

GUAM FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

AFT Local 1581

PAID LAST IN THE NATION

What federal wage data says about what Guam pays its workers

Full report

An analysis of the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics May 2025 wage data, covering 242 occupations across 54 states and territories

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1. What we found, in three numbers

53rd of 54

Guam ranks 53rd of 54 states and territories on what the typical worker earns. Only Puerto Rico is lower.

\$14,330

The yearly gap between the typical Guam worker at \$36,650 and the typical American worker at \$50,980. That is 28 percent.

152 of 235

Occupations where Guam pays the lowest or second lowest wage of any state or territory, out of 235 that could be ranked.

Those three numbers describe the whole workforce, not one industry and not one year. The rest of this report shows where the numbers come from and where the gaps are widest.

2. How the comparison was built

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics runs a survey called Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics. Every year it publishes what workers are paid in each occupation, in every state and territory. The May 2025 release is the most recent. It is public and free.

BLS reports 242 separate occupations for Guam. For each of those, we pulled the same occupation in every other state and territory and lined them up side by side.

The 54 areas compared

The 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. American Samoa and the Northern Mariana Islands are not in this BLS release.

The wage used

The annual median. That is the middle of the range: half of workers in that job earn more, half earn less. The median is used instead of the average because a small number of very high earners can pull an average upward and make pay look better than most people experience.

What a rank means

If Guam ranks 53rd of 54 in an occupation, it means 52 areas pay more and 1 pays less. Areas where BLS withholds the wage are not counted in the denominator, so the ranking never counts a missing number as a zero.

Employment types included

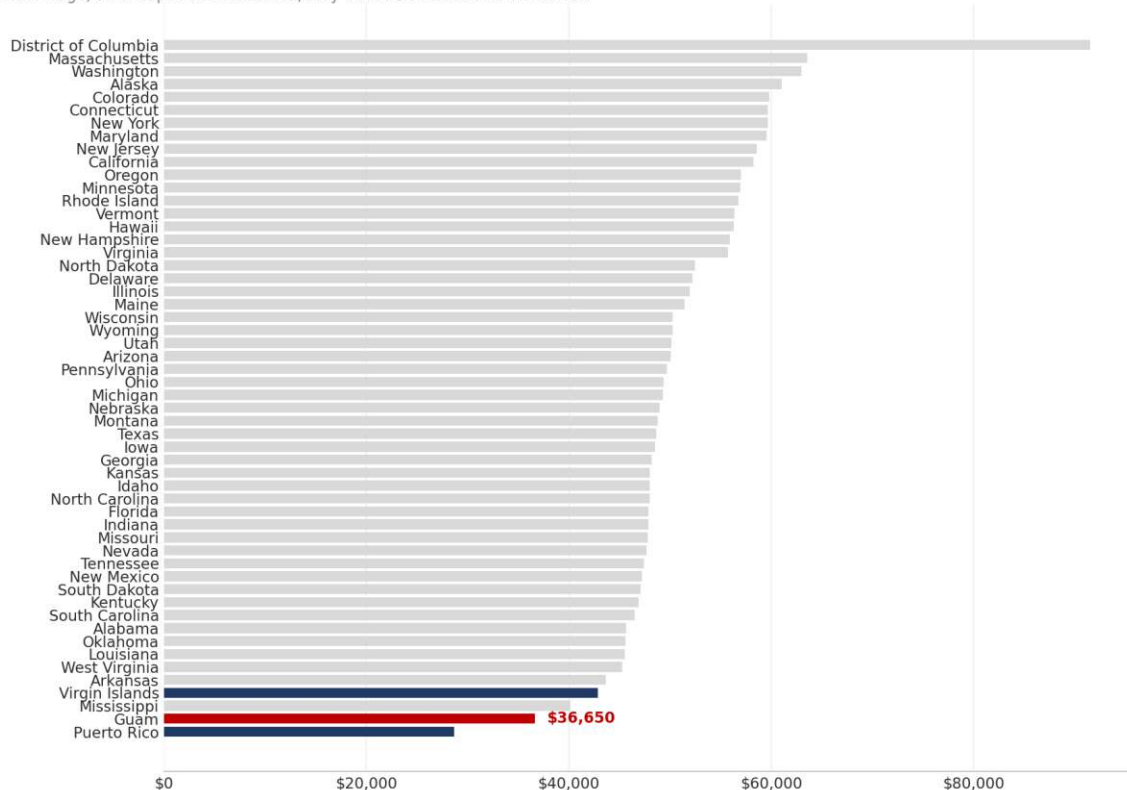
All of them. Government, private sector and everything else are combined, because that is the only way BLS publishes Guam.

3. Guam against every state and territory

This is the middle wage across all occupations in each area.

Guam is second to last in the nation on what a typical worker earns

Median annual wage, all occupations combined, May 2025. 54 states and territories.



Guam sits at \$36,650. The national figure is \$50,980. Every state, the District of Columbia and the U.S. Virgin Islands pay more. Puerto Rico, at \$28,680, is the only area that pays less.

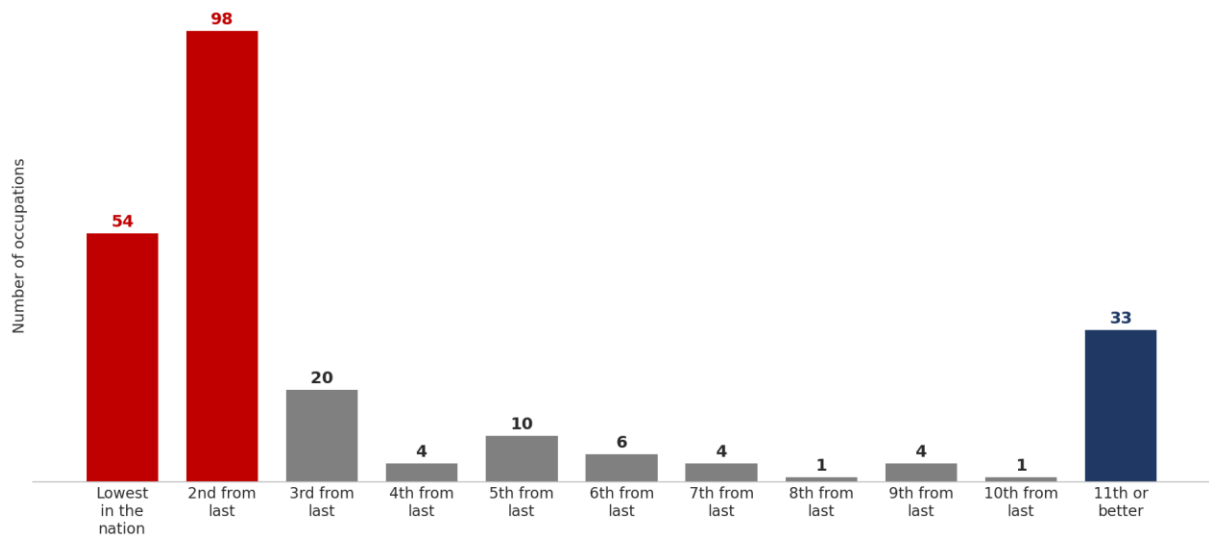
The highest paying area is the District of Columbia at \$91,540, which is two and a half times the Guam figure.

4. How often Guam finishes last

A single ranking can be an accident of one occupation. So we ranked Guam in all 235 occupations where a ranking was possible and counted the results.

In 152 of 235 occupations, Guam is last or second to last

Where Guam finishes among the areas that report each occupation. 235 occupations ranked.



Reading this chart

- Guam pays the lowest wage in the country in 54 occupations.
- Guam is second from last in 98 more. In 90 of those 98, the only area paying less is Puerto Rico.
- Together that is 152 of 235 occupations, or 65 percent.
- Guam is in the bottom five areas in 186 occupations, or 79 percent.
- Guam pays above the U.S. median in 12 occupations, or 5 percent.

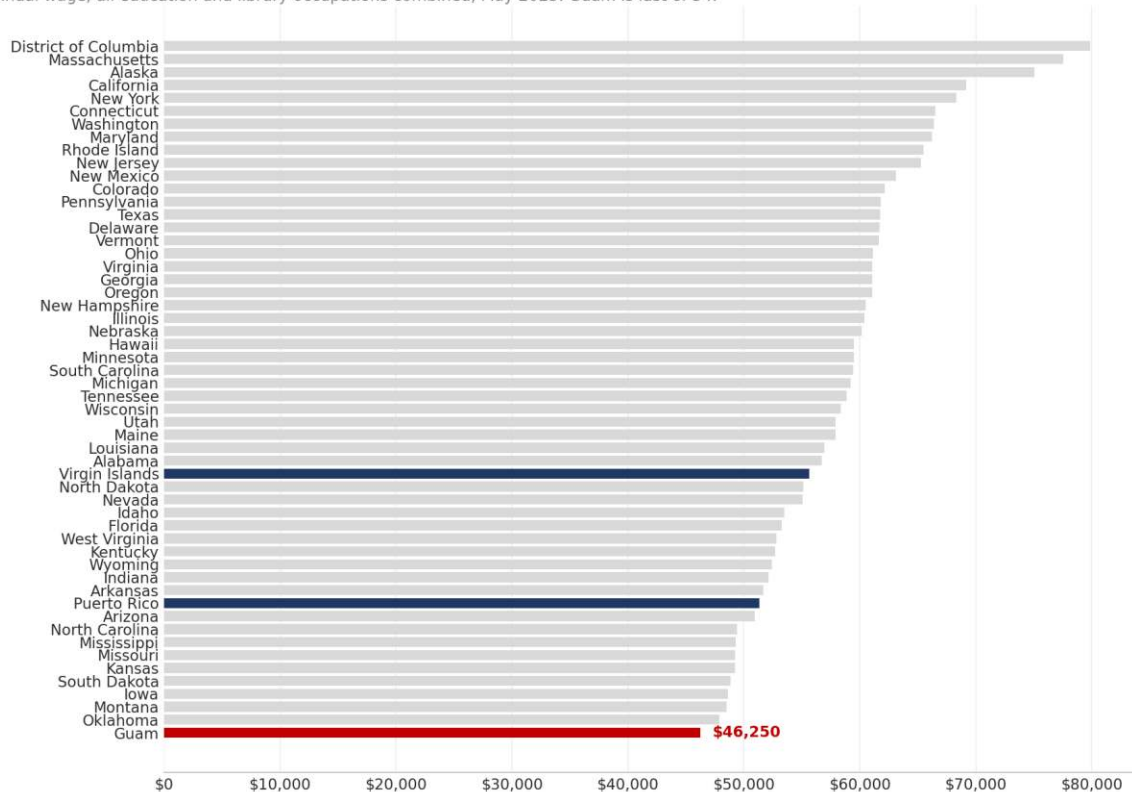
The seven remaining occupations of the 242 have no rank because BLS withholds the Guam wage. Registered nurses is one of them.

5. Education: the worst case in the data

Every job in schools and libraries on Guam, added together and compared with the same group everywhere else.

Guam pays education workers less than any state or territory

Median annual wage, all education and library occupations combined, May 2025. Guam is last of 54.



Guam pays education workers a median of \$46,250. That is last of all 54 areas. The national median is \$60,570. Guam is the floor.

Every education occupation Guam reports

Education occupation	Guam	National benchmark	Guam rank	Cents per dollar
All education and library occupations	\$46,250	\$60,570	54 of 54	76
Elementary school teachers †	\$62,240	\$76,552	42 of 52	81
Middle school teachers †	\$62,020	\$76,552	43 of 52	81
Secondary school teachers †	\$62,860	\$76,552	40 of 52	82
Instructional coordinators	\$61,750	\$77,440	50 of 54	80
Teachers and instructors, all other	\$50,000	\$66,140	47 of 52	76
Education and library workers, all other	\$37,840	\$50,890	47 of 52	74
Tutors	\$30,410	\$43,350	52 of 52	70

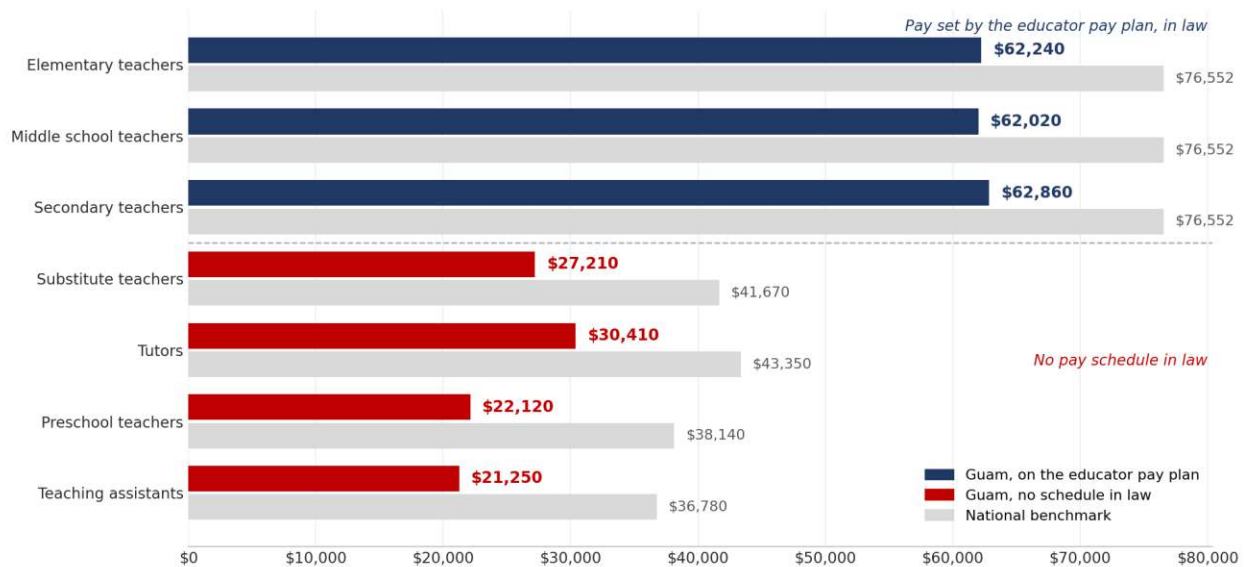
Education occupation	Guam	National benchmark	Guam rank	Cents per dollar
Substitute teachers, short term	\$27,210	\$41,670	47 of 51	65
Preschool teachers	\$22,120	\$38,140	54 of 54	58
Teaching assistants	\$21,250	\$36,780	54 of 54	58

Rows marked † are measured against the National Education Association estimated national average public school teacher salary of \$76,552 for 2025-26, and ranked among the 51 states and the District of Columbia plus Guam. Every other row uses the BLS national median and is ranked among the areas reporting that occupation. Cents per dollar is what the Guam median comes to for every dollar of the benchmark.

6. The contract divide

The education numbers split cleanly into two groups, and the split is the most important finding in this report.

**Teachers on the pay plan set in law fall short of the national average.
Teachers with no schedule in law at all are paid the least in the country.**



National benchmark: NEA estimated average public school teacher salary, \$76,552 (2025-26), for the three classifications on the pay plan; BLS national median for the four with no schedule in law.

Group one: paid under the educator pay plan, which is set in law

Guam public school teachers are paid under the educator pay plan, which is established in law rather than bargained, and they are paid far better than the rest of the education workforce on this island. That is the whole of the good news. Measured against the benchmark the teaching profession actually uses, the National Education Association estimate of the national average teacher salary, \$76,552 for 2025-26, an elementary teacher on Guam earns a median of \$62,240. That is 81 cents on the dollar and a shortfall of \$14,312 a year. Middle school teachers are at \$62,020 and secondary teachers at \$62,860. Placed against the NEA state table, all three classifications sit in the bottom quarter of the country.

Group two: no salary schedule in law

Every other education classification on Guam is at or near the bottom of the nation. Teaching assistants earn \$21,250 and rank last of 54. Preschool teachers earn \$22,120 and rank last of 54. Substitute teachers earn \$27,210. Tutors earn \$30,410 and rank last of the 52 areas reporting. No salary schedule in law governs any of these classifications.

What GFT understands about who holds these jobs

GFT understands the low paid classifications to be concentrated in Guam private schools and charter schools, where no salary schedule is established in law. There is a second gap alongside the pay gap, and it has had far less attention.

Guam does not require a person employed as a classroom teacher in a private or charter school to hold a teaching certificate. A public school teacher must be certified. A private or charter school teacher need not be. The territory sets a standard of preparation for the children in one classroom and no standard at all for the children in the classroom next door.

GFT is asking for two changes here, and they belong together. First, a certification requirement for every person employed as a classroom teacher on Guam, whatever school they work in. Second, that once a private or charter school teacher holds that certification, their pay mirrors the public sector schedule for the same credential and the same years of service. Certification without pay parity simply raises the bar for entry into the lowest paid teaching jobs in the United States. Pay parity without certification pays for a standard nobody has to meet. The two only work as a pair.

This point requires an honest caveat. The Bureau of Labor Statistics publishes Guam at all employer types combined. It does not separate public, private and charter schools for the territory, so the federal data cannot on its own confirm which employers these workers have. The wage figures above are federal and can be checked by anyone. The description of who holds those jobs, and the absence of a certification requirement outside the public system, are GFT knowledge of the local workforce and are offered as such.

How teacher pay is actually set on Guam

One point is commonly misunderstood and is worth stating plainly. GFT holds a collective bargaining agreement covering public school teachers, but the union is not permitted to negotiate wages.

Teacher pay is set by the educator pay plan, which is established in law. The union supplies data and lobbies for the plan to be updated, but the plan can only be changed by the Legislature and the Governor. It takes a bill or it takes a signature from the Governor. No one else on this island can move it, and no amount of bargaining can.

Private and charter school teachers have no salary schedule in law at all. Their pay is set entirely by their employer.

That distinction matters for what follows. The gap in group one is a legislative outcome, and the Legislature and the Governor are the only bodies that can close it. The gap in group two has no schedule behind it of any kind.

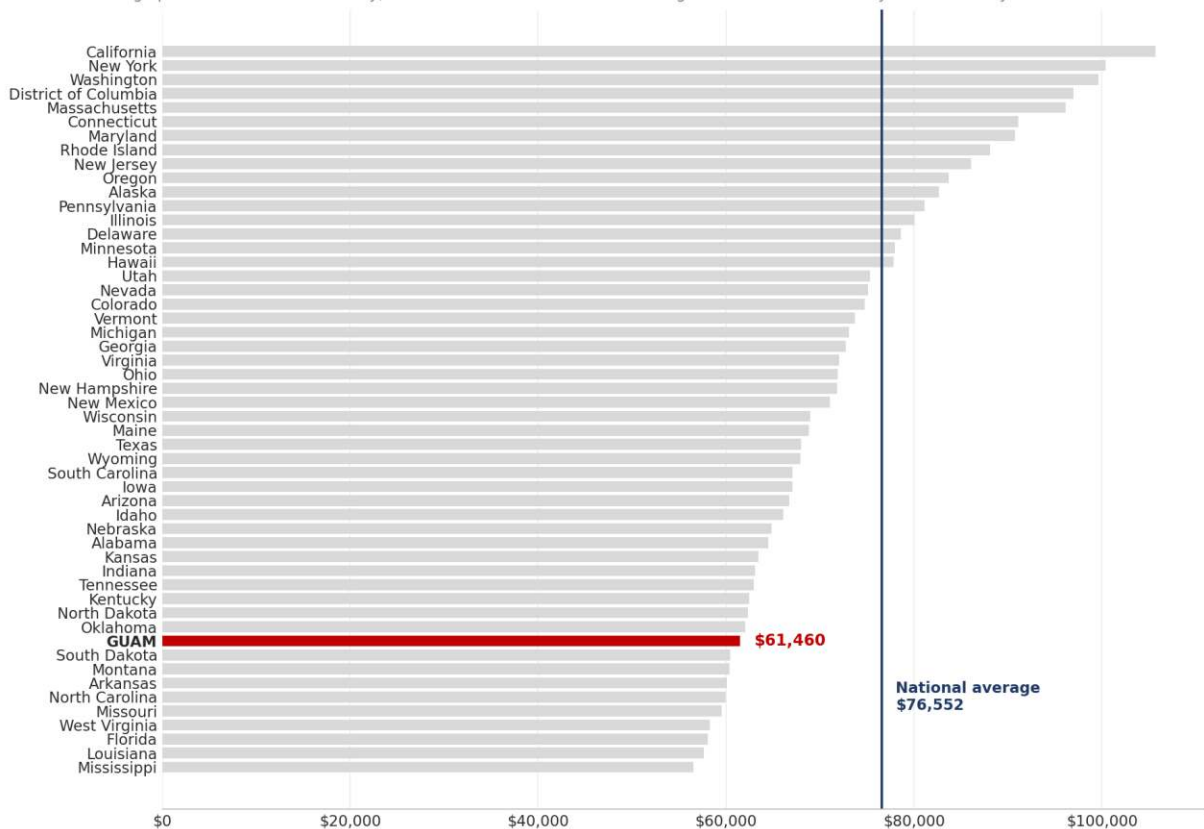
6a. Certified teachers against the national average

The National Education Association publishes an annual estimate of the average public school teacher salary in every state. Its April 2026 report estimates the national average classroom teacher salary for 2025-26 at \$76,552, and the average instructional staff salary at \$78,702. These are the figures the teaching profession cites, and they are averages rather than medians.

NEA does not cover Guam. To place Guam in that table we used the BLS average annual wage for Guam certified elementary and secondary teachers, which is \$61,460. An average is compared with an average.

Guam teachers would rank 43rd of 52 against the NEA state averages

NEA estimated average public school teacher salary, 2025-26. Guam bar is the BLS average for certified elementary and secondary teachers.



The result

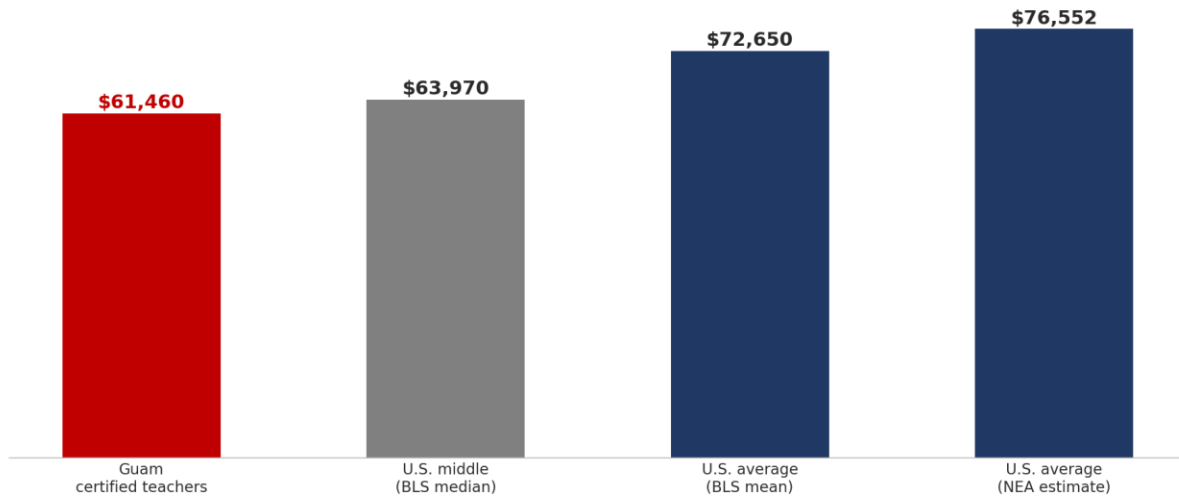
- Guam certified teachers earn 80 cents for every dollar of the national average.
- The shortfall is about \$15,100 a year per teacher.
- Placed in the NEA table, Guam would rank 43rd of 52. Nine states pay less: Arkansas, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, North Carolina, South Dakota and West Virginia.

6b. Why this report uses the average

An informed reader will notice that Guam teachers look much closer to the national figure when measured against the median, and will ask which number is right. Both are right. They measure different things, and the difference is itself a finding.

The benchmark you choose changes the answer, so this report uses the average

Elementary school teachers. The NEA estimate and the BLS average agree closely. The BLS median is lower because it ignores the top of the pay range.



What the gap between the two benchmarks means

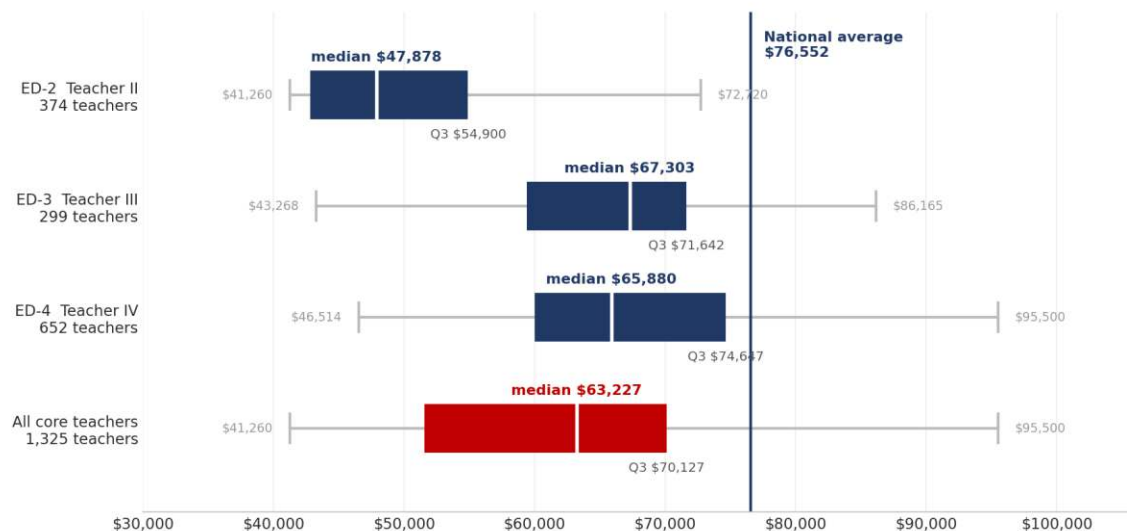
The median is the middle of the pay range. The average includes the top of it. In most states a teacher who stays twenty or thirty years, and who earns a master's degree somewhere along the way, finishes a career well above where it started, and those senior salaries pull the state average above the state median. Nationally the average elementary teacher salary is \$8,680 higher than the median.

On Guam the reverse is true. The BLS average sits \$800 below the median for elementary teachers and \$1,380 below for secondary teachers. GFT's own statistical analysis of the Government of Guam FY25 fourth quarter pay schedule finds the same inversion across all 1,325 core classroom teachers, a mean of \$61,465 against a median of \$63,227. Two independent sources, one federal survey and one set of our own payroll records, land within five dollars of each other on what the average Guam teacher is paid. The reason for the inversion is not mysterious. The bottom of the Guam scale is crowded with teachers entering at or near \$41,260, and the top of it is not high enough to pull the average back up the way a mainland scale does.

Where Guam teachers actually sit on that scale

Three quarters of Guam's classroom teachers are paid below the national average

Guam public school core classroom teacher salaries, FY2025 fourth quarter, 1,325 teachers. The box spans the middle half of each grade.



Whiskers run from the lowest to the highest salary actually paid in that grade. The white line is the median. The red bar is all three grades combined. National average is the NEA estimate for 2025-26. Source: GFT analysis of the Government of Guam FY25 fourth quarter teacher pay schedule.

ED-4, Teacher IV, is the largest group of classroom teachers on this island, 652 of the 1,325, and it is the grade that holds the master's degrees and the longest service. The median ED-4 teacher earns \$65,880. The third quartile, the figure only the top quarter of that grade clears, is \$74,647. Both numbers sit below the national average teacher salary of \$76,552. Not below the top of the national range. Below the average of it. Three quarters of Guam's most experienced, master's holding classroom teachers are paid less than the average American teacher.

The same holds for the workforce as a whole. Across all three core grades the third quartile is \$70,127, so more than three in four of Guam's classroom teachers earn below the national average, and the single most common salary on the island, held by more teachers than any other figure, is \$65,880. A teacher who reaches the very top of ED-4 does earn \$95,500, and that is a real salary. It is also the end of a full career, and fewer than one ED-4 teacher in four earns even \$74,647. Guam's scale starts low and does not climb fast enough to catch a national average that keeps moving.

That last point deserves a line of its own. When GFT ran this payroll analysis in February 2026 it measured the shortfall against the national average then in print, \$72,030, and found a gap of \$10,565 per teacher per year. The Guam figure has not moved since. NEA's April 2026 estimate for 2025-26 is \$76,552, and the same Guam salary is now \$15,087 behind. Standing still on Guam is not standing still. The rest of the country is walking away from us.

A check on the two sources

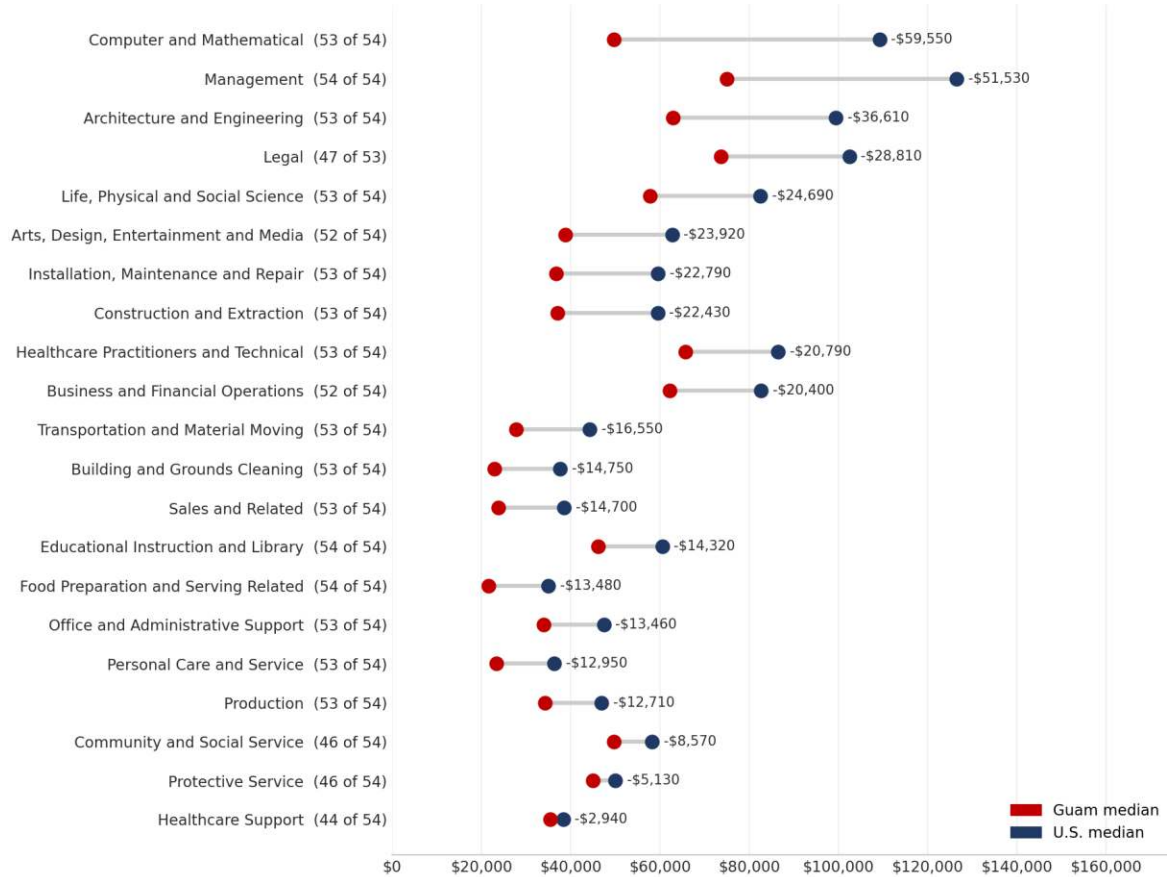
The NEA estimate and the BLS survey are independent of one another, so it is worth confirming that they agree. For secondary teachers the BLS national average is \$76,320 and the NEA national estimate is \$76,552, a difference of less than one percent. For elementary teachers the BLS national average is \$72,650, about 5 percent below the NEA figure, which is expected because NEA covers public schools only while BLS includes private and charter employers that pay less. The two sources are consistent.

7. Every major job family

BLS groups occupations into 21 major families. Guam pays below the U.S. median in all 21.

Every major job family on Guam pays below the national median

Guam median annual wage against the U.S. median for the same job family, May 2025. All 21 major groups, Guam rank in parentheses.



The same figures in a table

Job family	Guam	U.S. median	Guam rank	Cents per U.S. dollar
Computer and Mathematical	\$49,730	\$109,280	53 of 54	46
Management	\$74,990	\$126,520	54 of 54	59
Architecture and Engineering	\$62,910	\$99,520	53 of 54	63
Legal	\$73,690	\$102,500	47 of 53	72
Life, Physical and Social Science	\$57,840	\$82,530	53 of 54	70
Arts, Design, Entertainment and Media	\$38,830	\$62,750	52 of 54	62
Installation, Maintenance and Repair	\$36,830	\$59,620	53 of 54	62
Construction and Extraction	\$37,110	\$59,540	53 of 54	62
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	\$65,740	\$86,530	53 of 54	76
Business and Financial Operations	\$62,260	\$82,660	52 of 54	75
Transportation and Material Moving	\$27,800	\$44,350	53 of 54	63
Building and Grounds Cleaning	\$22,930	\$37,680	53 of 54	61
Sales and Related	\$23,830	\$38,530	53 of 54	62
Educational Instruction and Library	\$46,250	\$60,570	54 of 54	76
Food Preparation and Serving Related	\$21,570	\$35,050	54 of 54	62
Office and Administrative Support	\$33,990	\$47,450	53 of 54	72
Personal Care and Service	\$23,460	\$36,410	53 of 54	64
Production	\$34,280	\$46,990	53 of 54	73
Community and Social Service	\$49,730	\$58,300	46 of 54	85
Protective Service	\$44,950	\$50,080	46 of 54	90
Healthcare Support	\$35,400	\$38,340	44 of 54	92

Guam rank is out of the areas reporting that job family. Cents per U.S. dollar is what the Guam median comes to for every dollar of the U.S. median. Sorted by the size of the dollar gap.

8. The twelve occupations where the Guam dollar goes least far

Measured against the U.S. median wage for the same occupation.

Occupation	Guam	U.S. median	Guam rank	Cents per U.S. dollar
Web and Digital Interface Designers	\$31,200	\$104,000	48 of 48	30
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing	\$29,460	\$72,080	54 of 54	41
Sales Managers	\$60,740	\$148,270	53 of 53	41
Telecommunications Line Installers and Repairers	\$30,770	\$74,330	53 of 53	41
Travel Agents	\$22,650	\$50,160	51 of 51	45
Computer and Mathematical Occupations (all)	\$49,730	\$109,280	53 of 54	46
Marketing Managers	\$79,890	\$166,790	50 of 50	48
Financial Managers	\$80,390	\$166,570	54 of 54	48
Human Resources Managers	\$77,180	\$149,280	54 of 54	52
First-Line Supervisors, Non-Retail Sales	\$45,900	\$87,520	54 of 54	52
Computer and Information Systems Managers	\$92,560	\$175,140	53 of 54	53
Sales Representatives of Services	\$37,170	\$69,990	53 of 54	53

Cents per U.S. dollar is what the Guam median comes to for every dollar of the U.S. median for that occupation.

Computer and mathematical occupations are the clearest case. Guam pays a median of \$49,730 where the national median is \$109,280. A worker in that field earns less than half on Guam what the same worker earns nationally.

9. Where Guam does well, and why it matters

Guam pays above the U.S. median in 12 of the 235 occupations that can be ranked. The pattern in that short list is worth the attention of the Legislature and the Governor.

Occupation	Guam	U.S. median	Guam rank	Cents per U.S. dollar
Education Administrators, All Other	\$129,480	\$95,200	2 of 51	136
Installation, Maintenance and Repair Workers, All Other	\$64,650	\$49,230	3 of 54	131
General Internal Medicine Physicians	\$324,920	\$256,560	12 of 46	127
Office and Administrative Support Workers, All Other	\$53,290	\$45,670	10 of 51	117
Health Education Specialists	\$73,070	\$64,070	13 of 53	114
Postal Service Clerks	\$68,810	\$62,130	1 of 54	111
Business Operations Specialists, All Other	\$88,610	\$83,050	12 of 54	107
Media and Communication Equipment Workers, All Other	\$75,360	\$70,720	15 of 35	107
Property, Real Estate and Community Association Managers	\$73,110	\$69,990	19 of 53	104
Engineering Technologists and Technicians, All Other	\$81,330	\$78,350	12 of 51	104
Postal Service Mail Sorters and Processors	\$60,530	\$58,470	3 of 53	104
Massage Therapists	\$60,420	\$58,450	24 of 52	103

The postal clerk case

Postal service clerks are the single occupation where Guam pays the most in the entire country. A postal clerk on Guam earns a median of \$68,810. The national median is \$62,130. Guam ranks first of 54 areas. Postal service mail sorters rank third.

Postal pay is set on a federal schedule. It does not adjust downward to match local wage levels. Where pay is set nationally, Guam workers are paid at the top of the country. Where pay is set locally, the same island is at the bottom.

That comparison is the argument in one line. Low wages on Guam are not an unavoidable feature of the island economy. They are the result of how pay is set.

10. What we are asking the Legislature and the Governor to do

The current budget does not address wage disparity in the public sector or the private sector. It funds neither a study of the problem nor a fix. For public school teachers the matter sits squarely with the Legislature and the Governor, because their pay is set by the educator pay plan in law and cannot be raised at the bargaining table.

Option one: fund a wage study

Appropriate funds for a comprehensive study establishing what it costs to live and work on Guam, what competitive wages for each classification would be, and what closing the gap would cost over a set number of years. This produces the number lawmakers have said they lack.

Option two: appropriate the money

Skip the study and direct the appropriation to raising wages, beginning with the classifications that rank last in the nation. The BLS data already identifies which those are, and this report lists them. For core classroom teachers the size of the job is already known. Bringing the ED-2 to ED-4 mean from \$61,465 to between 95 and 100 percent of the national average means a target of roughly \$72,700 to \$76,600 per teacher.

Four changes that keep this from reopening

Index educator pay to national benchmarks. Enact legislation requiring periodic review of the educator pay plan against national salary data and the cost of living on Guam, with automatic adjustment. A one-time raise that is not indexed only resets the clock on the next set of data.

Commit to a multi-year stabilization plan. A three- to five-year budget trajectory that brings Guam educator pay to parity with the national average, with annual public reporting on recruitment, retention and vacancy rates, so that progress can be checked rather than asserted.

Authorize bargaining over salary. GFT holds a contract it is not permitted to use on pay. Give teachers and their union standing to negotiate compensation directly and the Legislature gains a partner in solving this instead of a petitioner outside the door.

Fully fund the Yamashita Educator Corps Scholarship. Guam cannot win a bidding war against mainland districts paying \$10,000 to \$20,000 more for the same job. It can build its own pipeline of locally trained teachers who intend to stay.

What GFT cannot support

The last meaningful increase to the educator pay plan took effect in 2022 and delivered a 20 percent base adjustment. It was real and it mattered. The wage data behind it was gathered before the Covid-era inflation that followed, and nothing has moved since. Every figure in this report is from May 2025 or later. Guam has spent four years paying its educators under a plan built for a cost of living that no longer exists.

The absence of data has been the standing reason for inaction. That reason will not hold. The data has always been available. The federal government publishes these figures every year, they are public, they are free, and they place Guam at or near the bottom of the country in 65 percent of the occupations measured. What has been lacking is not information. It is the will to act on it.

The cost of waiting is not theoretical, and it is not a forecast. The Guam Department of Education opens every school year already short, with several dozen classroom positions unfilled, and the shortages fall hardest on secondary content courses, the exact posts mainland districts recruit hardest for. Schools cover the gap with long term substitutes, combined classes and courses left understaffed. A system that begins every single year below full staffing has stopped treating it as an emergency and started treating it as the weather.

Teachers, teaching assistants and school staff are leaving Guam. They are going to the mainland, to Hawaii, to anywhere that pays what this island will not. They are not leaving because they stopped caring about our children. They are leaving because the arithmetic of raising a family here stopped working. Every year that passes without action exports another cohort of trained, certified, experienced educators, and the children in those classrooms are the ones who pay the difference.

This is the third budget cycle in which GFT has brought this problem forward. We are not asking anyone to study whether the problem is real. It is real, it is federally documented, it is documented again in our own payroll records, and it grows every year it is deferred. Fund the study or fund the raises. Choosing neither is itself a choice, and it is the most expensive one on the table.

11. Limits of this analysis

This report states its limits plainly so that they cannot be used to dismiss it.

Wages are not adjusted for cost of living

Every figure is a nominal wage as published by BLS. No cost of living adjustment has been applied, because the BLS wage file does not contain one. Adjusting for the cost of living on Guam would very likely widen these gaps rather than narrow them, but this report does not claim that, because it cannot be shown from this data.

Employer type is not separated

BLS reports Guam at all employer types combined. Public, private and charter employers cannot be separated in this data.

Some wages are withheld

BLS withholds a wage estimate where the sample is too small to publish safely. Guam has 7 such occupations out of 242, including registered nurses. Those occupations are kept in the workbook and flagged, not deleted, but they carry no rank.

Guam reports fewer occupations than the mainland

BLS publishes 242 occupations for Guam against 1,401 nationally. This report covers the 242 Guam reports. Occupations Guam does not report are outside its scope.

A median is not a starting wage

These are middle of the range wages for workers already in the job. They are not entry level pay and not the lowest wage paid.

More than one source is combined in sections 5, 6a and 6b

Sections 3 to 5 and 7 to 9 use BLS data only, comparing like with like, with two exceptions that are marked wherever they appear. The three certified teacher rows in section 5 and the certified teacher comparison in section 6a set a Guam figure against an NEA figure for the states, because NEA does not publish Guam. Section 6b also cites GFT's own FY2025 payroll analysis and the educator pay plan schedule established in law. Section 6b shows that the BLS and NEA national figures agree to within 5 percent. These are sound comparisons but they are not single source comparisons, and they are identified as such.

12. Sources and how to check our work

Almost every figure in this report can be verified independently against a federal or national source. Three items come from GFT rather than from a federal survey, and each is labelled where it appears: the description of who holds the lowest paid education jobs on Guam, the absence of a certification requirement outside the public system, and the FY25 payroll analysis of core classroom teacher salaries used in section 6b. That payroll analysis is itself built on Government of Guam pay schedule data and is available in full.

Primary sources

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics, May 2025 release, all data file. Published by the U.S. Department of Labor and available free at bls.gov/oes.

National Education Association, Rankings and Estimates, April 2026, table E-6, used for the national average teacher salary of \$76,552 for 2025-26 and for the state by state averages in sections 5, 6 and 6a.

Guam Federation of Teachers, Statistical Analysis of Core Classroom Teacher Salaries, ED-2 through ED-4 Positions, FY25 Fourth Quarter Data, 20 February 2026. Source data: Government of Guam FY25 fourth quarter teacher pay schedule, 1,325 teachers. Used in section 6b for the grade distributions, the quartiles, the mean of \$61,465 and the median of \$63,227.

Government of Guam Department of Administration, 2022 GDOE Educator Pay Plan Implementation Guidelines, used for the Teacher II range cited in section 6b.

Selection rules used

- Guam: area 66, territory level, all industries, all employer types.
- National: the United States total, all industries, all employer types.
- States and territories: state level records, all industries, all employer types.
- Occupations matched across areas by federal occupation code.

Supporting workbook

A companion spreadsheet contains all 242 Guam occupations, all 54 areas and all 13,068 occupation and area combinations, with the rank and comparison columns built as live formulas. Every BLS figure in this report can be traced to a cell in that workbook. The national average teacher salary and the 52 area teacher rankings come from the NEA table cited above, and the pay grade distributions come from the FY25 payroll analysis cited above. All three are available on request.

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