

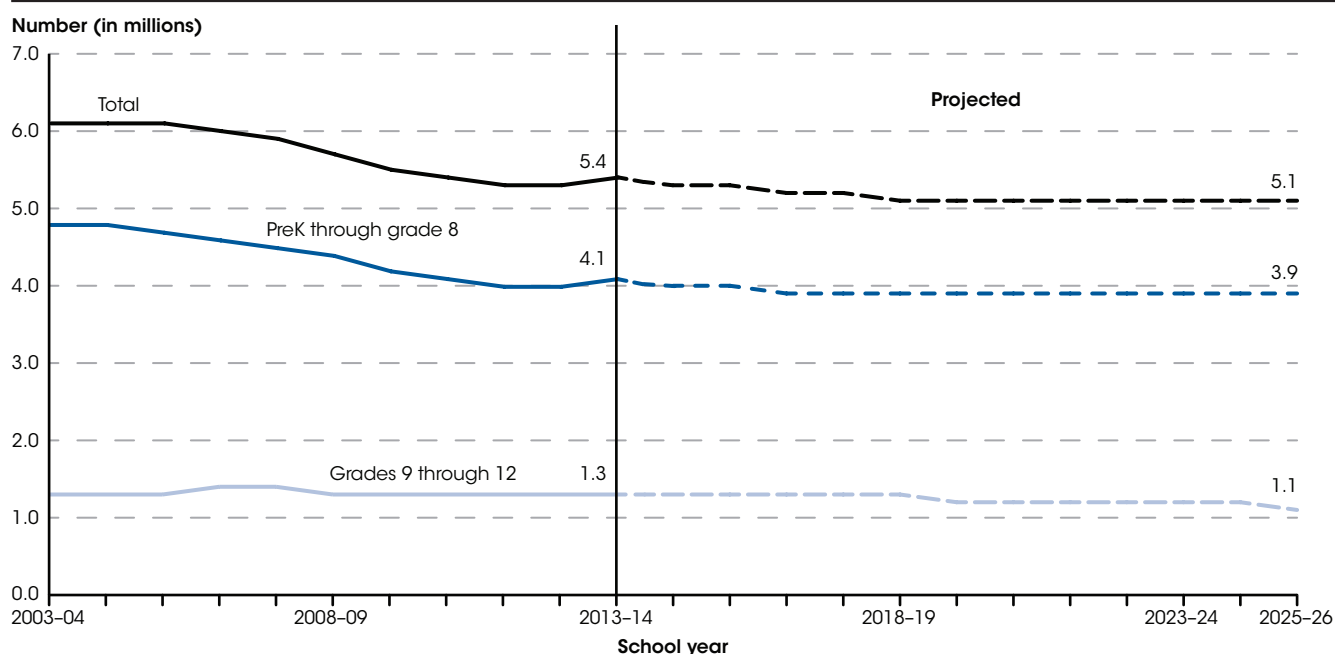
# Private School Enrollment

*Private school enrollment in prekindergarten (preK) through grade 12 increased from 5.9 million students in 1995–96 to 6.3 million in 2001–02, and then declined to 5.4 million in 2013–14.*

In school year 2013–14, some 5.4 million students (or 10 percent of all elementary and secondary students) were enrolled in private elementary and secondary schools.<sup>1</sup> The percentage of all elementary and secondary

students enrolled in private schools decreased from 12 percent in 1995–96 to 10 percent in 2013–14, and is projected to continue to decrease to 9 percent in 2025–26 (the last year for which projected data are available).

**Figure 1. Actual and projected private school enrollment in prekindergarten (preK) through grade 12, by grade level: School years 2003–04 through 2025–26**



NOTE: Prekindergarten students who are enrolled in private schools that do not offer kindergarten or higher grades are not included in this analysis. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

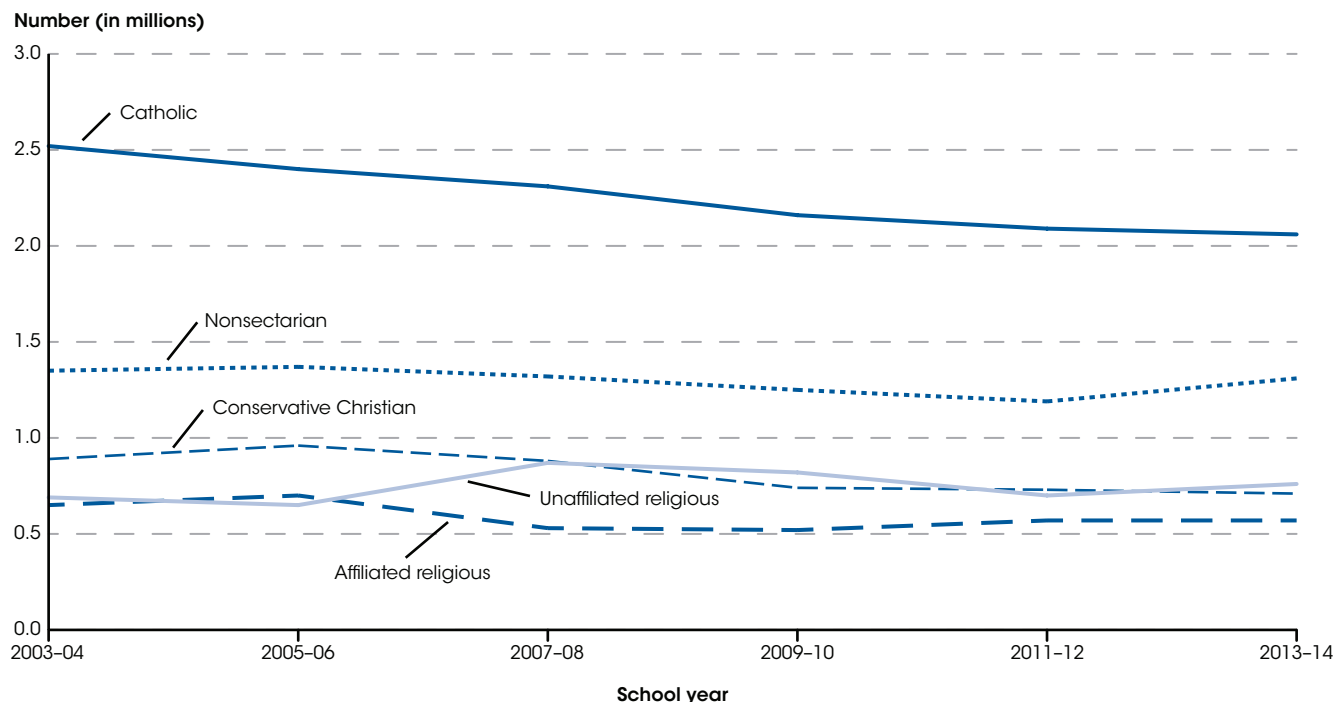
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Private School Universe Survey (PSS), 2003–04 through 2013–14; National Elementary and Secondary Enrollment Projection Model, 1972 through 2025. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2015*, table 105.30.

Private school enrollment in prekindergarten (preK) through grade 12 increased from 5.9 million in 1995–96 to 6.3 million in 2001–02, and then declined to 5.4 million in 2013–14. More recently, total private school enrollment decreased by 12 percent between 2003–04 and 2013–14; enrollment is projected to decrease by 6 percent to 5.1 million students in 2025–26.

Similar to overall private school enrollment, private school enrollment in preK through grade 8 increased from 4.8 million students in 1995–96 to 5.0 million in

2001–02 before decreasing to 4.1 million in 2013–14. Between 2003–04 and 2013–14, private school enrollment in preK through grade 8 decreased by 15 percent. Enrollment is expected to decrease by a further 3 percent to 3.9 million students in 2025–26. Private school enrollment in grades 9 through 12 increased from 1.2 million students in 1995–96 to a peak of 1.4 million in 2007–08; enrollment then fluctuated from 2007–08 to 2013–14. From 2013–14 to 2025–26, private school enrollment in grades 9 through 12 is expected to decrease by 13 percent, from 1.3 million to 1.1 million students.

**Figure 2. Private elementary and secondary school enrollment, by school orientation: Selected school years, 2003–04 through 2013–14**

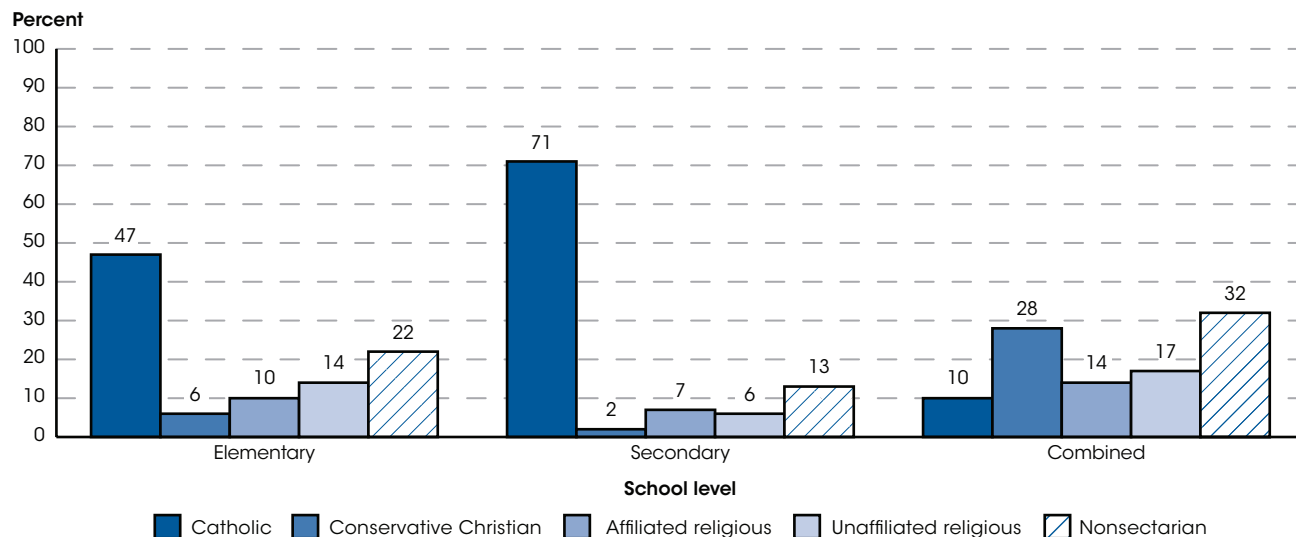


NOTE: Prekindergarten students who are enrolled in private schools that do not offer kindergarten or higher grades are not included in this analysis. Catholic schools include parochial, diocesan, and private Catholic schools. Conservative Christian schools have membership in at least one of four associations: Accelerated Christian Education, American Association of Christian Schools, Association of Christian Schools International, or Oral Roberts University Education Fellowship. Affiliated religious schools belong to associations of schools with a specific religious orientation other than Catholic or conservative Christian. Unaffiliated religious schools have a religious orientation or purpose but are not classified as Catholic, conservative Christian, or affiliated religious. Nonsectarian schools do not have a religious orientation or purpose.  
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Private School Universe Survey (PSS), selected years, 2003–04 through 2013–14. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2015*, table 205.20.

In 2013–14, some 38 percent of all private school students were enrolled in Catholic schools. The number of private school students enrolled in Catholic schools decreased from 2.5 million in 2003–04 to 2.1 million in 2013–14. The decrease in the number of students enrolled in Catholic schools was primarily due to a decline in the number of students enrolled in Catholic parochial schools (1.2 million in 2003–04 compared to 740,000 in 2013–14). The numbers of students enrolled

in conservative Christian (707,000) and affiliated religious (565,000) schools in 2013–14 were also lower than in 2003–04, while the number of students enrolled in unaffiliated religious schools (758,000) in 2013–14 was higher than in 2003–04. The number of students enrolled in nonsectarian schools (1.3 million) in 2013–14 was not measurably different from the number enrolled in 2003–04.

**Figure 3. Percentage distribution of private elementary and secondary school enrollment, by school level and orientation: School year 2013–14**

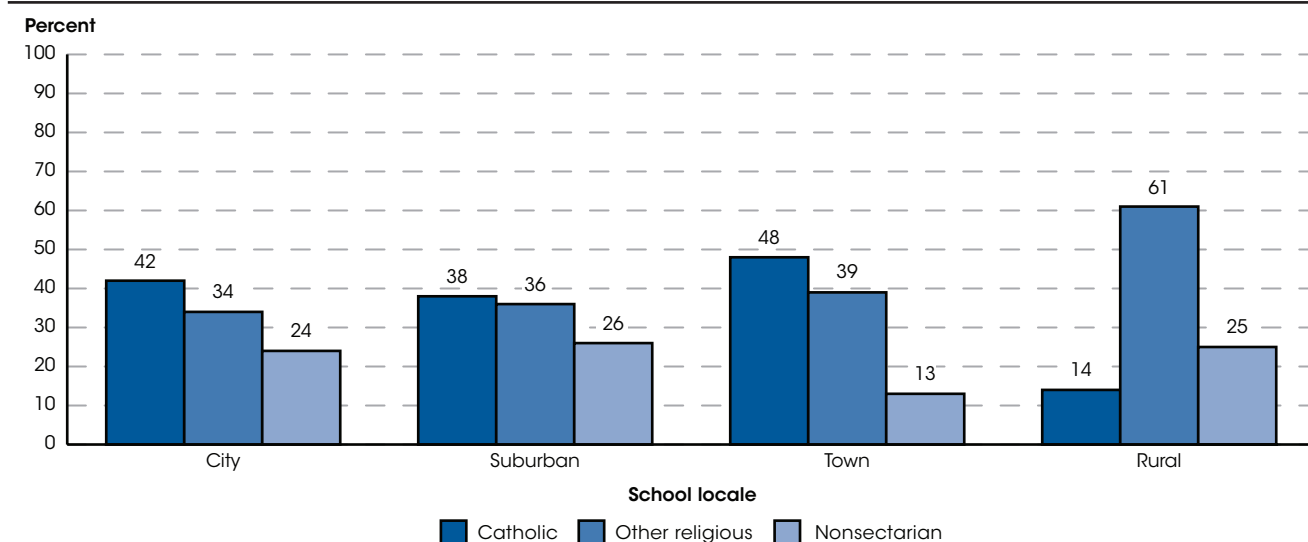


NOTE: Prekindergarten students who are enrolled in private schools that do not offer kindergarten or higher grades are not included in this analysis. Elementary schools have grade 6 or lower and no grade higher than 8. Secondary schools have no grade lower than 7. Combined schools include those that have grades lower than 7 and higher than 8, as well as those that do not classify students by grade level. Catholic schools include parochial, diocesan, and private Catholic schools. Conservative Christian schools have membership in at least one of four associations: Accelerated Christian Education, American Association of Christian Schools, Association of Christian Schools International, or Oral Roberts University Education Fellowship. Affiliated religious schools belong to associations of schools with a specific religious orientation other than Catholic or conservative Christian. Unaffiliated religious schools have a religious orientation or purpose but are not classified as Catholic, conservative Christian, or affiliated religious. Nonsectarian schools do not have a religious orientation or purpose. 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), 2013–14. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2015*, table 205.30.

In 2013–14, the percentage of private elementary<sup>2</sup> students enrolled in Catholic schools was 47 percent, which was higher than the percentage of students enrolled in nonsectarian (22 percent), unaffiliated religious (14 percent), affiliated religious (10 percent), and conservative Christian (6 percent) schools. Similarly, a higher percentage of private secondary<sup>3</sup> students were

enrolled in Catholic schools (71 percent) than in any other school orientation. In contrast to the large percentages of private school students enrolled in Catholic elementary and secondary schools, Catholic students made up a smaller percentage (10 percent) of private school students enrolled in combined<sup>4</sup> elementary/secondary schools.

**Figure 4. Percentage distribution of private elementary and secondary school enrollment, by school locale and orientation: School year 2013–14**



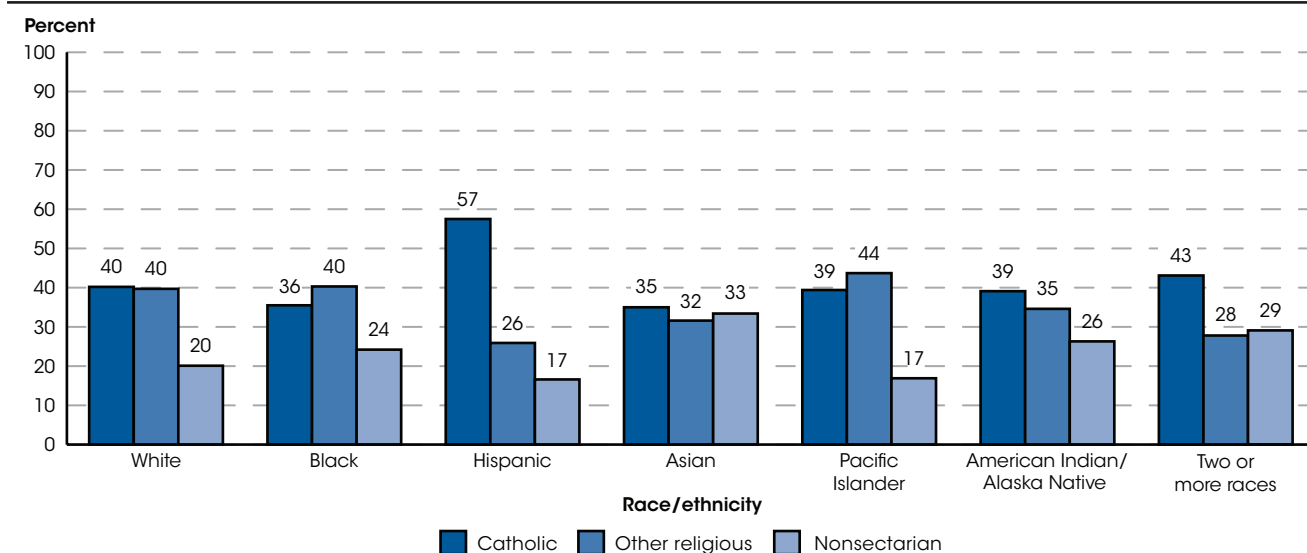
NOTE: Prekindergarten students who are enrolled in private schools that do not offer kindergarten or higher grades are not included in this analysis. Catholic schools include parochial, diocesan, and private Catholic schools. Other religious schools include conservative Christian, affiliated religious, and unaffiliated religious schools. Conservative Christian schools have membership in at least one of four associations: Accelerated Christian Education, American Association of Christian Schools, Association of Christian Schools International, or Oral Roberts University Education Fellowship. Affiliated religious schools belong to associations of schools with a specific religious orientation other than Catholic or conservative Christian. Unaffiliated religious schools have a religious orientation or purpose but are not classified as Catholic, conservative Christian, or affiliated religious. Nonsectarian schools do not have a religious orientation or purpose. 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), 2013–14. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2015*, table 205.30.

In 2013–14, higher percentages of private school students in cities and towns were enrolled in Catholic schools than in other religious<sup>5</sup> or nonsectarian schools. For example, in towns, 48 percent of private school students were enrolled in Catholic schools, while 39 percent were enrolled in other religious schools and 13 percent were enrolled in nonsectarian schools. In contrast, a lower percentage of private school students in rural areas

were enrolled in Catholic schools (14 percent) than nonsectarian (25 percent) or other religious (61 percent) schools. Additionally, while the percentage of private school students in suburbs enrolled in Catholic schools (38 percent) was higher than the percentage enrolled in nonsectarian schools (26 percent), it was not measurably different from the percentage enrolled in other religious schools.

**Figure 5. Percentage distribution of private elementary and secondary school enrollment, by race/ethnicity and school orientation: School year 2013–14**



NOTE: Prekindergarten students who are enrolled in private schools that do not offer kindergarten or higher grades are not included in this analysis. Catholic schools include parochial, diocesan, and private Catholic schools. Other religious schools include conservative Christian, affiliated religious, and unaffiliated religious schools. Conservative Christian schools have membership in at least one of four associations: Accelerated Christian Education, American Association of Christian Schools, Association of Christian Schools International, or Oral Roberts University Education Fellowship. Affiliated religious schools belong to associations of schools with a specific religious orientation other than Catholic or conservative Christian. Unaffiliated religious schools have a religious orientation or purpose but are not classified as Catholic, conservative Christian, or affiliated religious. Nonsectarian schools do not have a religious orientation or purpose. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Percentage distribution is based on the students for whom race/ethnicity was reported. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded estimates. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Private School Universe Survey (PSS), 2013–14. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2015*, table 205.30.

There were also differences in private school enrollment by school orientation within racial/ethnic groups. Among Hispanic, Asian, and American Indian/Alaska Native students as well as students of Two or more races, higher percentages of private school students were enrolled in Catholic schools than other religious schools in 2013–14. For example, 57 percent of Hispanic private school students were enrolled in Catholic schools, while 26 percent were enrolled in other religious schools. In contrast, lower percentages of Black (36 percent) and Pacific Islander (39 percent) private school students were

enrolled in Catholic schools in 2013–14 than in other religious schools (40 and 44 percent, respectively). In addition, for all racial/ethnic groups other than Asian, higher percentages of private school students were enrolled in Catholic schools than nonsectarian schools. For example, 40 percent of White private school students were enrolled in Catholic schools compared to 20 percent enrolled in nonsectarian schools. The percentage of Asian students enrolled in Catholic schools (35 percent) was not measurably different from the percentage enrolled in nonsectarian schools (33 percent).

#### Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> Prekindergarten students who are enrolled in private schools that do not offer kindergarten or higher grades are not included in this analysis.

<sup>2</sup> Elementary schools have grade 6 or lower and no grade higher than 8. This category is not comparable to the preK through grade 8 category used elsewhere in this indicator.

<sup>3</sup> Secondary schools have one or more of grades 7 through 12 and have no grade lower than grade 7. This category is

not comparable to the grades 9 through 12 category used elsewhere in this indicator.

<sup>4</sup> Combined schools include grades lower than 7 and higher than 8, as well as those that do not classify students by grade level.

<sup>5</sup> Other religious schools include conservative Christian, affiliated religious, and unaffiliated religious schools.

**Reference tables:** *Digest of Education Statistics 2015*, tables 105.30, 205.20, and 205.30

**Related indicators:** Public School Enrollment, Teachers and Pupil/Teacher Ratios

**Glossary:** Catholic school, Combined school, Elementary school, Enrollment, Locale codes, Nonsectarian school, Other religious school, Prekindergarten, Private school, Racial/ethnic group, Secondary school