Elementary/Secondary Education

Homeschooled Students

In the spring of 2003, about 1.1 million, or 2.2 percent of all students, were homeschooled in the United States, an increase from 1999.

This indicator examines the number and characteristics of homeschooled students in the United States in 2003. Homeschooled students are school-age children (ages 5–17) in a grade equivalent to at least kindergarten and not higher than 12th grade who receive at least part of their instruction under their parents’ guidance at home and whose attendance at public or private school does not exceed 25 hours per week.

In 2003, the number of homeschooled students was 1.1 million, an increase from 850,000 in 1999 (see supplemental table 3-1). The percentage of the school-age population who were homeschooled increased from 1.7 percent in 1999 to 2.2 percent in 2003. The majority of homeschooled students received all of their education at home (82 percent), but some attended school up to 25 hours per week. Twelve percent of homeschooled students were enrolled in school less than 9 hours per week, and 6 percent were enrolled between 9 and 25 hours.

Homeschooled children tended to be White and from two-parent households in 2003. White children were more likely to be homeschooled than Black or Hispanic children or children from other race/ethnicities, and they constituted the majority of homeschooled students (77 percent). Eighty-one percent of homeschooled students were in two-parent households and 54 percent were in two-parent households with one parent in the labor force. The latter group of students had a higher homeschooling rate than their peers from families with different family employment characteristics. In 2003, there were no measurable differences in rates of homeschooling among students when considering their household income or the level of their parents’ education.

Parents give many different reasons for homeschooling their children. In 2003, the reasons most frequently reported by parents as being “applicable” were concerns about the school environment (e.g., safety, drugs, or negative peer pressure) (85 percent of parents); a desire to provide religious or moral instruction (72 percent); and dissatisfaction with academic instruction (68 percent) (see supplemental table 3-2). As their “most important” reason, parents most often cited concerns about the school environment and a desire to provide religious or moral instruction.

HOMESCHOOLED STUDENTS: Number and distribution of school-age children who were homeschooled, by amount of time spent in school: 1999 and 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total homeschooled</th>
<th>Homeschooled entirely</th>
<th>Homeschooled and enrolled in school less than 9 hours per week</th>
<th>Homeschooled and enrolled in school 9–25 hours per week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>850,000</td>
<td>697,000</td>
<td>107,000</td>
<td>46,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>1,096,000</td>
<td>898,000</td>
<td>137,000</td>
<td>61,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding. Homeschooled children are those ages 5–17 educated by their parents full or part time who are in a grade equivalent to kindergarten through 12th grade. Excludes students who were enrolled in public or private school more than 25 hours per week and students who were homeschooled only because of temporary illness.


FOR MORE INFORMATION:
Supplemental Notes 1, 3
Supplemental Tables 3–1, 3–2
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