

# RESEARCH FACTS ON HOMESCHOOLING

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## General Facts and Trends

- Homeschooling – that is, parent-led home-based education – is an age-old traditional educational practice that a decade ago appeared to be cutting-edge and “alternative” but is now bordering on “mainstream” in the United States. It may be the fastest-growing form of education in the United States. Home-based education has also growing around the world in many other nations (e.g., Australia, Canada, France, Hungary, Japan, Kenya, Russia, Mexico, South Korea, Thailand, and the United Kingdom).
- There are about 2.2 million home-educated students in the United States. There were an estimated 1.73 to 2.35 million children (in grades K to 12) home educated during the spring of 2010 in the United States (Ray, 2011). It appears the homeschool population is continuing to grow (at an estimated 2% to 8% per annum over the past few years).
- Families engaged in home-based education are not dependent on public, tax-funded resources for their children’s education. The finances associated with their homeschooling likely represent over \$16 billion that American taxpayers do not have to spend since these children are not in public schools
- Homeschooling is quickly growing in popularity among minorities. About 15% of homeschool families are non-white/nonHispanic (i.e., not white/Anglo).
- A demographically wide variety of people homeschool – these are atheists, Christians, and Mormons; conservatives, libertarians, and liberals; low-, middle-, and high-income families; black, Hispanic, and white; parents with Ph.D.s, GEDs, and no high-school diplomas.

## Reasons for Home Educating

- Most parents and youth decide to homeschool for more than one reason.
- The most common reasons given for homeschooling are the following:
  - customize or individualize the curriculum and learning environment for each child,
  - accomplish more academically than in schools,
  - use pedagogical approaches other than those typical in institutional schools,
  - enhance family relationships between children and parents and among siblings,
  - provide guided and reasoned social interactions with youthful peers and adults,
  - provide a safer environment for children and youth, because of physical violence, drugs and alcohol, psychological abuse, and improper and unhealthy sexuality associated with institutional schools, and
  - teach and impart a particular set of values, beliefs, and worldview to children and youth.

## Academic Performance

- The home-educated typically score 15 to 30 percentile points above public-school students on standardized academic achievement tests. (The public school average is the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile; scores range from 1 to 99.)
- Homeschool students score above average on achievement tests regardless of their parents’ level of formal education or their family’s household income.
- Whether homeschool parents were ever certified teachers is not related to their children’s academic achievement.
- Degree of state control and regulation of homeschooling is not related to academic achievement.
- Home-educated students typically score above average on the SAT and ACT tests that colleges consider for admissions.
- Homeschool students are increasingly being actively recruited by colleges.

## Social, Emotional, and Psychological Development

- The home-educated are doing well, typically above average, on measures of social, emotional, and psychological development. Research measures include peer interaction, self-concept, leadership skills, family cohesion, participation in community service, and self-esteem.
- Homeschool students are regularly engaged in social and educational activities outside their homes and with people other than their nuclear-family members. They are commonly involved in activities such as field trips, scouting, 4-H, political drives, church ministry, sports teams, and community volunteer work

## Gender Differences in Children and Youth Respected?

- One researcher finds that homeschooling gives young people an unusual chance to ask questions such as, “Who am I?” and “What do I really want?,” and through the process of such asking and gradually answering the questions home-educated girls develop the strengths and the resistance abilities that give them an unusually strong sense of self.
- Some think that boys’ energetic natures and tendency to physical expression can more easily be accommodated in home-based education. Many are concerned that a highly disproportionate number of public school special-education students are boys and that boys are 2.5 times as likely as girls in public schools to be diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

## Success in the “Real World” of Adulthood

The research base on adults who were home educated is growing; thus far it indicates that they:

- participate in local community service more frequently than does the general population,
- vote and attend public meetings more frequently than the general population, and
- go to and succeed at college at an equal or higher rate than the general population.
- Internalize the values and beliefs of their parents at a very high rate.

## General Interpretation of Research on Homeschool Success or Failure

It is possible that homeschooling causes the positive traits reported above. However, the research designs to date do not conclusively “prove” that homeschooling causes these things. At the same time, there is no empirical evidence that homeschooling causes negative things compared to institutional schooling. Future research may better answer the question of causation.

### Sources

The above findings are extensively documented in one or more of the following sources, all (except one) of which are available from [www.nheri.org](http://www.nheri.org):

- Homeschooling associated with beneficial learner and societal outcomes but educators do not promote it, Brian D. Ray, *Peabody Journal of Education*, 88(3), 324-341.
- Academic achievement and demographic traits of homeschool students: A nationwide study, Brian D. Ray, 2010, *Academic Leadership Journal*, [www.academicleadership.org](http://www.academicleadership.org).
- *A Sense of Self: Listening to Homeschooled Adolescent Girls*. Susannah Sheffer, 1995.
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- Homeschoolers on to College: What Research Shows Us, by Brian D. Ray, *Journal of College Admission*, 2004, No. 185, 5-11.
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- National Education Association. (2005). *Rankings and estimates: A Report of School Statistics Update*. Retrieved 7/10/06 online <http://www.nea.org/edstats/images/05rankings-update.pdf>.
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- *Worldwide Guide to Homeschooling*, Brian D. Ray, 2005.

### About the Author

**Brian D. Ray, Ph.D.** is an internationally known researcher, educator, speaker, and expert witness, and serves as president of the nonprofit National Home Education Research Institute. He has taught as a certified teacher in public and private schools and served as a professor in the fields of science, research methods, and education at the graduate and undergraduate levels. His Ph.D. is in science education from Oregon State University and his M.S. is in zoology from Ohio University. Dr. Ray has been studying the homeschool movement for about 24 years.

**For more homeschool research and more in-depth interpretation of research, please contact:**

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