

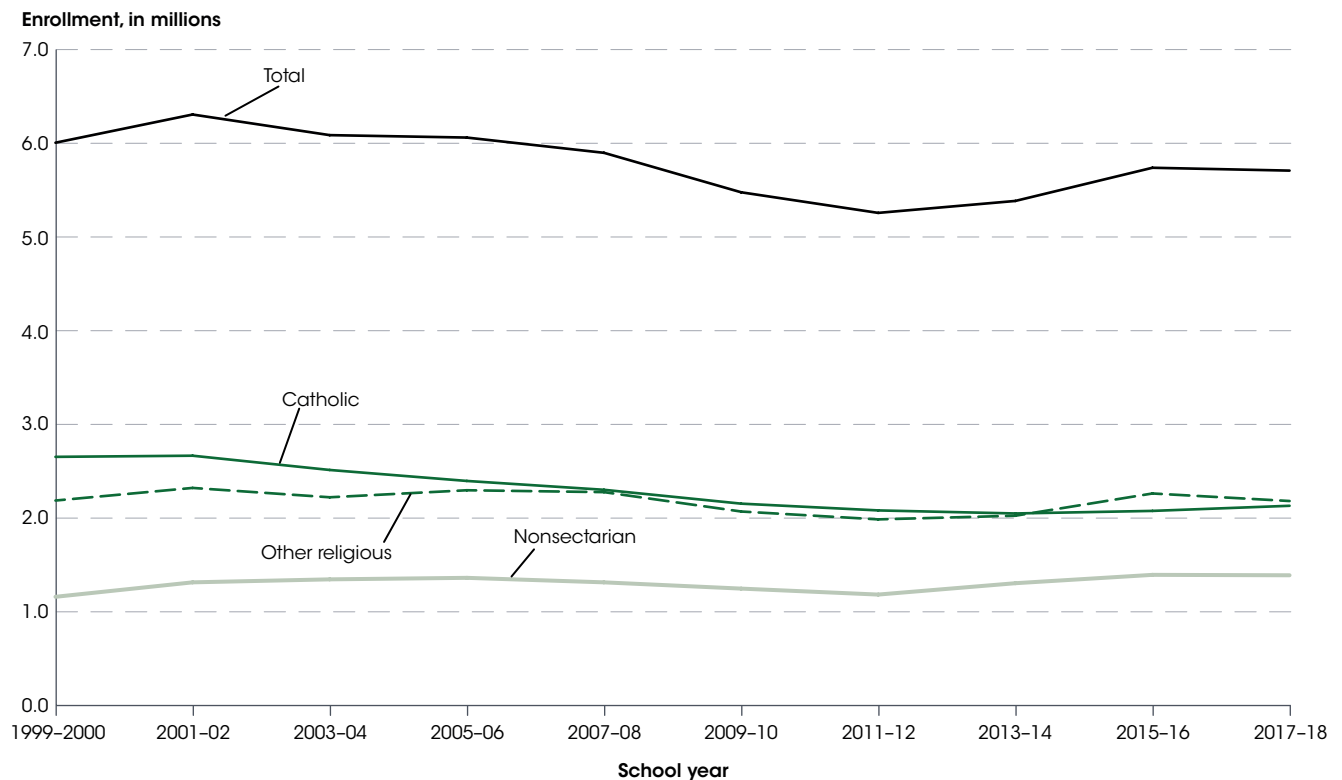
Private School Enrollment

In fall 2017, some 5.7 million students were enrolled in private elementary and secondary schools. The percentage of elementary and secondary students who were enrolled in private schools decreased from 11 percent in fall 1999 to 10 percent in fall 2017.

Private elementary and secondary schools are educational institutions that are not primarily supported by public funds.¹ In this indicator, private schools are grouped into the following categories by school orientation: Catholic, other religious, and nonsectarian (not religiously affiliated). Catholic schools include parochial, diocesan, and private Catholic schools. The other religious category includes conservative Christian schools, schools that are affiliated with other denominations, and religious schools that are not affiliated with any specific denomination. In addition, private school enrollment totals for elementary

or elementary and secondary grades in this indicator include prekindergarten students enrolled in schools that provide instruction in kindergarten or a higher grade, whereas other National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) analyses from the same source data (the Private School Universe Survey) do not include prekindergarten in private elementary and secondary school enrollment. Therefore, private school enrollment data in this indicator are not comparable to estimates published by the Private School Survey Program.

Figure 1. Private school enrollment in elementary and secondary schools, by school orientation: Fall 1999 through fall 2017

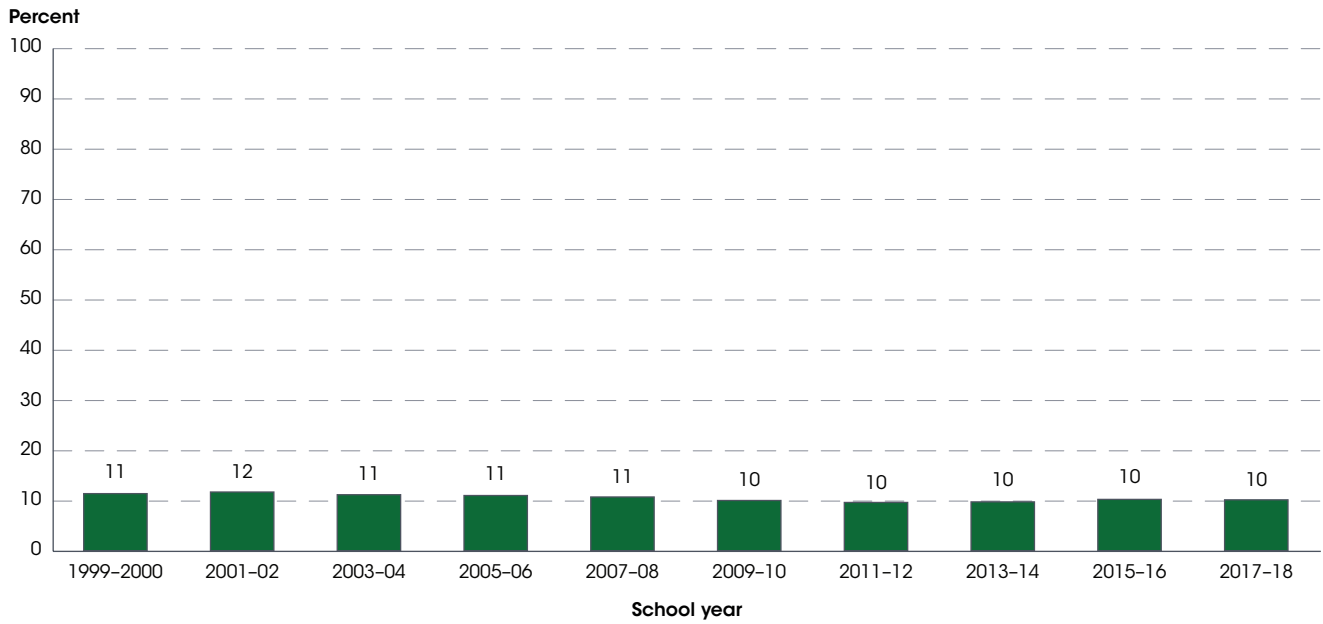


NOTE: Excludes prekindergarten students not enrolled in schools that offer kindergarten or higher grades.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Private School Universe Survey (PSS), 1999-2000 through 2017-18. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2019*, table 205.20.

The number of private school students decreased from 6.0 million in fall 1999 to 5.7 million in fall 2017. The number of private school students enrolled in Catholic schools decreased from 2.7 million in fall 1999 to 2.1 million in fall 2017. The number of students enrolled in other religious schools in fall 2017 was not

measurably different from the number enrolled in fall 1999 (2.2 million students each). The number of students enrolled in nonsectarian schools was higher in fall 2017 (1.4 million students) than in fall 1999 (1.2 million students).

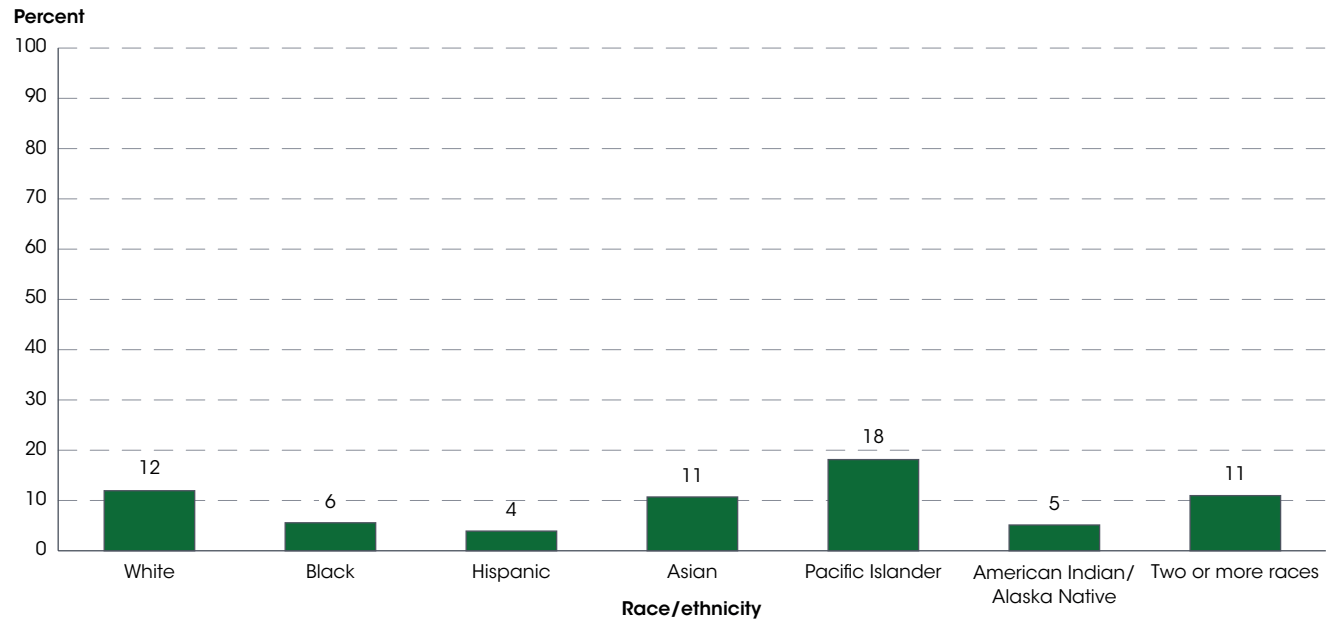
Figure 2. Percentage of elementary and secondary students enrolled in private schools: Fall 1999 through fall 2017



NOTE: Excludes prekindergarten students not enrolled in schools that offer kindergarten or higher grades. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Private School Universe Survey (PSS), 1999-2000 through 2017-18; Common Core of Data (CCD), "State Nonfiscal Survey of Public Elementary/Secondary Education," 1999-2000 through 2017-18. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2019*, tables 203.65 and 205.20.

The percentage of elementary and secondary students who were enrolled in private schools decreased from 11 percent in fall 1999 to 10 percent in fall 2017.

Figure 3. Percentage of elementary and secondary students enrolled in private schools, by race/ethnicity: Fall 2017

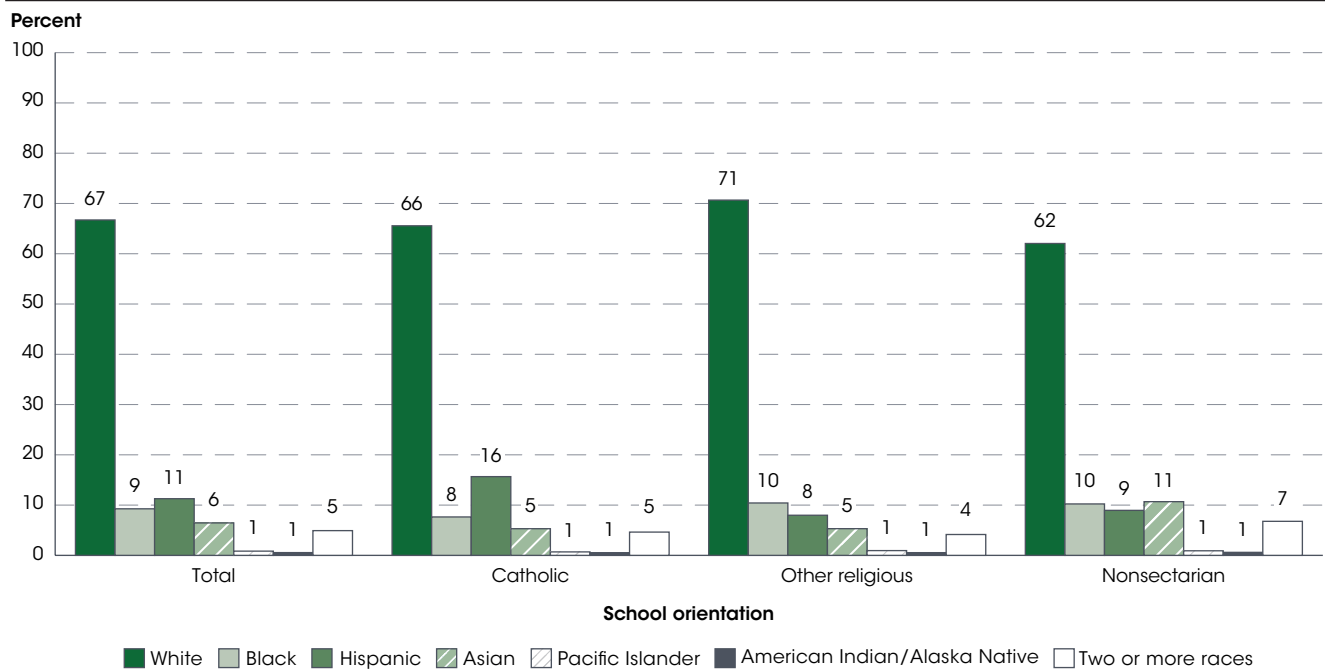


NOTE: Excludes prekindergarten students not enrolled in schools that offer kindergarten or higher grades. Ungraded students are prorated into prekindergarten through grade 8 and grades 9 through 12. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Race/ethnicity data were not collected for prekindergarten students who were enrolled in private schools (821,800 out of 5,719,990 students in 2017). Percentages in this figure are based on the students for whom race/ethnicity was reported. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Private School Universe Survey (PSS), 2017–18; Common Core of Data (CCD), “State Nonfiscal Survey of Public Elementary/Secondary Education,” 2017–18. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2019*, tables 203.65, 205.20, and 205.30.

The percentage of elementary and secondary students who were enrolled in private schools varied by race/ethnicity. In fall 2017, about 18 percent of Pacific Islander students,² 12 percent of White students, 11 percent of students of Two or more races, and 11 percent of Asian students were

enrolled in private schools, compared with 6 percent of Black students, 5 percent of American Indian/Alaska Native students, and 4 percent of Hispanic students in private schools.

Figure 4. Percentage distribution of private elementary and secondary school enrollment, by school orientation and race/ethnicity: Fall 2017



NOTE: Excludes prekindergarten students not enrolled in schools that offer kindergarten or higher grades. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Percentage distribution is based on the students for whom race/ethnicity was reported. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Private School Universe Survey (PSS), 2017–18. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2019*, table 205.30.

In fall 2017, about 5.7 million students were enrolled in private schools. Sixty-seven percent of private elementary and secondary school students were White, 11 percent were Hispanic, 9 percent were Black, 6 percent were Asian, and 5 percent were students of Two or more races. Pacific Islander and American Indian/Alaska Native students each constituted 1 percent of private school enrollment in 2017. Among students enrolled in the various categories of private schools, Black students made up the second-largest share of enrollment in other

religious schools (10 percent), and Hispanic students made up the second-largest share of enrollment at Catholic schools (16 percent).

In fall 2017, the poverty rate for private school students was 9 percent. Some 43 percent of all private school students were enrolled in schools in cities and 40 percent were enrolled in schools in suburban areas, while 11 percent were enrolled in schools in rural areas and 6 percent were enrolled in schools in towns.

Endnotes:

¹ For the purposes of this indicator, private schools exclude organizations or institutions that provide support for home-schooling. This indicator includes elementary and secondary enrollment in the United States, defined as including the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

² Race/ethnicity data were not collected for prekindergarten students who were enrolled in private schools (821,800 out of 5,719,990 students in 2017). Percentages in this indicator are based on the students for whom race/ethnicity was reported.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2019*, tables 102.70, 203.65, 205.20 and 205.30

Related indicators and resources: [Characteristics of Elementary and Secondary Schools](#); [Elementary and Secondary Enrollment \[Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups\]](#); [Public Charter School Enrollment](#); [Public School Enrollment](#); [School Choice in the United States: 2019](#)

Glossary: Catholic school; Combined school; Elementary school; Enrollment; Nonsectarian school; Other religious school; Prekindergarten; Private school; Racial/ethnic group; Secondary school