



2023–2024 Ratio of Students to Full-Time Equivalent School Psychologists in U.S. Public Elementary and Secondary Schools

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ABSTRACT

The current brief summarizes the 2023–2024 school year's student to school psychologist ratio for every United States territory, using the National Center for Education Statistics counts of school psychologists. Besides this, data are presented on the percentage change in student to school psychologist ratio from the 2022–2023 school year to the 2023–2024 school year (i.e., the currently released data). When territory ratios for the 2023–2024 school year were examined by region, the data displayed significant differences. No associations were found between the student to school psychologist ratio and territory population, the number of graduate programs in school psychology in that territory, or the average school psychologist's salary. This information is vital for tracking workforce shortages, as well as the effects of advocacy efforts throughout the country.

Keywords: School psychology, staffing, workforce, shortages, public education

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The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), part of the U.S. Department of Education, annually releases its *Common Core of Data* (CCD), which includes a comprehensive database on public elementary and secondary education across the United States (NCES, 2025). Starting with the 2019–2020 school year release and continuing with the current release of the 2023–2024 school year, this dataset includes counts of full-time equivalent (FTE) school psychologists. Because school psychologist counts are completed by territory, ratios of students to school psychologists for each territory are easily calculated. These data represent the most comprehensive attempt at determining ratios for each territory, as well as for the United States overall. For ease of reading, all states and territories will be referred to as territories in this brief.

Tracking the ratio of students to school psychologists in each territory and for the nation is vital to understanding whether the school psychology workforce is growing to meet the increased demand for school psychological services. Additionally, it allows individuals engaging in advocacy around workforce shortages to know where efforts are improving ratios and where more resources are still needed. Addressing workforce shortages, indicated by student to school psychologist ratios, is also a strategic goal of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP).

This Data Brief reviews both the current year's data and trends from the previous year, to examine the following questions:

- What is each territory's 2023–2024 school year ratio of students to school psychologists?
- How many territories meet NASP's recommended ratio of 500 students per school psychologist (NASP, 2020)?
- What is the percentage change in each territory's ratio from the previous year?
- Are there differences in the student to school psychologist ratio by region, or are there any associations with territory population, number of school psychology graduate education programs, or the average salary of school psychologists?

Figure 1 presents each U.S. territory's student to school psychologist ratios for the 2023–2024 school year. Guam and American Samoa did not report data for the 2023–2024 school year. The vertical green line denotes a ratio of 500 students to 1 school psychologist, which is NASP's recommended ratio (NASP, 2020). The data show that only three territories currently meet or fall below the recommended ratio: Connecticut, Puerto Rico, and Maine. Additionally, the data show that the national ratio of students per school psychologist is 1,065. Although this number is well above the 500 to 1 recommendation, it does represent a 5.5% decrease from the 2022–2023 school year (Affrunti, 2024). This means that the national ratio improved from 2022–2023 to 2023–2024 (i.e., fewer children per school psychologist).

Figure 2 displays the change in student to school psychologist ratio, as a percentage, from 2022–2023 to 2023–2024. As the data show, approximately 70% (39) of the territories decreased their ratio (i.e., fewer students per school psychologist), with Maine, Alabama, New Mexico, North Dakota, and Rhode Island all showing greater than 15% decreases in their ratio. Data show that the U.S. Virgin Islands, Utah, Hawaii, and Mississippi increased (i.e., more students per school psychologist) their ratios by greater than 10%.

Figure 3 displays the mean and standard deviation for the students per school psychologist ratio for each region for the 2023–2024 school year. A territory's affiliation was determined based on NASP's regional affiliations. Table 1 provides the regional affiliation for all territories. Table 2 provides the descriptive statistics for all regions. A Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted to determine whether any significant differences existed between regions. Importantly, Alabama, Mississippi, and New Mexico were not included in the following tests over concerns their counts were outliers.

Results showed a significant difference among regions $H(3) = 27.8, p < .001$ with a large effect size $\varepsilon^2 = .58$ (Tomczak & Tomczak, 2014). Post hoc Dwass-Steel-Critchlow-Flinger pairwise comparisons showed that the Northeast region had a significantly lower ratio than the Central, $W = -5.15, p = .002$, Western, $W = 4.61, p = .006$ and Southeast, $W = 5.86, p < .001$, regions. Additionally, the Western region had a significantly lower ratio than the Southeast, $W = -4.18, p = .017$, and the Central region had a significantly lower ratio than the Southeast, $W = 3.65, p = .049$. No other regional differences were observed.

Figure 1. Student to School Psychologist Ratio by Territory for 2023–2024

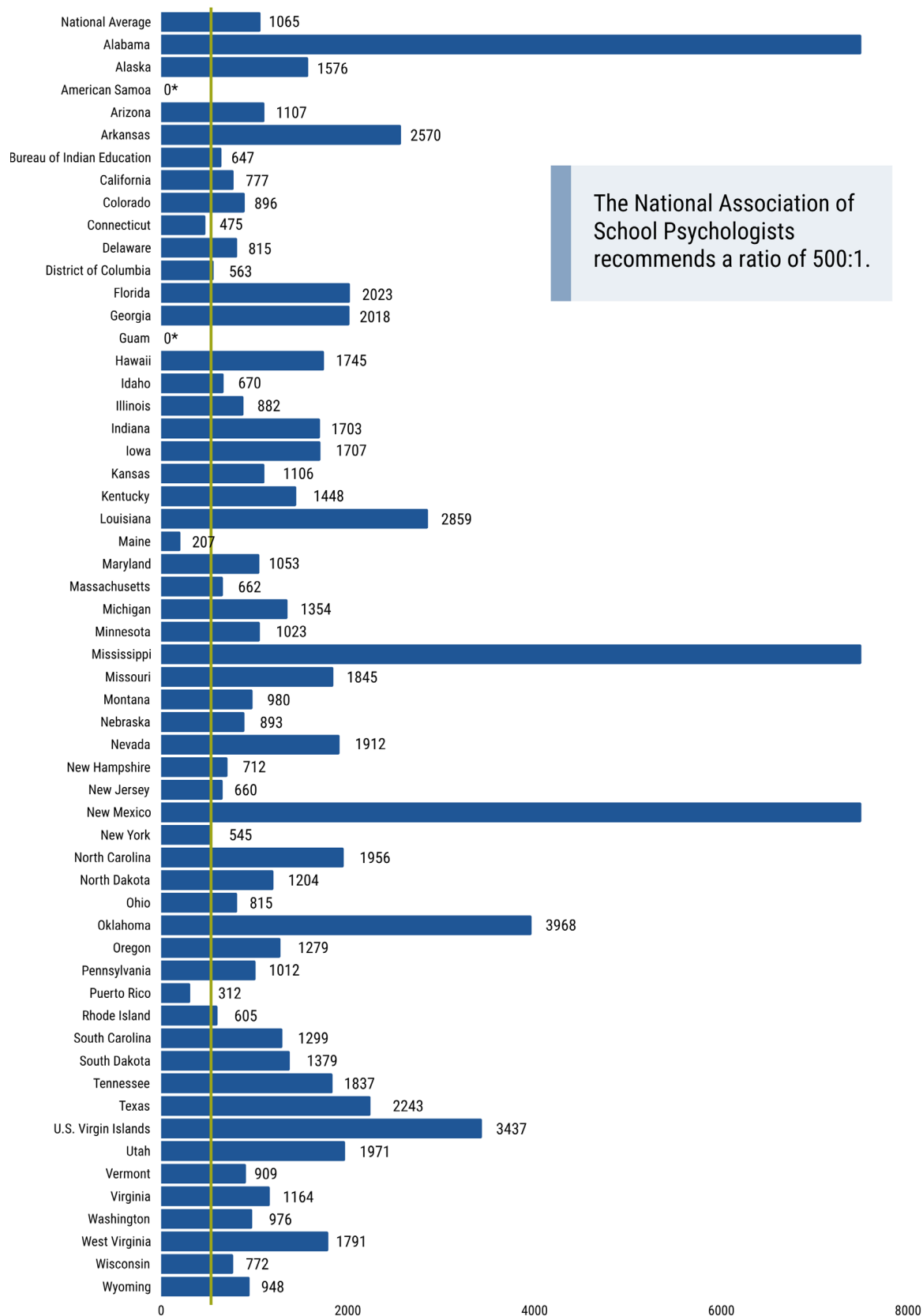


Figure 2. Percentage Change in Student to School Psychologist Ratio From 2022–2023 to 2023–2024

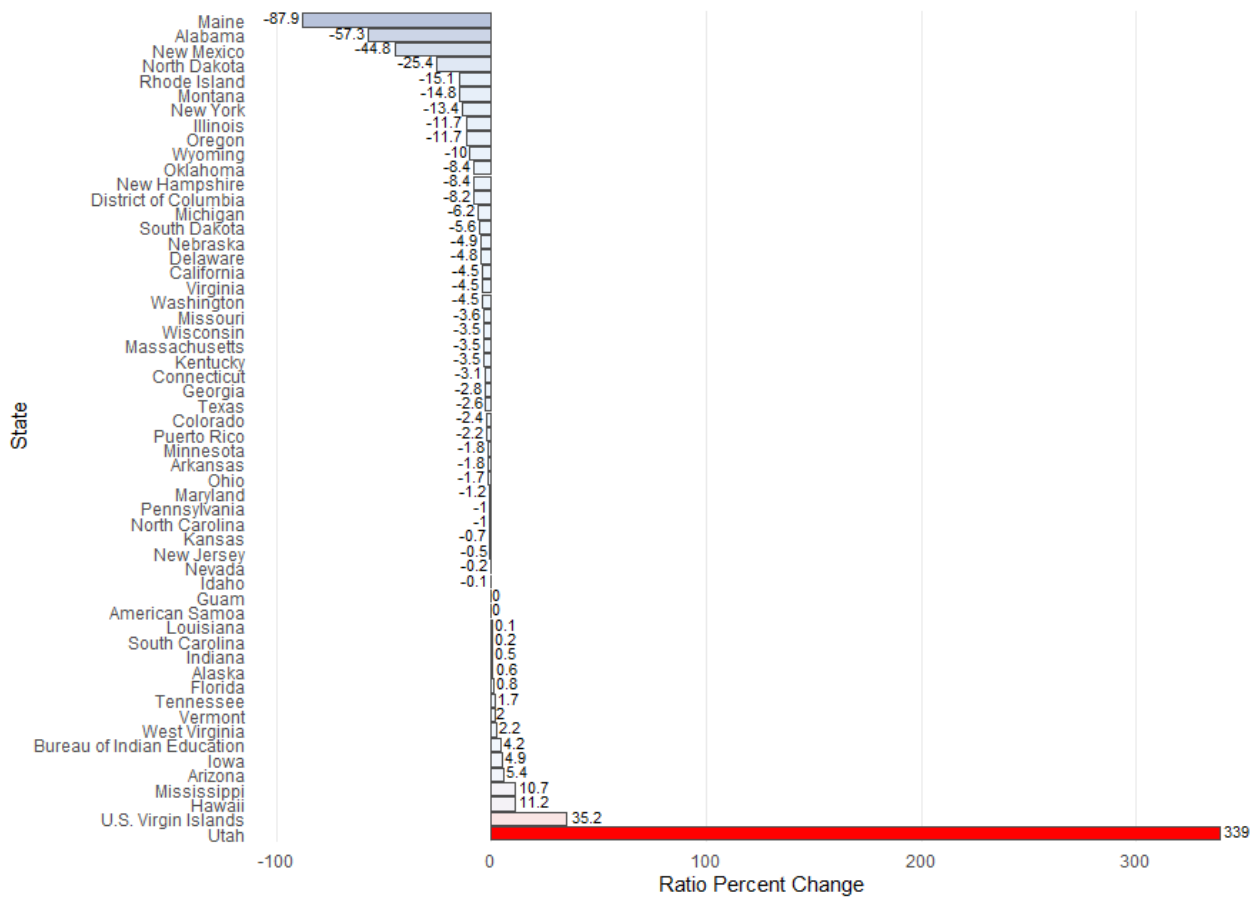


Figure 3. Differences in Student to School Psychologist Ratios by Region

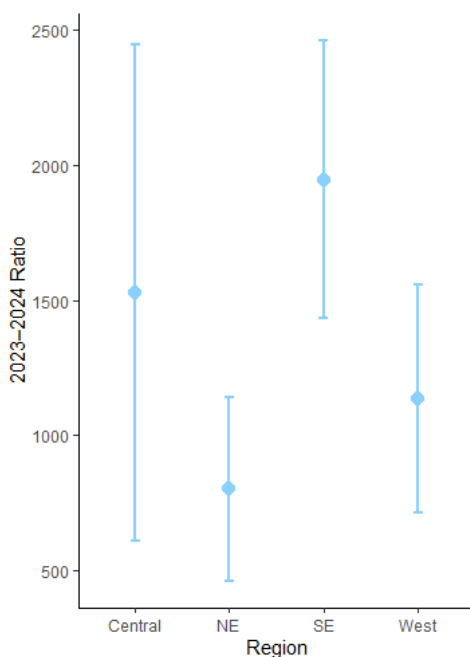


Table 1. Region Affiliations

Northeast (NE)	Southeast (SE)	Central	West
Connecticut	Alabama	Iowa	Alaska
District of Columbia	Arkansas	Illinois	Arizona
Delaware	Florida	Indiana	California
Massachusetts	Georgia	Kansas	Colorado
Maine	Kentucky	Michigan	Hawaii
Maryland	Louisiana	Minnesota	Idaho
New Hampshire	Mississippi	Missouri	Montana
New Jersey	North Carolina	North Dakota	New Mexico
New York	South Carolina	Nebraska	Nevada
Pennsylvania	Tennessee	Ohio	Oregon
Puerto Rico	Texas	Oklahoma	Utah
Rhode Island	Virginia	South Dakota	Washington
Vermont	West Virginia	Wisconsin	Wyoming

Note. Bureau of Indian Education, Guam, American Samoa, and U.S. Virgin Islands are not included in the table above because they are not included in NASP's regional affiliations.

Table 2. Region Means, Standard Deviations, and Standard Errors

Region	N	Mean	SD	SE
Central	13	1437	840	233
Northeast (NE)	13	656	251	69.5
Southeast (SE)	11	1928	513	155
West	12	1236	453	131

Note. SE and West regions include only 11 and 12 states, respectively, in descriptive calculations because Alabama, Mississippi, and New Mexico were not included over concerns that they were outliers.

Figure 4 plots the 2023–2024 ratio against the number of graduate programs in each territory. As shown by the data, there is no significant association between the number of graduate programs in a territory and its ratio of students to school psychologists $r(49) = -.08$, $p = .59$.

Figure 4. Scatterplot of 2023–2024 Student to School Psychologist Ratio by Number of Graduate Programs in Territory

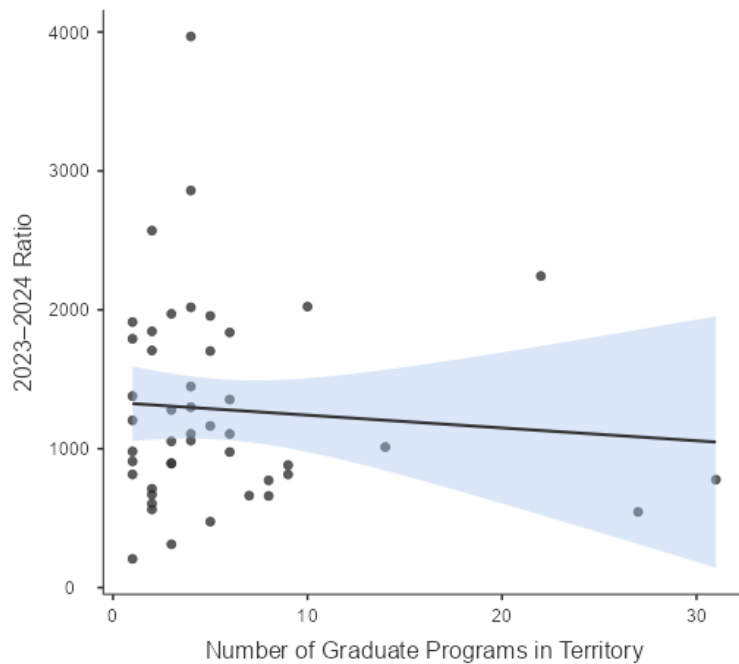


Figure 5 plots the 2023–2024 student to school psychologist ratio against the population of a territory. As shown by the data, there is no significant association between the population of a territory and its ratio of students to school psychologists $r(49) = .05$, $p = .75$.

Figure 5. Scatterplot of 2023–2024 Student to School Psychologist Ratio by Territory Population

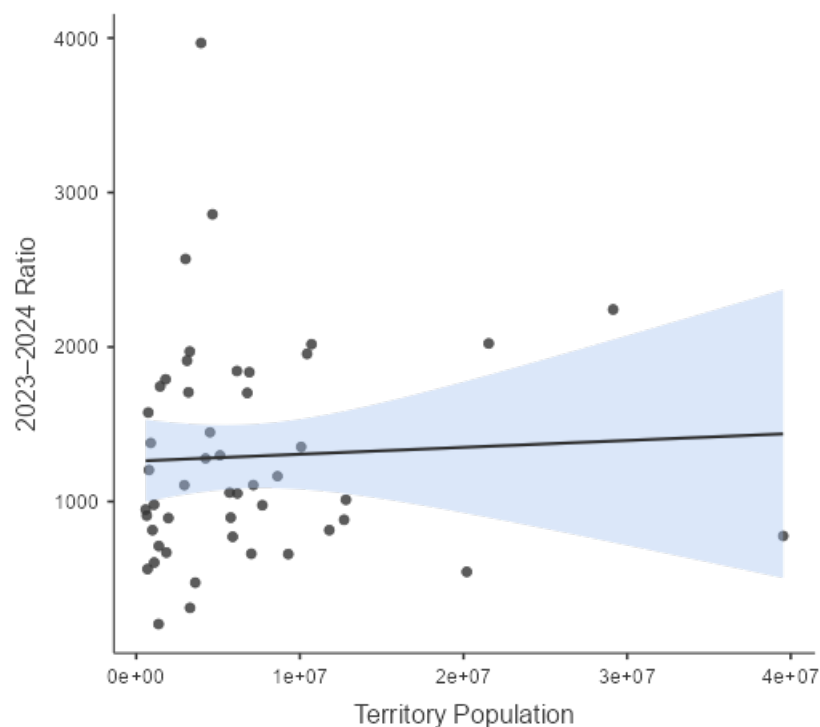
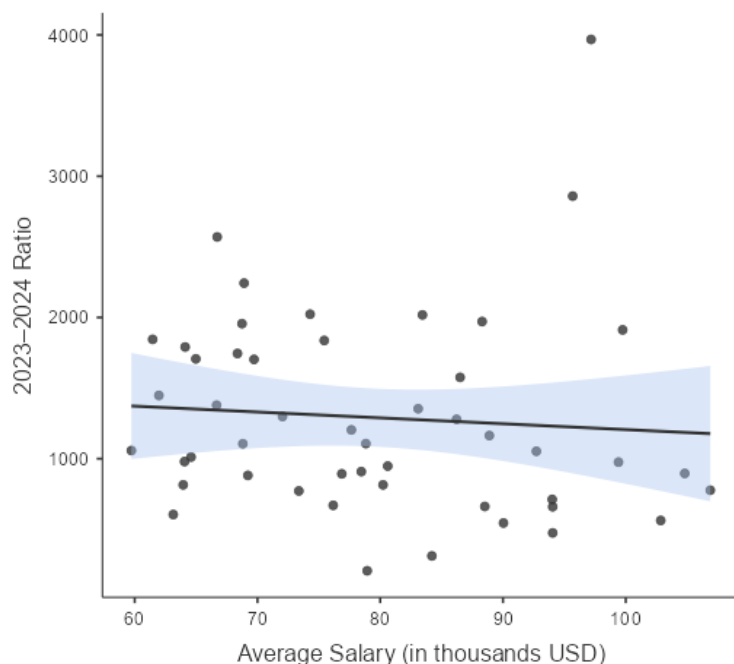


Figure 6 plots the 2023–2024 student to school psychologist ratio against the average salary for the territory in 2022. As shown by the data, there is no significant association between the average salary of a school psychologist in a territory and its ratio of students to school psychologists $r(49) = -.08$, $p = .60$.

Figure 6. Scatterplot of 2023–2024 Student to School Psychologist Ratio by Average Salary



HIGHLIGHTS

- The national ratio of students per school psychologist was 1,065 to 1 in 2023–2024. This was a 5.5% decrease from a ratio of 1,127 to 1 in 2021–2022.
- More than two thirds of U.S. territories decreased their ratio of students to school psychologists (i.e., had fewer students per school psychologist) from 2022–2023 to 2023–2024.
- The largest ratio decreases by percentage change (i.e., fewer students per school psychologist) were observed in Maine, Alabama, New Mexico, North Dakota, and Rhode Island. All had greater than 15% decreases from 2022–2023 to 2023–2024.
- The largest ratio increases by percentage change (i.e., increased students per school psychologist) were observed in the U.S. Virgin Islands, Utah, Hawaii, and Mississippi, which each had a greater than 10% increase from 2022–2023 to 2023–2024.
- The Northeast region had significantly smaller 2023–2024 student to school psychologist ratios (i.e., fewer students per school psychologist) than all other regions. The Western and Central regions had a significantly smaller 2023–2024 student to school psychologist ratio than the Southeast region. No other regional differences were observed.
- No associations were observed between 2023–2024 student to school psychologist ratio and territory population, number of school psychology graduate education programs, or average school psychologist salary.

TECHNICAL INFORMATION

All data for this brief are publicly available as part of the NCES's *Common Core of Data* (NCES, 2025), the Bureau of Labor Statistics *Occupational Employment and Wages* (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022), or the *National School Psychology Program Database Survey* (Gadke et al., 2025). Ratios were calculated by dividing the number of students by the number of FTE school psychologists within a territory. To be as inclusive as possible to territories, and not eliminate valid counts, outlier values were defined as occurring if they were greater than 3 standard deviations from the mean. Outliers were removed for analyses between territories and regions, but they were kept for percentage change analyses (i.e., analyses within territories). This affected three territories: Alabama, Mississippi, and New Mexico.

Other limitations to these data exist. First, some territories did not provide data for specific years used in the current analyses (e.g., Guam and American Samoa did not report counts of school psychologists). Second, some territory counts of school psychologists may be inaccurate; however, it is difficult to ascertain where such errors exist without a separate, comparable data source. Lastly, counts of school psychologists may not match internally collected data within territories. Territory representatives can work with their respective CCD coordinators to help rectify any inaccuracies. Despite these limitations, the level of detail provided with these data would be difficult to obtain if they were not part of the CCD. The dataset provides a vitally important source of data to understand and track shortages of school psychologists in each U.S. territory.

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