

Exploring the changing demographics of homeschooling in the United States

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Homeschooling was fully [legalized](#) in the United States in 1993. Since then, homeschooling has grown from a relatively small educational modality into the fastest-growing educational sector in the United States. Although white conservative Christian families have played a [major role](#) in shaping the modern homeschooling movement, homeschooling is no longer solely represented by this demographic. An increasing number of families from different religious, political, and social backgrounds have chosen to homeschool for a wide variety of reasons.

This growing diversity challenges the idea that homeschooling is driven by a singular ideology. Understanding the homeschooling demographic changes from the past decade is important when considering homeschooling oversight and child safety. Concerns related to educational neglect and child welfare cannot be fully understood by treating homeschoolers as a monolithic group. Furthermore, the outcomes of children currently being homeschooled have been minimally researched. A clearer understanding of the demographic characteristics of this population can guide future research about this homeschooling cohort.

KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

Homeschool Growth: Homeschooling is the fastest-growing educational sector in the United States.

Homeschooling's growth in the United States was fairly stagnant, and even slightly declining, from 2011-2016 according to the [National Household Education Survey](#). In 2011-2012, 3.4% of school-aged children were homeschooled, whereas in 2015-2016, that number dipped slightly to 3.3%. However, since the COVID-19 pandemic, homeschooling has become the [fastest-growing](#) educational sector in the US. Although the initial homeschooling surge occurred because of the pandemic, growth rates show no sign of waning. In the [2024-2025 school year](#), homeschooling grew at an average rate of roughly 5% (more than twice the pre-pandemic growth rate). Many states ([36%](#)) have reported record-high homeschooling rates in the past three years, exceeding the rates of homeschool enrollment during the height of the pandemic.

Racial & Ethnic Diversity is Increasing: More minority families are choosing to homeschool.

While white students continue to represent the largest share of homeschooled students, recent research shows that homeschooling is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. In 2007, white, non-Hispanic students made up 77% of homeschooled students. This proportion declined to [59%](#) in 2016. During this time, the number of Hispanic homeschooled students rose significantly: in 2015-2016, [26%](#) of homeschooled students were Hispanic, up from 15% in 2011-2012. Similarly, the [National Center for Education Statistics](#) (NCES) reported an increase in Black homeschool students, representing approximately 8% of the homeschooling population in 2016. More recent data show that this trend holds. The [National Household Education Survey](#), developed by NCES, suggests that the number of homeschooled students of color in 2022-2023 had risen to 29% of currently homeschooled children.

Household Income: Families from all socioeconomic statuses homeschool.

In 2007, [just 1.8%](#) of school-age children in poverty were homeschooled, compared with roughly 3.2% of those not in poverty. In 2011-2012, the rate was practically identical for each group—3.5% of children in poverty and 3.4% of children not in poverty were homeschooled. By [2016](#), more children in poverty were homeschooled (3.9%) compared to children not in poverty (3.1%). At this time, children living in poverty were roughly 26% more likely to be homeschooled than children not living in poverty. This trend, however, may have changed in the past 10 years.

More recent data, from the [Household Pulse Survey](#) in 2021, show that a relatively equal proportion of homeschooling families come from each income bracket. Among families who homeschool at least one child, the Household Pulse Survey found that 10% made less than \$25,000, 8% made between \$25,000-34,999, 10% made between \$35,000-49,999, 13% made between \$50,000-74,999, 12% made between 75,000-99,999, 13% made between 100,000-149,999, 5% made between 150,000-199,999, and 5% made 200,000 and above.

Parental Education: Families from all education levels homeschool, including those without a high school diploma or GED.

In 2007, only [0.4%](#) of parents who did not hold a high school diploma or GED homeschooled. That number significantly grew in the following years. The National Household Education Survey, with data from [2016](#), found 4.4% of parents who did not have a high school diploma or GED homeschooled, as compared to only 3.6% of children with at least one parent with a bachelor's degree. More recent data show a mix of education levels among homeschooling caregivers. The 2023-2024 [Household Pulse Survey](#) found that, among homeschooling families, 9% of parents did not have a high school diploma or GED, 29% had a high school diploma or GED, 33% had an associate's degree or some college, and 29% had a bachelor's degree or higher.

Religious demographics: There is more religious diversity among homeschooling families.

Homeschooling families are still more likely to identify as religious than their traditionally schooled counterparts; however, more secular families are choosing to homeschool. The percentage of parents who listed a desire to provide religious instruction as their most important reason for homeschooling [slightly declined](#) from 17% in 2011-2012 to 16% in 2015-2016.

More recent data, from 2024, show that [over 30 percent](#) of homeschool families never attend religious services. In conjunction with the rapid growth of homeschooling over the past few years, these findings do not suggest that fewer religious people are choosing homeschooling. Instead, as more secular families enter the homeschool movement, religious homeschoolers likely represent a smaller share of the overarching population.

Political demographics: There is more political diversity among homeschooling families.

During the 1980s, the homeschooling movement was primarily driven by conservative Evangelical Christians. These roots have continued to influence the political composition of the modern homeschooling movement; in fact, religious freedom cases like *Wisconsin v. Yoder* and *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* have continued to guide efforts to deregulate homeschooling. Although homeschooling families are still more likely to identify as conservative or Republican, the political ideologies represented in the movement have become increasingly more diverse. [Data from 2024](#) suggest that roughly 29% of homeschooling families identify as Democrats.

Homeschool student ages: High school students are homeschooled at a higher rate than elementary school students.

In 2007, the homeschooling rate was slightly higher for elementary school children than for middle or high school students. This shifted by 2011-2012, when high school students were 19% more likely to be homeschooled than young elementary students. This pattern continued, and in the [2015-2016](#) school year, high school students were 31% more likely to be homeschooled. This divide is also present in [NCES](#) data from 2019, which found that the number of homeschooled students in grades equivalent to 9th-12th (3.8%) was far greater than their counterparts in grades equivalent to 1st- 3rd (2.4%).

Reasons for Homeschooling are Changing: Homeschooling parents cite a wide range of reasons for choosing to homeschool.

In data from a 2015-2016 [NCES survey](#), 61% of parents listed concern about academic instruction as one of their reasons for homeschooling. This cited motivation has become more prevalent over time, as the [National Household Education Survey](#), from 2023, found that 72% of families cited dissatisfaction with academic instruction at traditional schools as a reason for homeschooling.

Concern about school environment has also become an increasingly cited motivation. The percentage of homeschooling parents citing the environment at other schools as their *most* important motivation for homeschooling increased 9% from the 2011-2012 school year to the 2015-2016 school year. This trend can also be observed in 2023 data, with the National Household Education Survey showing that 83% of homeschooling parents reported that concern about the school environment was a motivation for homeschooling. Wanting to provide moral instruction (75%) and wanting more family time (72%) were also common motivations found in this survey data.

[Preliminary research](#) from 2019 also suggests that some families with LGBTQ+ children may be utilizing homeschooling as a way to escape discrimination and bullying.

KEY TAKEAWAY

As homeschooling grows in the United States, homeschool demographics are beginning to more closely resemble those of the nation as a whole. What was once a movement primarily associated with white conservative Christian families now includes a wide range of families with diverse racial, religious, socioeconomic, and ideological backgrounds. Recognizing ongoing demographic shifts, while also accounting for the historical roots of the movement, is important when considering

homeschool policy and child protections. Understanding who homeschools, as well as their motivations for doing so, helps inform legislation that protects homeschooled children as a whole rather than focusing on only certain demographics within the homeschooling population. Although research shows growing diversity among homeschooling families, education and life outcomes are still understudied. As homeschooling becomes less uniform, student needs may differ. More research is needed to elucidate what contexts lead to the best outcomes for homeschooled children, which will inform how oversight and support structures can be adjusted to the benefit of all homeschooled children.

At CRHE, we are committed to ensuring that all homeschooled children, regardless of religious affiliation, race, sexual orientation, or gender identity, have access to high-quality resources that fit their educational needs.