

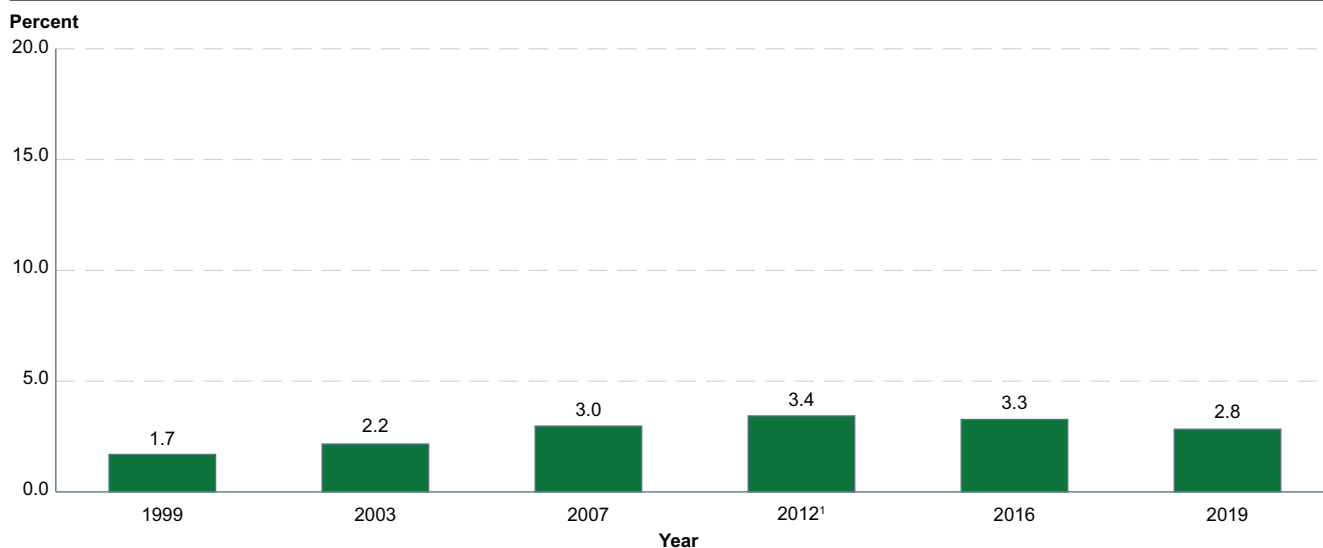
## Homeschooled Children and Reasons for Homeschooling

*In 2020–21, among adults 18 years old and over who had students under 18 in the home, 6.8 percent reported having at least one child homeschooled. When examined at the child level, the data show that 5.4 percent of children were reported to be homeschooled in 2020–21.*

This spotlight first uses data from the National Household Education Survey (NHES) to examine the prevalence of homeschooling up to 2019, prior to the pandemic, as well as reasons for homeschooling as reported by parents. In the NHES, students are considered to be homeschooled if all of the following conditions are met: their parents reported them being schooled at home instead of at a public or private school, their enrollment in public or private schools did not exceed 24 hours a week,<sup>1</sup> and they were not being homeschooled only due to a temporary illness. Homeschooled students include those ages 5 to 17 with a grade equivalent of kindergarten through grade 12.

This spotlight then uses data from the Household Pulse Survey (HPS)<sup>2</sup>—collected during the period of August 18 to August 30, 2021—to discuss the prevalence of homeschooling during the 2020–21 school year. In this HPS data collection, adults 18 years old and over were asked to report on the number of children under 18 in the home who were enrolled in a public school, enrolled in a private school, or homeschooled during the school year that ended in the spring of 2021. Homeschooling was not defined for the respondents in the HPS. Readers should note that estimates based on the HPS data cannot be directly compared with those from the NHES.

**Figure 1. Percentage of homeschooled students ages 5 through 17 with a grade equivalent of kindergarten through 12th grade: Selected years, 1999 through 2019**



<sup>1</sup> The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) uses a statistical adjustment for estimates of homeschoolers in 2012. For more information about this adjustment, please see *Homeschooling in the United States: 2012* (NCES 2016-096REV).

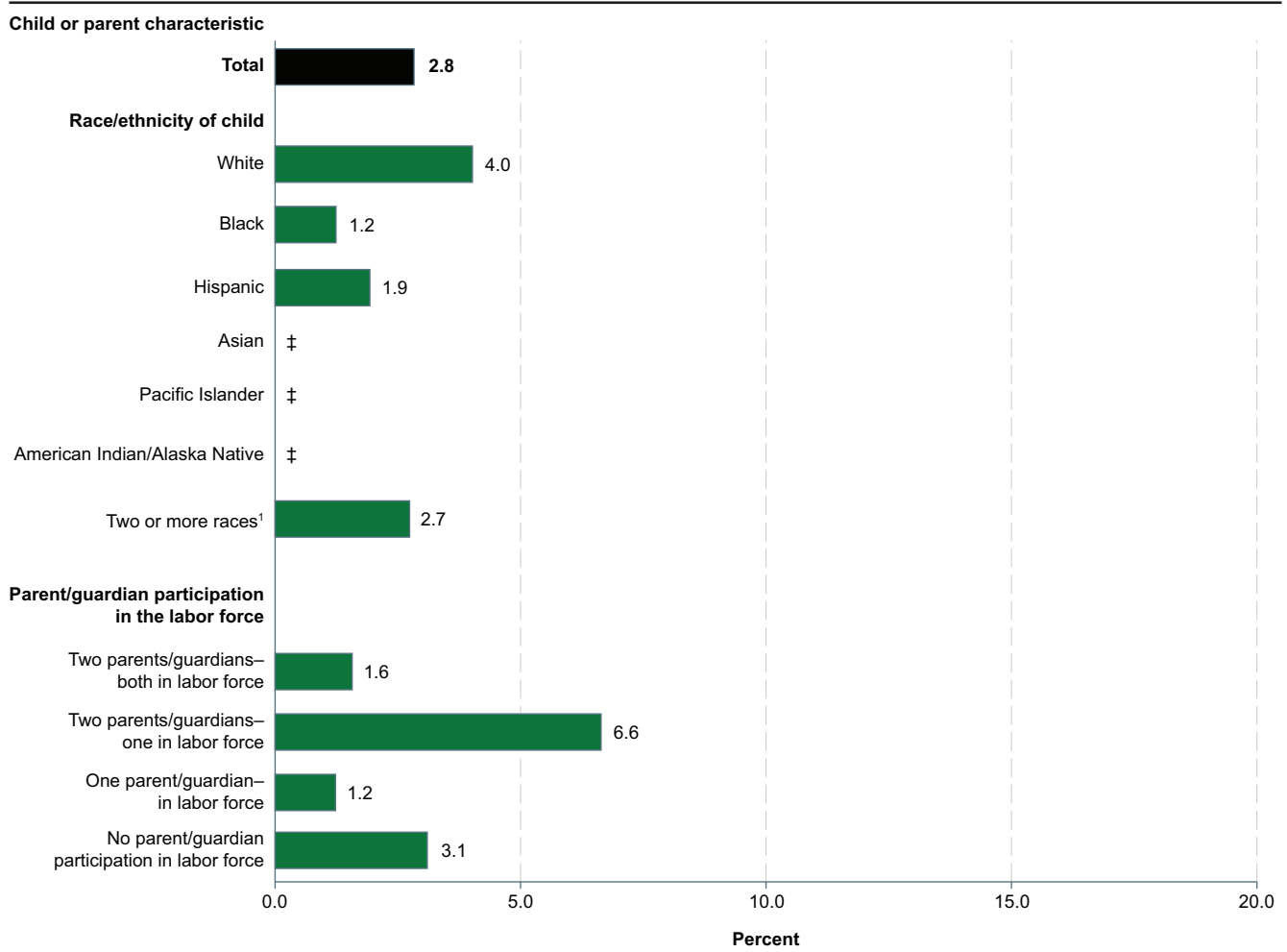
NOTE: Data in 2019 exclude students who were enrolled in school for more than 24 hours a week, while data prior to 2019 exclude students who were enrolled in school for more than 25 hours a week. Caution should be used when comparing the 2019 homeschooling estimates with those of earlier years. Data for all years also exclude students who were homeschooled only due to a temporary illness. National Household Education Surveys Program (NHES) administrations prior to 2012 were administered via telephone with an interviewer. NHES:2012 used self-administered paper-and-pencil questionnaires that were mailed to respondents. For NHES:2016, initial contact with all respondents was by mail, and the majority of respondents received paper-and-pencil questionnaires. However, as an experiment with web use, a small sample of NHES:2016 respondents received mailed invitations to complete the survey online. 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. Before 2007, NHES requested that the parent most knowledgeable about the sampled child answer the survey. Responding parents reported on their own activities and the activities of their spouse/other adults in the household.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Parent Survey and Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey of the National Household Education Surveys Program (Parent-NHES:1999 and PFI-NHES:2003, 2007, 2012, 2016, and 2019). See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 206.10.

More students were homeschooled in 2019 than in 1999. Specifically, of those ages 5 to 17 with a grade equivalent of kindergarten through 12th grade, 2.8 percent (1,457,000 students) were homeschooled in 2019, compared with 1.7 percent (850,000 students) in 1999. Within these

two decades,<sup>3</sup> the percentage of students who were homeschooled first increased from 1.7 percent in 1999 to 3.4 percent in 2012.<sup>4</sup> However, the percentage of students who were homeschooled was lower in 2019 than in 2012.

**Figure 2. Percentage of homeschooled students ages 5 through 17 with a grade equivalent of kindergarten through 12th grade, by student’s race/ethnicity and parent/guardian participation in the labor force: 2019**



‡ Reporting standards not met (too few cases for a reliable estimate).

<sup>1</sup> Also includes children whose race/ethnicity was not reported.

NOTE: Excludes students who were enrolled in school for more than 24 hours a week and students who were homeschooled only due to a temporary illness. Responding parents reported on their own activities and the activities of their spouse/other adults in the household. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey of the National Household Education Surveys Program (PFI-NHES:2019). See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 206.10.

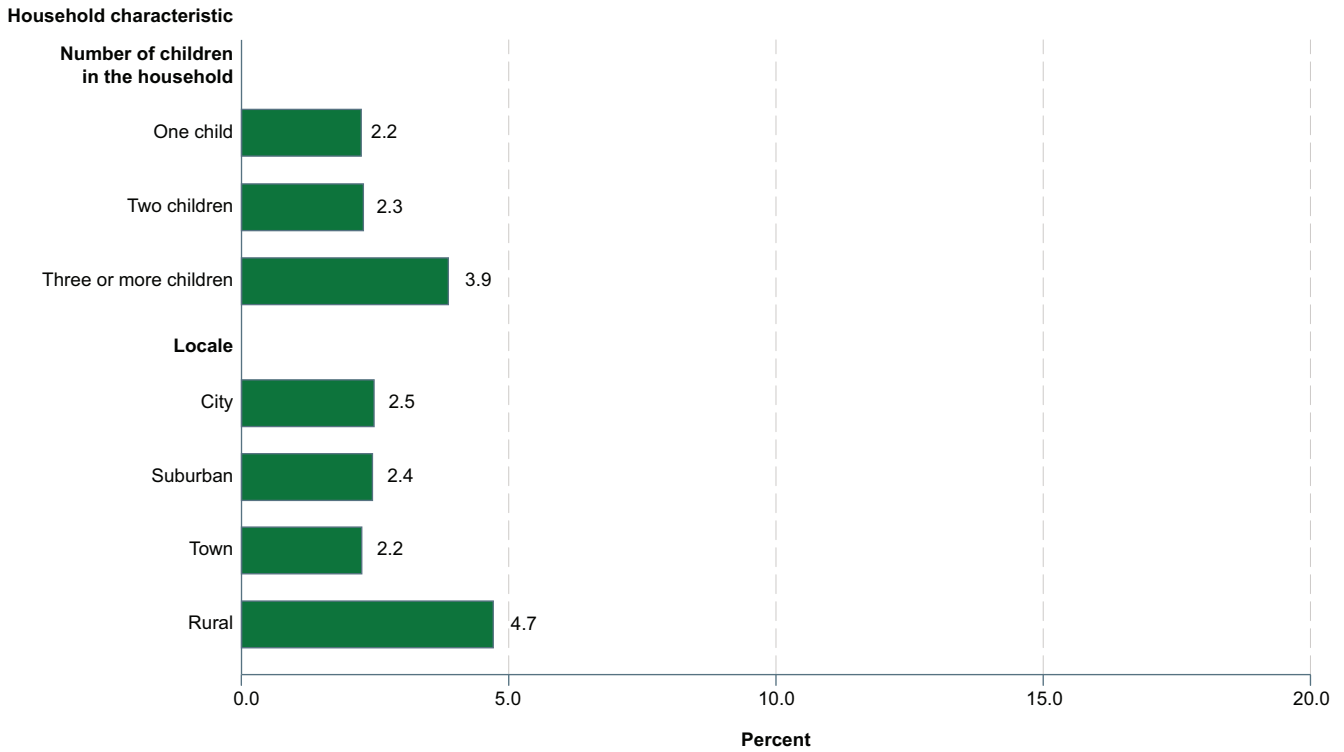
In 2019, the homeschooling rate among students ages 5 to 17 with a grade equivalent of kindergarten through 12th grade varied by race/ethnicity. A higher percentage of White students were homeschooled (4.0 percent) than Hispanic students (1.9 percent) and Black students (1.2 percent). The percentage of students who were homeschooled was also higher for those of Two or more races<sup>5</sup> (2.7 percent) than for those who were Black.<sup>6</sup>

Considering family structure and parent labor force participation,<sup>7</sup> the percentage of students who were homeschooled in 2019 was highest for those with two parents, one of whom was in the labor force (6.6 percent). In comparison, 3.1 percent of students with no parent participation in the labor force; 1.6 percent of students

with two parents, both of whom were in the labor force; and 1.2 percent of students from one-parent households with the parent in the labor force were homeschooled.

Generally, there were no measurable differences by the highest education level of students’ parents in the percentage of students who were homeschooled in 2019.<sup>8</sup> The only exception was that the percentage of students who were homeschooled was higher for those whose parents had attained a bachelor’s degree or some graduate school as their highest education level (3.3 percent), compared with those whose parents had attained a high school diploma or less (2.2 percent). In 2019, there were no measurable differences by household income in the percentage of students who were homeschooled.<sup>9</sup>

**Figure 3. Percentage of homeschooled students ages 5 through 17 with a grade equivalent of kindergarten through 12th grade, by number of children in the household and locale: 2019**



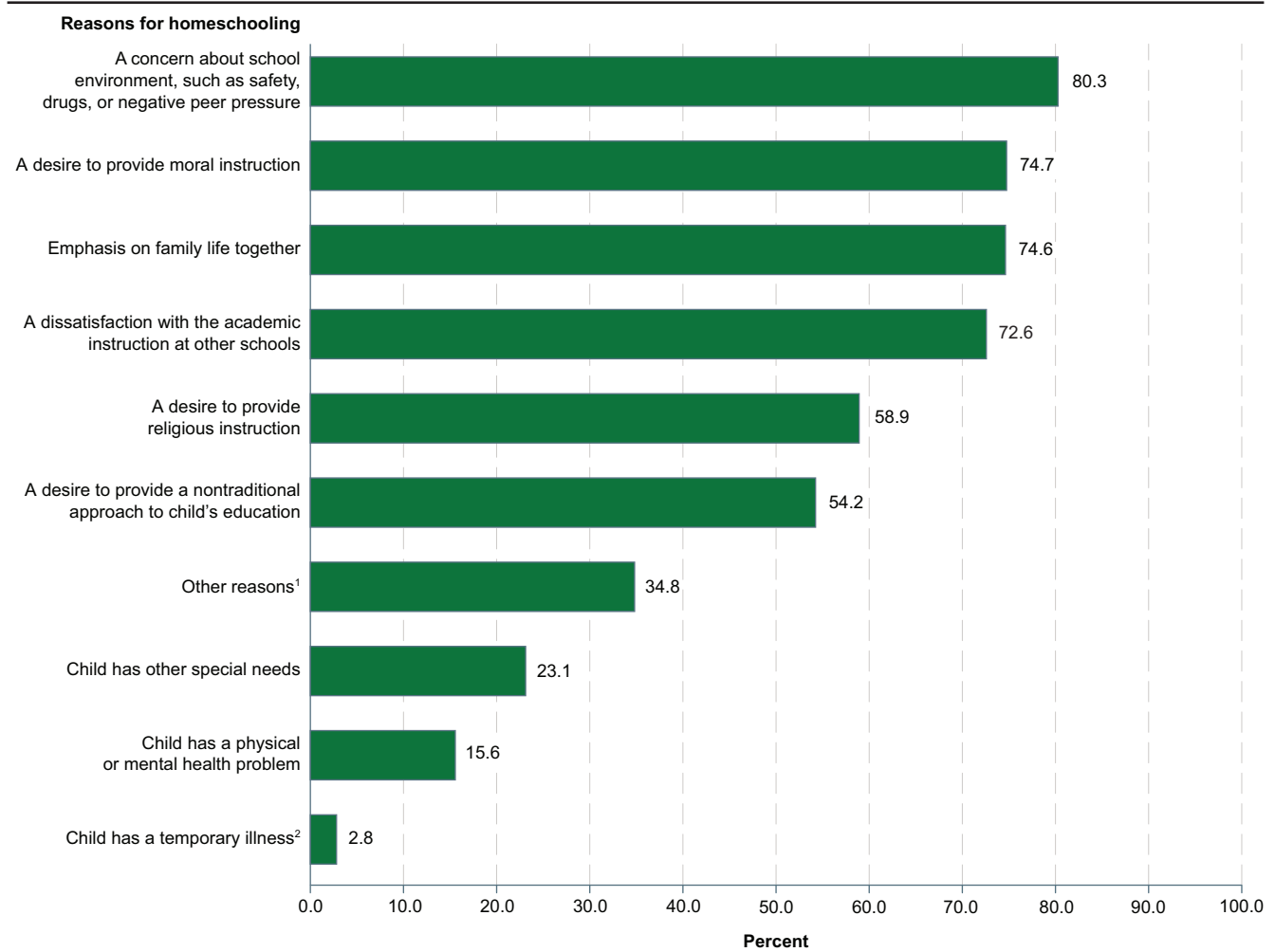
NOTE: Excludes students who were enrolled in school for more than 24 hours a week and students who were homeschooled only due to a temporary illness. Responding parents reported on their own activities and the activities of their spouse/other adults in the household. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey of the National Household Education Surveys Program (PFI-NHES:2019). See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 206.10.

In 2019, among students ages 5 to 17 with a grade equivalent of kindergarten through 12th grade, homeschooling rates were generally higher for households with three or more children and for rural households. Specifically, the percentage of students who were homeschooled was higher for those living in households with three or more children (3.9 percent) than for those

living in households with two children (2.3 percent) and for those who were the only child in the household (2.2 percent). In addition, the percentage of students who were homeschooled was higher for those living in rural areas (4.7 percent) than for those living in cities (2.5 percent), suburban areas (2.4 percent) and towns (2.2 percent).

**Figure 4. Percentage of homeschooled students ages 5 through 17 with a grade equivalent of kindergarten through 12th grade whose parents selected each reason as one of their reasons for homeschooling: 2019**



<sup>1</sup> In addition to selecting listed reasons, parents could also write in "another reason." Other reasons that parents gave for homeschooling include child being bullied, finances, travel, and a more flexible schedule. This category also includes children whose parents responded "no" to all response options provided in the questionnaire, including "another reason."

<sup>2</sup> Refers to the percentage of homeschooled students whose parents gave more than one reason for homeschooling, one of which was "Child has a temporary illness." Students are excluded from this entire figure if a temporary illness was the only reason that their parents gave for homeschooling.

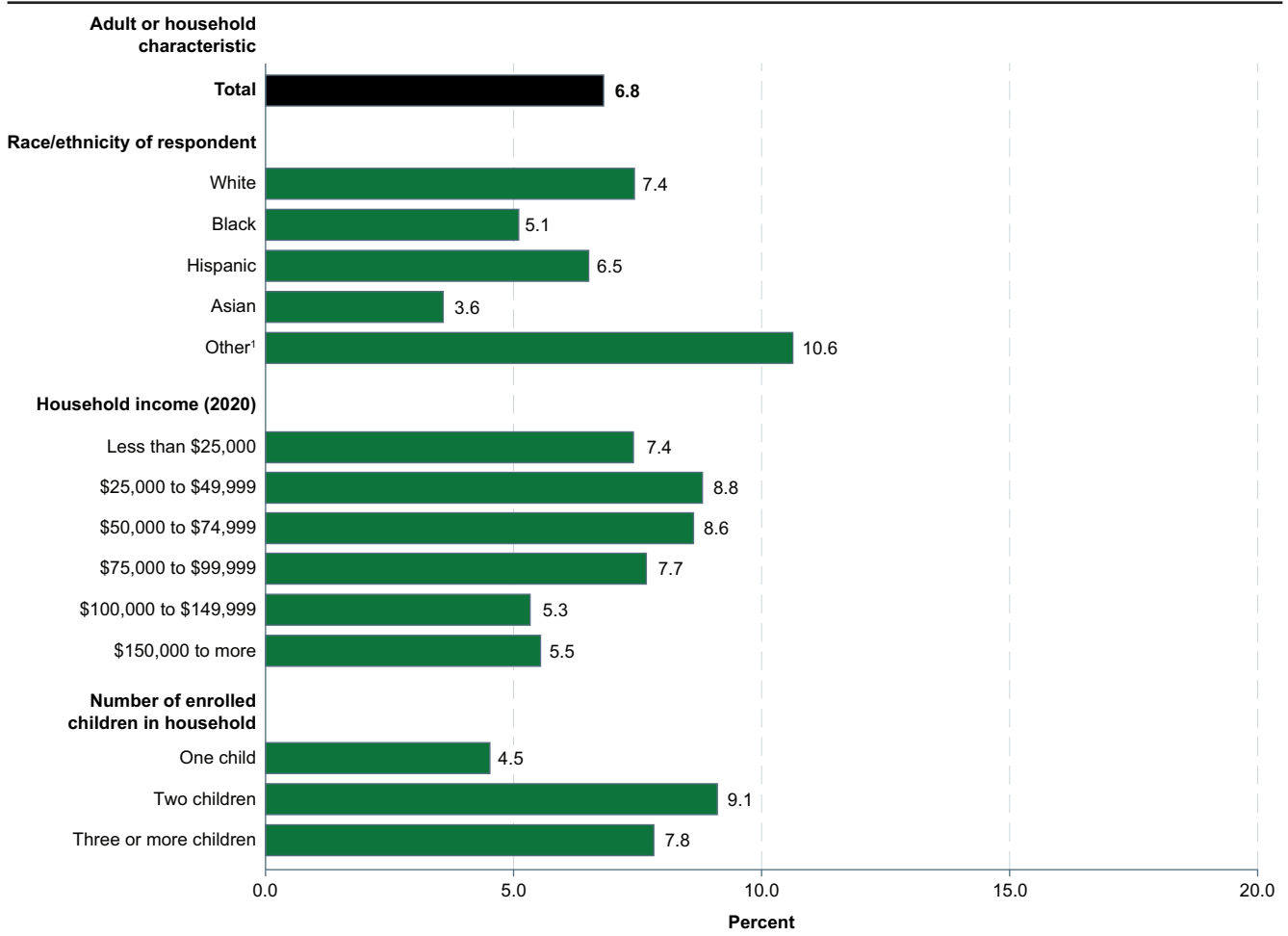
NOTE: Parents could give more than one reason. They answered "yes" or "no" to each of the listed reasons. Excludes students who were enrolled in school for more than 24 hours a week.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey of the National Household Education Surveys Program (PFI-NHES:2019). See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 206.15.

Parents of homeschooled students ages 5 through 17 with a grade equivalent of kindergarten through 12th grade were asked to identify all reasons that applied to their decision to homeschool their child in 2019. More than two-thirds of homeschooled students had parents who selected one or more of the following as a reason for homeschooling: a concern about school environment, such as safety, drugs, or negative peer pressure (80 percent); a desire to provide moral instruction (75 percent); emphasis on family life together (75 percent); and a dissatisfaction with the academic instruction at other schools (73 percent).

In addition, parents of homeschooled students were asked to identify the single most important reason to homeschool their child in 2019. The most common was a concern about school environment, such as safety, drugs, or negative peer pressure (25 percent). Fifteen percent of homeschooled students had parents who reported that the most important reason was a dissatisfaction with the academic instruction at other schools. Thirteen percent had parents who reported that the most important reason was a desire to provide religious instruction.

**Figure 5. Among adults 18 years old and over who had children under 18 in the home, percentage reporting having at least one child homeschooled, by selected adult and household characteristics: 2020–21**



<sup>1</sup> Includes persons reporting Pacific Islander alone, persons reporting American Indian/Alaska Native alone, and persons of Two or more races.  
 NOTE: Data in this figure are considered experimental and do not meet National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) standards for response rates. The 2021 Household Pulse Survey, an experimental data product, is an Interagency Federal Statistical Rapid Response Survey to Measure Household Experiences during the coronavirus pandemic, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau in partnership with 16 other federal agencies and offices. The number of respondents and response rate for the period reported in this table are 69,114 and 6.6 percent. The final weights are designed to produce estimates for the total persons age 18 and older living within housing units. These weights were created by adjusting the household level sampling base weights by various factors to account for nonresponse, adults per household, and coverage. For more information, see <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/household-pulse-survey/technical-documentation.html>. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.  
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Household Pulse Survey, August 18–30, 2021. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 206.60.

As mentioned in the introduction, the HPS data can shed light on the prevalence of homeschooling during the 2020-21 school year, the first full school year after the emergence of the coronavirus pandemic.<sup>10</sup> In 2020-21, among adults 18 years old and over who had students under 18 years old in the home, 6.8 percent reported having at least one child homeschooled. When examined at the student level, the data show that 5.4 percent of students were reported to be homeschooled in 2020-21.

The remainder of this indicator focuses on the percentage of adults with at least one homeschooled student in their home because this is the level at which the HPS data were collected. Estimates based on the HPS data are not comparable with those based on the NHES data, the latter of which are at the student level.

In 2020-21, the percentage of adults 18 years old and over reporting that at least one student in the home was homeschooled varied by race/ethnicity of the reporting adults. The percentage was higher for White adults (7.4 percent) than for Black adults (5.1 percent) and Asian adults (3.6 percent). It was also higher for Hispanic adults (6.5 percent) than for Asian adults. About 10.6 percent of adults of other racial/ethnic groups reported that at least one student in the home was homeschooled.<sup>11</sup> This was also higher than the percentages for Black and Asian adults.

There were some differences by 2020 household income in the percentage of adults 18 years old and over reporting that at least one student in the home was homeschooled in 2020-21. The percentages were higher for those with household income levels of \$25,000 to \$49,999 (8.8 percent) and \$50,000 to \$74,999 (8.6 percent) than for those with household income levels of \$100,000 to \$149,999 (5.3 percent) and \$150,000 or more (5.5 percent). However, there were no measurable differences by educational attainment of the responding adults in the percentage of adults reporting that at least one student in the home was homeschooled.<sup>12</sup>

There were some differences by number of children in the household in the percentage of adults 18 years old and over reporting that at least one student in the home was homeschooled in 2020-21. Among adults 18 years old and over who had only one student in the household, 4.5 percent reported that the child was homeschooled in 2020-21. In contrast, 9.1 of adults in households with two students reported that at least one child was homeschooled, and 7.8 percent of adults in households with three or more students reported that at least one child was homeschooled.

**Endnotes:**

<sup>1</sup> Data in 2019 exclude students who were enrolled in school for more than 24 hours a week, while data prior to 2019 exclude students who were enrolled in school for more than 25 hours a week. Caution should be used when comparing the 2019 homeschooling estimates with those of earlier years.

<sup>2</sup> The Household Pulse Survey (HPS) is conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau with 16 other federal agencies and offices, including the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). It has provided weekly or biweekly national and state estimates on topics such as employment, food security, housing, access to health care, and household educational activities since April 23, 2020, when data collection began.

<sup>3</sup> Data are only available for 1999, 2003, 2007, 2012, 2016, and 2019.

<sup>4</sup> NCES uses a statistical adjustment for estimates of homeschoolers in 2012. For more information about this adjustment, see *Homeschooling in the United States: 2012* (NCES 2016-096REV), available at <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2016096rev>.

<sup>5</sup> Also includes children whose race/ethnicity was not reported.

<sup>6</sup> Asian, Pacific Islander, and American Indian/Alaska Native students are excluded from this comparison because their data did not meet reporting standards in 2019.

<sup>7</sup> Also includes labor force participation of the students' guardians.

<sup>8</sup> Also includes education completed by the students' guardians.

<sup>9</sup> The five categories of household income level from the NHES data are \$20,000 or less, \$20,001 to \$50,000, \$50,001

to \$75,000, \$75,001 to \$100,000, and over \$100,000. These categories are different from the ones used in the later section of this indicator based on HPS data.

<sup>10</sup> The speed of the survey development and the pace of the data collection efforts led to policies and procedures for the experimental HPS that were not always consistent with traditional federal survey operations. For example, the timeline for the surveys meant that opportunities to follow up with nonrespondents were very limited. This has led to response rates of 1 to 10 percent, which are much lower than the typical target response rate set in most federal surveys. (The number of respondents and response rate for the period reported in this indicator are 69,114 and 6.6 percent.) While the responses have been statistically adjusted so that they represent the nation and states in terms of geographic distribution, sex, race/ethnicity, age, and educational attainment, the impact of survey bias has not been fully explored.

<sup>11</sup> Adults of other racial/ethnic groups include persons reporting Pacific Islander alone, persons reporting American Indian/Alaska Native alone, and persons of Two or more races.

<sup>12</sup> The five categories of educational attainment of the respondent from the HPS are less than high school completion, high school completion, some college or associate's degree, bachelor's degree, and graduate degree. These categories are different from the highest education level of parents/guardians used in the NHES.

**Reference tables:** *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, tables 206.10, 206.15, and 206.60

**Related indicators and resources:** [Private School Enrollment](#); [Public Charter School Enrollment](#); [Public School Enrollment](#)

**Glossary:** Bachelor's degree; High school diploma; Homeschool; Household; Locale codes; Private school; Public school or institution; Racial/ethnic group