

U.S. Department of Education
NCES 2009-030

1.5 Million Homeschooled Students in the United States in 2007

Since 1999, the National Household Education Surveys Program (NHES), conducted by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in the Institute of Education Sciences, has collected nationally representative data that can be used to estimate the number of homeschooled students in the United States. This Issue Brief provides estimates of the number and percentage of homeschooled students in the United States in 2007 and compares these estimates to those from 1999 and 2003. In addition, parents' reasons for homeschooling their children are presented. Estimates of homeschooling in 2007 are based on data from the Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey (PFI) of the 2007 NHES.¹

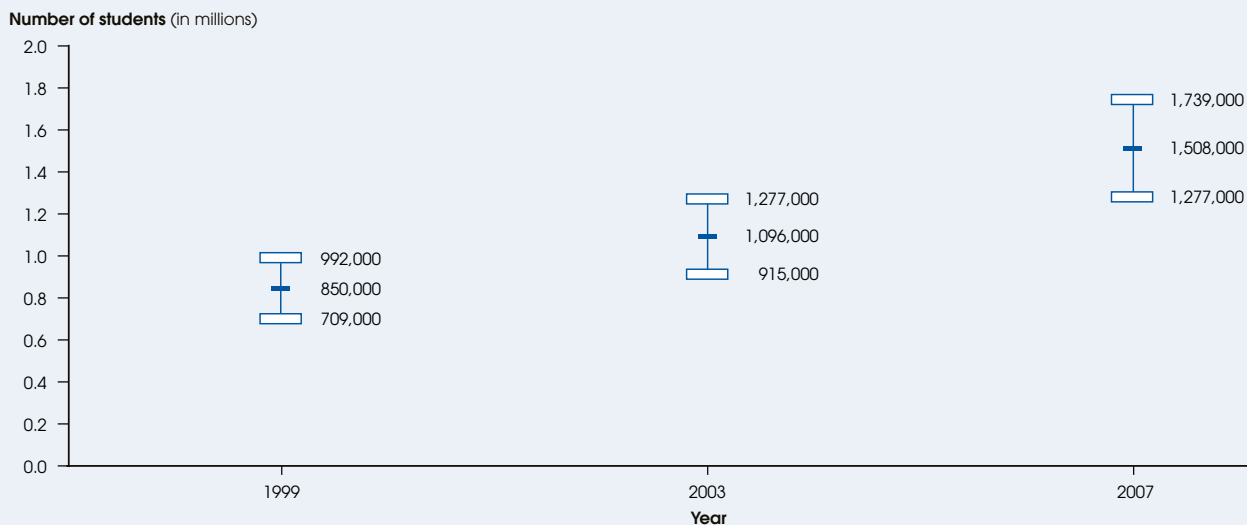
Data were collected for students ages 5 through 17 with a grade equivalent of kindergarten through 12th grade. Interviews were conducted with the parents of 10,681 students, including 290 homeschooled students. When weighted, these data represent the experiences of approximately 51,135,000 students ages 5 through 17 with a grade equivalent of kindergarten through 12th grade in the United States in 2007.²

In this Brief, students are considered to be homeschooled if their parents reported them as being schooled at home instead of at a public or private school for at least part of their education and if their part-time enrollment in public or private school did not exceed 25 hours a week. Students who were schooled at home primarily because of a temporary illness are not included as homeschoolers.

Number and Percentage of Homeschooled Students in the United States

Data from the 2007 NHES survey show an estimated 1.5 million students (1,508,000) were homeschooled in the United States in the spring of 2007 (figure 1). This represents an increase from the estimated 1.1 million students who were homeschooled in the spring of 2003 (Princiotta, Bielick, and Chapman 2004). In addition, the percentage of the school-age population that was homeschooled increased from 2.2 percent in 2003 to 2.9 percent in 2007 (not shown in tables or figures). Data from the 1999 NHES showed an estimated 850,000 homeschooled students in the United States—about 1.7 percent of the school-age population (Bielick, Chandler, and Broughman 2001). The increase

Figure 1. Estimated number and 95 percent confidence interval for number of homeschooled students, ages 5 through 17 with a grade equivalent of kindergarten through 12th grade: 1999, 2003, and 2007



NOTE: Excludes students who were enrolled in public or private school for more than 25 hours a week and students who were homeschooled primarily because of a temporary illness. The numbers in bold are the estimated number of homeschooled students in the United States. The numbers above and below the bold numbers are the upper and lower boundaries of the 95 percent confidence interval around the estimates.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Parent Survey of the 1999 National Household Education Surveys Program (NHES); Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey of the 2003 and 2007 NHES.

in the homeschooling rate (from 1.7 percent in 1999 to 2.2 percent in 2003 to 2.9 percent in 2007) represents a 74 percent relative increase over the 8-year period and a 36 percent relative increase since 2003.³

As with the results from any sample survey, the numbers and percentages discussed in this Issue Brief are estimates of the actual numbers and percentages of homeschooled students in the population. Although 1.5 million is the best estimate of the number of homeschoolers from the 2007 NHES, another similar sample survey might produce a different estimate. The margin of error presented in this Issue Brief defines a range of values around an estimate within which 95 percent of the estimates from all possible similar sample surveys are expected to fall. It is presented along with each estimate to show the range of possible values for the estimate. The margin of error for the number of students who were homeschooled in spring 2007 is +/- 231,000, which means the range of the estimate is from 1,277,000 to 1,739,000 (figure 1).⁴ Confidence intervals vary from year to year and are largest in 2007.

The estimates of homeschooling discussed in this Issue Brief include students who were homeschooled only and students who were homeschooled while also enrolled in school for 25 hours or less per week. As shown in table 1, in all 3 survey years, about four out of five homeschoolers were homeschooled only, while about one out of five homeschoolers was also enrolled in public or private school part time.

Parents' Reasons for Homeschooling Their Children

In the 2003 and 2007 NHES, parents were asked whether

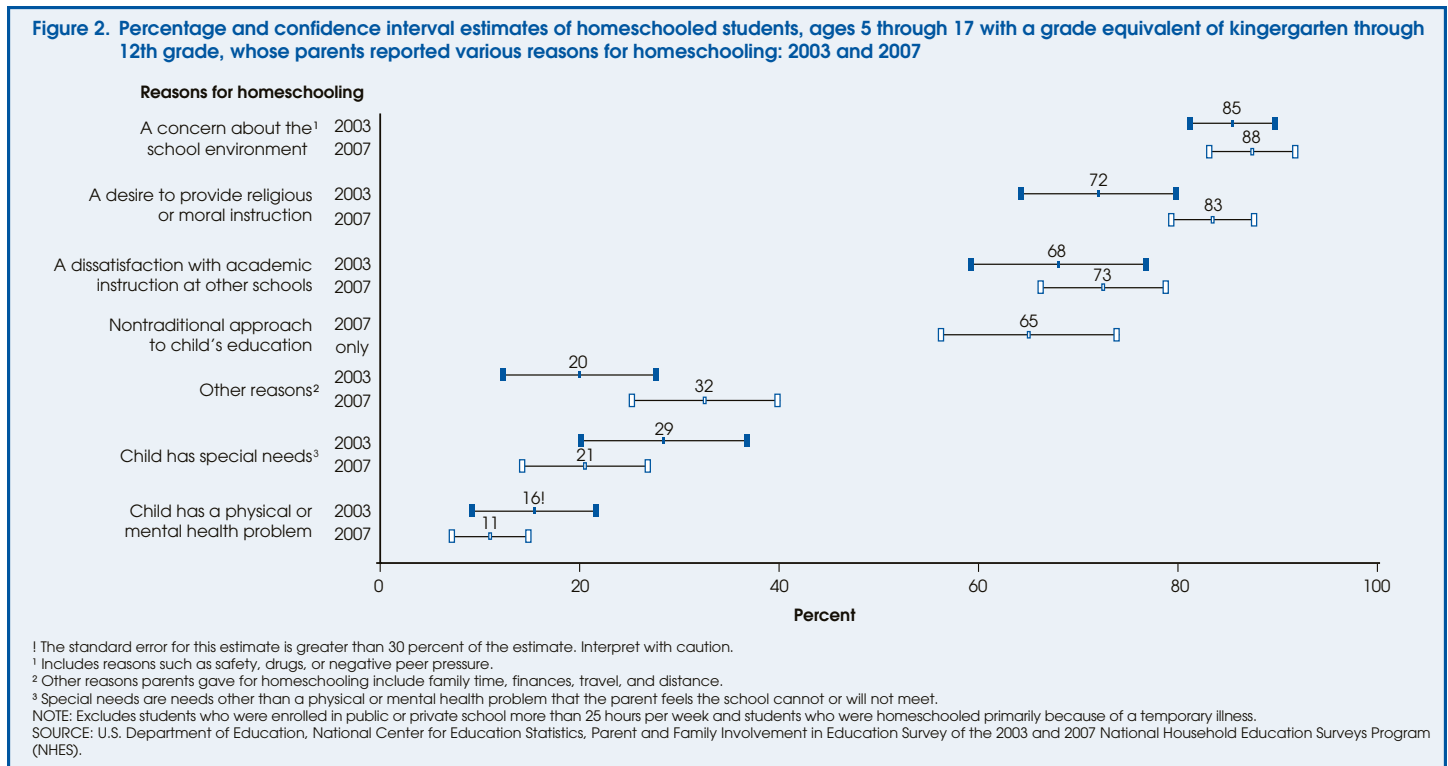
Table 1. Percentage of homeschooled students, ages 5 through 17 with a grade equivalent of kindergarten through 12th grade, by school enrollment status: 1999, 2003, and 2007

School enrollment status	Year					
	1999		2003		2007	
	Percent	+/-	Percent	+/-	Percent	+/-
Total	100	†	100	†	100	†
Homeschooled only	82	6	82	7	84	5
Enrolled in school part time	18	6	18	7	16	5
Enrolled in school for less than 9 hours a week	13	6	12	6	11	5
Enrolled in school for 9 to 25 hours a week	5	3	6	4!	5	3!

† Not applicable.
 +/- is margin of error for a 95 percent confidence interval.
 ! The standard error for this estimate is greater than 30 percent of the estimate. Interpret with caution.
 NOTE: Excludes students who were enrolled in public or private school for more than 25 hours a week and students who were homeschooled primarily because of a temporary illness. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Parent Survey of the 1999 National Household Education Surveys Program (NHES); Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey of the 2003 and 2007 NHES.

particular reasons for homeschooling their children applied to them. The three reasons selected by parents of more than two-thirds of students were concern about the school environment, to provide religious or moral instruction, and dissatisfaction with the academic instruction available at other schools (figure 2). From 2003 to 2007, the percentage of students whose parents reported homeschooling to provide religious or moral instruction increased from 72 percent to 83 percent.

In the 2007 NHES, parents also were asked which one of their selected reasons for homeschooling was the most important.⁵ The reason reported by the highest percentage of homeschoolers' parents as being most important was



to provide religious or moral instruction (36 percent). For an additional 21 percent, the most important reason was concern about the school environment, and for 17 percent it was dissatisfaction with the academic instruction available at other schools. The remaining homeschoolers had parents who reported another reason as being most important (child has a physical or mental health problem, 2 percent; child has other special needs, 4 percent; interest in a nontraditional approach to education, 7 percent; other reasons such as family time, finances, travel, and distance, 14 percent).⁶

Summary

From 1999 to 2007, the number of homeschooled students in the United States increased, as did the homeschooling rate. In 2007, parents homeschooled their children for a variety of reasons, but three reasons—to provide religious or moral instruction, concern about the school environment, and dissatisfaction with the academic instruction at other schools—were noted as most important.

Data from NHES can also be used to examine the student, family, and household characteristics of homeschoolers. Upcoming reports will use these data to study the characteristics of homeschoolers and to see how homeschooling rates may have changed between 1999, 2003, and 2007 for different segments of the student population.

References

- Bielick, S., Chandler, K., and Broughman, S.P. (2001). *Homeschooling in the United States: 1999* (NCES 2001-033). National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education. Washington, D.C.
- Princiotta, D., Bielick, S., and Chapman, C. (2004). *1.1 Million Homeschooled Students in the United States in 2003* (NCES 2004-115). National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Washington, D.C.
- Schenker, N., and Gentleman, J.F. (2001). On Judging the Significance of Differences by Examining the Overlap Between Confidence Intervals. *The American Statistician*, 55(3): 182–186.

Endnotes

¹ Estimates of homeschooling in 1999 and 2003 are based on data from the Parent Survey of the 1999 NHES and the Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey (PFI) of the 2003 NHES. NHES collected data about homeschooled students in 1996, but did not include questions about part-time homeschooling. Therefore, estimates from 1996 are not representative of the homeschooled population, are not comparable to later years, and are not included in NCES reports on homeschooling.

² When applied to survey data, weights allow for the generation of national estimates from a sample of respondents. They also adjust for characteristics of the survey design, nonresponse, and noncoverage. However, biases may exist in the data if weighting procedures have not adequately adjusted for these issues. A large-scale bias study was conducted in conjunction with the 2007 data collection. Readers interested in the findings of the bias study, as well as detailed information on NHES survey methods, weighting, and response rates, can refer to the Data File User's Manuals published online at <http://nces.ed.gov/nhes>.

³ All estimates of change and relative change were computed using unrounded data.

⁴ Although the confidence intervals surrounding the estimated number of homeschooled students in the United States may overlap somewhat, the differences between the estimates are statistically significant. Differences between estimates with overlapping confidence intervals can be statistically significant (Schenker and Gentleman 2001).

⁵ “Most important reason for homeschooling” was asked differently in 2003 and 2007 and, therefore, cannot be compared across time.

⁶ Percentages do not sum to 100 because of rounding.

The Issue Brief series presents information on education topics of current interest. All estimates shown are based on samples and are subject to sampling variability. All differences discussed are statistically significant at the .05 level; this means a difference is discussed only if the probability that it is due to chance (i.e., sampling variability) is less than 1 in 20. No adjustments were made for multiple comparisons. In the design, conduct, and data processing of National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) surveys, efforts are made to minimize the effects of nonsampling errors, such as item nonresponse, measurement error, data processing error, or other systematic error. For more information on the National Household Education Surveys Program (NHES), visit <http://nces.ed.gov/nhes>.

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