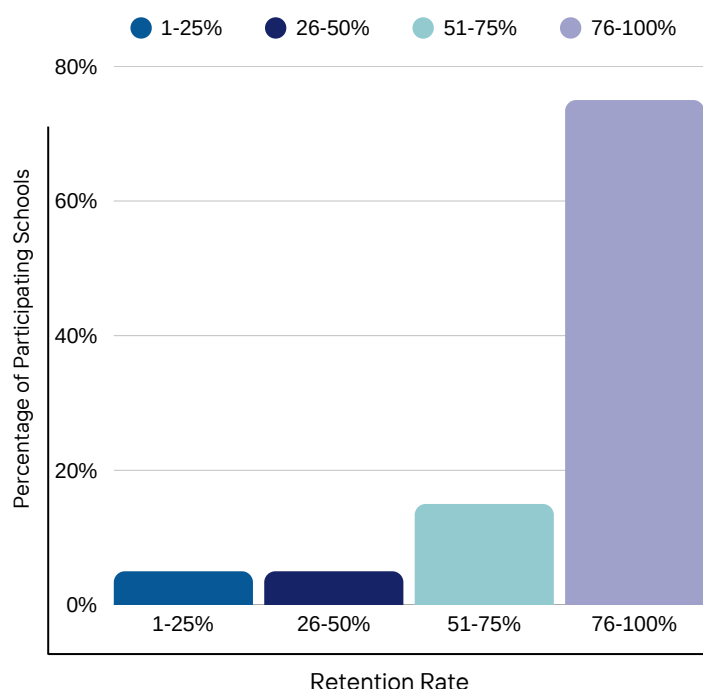
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION



Teacher Retention Rates

The survey asked respondents to indicate what percentage of their teachers remained employed between the school year prior to the survey administration and the current academic year, in other words, between the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years. This data reflects teacher retention rates, a key indicator of school stability and educator satisfaction.

Chart 18: What was your school's teacher retention rate between the past academic year (2021-2022) and the current one (2022-2023)? In other words, what percentage of teachers remained employed at your school?



Seventy-five percent of the schools reported that 76-100% of their teachers remained employed, indicating a high retention rate for the majority of schools. This suggests that most surveyed schools were able to retain a substantial portion of their teaching staff. Fifteen percent of schools reported that 51-75% of their teachers remained employed, indicating moderate retention rates in these schools, which could suggest some turnover challenges or evolving staffing needs.

A small percentage of schools, 5%, reported that 26-50% of their teachers remained employed, and another 5% had only 1-25% of their teachers retained. These low retention rates could point to issues such as teacher dissatisfaction, financial constraints, or operational challenges leading to high turnover.

Difficulties in Filling Teacher Vacancies Across Subjects

In addition to retention, the survey asked respondents to provide insight into the difficulty they faced in filling teacher vacancies across various subject areas, including Arabic, Quran, Islamic Studies, Elementary Lead, Social Studies, English Language Arts (ELA), Science, and Math. The data in the following chart is segmented into five categories: Could not fill the vacancy, Very Difficult, Difficult, Easy, and Not Applicable.

In most cases, the percentage of schools unable to fill positions was relatively low. The most significant figures included English Language Arts (ELA), Elementary Lead and Math at 6%, 4% and 4% respectively. Science, Social Studies, Islamic Studies, Quran and Arabic all had 2% or fewer schools reporting they couldn't fill the vacancy.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

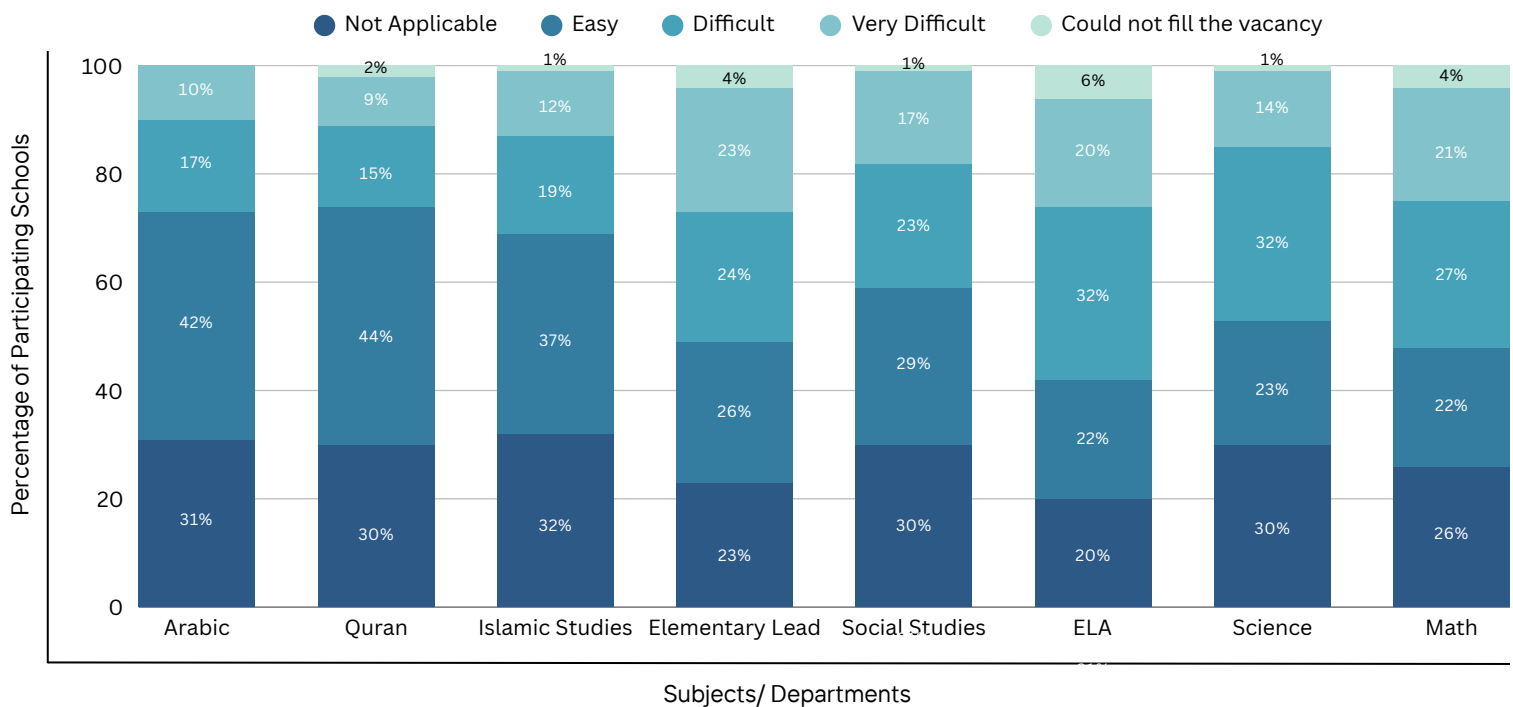


Chart 19: For THIS school year, how easy or difficult was it to fill teacher vacancies? Select "Not Applicable" if you did not have a vacancy in that field.

The most difficult subjects to hire teachers for, in descending order, were ELA, Math, Elementary Lead teachers, Science teachers, and Social Studies teachers.

- English Language Arts: 52% of schools found it very difficult (32%) or difficult (22%) to hire ELA teachers.
- Math: 48% of schools found it very difficult (27%) or difficult (21%) to fill math positions.
- Elementary Lead: 47% of schools reported difficulties filling these roles (23% very difficult, 24% difficult).
- Science: A combined 46% of schools reported it was either very difficult (14%) or difficult (32%) to fill science teacher roles, making it one of the hardest subjects to staff.
- Social Studies: 40% of schools reported hiring difficulties, with 17% very difficult and 23% difficult.

The easiest positions to fill, in descending order were Quran, Arabic and Islamic Studies teachers.

- Quran: 44% of schools reported that hiring for Quran teaching roles was easy
- Arabic: 42% of schools reported that hiring for Arabic teaching positions was easy
- Islamic Studies: 37% of schools reported that filling Islamic Studies teaching positions was easy

Interestingly, correlations among types of vacancies were positive, strong, and statistically significant. This suggests that schools that had difficulty filling vacancies in one area had issues in filling vacancies in most other areas as well, and vice versa. In other words, challenges or ease in teacher hiring was a school-wide phenomenon and not specifically tied to a particular subject.¹

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION



Average Annual Salary by Grade Band

The charts on the next page present the annual salary distribution for different categories of teachers across the surveyed Islamic schools, segmented into four groups: Elementary, Middle, High School and Quran, Arabic and Islamic Studies Teachers.

Elementary School Teachers

The most common salary range for elementary school teachers was \$31,000 to \$40,000, with 44% of teachers falling into this bracket. Twenty-nine percent of elementary school teachers earned between \$20,000 and \$30,000, while 22% earn between \$41,000 and \$50,000. Only 3% of elementary school teachers earned more than \$50,000, indicating that salaries tend to cluster in the lower to mid-range.

Middle School Teachers:

Like elementary teachers, 44% of middle school teachers earned between \$31,000 and \$40,000, and 30% earned in the \$41,000 to \$50,000 range. Eighteen percent of middle school teachers earned \$20,000 to \$30,000, and very few (only 6%) earned more than \$50,000. Overall, middle school teachers tended to have slightly higher compensation compared to elementary teachers.

High School Teachers:

High school teachers had more variation in salary, with 34% earning between \$31,000 and \$40,000, and 33% earning \$41,000 to \$50,000. Notably, 12% of high school teachers earned between \$51,000 and \$60,000, which is higher than the percentages in elementary and middle school categories.

Quran, Arabic, and Islamic Studies Teachers:

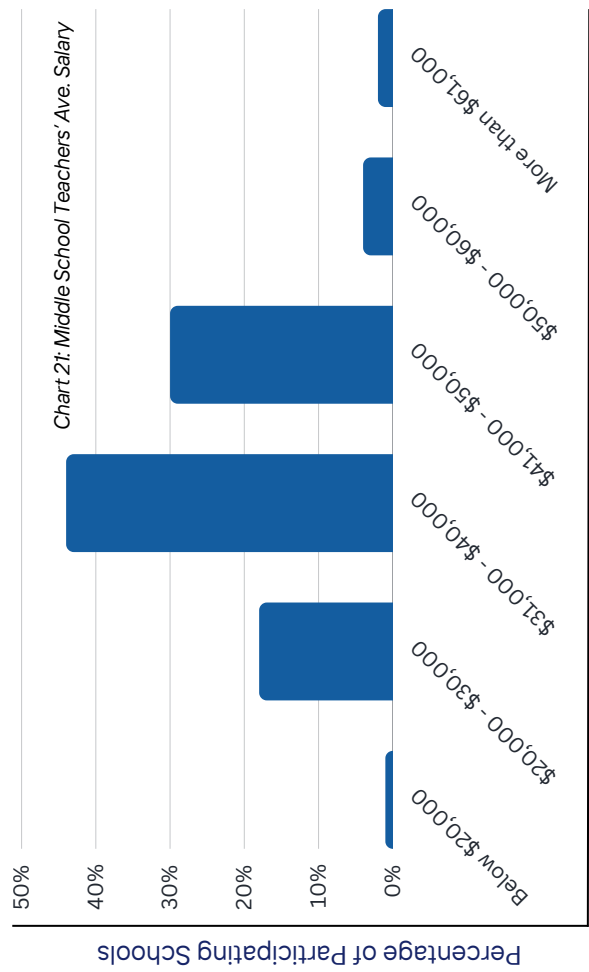
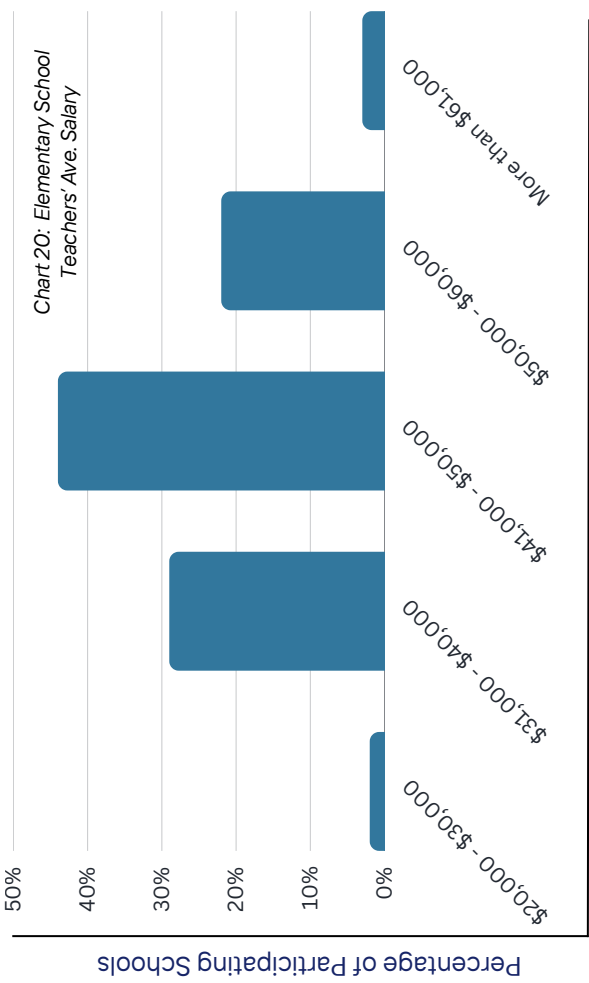
Salaries for Quran, Arabic, and Islamic Studies teachers tended to be lower, with a significant percentage earning less than \$30,000. The largest percentage (46%) of Quran, Arabic, and Islamic Studies teachers earned between \$31,000 and \$40,000. Thirty percent of teachers in this category earned between \$20,000 and \$30,000, and 17% earned between \$41,000 and \$50,000. Very few teachers in this category (just 4%) earned more than \$50,000, suggesting that Quran, Arabic, and Islamic Studies teachers are generally compensated at a lower rate compared to core academic subjects.

What insights do we gain from the salary data?

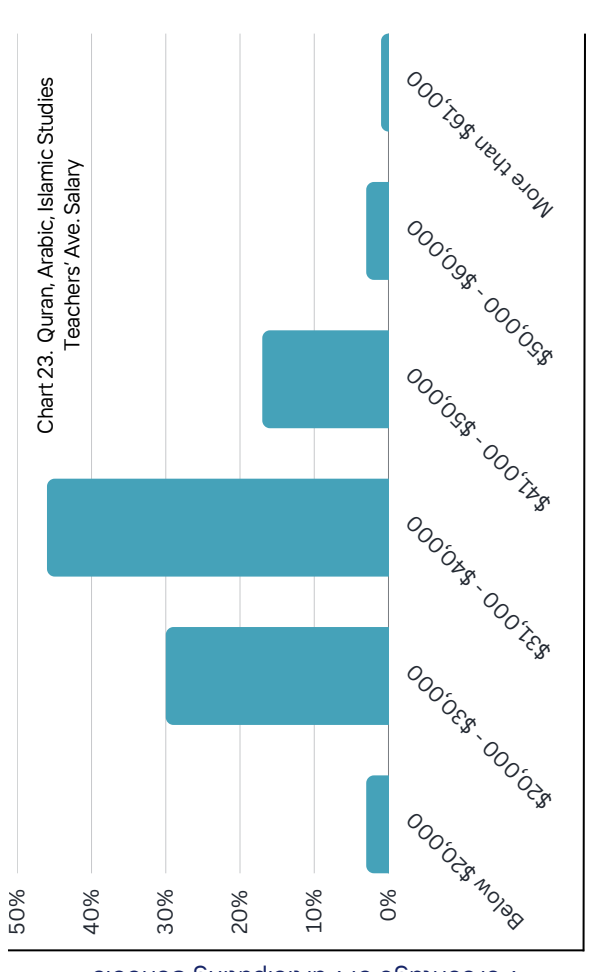
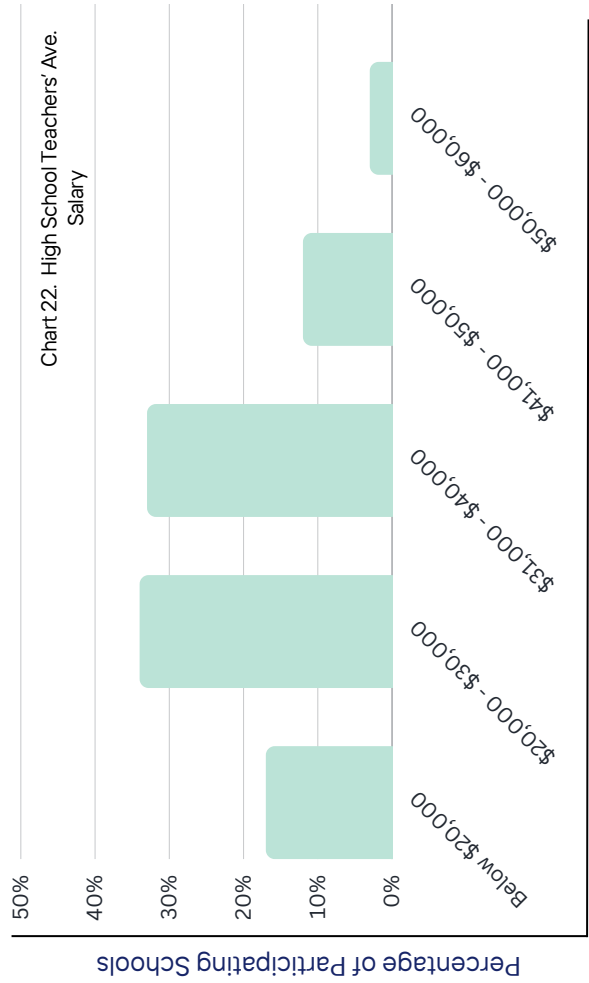
Teacher salaries were overall the lowest for Quran, Arabic and Islamic Studies teachers. Respondents were asked to provide average salary ranges for this group across grade levels, K-12, unlike the other categories which were distributed by grade level. In the grade level responses, we see that the average salaries are higher in the upper grades and gradually less in the lower grades.

The low average salary for QAIS teachers could be because respondents reported on QAIS salaries with all of the grade levels are combined, or it could be indicative of other unconscious or conscious biases regarding the value of these subjects and/or teachers. It is worth exploring this further through conversations with those responsible for setting the salaries.

Average Annual Salary by Grade Band



Average Annual Salary of Elementary School Teachers



Average Annual Salary of High School Teachers

Average Annual Salary of QAIS Teachers

Chart 20-23: Please indicate the average annual compensation for full-time teachers. Select N/A if you do not offer the grade band.²

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION



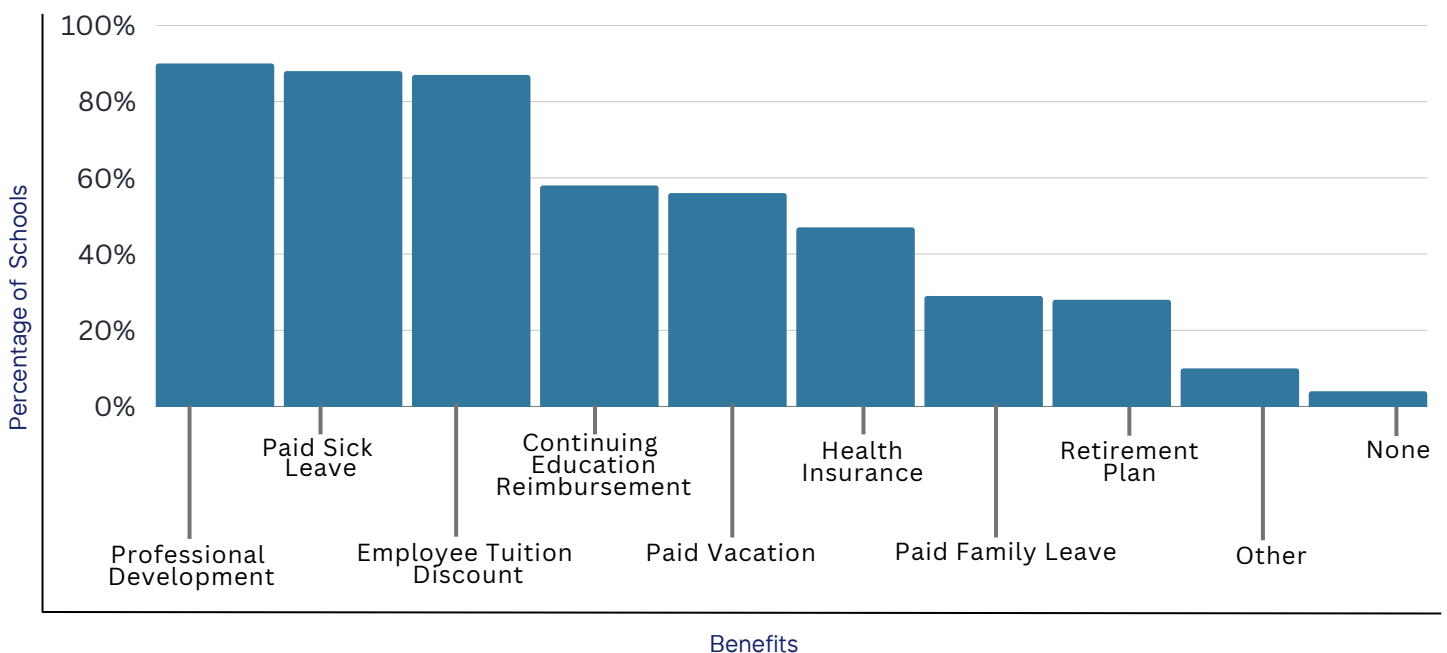
Benefits Offered in Surveyed Islamic Schools

Professional development was offered by the majority of schools, with 90% of schools providing this benefit. This suggests a strong emphasis on teacher growth and training, which is crucial for enhancing teaching quality. Paid sick leave was also widely offered, with 88% of schools including it as a benefit, indicating a focus on employee well-being. Employee tuition discount was available in 87% of schools, which could be a significant incentive for teachers with school-age children.

Continuing education reimbursement and paid vacation were provided by 58% and 56% of schools, respectively. These benefits contribute to furthering teachers' qualifications and ensuring they have adequate time for rest. Health insurance was offered by 47% of schools, reflecting a near-even split between schools that offer it and those that don't.

Paid family leave was only available in 29% of schools, and retirement plans were offered by 28%. These lower percentages may highlight the financial challenges that Islamic schools face in providing comprehensive benefits packages. Other benefits are only provided by 10% of schools, while 4% of schools offer no benefits at all.

Chart 24. What benefits are provided to employees at your school? (Select all that apply)





Conclusion

The report offers a comprehensive overview of staffing trends and practices in U.S. full-time Islamic schools, shedding light on various aspects of teacher demographics, qualifications, recruitment and retention, and salaries and benefits. It provides a detailed examination of teacher roles across grade levels and subject areas, highlighting the different staffing patterns and qualifications observed within these schools. By presenting data on the availability of teachers and support roles, the report underscores the operational dynamics of Islamic schools and the diverse needs they strive to address.

In addition to teacher roles, the report explores staffing diversity, reflecting on the representation of various racial and ethnic groups within the schools. It also highlights leadership trends, including preferences for hiring principals and other key administrative roles. Furthermore, it examines the presence of academic and student-facing support roles, offering a broader perspective on how Islamic schools structure their staff to meet both educational and operational goals.

This report serves as a valuable resource for stakeholders, including educators, administrators, and policymakers, by providing a clear snapshot of current staffing trends. Data in this report can be used in board discussions and decision-making. For example, it demonstrates that there is a much larger body of teachers who are licensed than we have seen in the past because some schools have focused on hiring those with certifications and higher education degrees. It aims to inform decision-making processes, support strategic planning, and contribute to the ongoing development of Islamic education in the United States.

Footnotes

1. There was a significant negative correlation between Elementary lead vacancy and total school enrollment, $r = -.24$, $p = .032$ suggesting that larger schools have difficulty filling this position. This correlation analysis was conducted by Dr. Jehanzeb Cheema.
2. Reported percentages that are less or exceed 100% were rescaled by adjusting each category proportionally, so the total equals 100% while preserving the original distribution.

Acknowledgement

We want to thank all of the administrators who took the survey, without whom we could have never embarked upon this project. Your time and input allowed us to gain deeper insights into Islamic schools.

The donors who contributed to this project have allowed for foundational data and analyses to be made public, enabling further research and contributing to the advancement of Islamic education in America.

We are indebted to the Advisors of the ISLA Database Project, which include Dr. Seema Imam, Dr. Ihsan Bagby, Dr. Shariq Siddiqui, Meira Naggaz, and Dalia Mogahed.

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We are truly thankful to Syeda Khunsa Batool for her tireless work on the graphs and final publication.

APPENDIX A. SURVEY ITEMS



Survey Items included in this report:

- Indicate the number of teachers at your school based on full-time/part-time status.
- What percentage of the school's employees falls into each of the following racial/ethnic categories? Make a selection for every row.
- Please indicate the average annual compensation for full-time elementary, middle, high school and Quran, Arabic and Islamic studies (QAIS) teachers. Select N/A if you do not offer the grade band.
- What benefits are provided to employees at your school? (Select all that apply.)
- Indicate what percentage of your elementary/middle/high school/ QAIS teachers have: [select qualifications]
- Select the employment status for each of the following roles at your school. Select "Not Applicable" if the school does not have someone for that role.
- What is the percentage of teachers at your school, by grade band? Select "Not Applicable" if your school does not offer that grade band.
- What was your school's teacher retention rate between the past academic year (2021-2022) and the current one (2022-2023)? In other words, what percentage of teachers REMAINED EMPLOYED at your school?
- For THIS school year, how easy or difficult was it to fill teacher vacancies? Select "Not Applicable" if you did not have a vacancy in that field.