

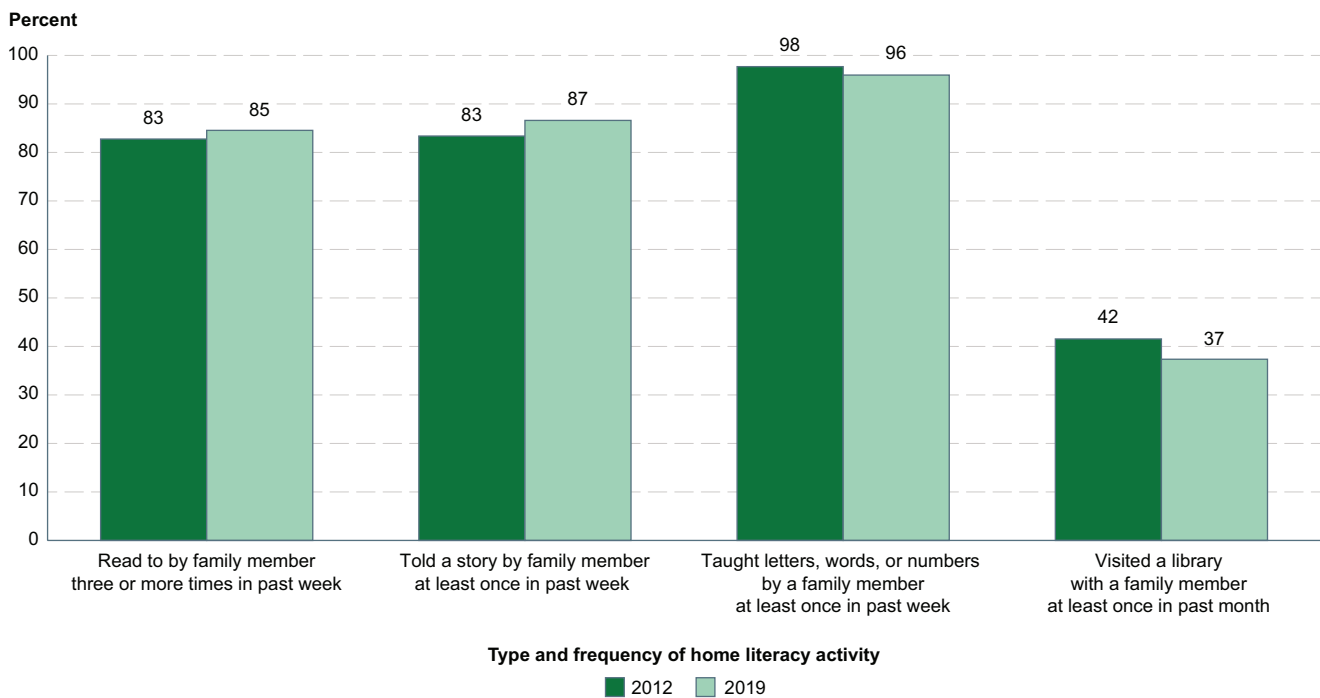
Home Literacy Activities With Young Children

In 2019, higher percentages of children ages 3–5 who were White (91 percent) and of Two or more races (89 percent) had a family member read to them three or more times in the past week than did children who were Asian (81 percent), Hispanic (77 percent), or Black (75 percent). However, there were no measurable differences by race/ethnicity in the percentage of children who were taught letters, words, or numbers by a family member.

Literacy development begins early, long before children enter formal instruction in reading and writing (Terrell and Watson 2018).¹ Parents and other family members can introduce young children to literacy and the world of books in different ways, including reading to them; telling stories;

teaching letters, words, or numbers; and visiting a library. This indicator looks at parent reports of home literacy activities over the past week or month² for 3- to 5-year-old children who were not yet in kindergarten.

Figure 1. Percentage of 3- to 5-year-olds not yet enrolled in kindergarten, by type and frequency of home literacy activity: 2012 and 2019



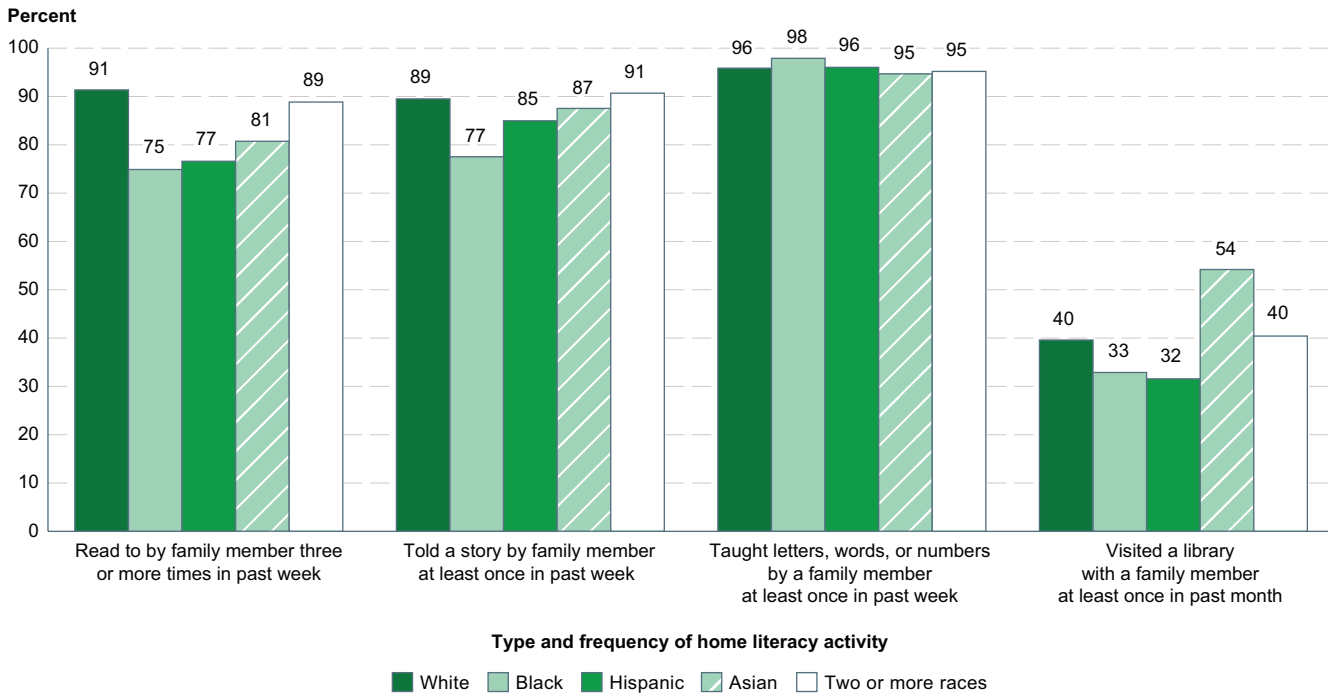
NOTE: All information is based on parent reports. The National Household Education Surveys Program (NHES):2012 used self-administered paper-and-pencil questionnaires that were mailed to respondents. For NHES:2019, the majority of data were collected using a web-based survey instrument that respondents accessed with credentials they received in a mailed invitation. Paper surveys were used for nonresponse follow-up and for a small experiment. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Early Childhood Program Participation Survey of the National Household Education Surveys Program (ECP-P-NHES:2012 and 2019). See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 207.10.

Based on parent reports in 2019, most 3- to 5-year-olds not yet enrolled in kindergarten participated in one or more home literacy activities with members of their family. In the week before parents were surveyed, 85 percent of children were read to by a family member three or more times; 87 percent were told a story by a family member at least once; and 96 percent were taught letters, words, or numbers by a family member at least once. Also, in the month before the survey, 37 percent of children visited a library with a family member at least once.

The percentage of 3- to 5-year-olds not yet enrolled in kindergarten who were told a story by a family member at least once in the past week was higher in 2019 than in 2012 (87 vs. 83 percent).³ The percentage of children who were read to by a family member three or more times in the past week was not measurably different between these years. However, the percentage of children who were taught letters, words, or numbers by a family member at least once in the past week was lower in 2019 than in 2012 (96 vs. 98 percent), as was the percentage of those who visited a library with a family member at least once in the past month (37 vs. 42 percent).

Figure 2. Percentage of 3- to 5-year-olds not yet enrolled in kindergarten, by type and frequency of home literacy activity and child's race/ethnicity: 2019

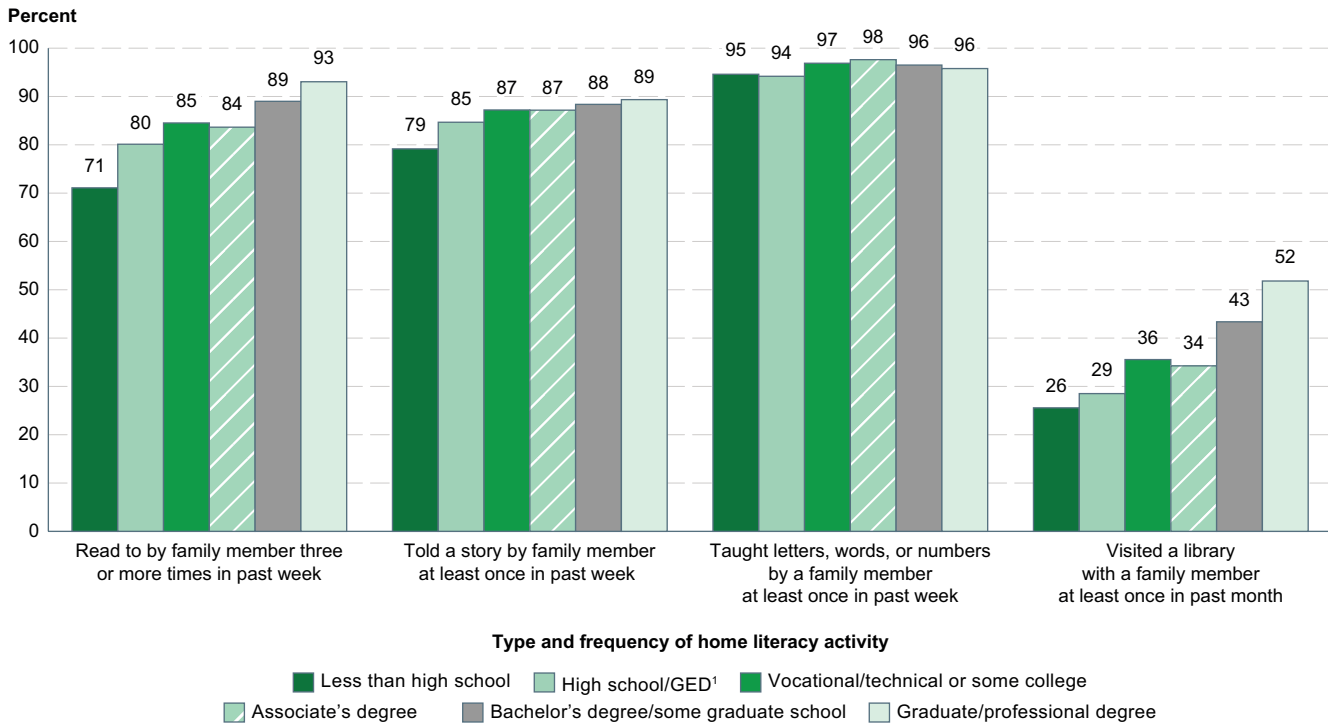


NOTE: All information is based on parent reports. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Excludes a small number of non-Hispanic children whose parents did not choose any race from the categories provided on the race item in the questionnaire. Data for Pacific Islander and American Indian/Alaska Native 3- to 5-year-olds were not included because reporting standards were not met. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Early Childhood Program Participation Survey of the National Household Education Surveys Program (ECPPE-NHES: 2019). See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 207.10.

In 2019, there were no measurable differences by race/ethnicity⁴ in the percentage of 3- to 5-year-olds not yet enrolled in kindergarten who were taught letters, words, or numbers by a family member at least once in the past week. However, participation in other home literacy activities differed by race/ethnicity. In regard to being read to, higher percentages of children who were White (91 percent) and of Two or more races (89 percent) had a family member read to them three or more times in the past week than did children who were Asian (81 percent), Hispanic (77 percent), or Black (75 percent). With respect to being told a story, higher percentages of children

who were of Two or more races (91 percent), White (89 percent), and Asian (87 percent) were told a story by a family member at least once in the past week than were children who were Black (77 percent). The percentage of White children who were told a story was also higher than the percentage of Hispanic children (85 percent). For visiting a library, higher percentages of children who were Asian (54 percent) than of children who were of Two or more races (40 percent), White (40 percent), Black (33 percent), and Hispanic (32 percent) visited a library with a family member at least once in the past month.

Figure 3. Percentage of 3- to 5-year-olds not yet enrolled in kindergarten, by type and frequency of home literacy activity and mother’s highest level of education: 2019

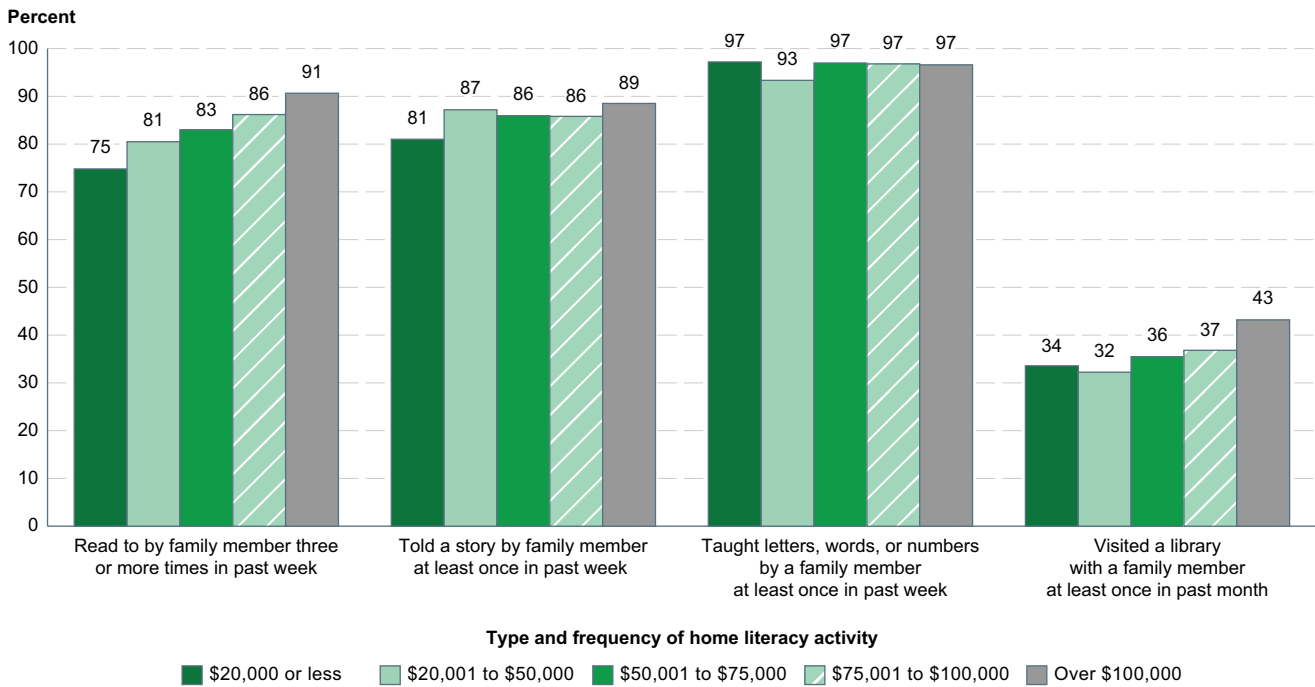


¹ Includes those who completed high school through equivalency programs, such as a GED program.
NOTE: All information is based on parent reports. Excludes children living in households with no mother or female guardian present. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Early Childhood Program Participation Survey of the National Household Education Surveys Program (ECP-P-NHES: 2019). See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 207.10.

In 2019, there were also no measurable differences by mother’s highest level of educational attainment in the percentage of 3- to 5-year-olds not yet enrolled in kindergarten who were taught letters, words, or numbers by a family member at least once in the past week. However, participation in other home literacy activities differed by mother’s highest level of educational attainment. In regard to being read to, higher percentages of children whose mothers had a graduate/professional degree (93 percent) and whose mothers had a bachelor’s degree⁵ (89 percent) than of children whose mothers had only completed high school⁶ (80 percent) and whose mothers did not complete high school (71 percent) were read to by a family member three or more times in the past week. For visiting a library, higher percentages of

children whose mothers had a graduate/professional degree (52 percent) and whose mothers had a bachelor’s degree (43 percent) than of children whose mothers had only completed high school (29 percent) and whose mothers did not complete high school (26 percent) visited a library with a family member at least once in the past month. The percentages of children who were told a story by a family member at least once in the past week were also higher for those whose mothers had a graduate/professional degree (89 percent) and those whose mothers had a bachelor’s degree (88 percent) than for those whose mothers did not complete high school (79 percent), but they were not measurably different from those whose mothers had only completed high school (85 percent).

Figure 4. Percentage of 3- to 5-year-olds not yet enrolled in kindergarten, by type and frequency of home literacy activity and family income: 2019



NOTE: All information is based on parent reports. Family income is reported in current dollars. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Early Childhood Program Participation Survey of the National Household Education Surveys Program (ECPPE-NHES: 2019). See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 207.10.

In 2019, similar to the patterns by race/ethnicity and by mother’s highest level of educational attainment, the percentage of 3- to 5-year-olds not yet enrolled in kindergarten who were taught letters, words, or numbers by a family member at least once in the past week did not differ by family income level. In contrast, there were measurable differences between the top and bottom levels of family income for other home literacy activities. For example, the percentages of children who were read to by a family member three or more times in the past week were higher for children whose family income was over \$100,000 (91 percent) and \$75,001 to \$100,000 (86 percent) than for those whose family income was \$20,000 or less (75 percent). The percentage of children

who visited a library with a family member at least once in the past month was higher for children whose family income was over \$100,000 (43 percent) than for children whose family income was \$20,000 or less (34 percent). The percentages of children who were told a story by a family member at least once in the past week was also higher for children whose family income was over \$100,000 (89 percent) than for children whose family income was \$20,000 or less (81 percent). There were no measurable differences in any of the four home literacy activities among children in households with middle levels of family income (\$20,001 to \$50,000, \$50,001 to \$75,000, and \$75,001 to \$100,000) when comparing these three groups to each other.

Endnotes:

¹ Terrell, P., and Watson, M. (2018). Laying a Firm Foundation: Embedding Evidence-Based Emergent Literacy Practices Into Early Intervention and Preschool Environments. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools*, 49(2): 148-164. Retrieved March 10, 2021, from https://doi.org/10.1044/2017_LSHSS-17-0053.

² Refers to the past week or month before parents were surveyed.

³ The National Household Education Surveys Program (NHES):2012 used self-administered paper-and-pencil questionnaires that were mailed to respondents. For NHES:2019, the majority of data were collected using a web-based survey instrument that respondents accessed with credentials they received in a mailed invitation.

Paper surveys were used for nonresponse follow-up and for a small experiment.

⁴ Excludes a small number of non-Hispanic 3- to 5-year-olds whose parents did not choose any race from the categories provided on the race item in the questionnaire. Data for both Pacific Islander and American Indian/Alaska Native 3- to 5-year-olds were not discussed because reporting standards were not met.

⁵ Includes those with some graduate school but no graduate/professional degree.

⁶ Includes those who completed high school through equivalency programs, such as a GED program.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 207.10

Related indicators and resources: [Family Involvement in Education-Related Activities Outside of School](#) [*web-only*]

Glossary: Bachelor's degree; High school completer; Household; Preschool; Racial/ethnic group