

RESEARCH FACTS ON HOMESCHOOLING

Homeschooling Fast Facts

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GENERAL FACTS, STATISTICS, AND TRENDS

- There are an estimated 4.0 to 5.0 million homeschool students in grades K-12 in the United States (or 7% to 9% of school-age children). There were about 2.5 million homeschool students in spring 2019 (or 3% to 4% of school-age children) [note 1]. The homeschool population had been growing at an estimated 2% to 8% per annum over the past several years, but it grew drastically from 2019-2020 to 2020-2021.
- Homeschooling – that is, parent-led home-based education; home education – is an age-old traditional educational practice that a decade ago appeared to be cutting-edge and “alternative” but is now bordering on “mainstream” in the United States. It may be the fastest-growing form of education in the United States. Home-based education has also been growing around the world in many other nations (e.g., Australia, Canada, France, Hungary, Japan, Kenya, Russia, Mexico, South Korea, Thailand, and the United Kingdom).
- A demographically wide variety of people homeschool – these are atheists, Christians, and Mormons; conservatives, libertarians, and liberals; low-, middle-, and high-income families; black, Hispanic, and white; parents with Ph.D.s, GEDs, and no high-school diplomas. One nationwide study shows that 41% of homeschool students are Black, Asian, Hispanic, and others (i.e., not White/non-Hispanic) (U.S. Department of Education, 2019).
- Families engaged in home-based education are not dependent on public, tax-funded resources for their children’s education. The finances associated with their homeschooling likely represent over \$27 billion that American taxpayers do not have to spend, annually, since these children are not in public schools
- Taxpayers spend an average of \$14,270 per pupil annually in public schools, plus capital expenditures. Today’s roughly 4.5 million homeschool students represent a savings of over \$65 billion for taxpayers. Taxpayers spend nothing on most homeschool students, and homeschool families spend an average of \$600 per student annually for their education.
- Homeschooling is quickly growing in popularity among minorities. About 41% of homeschool families are non-white/non-Hispanic (i.e., not white/Anglo).
- It is estimated that over 9 million Americans had experienced being homeschooled as of February of 2020.

REASONS AND MOTIVATIONS FOR HOME EDUCATING

Most parents and youth decide to homeschool for more than one reason. The most common reasons given for homeschooling are the following:

- customize or individualize the curriculum and learning environment for each child,
- accomplish more academically than in schools,
- use pedagogical approaches other than those typical in institutional schools,
- enhance family relationships between children and parents and among siblings,
- provide guided and reasoned social interactions with youthful peers and adults,
- provide a safer environment for children and youth, because of physical violence, drugs and alcohol, psychological abuse, racism, and improper and unhealthy sexuality associated with institutional schools, and
- as an alternative education approach when public or private institutional schools are closed due to acute health situations such as related to disease (e.g., Covid-19, Coronavirus)
- protect minority children from racism in public schools or lower expectations of children of color (e.g., black) (e.g., Fields-Smith, 2020; Mazama & Lundy, 2012).
- teach and impart a particular set of values, beliefs, and worldview to children and youth.

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

- The home-educated typically score 15 to 30 percentile points above public-school students on standardized academic achievement tests. (The public school average is the 50th percentile; scores range from 1 to 99.) A 2015 study found Black homeschool students to be scoring 23 to 42 percentile points above Black public school students (Ray, 2015).
- 78% of peer-reviewed studies on academic achievement show homeschool students perform statistically significantly better than those in institutional schools (Ray, 2017).
- Homeschool students score above average on achievement tests regardless of their parents' level of formal education or their family's household income.
- Whether homeschool parents were ever certified teachers is not related to their children's academic achievement.
- Degree of state control and regulation of homeschooling is not related to academic achievement.
- Home-educated students typically score above average on the SAT and ACT tests that colleges consider for admissions.
- Homeschool students are increasingly being actively recruited by colleges.

SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT (SOCIALIZATION)

- The home-educated are doing well, typically above average, on measures of social, emotional, and psychological development. Research measures include peer interaction, self-concept, leadership skills, family cohesion, participation in community service, and self-esteem.
- 87% of peer-reviewed studies on social, emotional, and psychological development show homeschool students perform statistically significantly better than those in conventional schools (Ray, 2017).
- Homeschool students are regularly engaged in social and educational activities outside their homes and with people other than their nuclear-family members. They are commonly involved in

activities such as field trips, scouting, 4-H, political drives, church ministry, sports teams, and community volunteer work.

- Adults who were home educated are more politically tolerant than the public schooled in the limited research done so far.

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN CHILDREN AND YOUTH RESPECTED?

- One researcher finds that homeschooling gives young people an unusual chance to ask questions such as, “Who am I?” and “What do I really want?,” and through the process of such asking and gradually answering the questions home-educated girls develop the strengths and the resistance abilities that give them an unusually strong sense of self.
- Some think that boys’ energetic natures and tendency to physical expression can more easily be accommodated in home-based education. Many are concerned that a highly disproportionate number of public school special-education students are boys and that boys are 2.5 times as likely as girls in public schools to be diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

SUCCESS IN THE “REAL WORLD” OF ADULTHOOD

The research base on adults who were home educated is growing; thus far it indicates that:

- 69% of peer-reviewed studies on success into adulthood (including college) show adults who were home educated succeed and perform statistically significantly better than those who attended institutional schools (Ray, 2017),
- they participate in local community service more frequently than does the general population,
- these adults vote and attend public meetings more frequently than the general population
- they go to and succeed at college at an equal or higher rate than the general population
- by adulthood, they internalize the values and beliefs of their parents at a high rate.

GENERAL INTERPRETATION OF RESEARCH ON HOMESCHOOL SUCCESS OR FAILURE

It is possible that homeschooling causes the positive traits reported above. However, the research designs to date do not conclusively “prove” that homeschooling causes these things. At the same time, there is no empirical evidence that homeschooling causes negative things compared to institutional schooling. Future research may better answer the question of causation.

Notes:

1. See McDonald (2020). The spring 2019 estimate was based on an estimate of about 2.5% per annum growth from estimates of 2 million home-educated children during the spring of 2010 and 2.3 million spring of 2016 in the United States (Ray, 2011). The estimate of 2.3 million in 2016 was calculated by Brian D. Ray, the author of this fact sheet, on April 7, 2016. He based it on publicly available research findings.

Sources

The above findings are extensively documented in one or more of the following sources, and most are available from www.nheri.org:

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For more homeschool research and more in-depth interpretation of research, media, journalists, and others please contact:

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