



Changes in Teacher Salaries Under the Arkansas LEARNS Act

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Outline

1. Teacher Compensation in Arkansas
2. The LEARNS Act of 2023
3. Districts' Responses
4. Teacher Retention
5. Administrator Plans

Arkansas traditionally used a minimum salary schedule for teacher compensation.

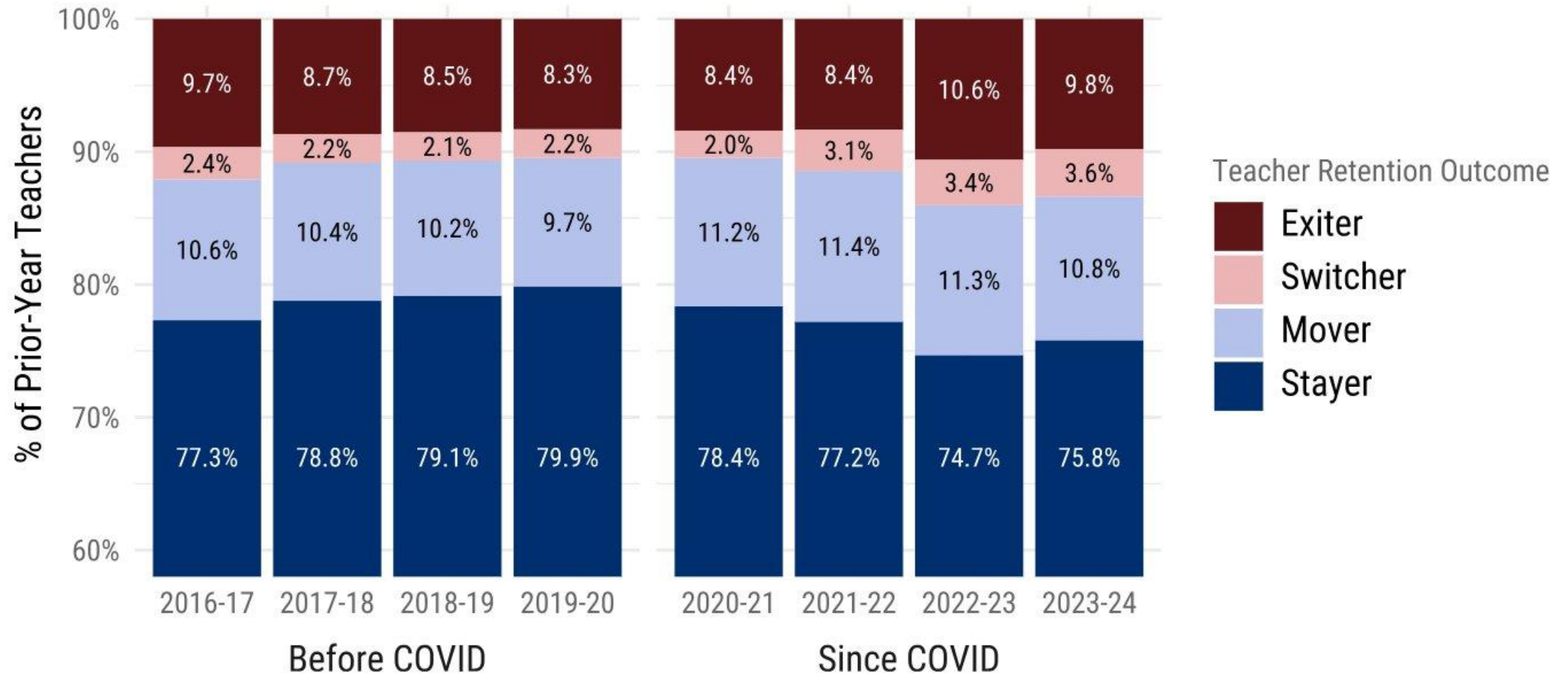
Between 2004-05 and 2022-23:

- Required increments for years of experience.
 - Legislature set minimum base salaries and increments.
 - Districts were free to go beyond these minimums.
-
- State funding for teacher salaries included in foundation funding formula/calculations.

There was modest growth in minimum teacher compensation during this period.

- New teacher, bachelor's degree:
 - 2004-05: **\$27,500**
 - 2022-23: **\$36,000**
- New teacher, master's degree:
 - 2004-05: **\$31,625**
 - 2022-23: **\$40,650**
- Inflation outpaced minimum salary growth.

Following the COVID-19 Pandemic there have been concerns about the teacher workforce.



The Arkansas LEARNS Act of 2023 contained substantial reforms to teacher compensation.

- Eliminated a minimum salary schedule.
- Increments for education and years of experience no longer required.
- Implemented a **minimum salary of \$50,000**.
- Provided a raise of \$2,000 for all teachers making more than \$48,000 during the 2022-23 school year.
- New required spending fully funded by ~\$183 million in new education spending.

Our research explores three aspects of these changes in teacher compensation policies.

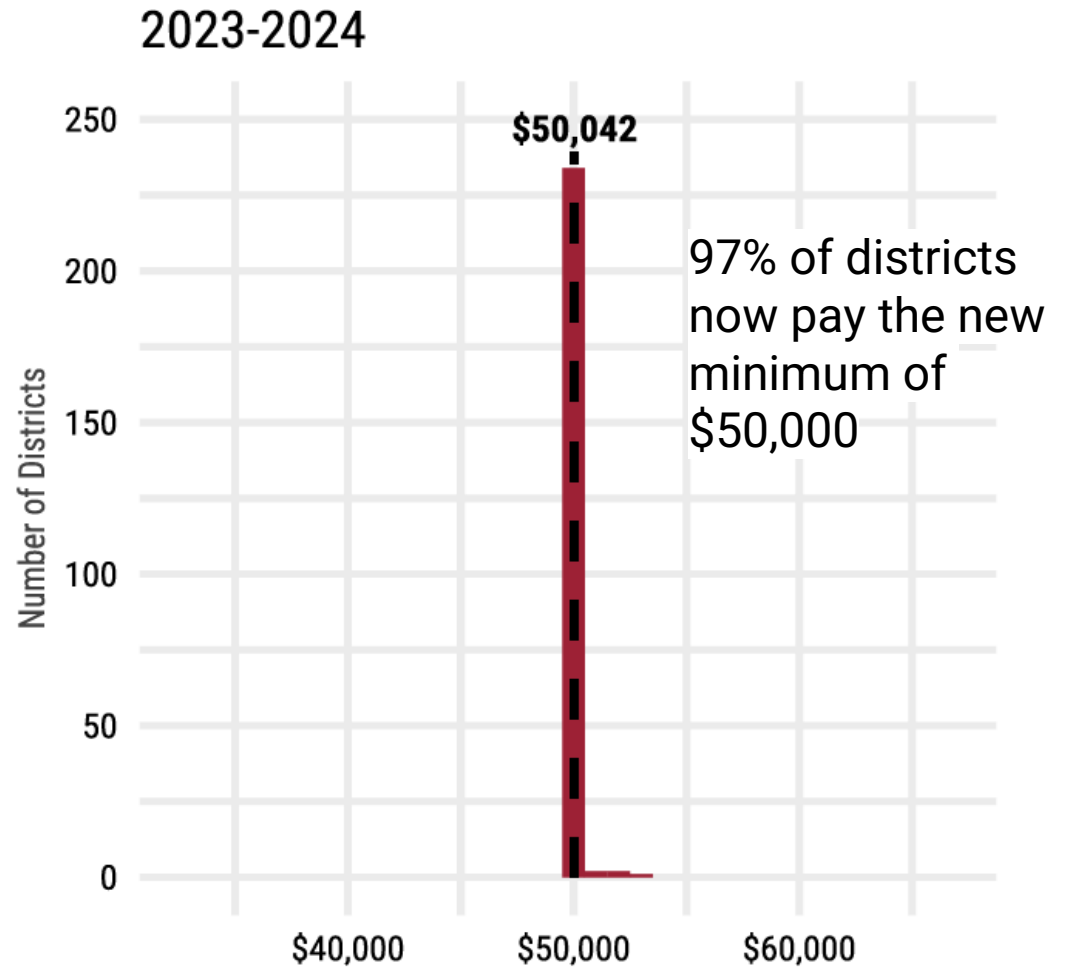
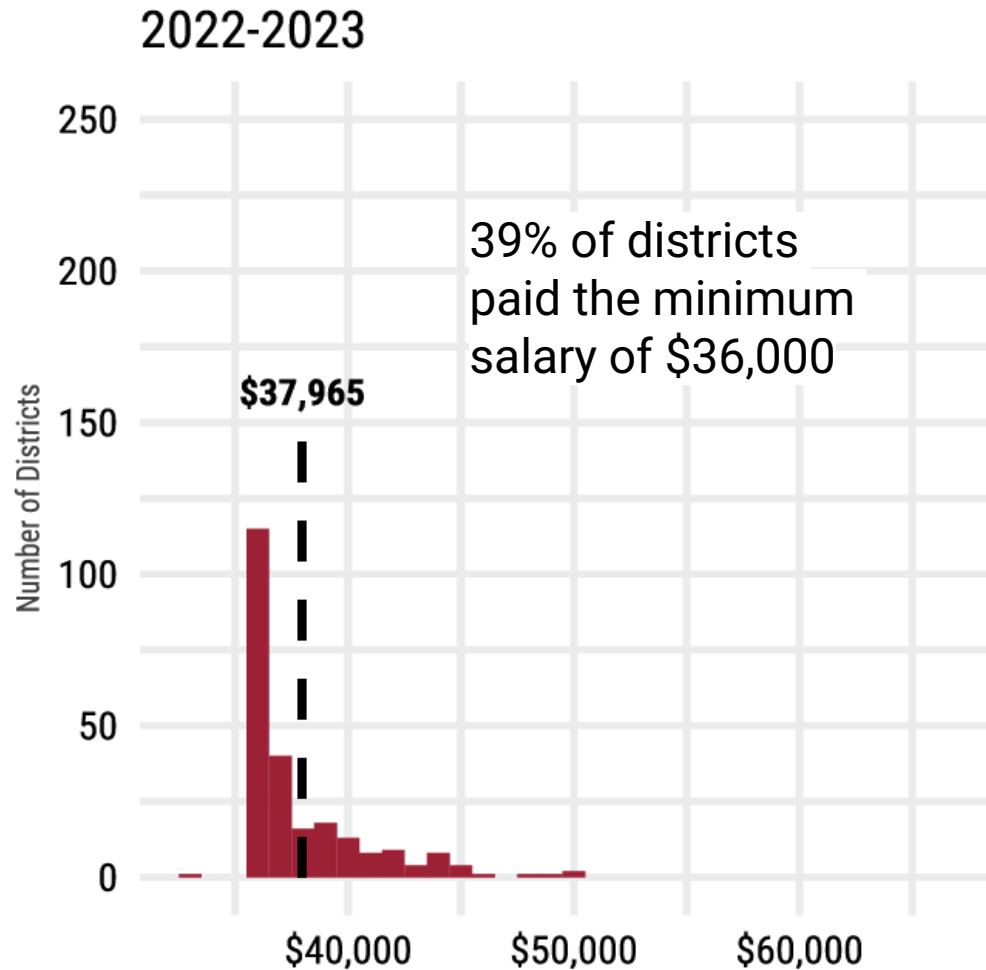
- (1) Districts' responses
- (2) Teacher retention
- (3) Administrator's plans

Districts' Responses to the LEARNS Act

Districts Responded to the LEARNS Act in Three General Ways.

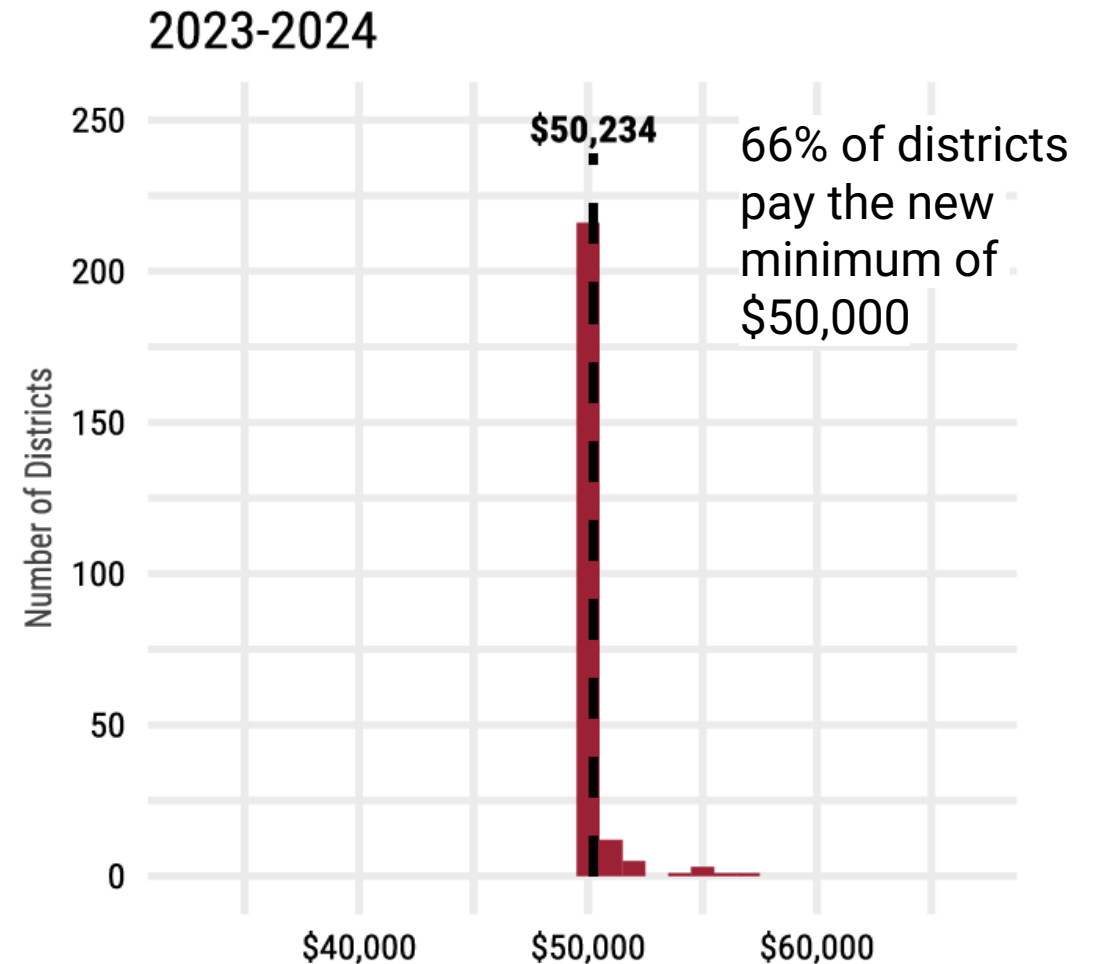
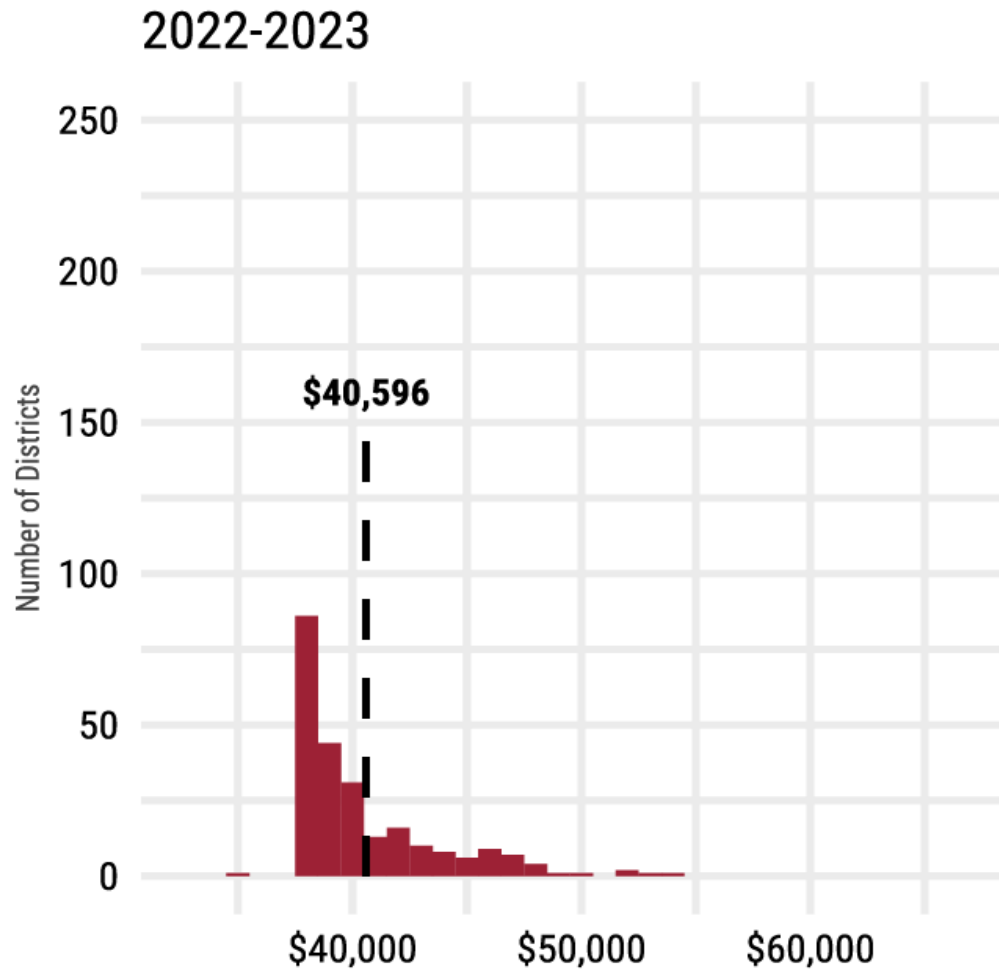
- If the 2022-23 schedule was entirely below \$50,000, districts transitioned to flat \$50,000 salary schedules (55% of BA schedules).
- Districts with some 2022-23 steps below \$48,000 raised those steps to \$50,000 and increased other steps by \$2,000 (36% of BA schedules).
- Districts with all 2022-23 steps at/above \$48,000 raised all steps by \$2,000 (9% of BA schedules).

These changes substantially equalized beginning teacher pay across the state.



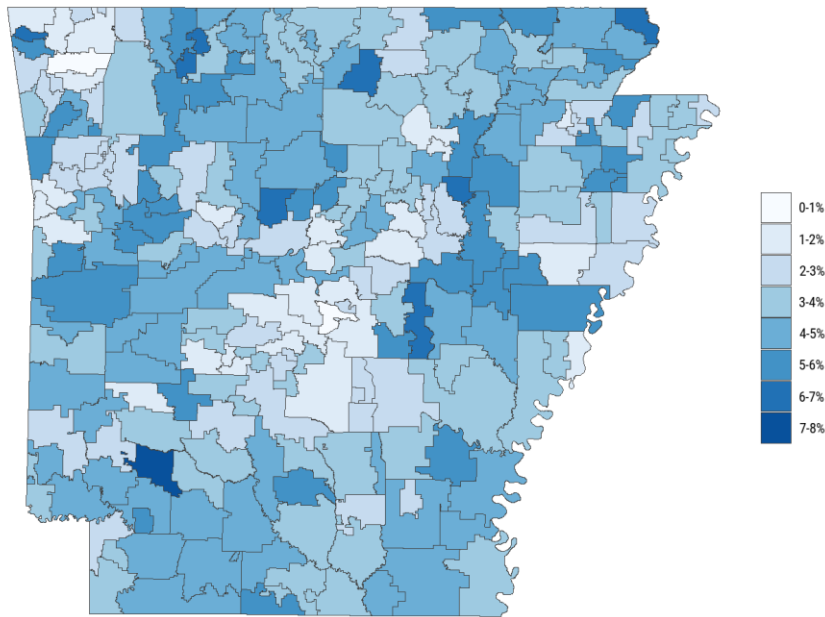
Bachelor's degree, 0 years of experience

Compensation for experienced teachers has increased but is similar to beginning teachers.

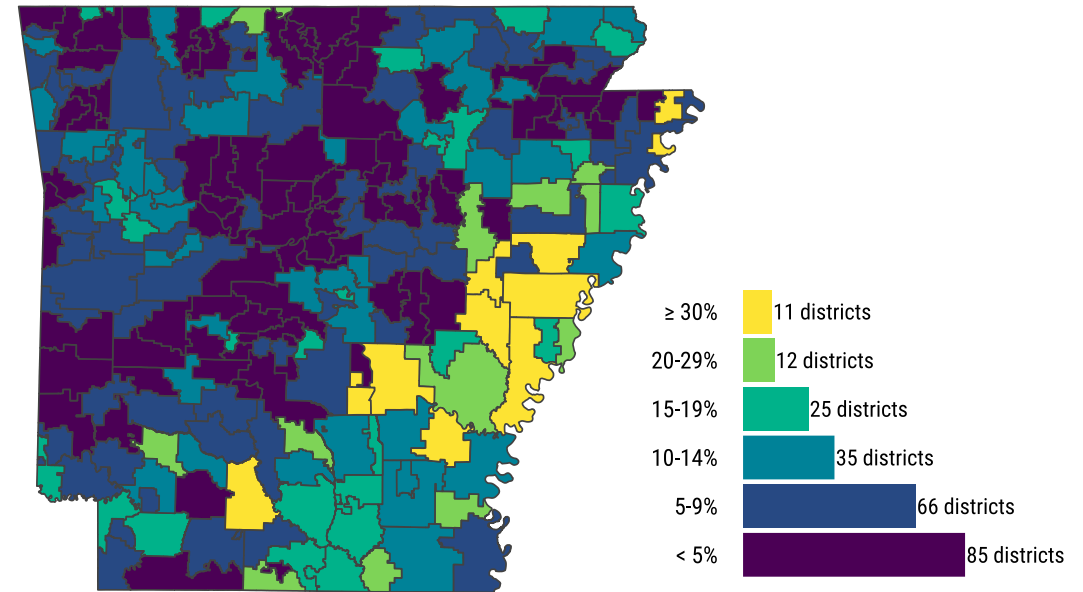


Bachelor's degree, 15 years of experience

LEARNs provided additional aid for districts facing acute staffing challenges.

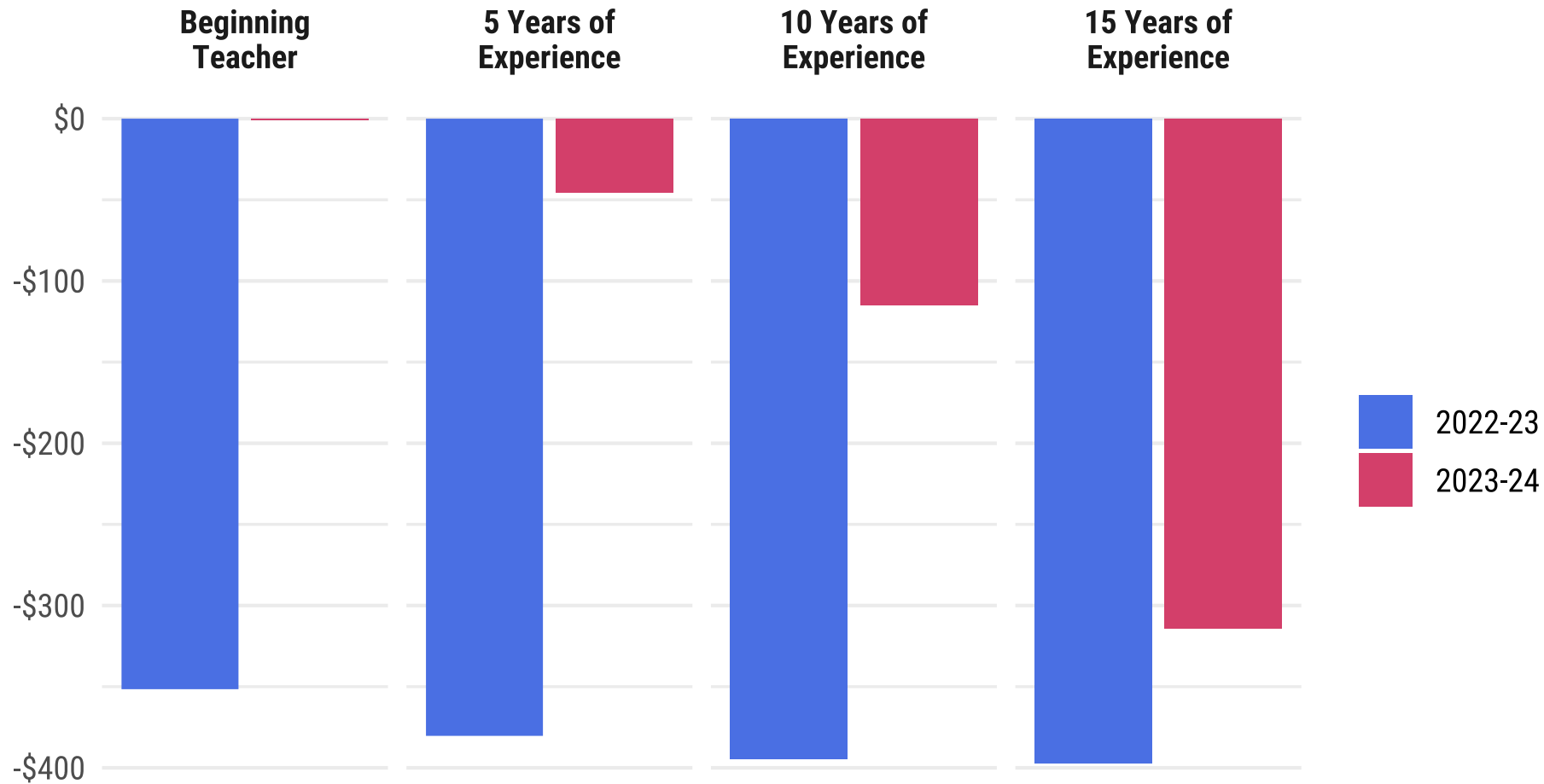


Projected LEARNs Allocation as
Percent of Prior Year Revenue



Percent of Teachers Not Appropriately
Licensed for Classes They Teach

Salary increases from the LEARNS Act had large impacts in high-poverty districts.



Explore LEARNS Act Salary Changes Using Interactive Data Visualizations

Teacher Retention and the LEARNS Act

We examine several aspects of teacher retention as it relates to the LEARNS Act.

- We examine different types of teacher retention:
 - **Stayers**
 - **Movers** (within district)
 - **Movers** (between districts)
 - **Switchers**
 - **Exiters**
- We also examine new hires and geographic shortages areas which have largely benefited from LEARNS Act salary increases.

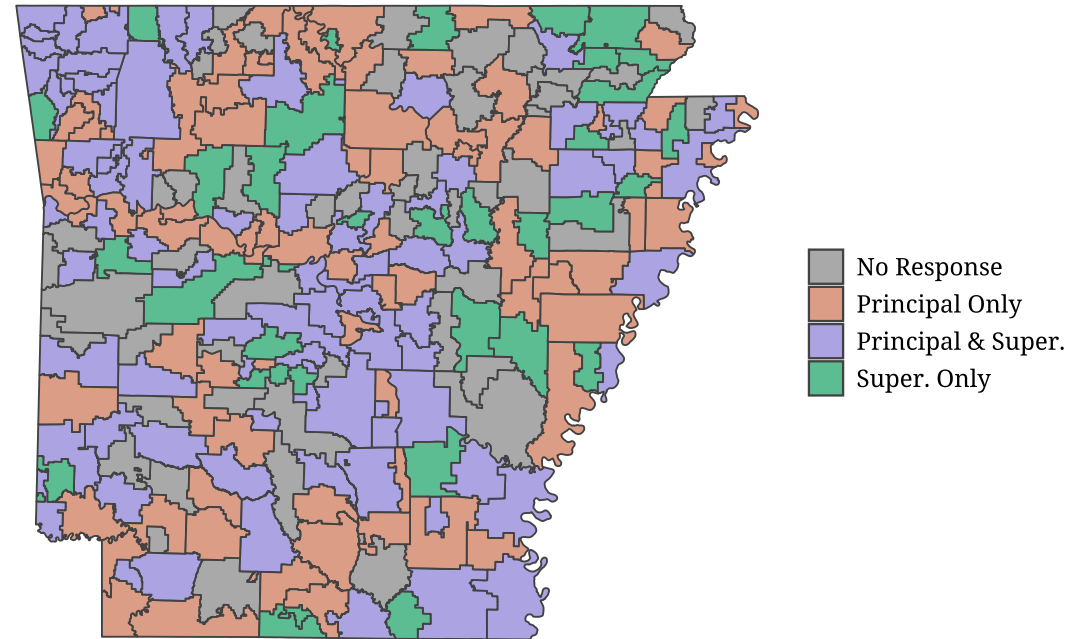
We find few signs of impacts of LEARNS Act salary increases during the first year.

- Some signs of decreased exits from the education sector, but no clear patterns as they relate to salary increases.
- Decreased probability of teachers transitioning into non-instructional roles especially for later career teachers.
- Suggestive evidence that new teachers are more likely to enter the teaching workforce in geographic shortage areas.
- Uncertainty over LEARNS Act implementation could have limited teachers' reactions during this first year.

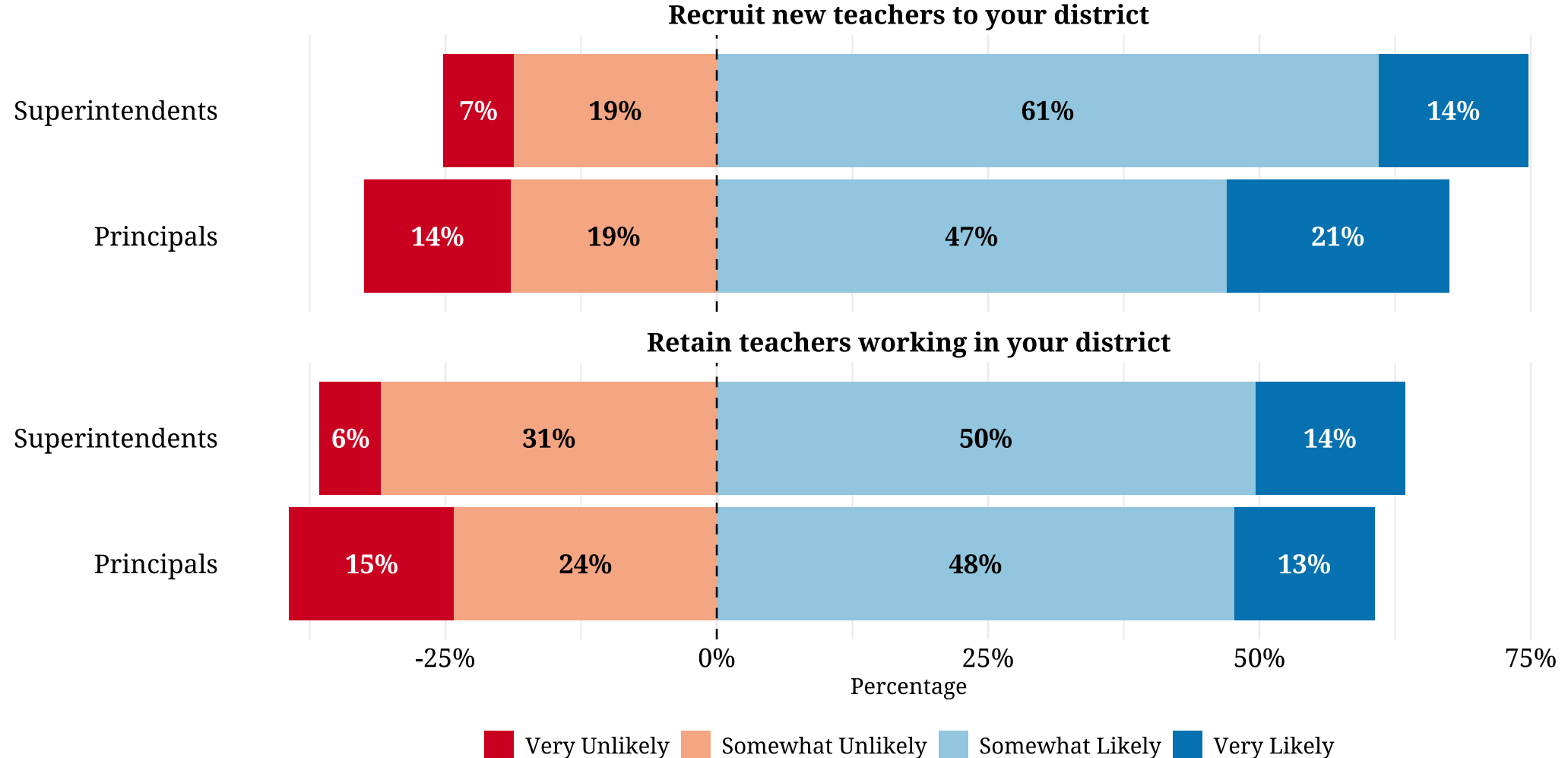
Administrators' Plans for the Future

We administered a 5-question survey to principals and superintendents in Spring 2024.

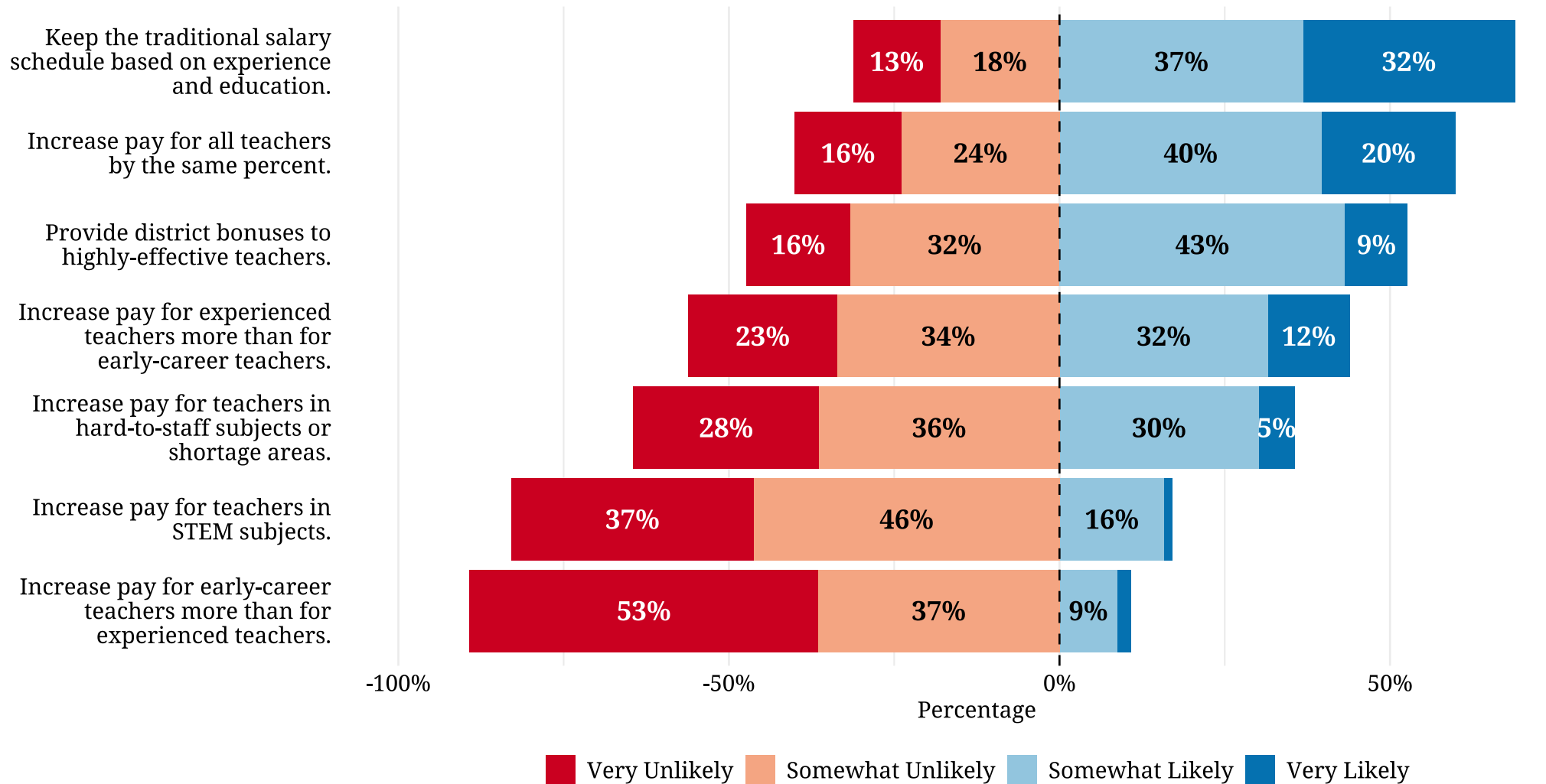
- Asked questions about their perceptions of the LEARNS Act salary changes.
- Received responses from 129 superintendents and 325 principals (38% overall response rate).



Administrators feel optimistic about the LEARNS Act helping retention & recruitment.

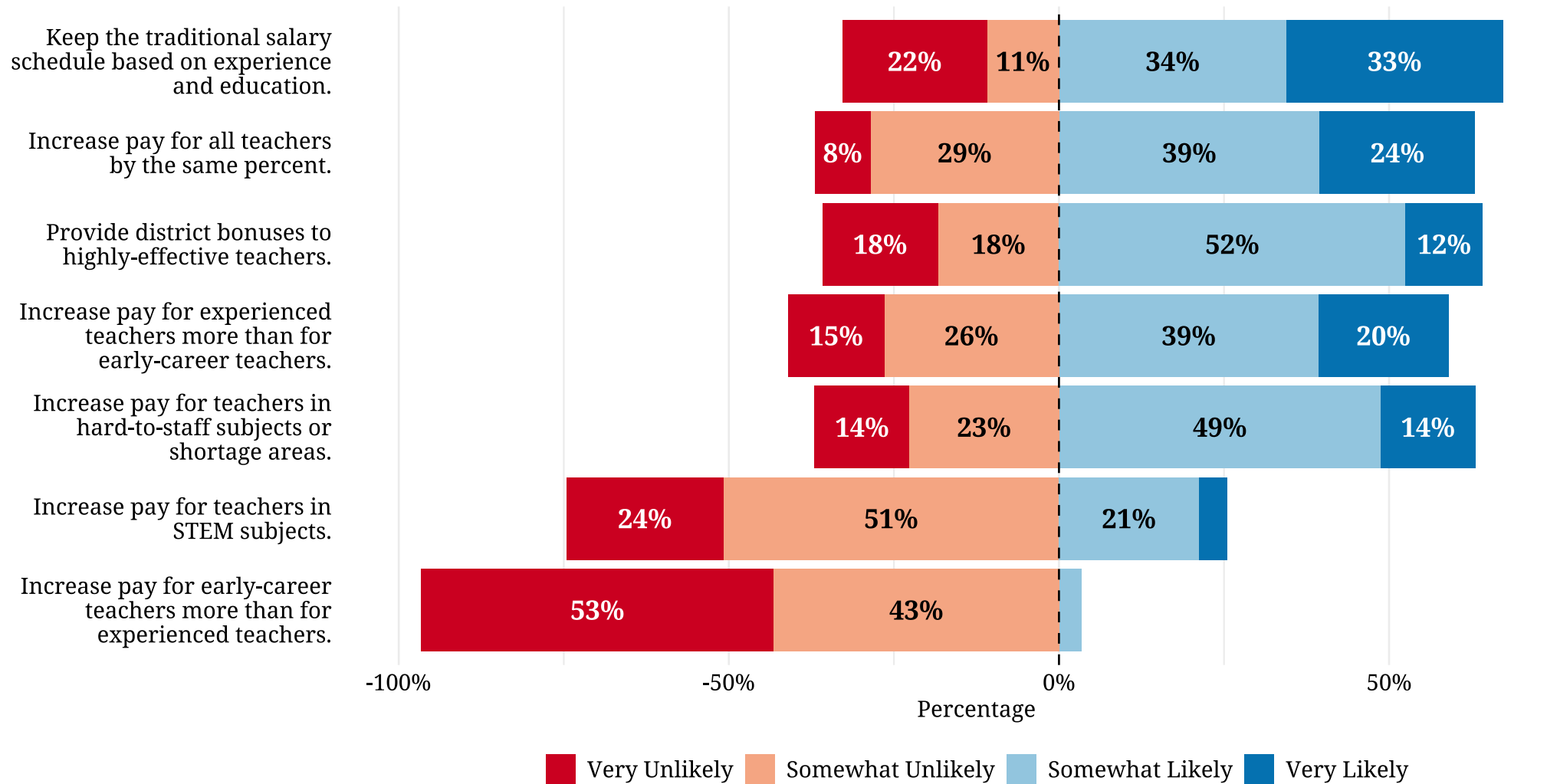


While many administrators intend to keep a salary schedule, there are signs of innovation.



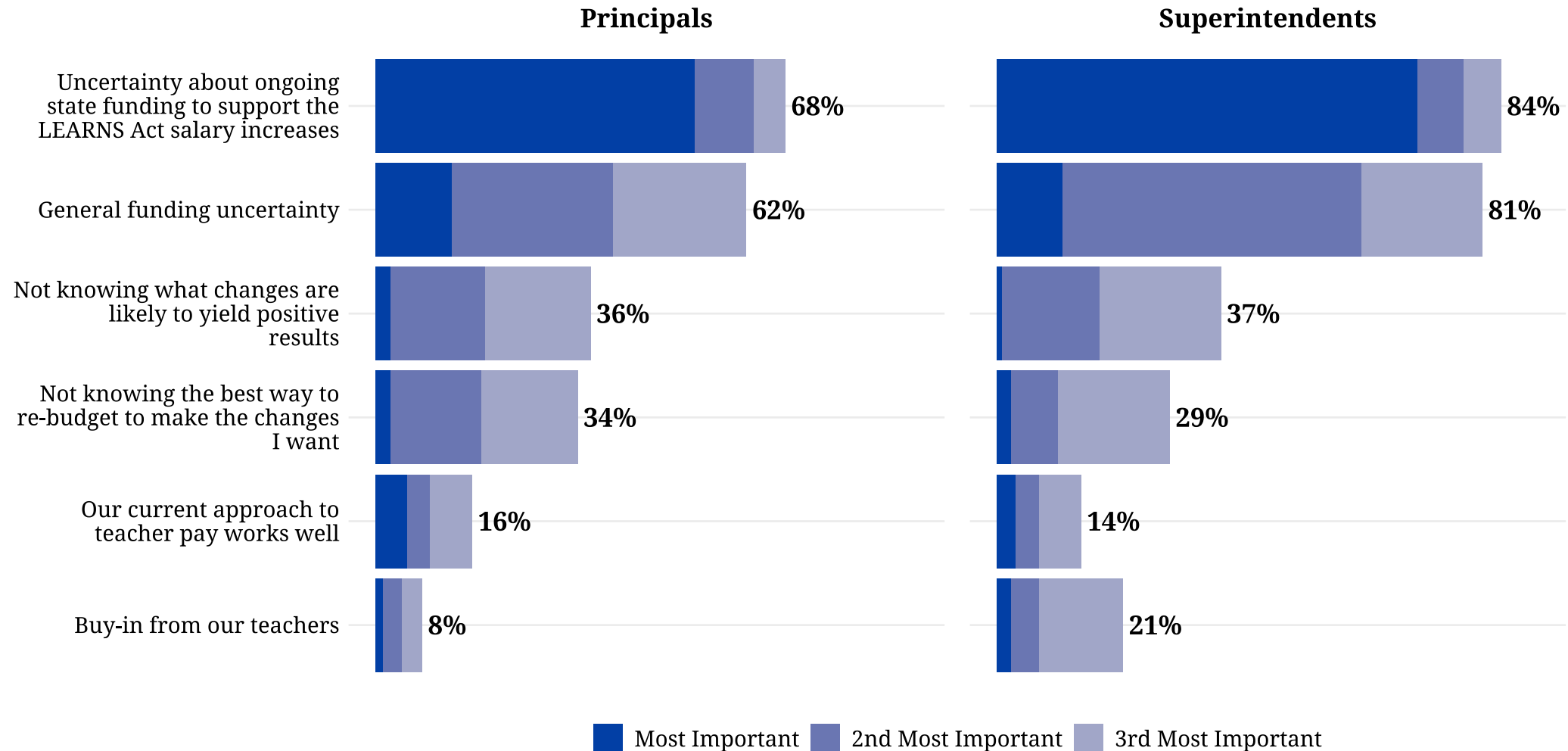
Principals

While many administrators intend to keep a salary schedule, there are signs of innovation.



Superintendents

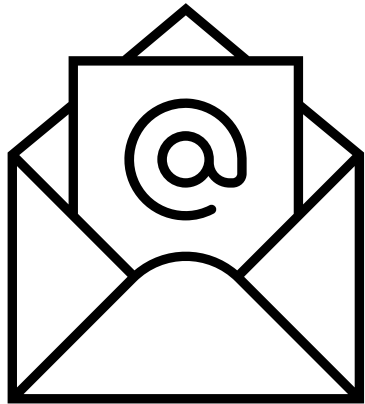
Uncertainty about continued funding seems to be the biggest concern for administrators.



Conclusion & Discussion

- The Arkansas LEARNS Act substantially equalized teacher pay across the state and resulted in substantial new revenues for high-poverty districts.
- There appear to be minimal effects on teacher retention so far, but this may be due to uncertainty surrounding implementation.
- Uncertainty surrounding continued funding is the biggest barrier for administrators seeking to make changes to teacher compensation policies, though this isn't unique to the LEARN Act.

Thank you!



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