

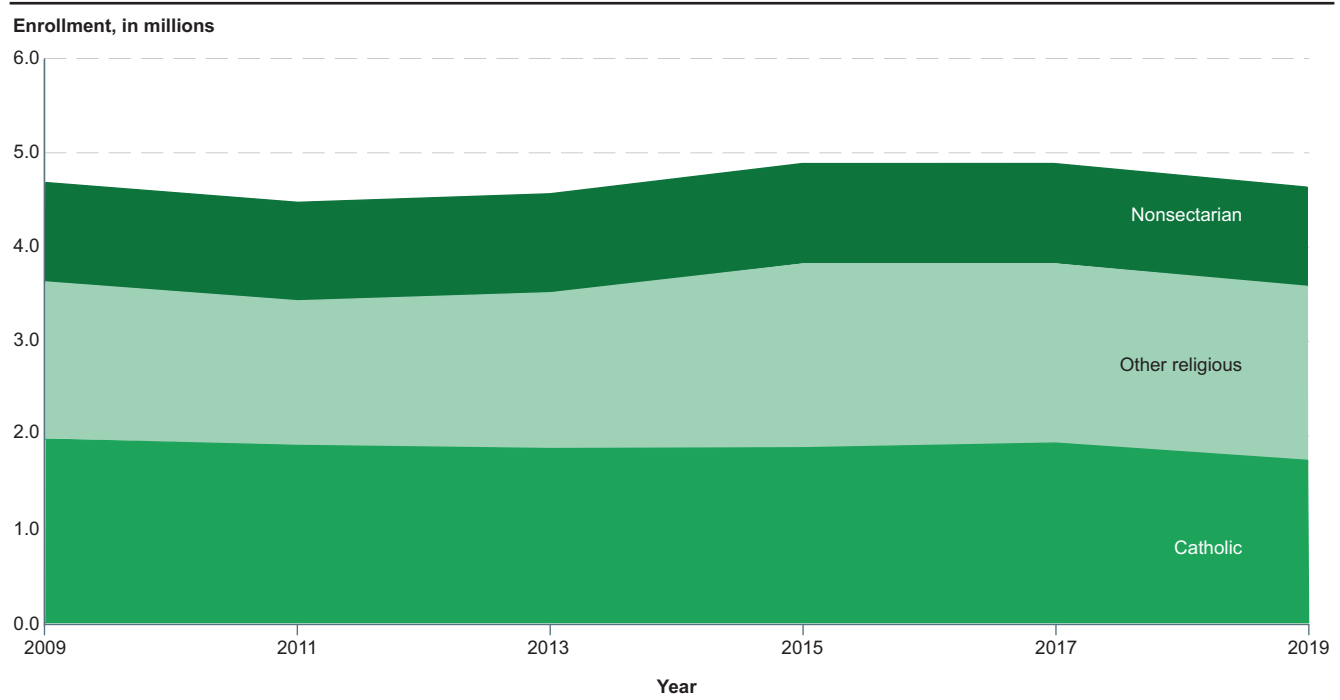
Private School Enrollment

In the fall of 2019, some 4.7 million kindergarten through grade 12 students (9 percent) were enrolled in private schools.

Private 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.

Figure 1. Number of kindergarten through grade 12 students enrolled in private schools, by school orientation: Fall 2009 through fall 2019



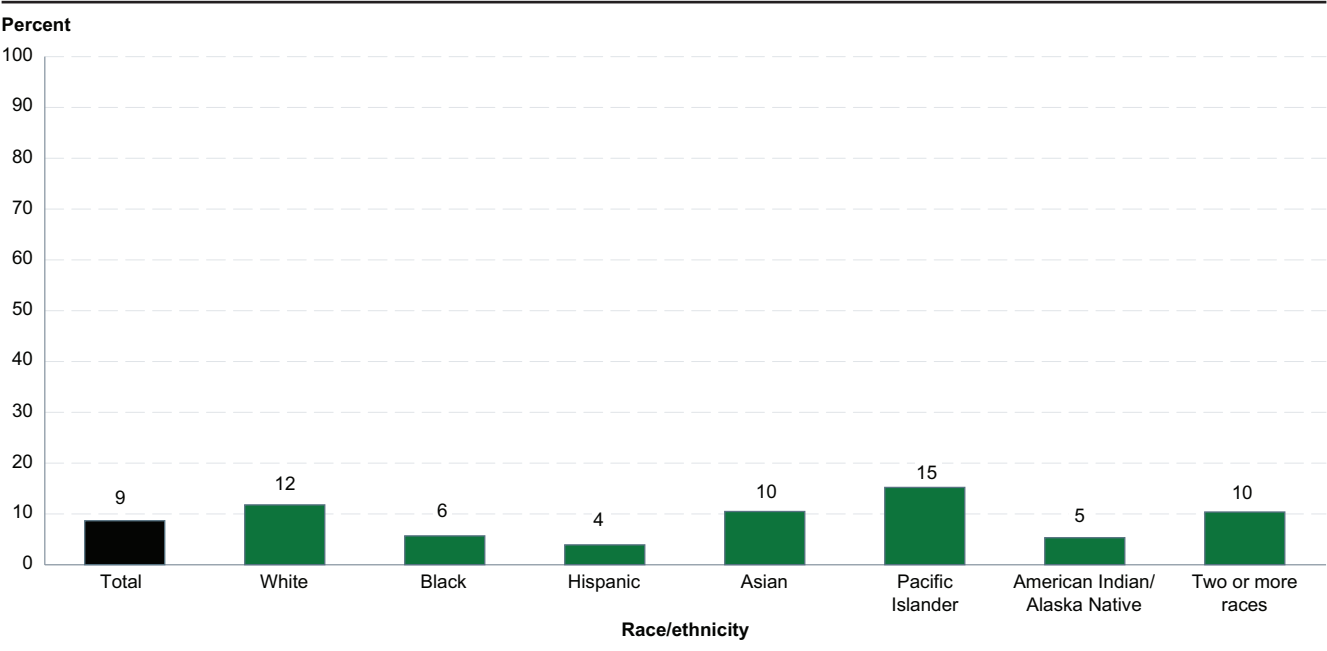
NOTE: Excludes about 832,900 prekindergarten students who were enrolled in private schools that offer kindergarten or higher grades in 2019.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Private School Universe Survey (PSS), 2009–10 through 2019–20. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 205.20.

The latest year for which private school enrollment data are available is fall 2019. In fall 2019, about 4.7 million kindergarten through grade 12 (K-12) students were enrolled in private schools,² which was not measurably different from the number enrolled in fall 2009. In comparison, the number of K-12 students who were enrolled in public schools increased from 48.1 million in fall 2009 to 49.2 million in fall 2019. Overall, 53.9 million K-12 students were enrolled in public and private schools in fall 2019. Of these students, 9 percent were enrolled in private schools, and the remaining 91 percent were enrolled in public schools. K-12 private school students made up about 9 percent of the combined public and

private enrollment in every year from fall 2009 to fall 2019.

Data by school orientation show that the number of K-12 students enrolled in Catholic schools was lower in fall 2019 (1.7 million students) than in fall 2009 (2.0 million students). The number of students enrolled in other religious schools in fall 2019 was not measurably different from the number enrolled in fall 2009 (1.8 million students each). In contrast, the number of students enrolled in nonsectarian schools increased from 0.9 million in fall 2009 to 1.1 million in fall 2019.

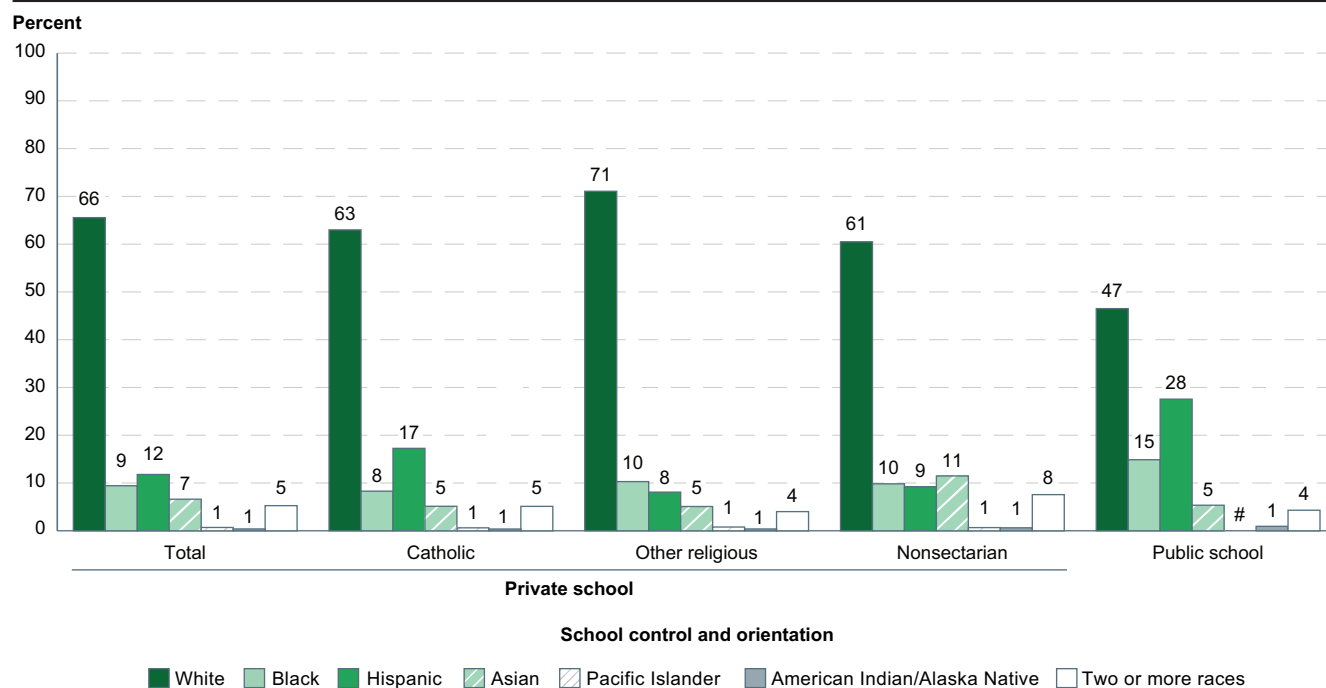
Figure 2. Percentage of kindergarten through grade 12 students enrolled in private schools, by race/ethnicity: Fall 2019



NOTE: Excludes about 832,900 prekindergarten students who were enrolled in private schools that offer kindergarten or higher grades in 2019. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. 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), 2019–20; Common Core of Data (CCD), “State Nonfiscal Survey of Public Elementary/Secondary Education,” 2019–20. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, tables 203.65, 205.20, and 205.30.

The percentage of K-12 students who were enrolled in private schools varied by race/ethnicity. In fall 2019, the percentages of Pacific Islander students (15 percent), White students (12 percent), Asian students (10 percent), and students of Two or more races (10 percent) who were enrolled in private schools were higher than the national

average (9 percent).³ In comparison, the percentage of Black students (6 percent), American Indian/Alaska Native students (5 percent), and Hispanic students (4 percent) who were enrolled in private schools was lower than the national average.

Figure 3. Percentage distribution of students enrolled in kindergarten through grade 12, by school control and orientation and students' race/ethnicity: Fall 2019

Rounds to zero.

NOTE: Excludes about 832,900 prekindergarten students who were enrolled in private schools that offer kindergarten or higher grades in 2019. 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), 2019–20; Common Core of Data (CCD), "State Nonfiscal Survey of Public Elementary/Secondary Education," 2019–20. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, tables 203.65 and 205.30.

Among the 4.7 million K-12 students who were enrolled in private schools in fall 2019, about 66 percent were White, 12 percent were Hispanic, 9 percent were Black, 7 percent were Asian, and 5 percent were students of Two or more races. The percentages of private school students who were White, Asian, and of Two or more races were higher than the percentages of public school students who were White (47 percent), Asian (5 percent), and of Two or more races (4 percent). In contrast, the percentages of private school students who were Hispanic and Black were lower than the percentages of public school students who were Hispanic (28 percent) and Black (15 percent). Pacific Islander and American Indian/Alaska Native students each constituted 1 percent or less of enrollment in both private and public schools in fall 2019.

Private school students also differed from public school students in other demographic characteristics. In fall

2019, the poverty rate for K-12 private school students was 9 percent, compared with 17 percent for public school students.⁴ Higher percentages of private school students than of public school students were enrolled in schools in cities (44 vs. 31 percent) and in suburban areas (40 vs. 39 percent). In contrast, lower percentages of private school students than of public school students were enrolled in schools in rural areas (10 vs. 19 percent) and in towns (6 vs. 11 percent). In addition, higher percentages of private school students than of public school students were enrolled in schools in the Northeast (21 vs. 16 percent) and the Midwest (23 vs. 21 percent) regions of the country. In contrast, lower percentages of private school students than of public school students were enrolled in schools in the South (37 vs. 39 percent) and the West (20 vs. 25 percent).

Endnotes:

- ¹ For the purposes of this indicator, private schools exclude organizations or institutions that provide support for homeschooling. This indicator includes kindergarten through grade 12 enrollment in the United States, defined as including the 50 states and the District of Columbia.
- ² Excludes about 832,900 prekindergarten students who were enrolled in private schools that offer kindergarten or higher grades in 2019.

- ³ Percentages in this indicator are based on the students for whom race/ethnicity was reported.
- ⁴ The remaining indicator includes prekindergarten students (832,900) in the discussion.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, tables 203.20, 203.65, 203.72, 205.20, and 205.30; *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 102.70

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