

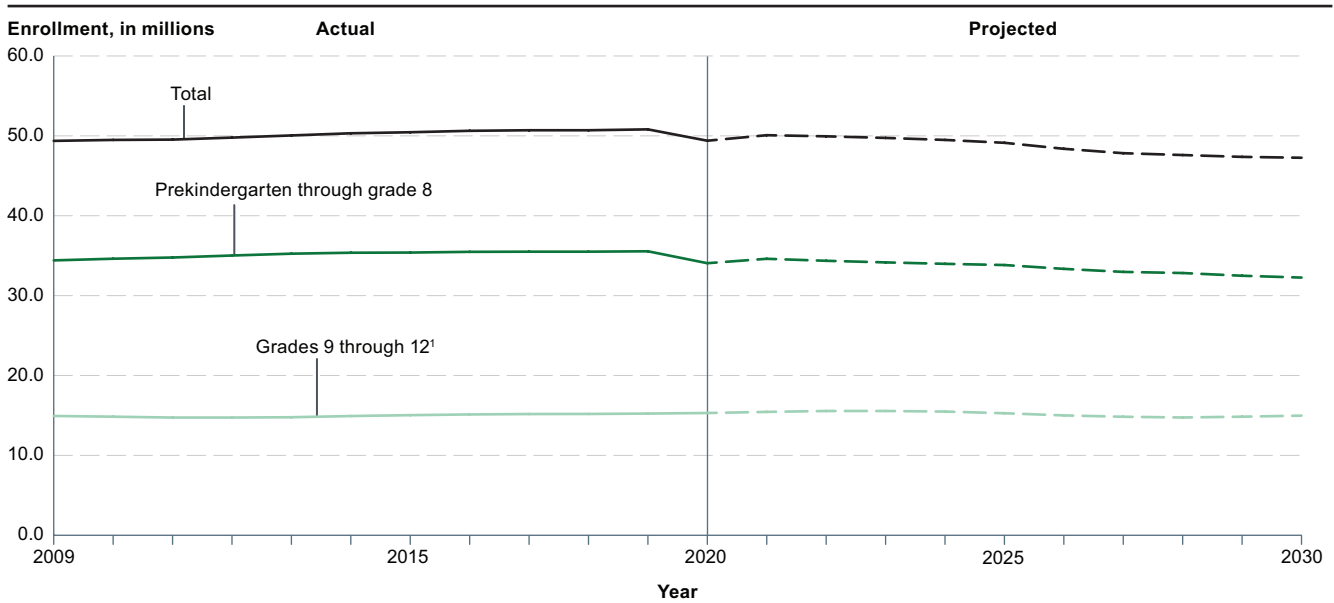
Public School Enrollment

From fall 2019 to fall 2020, total public school enrollment in prekindergarten through grade 12 dropped from 50.8 million students to 49.4 million students. Prior to this period, total public school enrollment had increased between fall 2009 and fall 2019. Changes in public elementary and secondary school enrollment varied by state.

This indicator discusses overall changes in the number of students enrolled in public schools (including both traditional public schools and public charter schools) as well as changes by grade level and by state. In fall 2020, the first year in which reported fall enrollment may have been affected by the coronavirus pandemic, the nation's

public elementary and secondary schools enrolled 49.4 million students in prekindergarten (preK) through grade 12.^{1,2} Of these students, 34.1 million were enrolled in preK through grade 8, and the remaining 15.3 million were enrolled in grades 9 through 12.

Figure 1. Enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools, by level: Fall 2009 through fall 2030



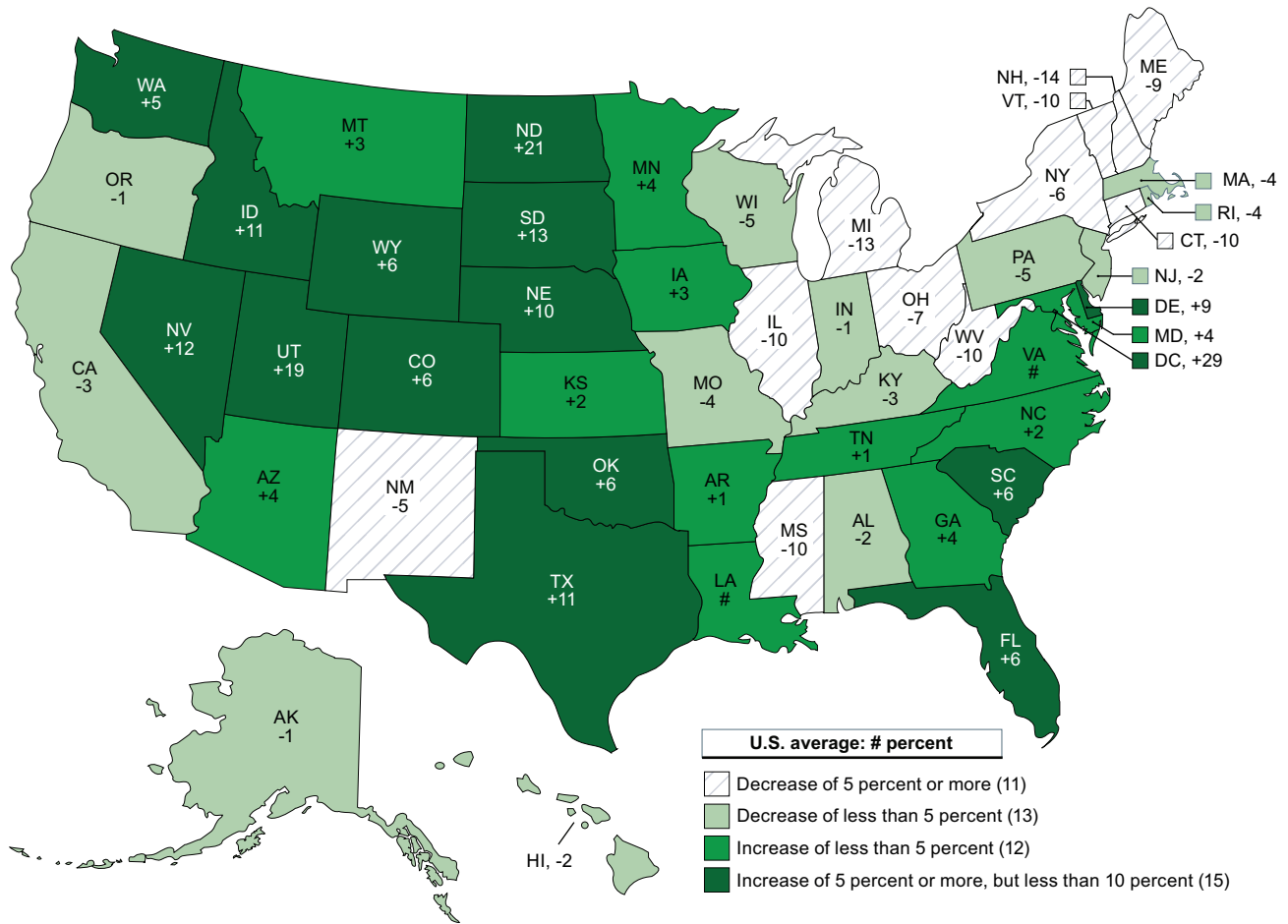
¹ Includes students reported as being enrolled in grade 13.
 NOTE: Data are for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Data include both traditional public schools and public charter schools. The total ungraded counts of students were prorated to prekindergarten through grade 8 and grades 9 through 12 based on the known grade-level distribution of a state. Includes imputations for nonreported prekindergarten enrollment in California for fall 2019 and 2020 and in Oregon for fall 2020. Includes imputations for nonreported enrollment for all grades in Illinois for fall 2020. Projections in this figure were calculated after the onset of the coronavirus pandemic and take into account the expected impacts of the pandemic. Some data have been revised from previously published figures.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "State Nonfiscal Survey of Public Elementary/Secondary Education," 2009–10 through 2019–20 and 2020–21 Preliminary; and State Public Elementary and Secondary Enrollment Projection Model, through 2030. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 203.10.

Between fall 2019 and fall 2020, total public elementary and secondary school enrollment dropped from 50.8 million to 49.4 million students. This 3 percent drop brought total enrollment back to 2009 levels (49.4 million),³ erasing a decade of steady growth. This was the largest single year decline in total public school enrollment since 1943.^{4,5} However, whereas the 1943 drop—during World War II—was concentrated among those in grades 9 through 12, the 2020 drop was concentrated among those in grades preK through 8. Specifically, between fall 2009 and fall 2019, enrollment in preK through grade 8 increased by 3 percent (from 34.4 million to 35.6 million) before dropping 4 percent to 34.1 million students in fall 2020. In contrast, enrollment in grades 9 through 12 increased 2 percent between fall 2009

(15.0 million) and fall 2019 (15.2 million) and continued to increase in fall 2020 (15.3 million).

Due primarily to projected declines in the school-aged population, total public elementary and secondary school enrollment is projected to decrease between fall 2020 and fall 2030 (the last year for which projected data are available). From fall 2020 to fall 2030, total enrollment is projected to decrease by 4 percent, from 49.4 million to 47.3 million students. Enrollment in preK through grade 8 is projected to decrease by 5 percent, from 34.1 million to 32.3 million students, between fall 2020 and fall 2030. Enrollment in grades 9 through 12 is projected to decrease by 2 percent, from 15.3 million to 15.0 million students, between fall 2020 and fall 2030.

Figure 2. Percentage change in public elementary and secondary school enrollment, categorized into specific ranges, by state: Fall 2009 to fall 2020



Rounds to zero.

NOTE: U.S. average is for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Data include both traditional public schools and public charter schools. Includes imputations for nonreported prekindergarten enrollment in California and Oregon for fall 2020. Includes imputations for nonreported enrollment for all grades in Illinois for fall 2020. Categorizations are based on unrounded percentages.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "State Nonfiscal Survey of Public Elementary/Secondary Education," 2009–10 and 2020–21 Preliminary. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 203.20.

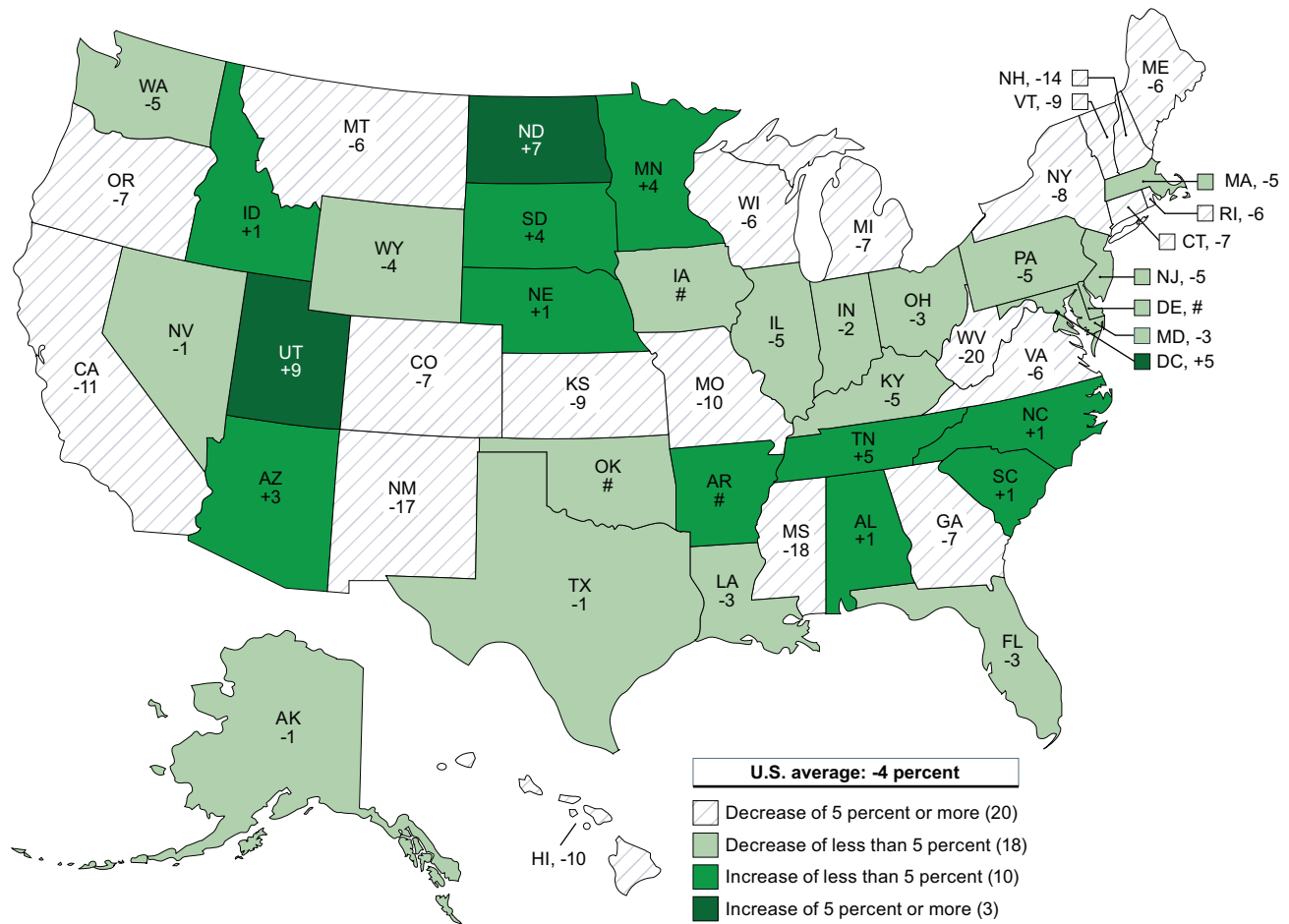
Changes in public elementary and secondary school enrollment from 2009 to 2020 varied by state. Total enrollment in preK through grade 12 was higher in fall 2020 than in fall 2009 for 26 states and the District of Columbia. Increases of 10 percent or more occurred in 6 states (Texas, Idaho, Nevada, South Dakota, Utah, and North Dakota) and the District of Columbia. Total enrollment in preK through grade 12 was lower in fall 2020 than in fall 2009 for the other 24 states, including all 9 Northeastern states. Decreases of 10 percent or more occurred in 5 states (Illinois, Mississippi, West Virginia, Michigan, and New Hampshire). In fall 2020, total enrollment ranged from fewer than 100,000 students in Vermont (82,400 students), the District of Columbia (89,900 students), and Wyoming (93,000 students) to 5.4 million students in Texas and 6.1 million students in California. Due to a combination of large enrollment and strong growth, the total enrollment in Texas grew by 522,600 students from fall 2009 to fall 2020.

Focusing on the first year of the coronavirus pandemic, all 50 states recorded lower enrollments in fall 2020 than in fall 2019. The states with the largest percentage changes in enrollment were Oregon, Vermont, Mississippi, Kentucky, Washington, and New Hampshire, which experienced

a 5 percent drop in public school enrollment between the two years. The states with the smallest percentage changes were South Dakota and Utah (less than 1 percent lower in 2020 than 2019). The District of Columbia was the only jurisdiction that did not record a drop in enrollment between 2019 and 2020 (89,900 in both years).

In fall 2020, public school enrollment was higher than in fall 2009 in both preK through grade 8 and grades 9 through 12 for 21 states and the District of Columbia. In contrast, 18 states had lower enrollment in fall 2020 than in fall 2009 at both grade ranges. The remaining 11 states had opposite enrollment patterns between the two grade ranges. In 9 states, enrollment in fall 2020 was lower in preK through grade 8 but higher in grades 9 through 12; in 2 states, enrollment in fall 2020 was higher in preK through grade 8 but lower in grades 9 through 12. For preK through grade 8, changes in enrollment across states ranged from an increase of 36 percent in the District of Columbia to a decrease of 14 percent in New Hampshire from 2009 to 2020. For grades 9 through 12 over this period, changes in enrollment across states ranged from an increase of 31 percent in Utah to a decrease of 16 percent in Vermont.

Figure 3. Projected percentage change in public elementary and secondary school enrollment, categorized into specific ranges, by state: Fall 2020 to fall 2030



Rounds to zero.

NOTE: U.S. average is for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Data include both traditional public schools and public charter schools. Includes imputations for nonreported prekindergarten enrollment in California and Oregon for fall 2020. Includes imputations for nonreported enrollment for all grades in Illinois for fall 2020. Projections in this figure were calculated after the onset of the coronavirus pandemic and take into account the expected impacts of the pandemic. Categorizations are based on unrounded percentages.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "State Nonfiscal Survey of Public Elementary/Secondary Education," 2020–21 Preliminary; and State Public Elementary and Secondary Enrollment Projection Model, through 2030. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 203.20.

Total public elementary and secondary school enrollment is projected to be higher in fall 2030 than in fall 2020 in 12 states and the District of Columbia, all of which are located in the South, the West, or the Midwest. Utah is projected to have the largest percentage increase in total enrollment (9 percent), followed by North Dakota (7 percent).⁶ Total enrollment is projected to be lower in fall 2030 than in fall 2020 in 38 states: all 9 of the states located in the Northeast, 11 states located in the South,

10 states located in the West, and 8 states located in the Midwest. West Virginia and Mississippi are projected to have the largest percentage decreases in total enrollment (20 and 18 percent, respectively). In fall 2030, Vermont (74,600 students), Wyoming (89,400 students), and the District of Columbia (94,700 students) are projected to still have fewer than 100,000 students. California is projected to have the largest total enrollment in fall 2030 (5.4 million students), followed by Texas (5.3 million students).

Between fall 2020 and fall 2030, nine states are projected to have public school enrollment that is higher in fall 2030 than in fall 2020 at both preK through grade 8 and grades 9 through 12. In contrast, 28 states are projected to have enrollment that is lower in fall 2030 than in fall 2020 at both grade ranges. The remaining 13 states and the District of Columbia are projected to have lower enrollment in fall 2030 than in fall 2020 for preK through grade 8 but higher enrollment in fall 2030 than in fall 2020 for grades 9 through 12. Considering the size of these changes, enrollment in preK through grade 8 is projected to be at least 15 percent lower in fall 2030 than in fall 2020 in Mississippi, New Mexico, and West Virginia. In the same three states, enrollment is also predicted to be at least 15 percent lower for grades 9 through 12 in fall 2030 than in fall 2020. Meanwhile, enrollment in grades 9 through 12 is projected to be at least 10 percent higher in fall 2030 than in fall 2020 in Minnesota, South Dakota, Utah, North Dakota, and the District of Columbia. In contrast, there are no states in which the enrollment in preK through grade 8 is projected to be 10 percent higher in fall 2030 than in fall 2020.

Among the public school students enrolled in the 2020-21 school year, students may have been enrolled in different modes of instruction at different times of the school year. In early 2021, the Institute of Education Sciences began collecting data as a response to the coronavirus pandemic on enrollment in grades 4 and 8 in three instructional modes of learning: remote only, hybrid,

and in-person instruction.⁷ Complete results from this survey can be found at the [NAEP Monthly School Survey Dashboard](#). In both February and May 2021, there were 44 states—along with the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico—that participated in the survey. In May 2021, the overall percentage of grade 4 and 8 public school students enrolled only in remote instruction was 27 percent, which was lower than 44 percent in February 2021. Compared with February 2021, higher percentages of students in May 2021 were enrolled in in-person instruction (49 vs. 34 percent) and in hybrid instruction (24 vs. 21 percent). Among the 21 states and the District of Columbia that met the minimum response rate requirements in May 2021 for reporting jurisdiction results, the percentage of students enrolled in in-person instruction ranged from 93 percent in Wyoming to less than 1 percent in the District of Columbia.

In May 2021, enrollment in in-person instruction differed by race/ethnicity.⁸ The percentage of students enrolled in-person was highest for White students (62 percent), followed by American Indian/Alaska Native students (53 percent). The percentages of White and American Indian/Alaska Native students enrolled in-person were both higher than the percentage of students of Two or more races (47 percent), which was in turn higher than the percentages of Black students (39 percent) and Hispanic students (41 percent). The percentages of students enrolled in-person were lowest for Asian students (23 percent) and Pacific Islander students (29 percent).

Endnotes:

¹ In this indicator, public elementary and secondary school enrollment includes ungraded students for all years. This also includes a small number of students reported as being enrolled in grade 13, who were counted as enrolled in grades 9 through 12.

² This indicator includes public elementary and secondary school enrollment in the United States, defined as including the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

³ The school-aged resident population ages 5 to 17 decreased 1 percent between 2009 and 2020, from 53.9 million to 53.5 million children.

⁴ U.S. Department of Education. (1993). *120 Years of American Education: A Statistical Portrait*. Retrieved January 5, 2022, from <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=93442>.

⁵ Enrollment data in 1942-43 and 1943-44 did not include prekindergarten. Enrollment data were also reported for the full school year, rather than fall.

⁶ Although enrollment in North Dakota is projected to be higher in fall 2030 than in fall 2020, there may not be a consistent upward trend over that period.

⁷ Instructional modes of learning offered to students varied, and individual schools may have offered only one or two of the instructional modes of learning discussed.

⁸ Excludes students for whom race/ethnicity data were not available.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, tables 101.40, 203.10, 203.20, 203.25, and 203.30; *2021 NAEP Monthly School Survey*, Grades 4 and 8 combined tables, trend table 6 and month 5 table 6

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*]; [English Learners in Public Schools](#); [Homeless Children and Youth in Public Schools](#) [*The Condition of Education 2017 Spotlight*]; [Homeschooled Children and Reasons for Homeschooling](#) [*The Condition of Education 2022 Spotlight*]; [Private School Enrollment](#); [Public Charter School Enrollment](#); [Student With Disabilities](#)

Glossary: Distance education; Elementary school; Enrollment; Geographic region; Middle school; Other/ungraded school; Prekindergarten school; Public school or institution; Secondary/High school