

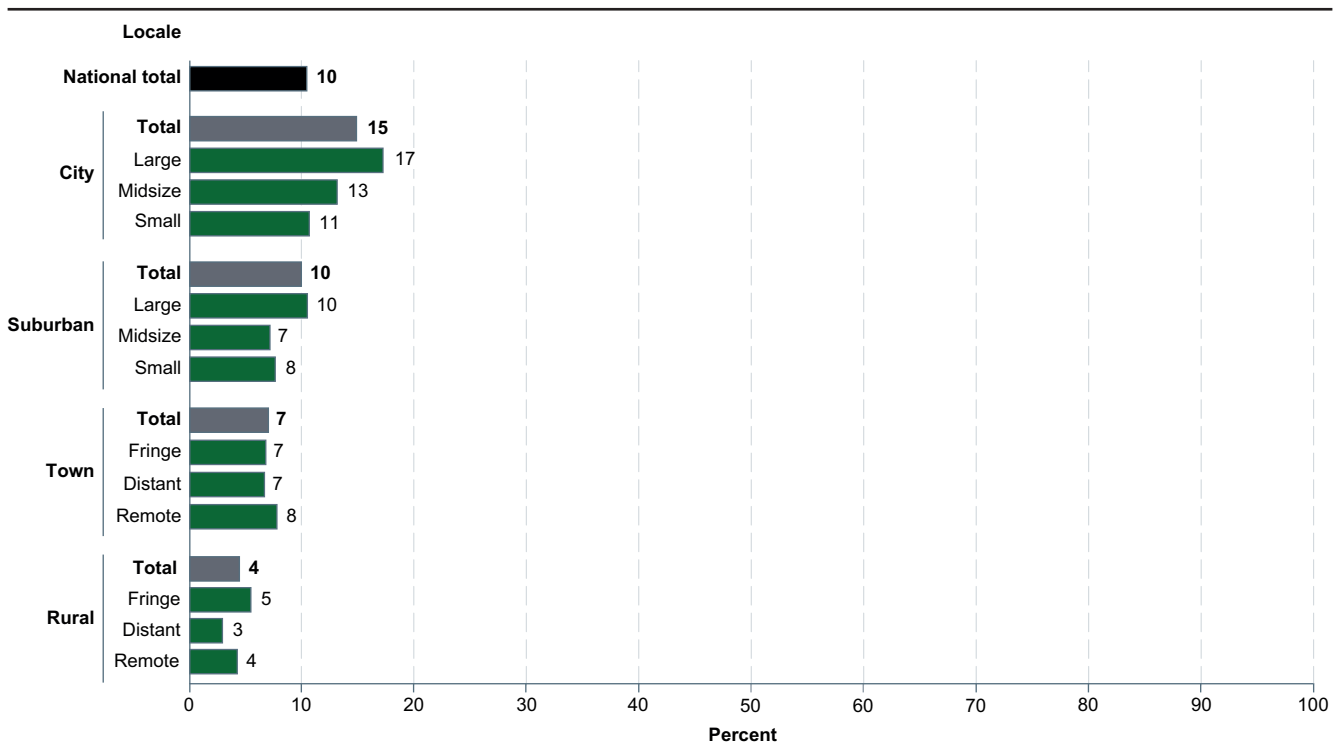
English Learners and Students With Disabilities in Rural Public Schools

In fall 2019, English learner students made up 4 percent of total public school district enrollment in rural areas, compared with 7 percent of enrollment in towns, 10 percent of enrollment in suburban areas, and 15 percent of enrollment in cities. In the same year, students with disabilities made up 15 percent of total public school district enrollment in rural areas and towns and 14 percent of enrollment in suburban areas and cities.

Public school districts in the United States, including the 50 states and the District of Columbia, offer programs and services for students with educational needs that extend beyond regular classroom instruction. This indicator looks at two such groups of students: those who are identified as English learners (EL) and those who have disabilities. Students who are identified as EL can participate in language assistance programs. Participation in these types of programs can improve students' English language proficiency, which in turn has been associated with improved educational outcomes.¹ For students with

disabilities, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandates the provision of a free and appropriate public school education for eligible students ages 3-21. Eligible students are those identified by a team of professionals as having a disability that adversely affects academic performance and as needing special education and related services. Using data from the 2019-20 Common Core of Data (CCD), this indicator shows the number and percentage of students identified as EL and of students with disabilities served under IDEA by the locale² of their school districts.

Figure 1. Percentage of students enrolled in public school districts who were English learners (EL), by school district locale: Fall 2019



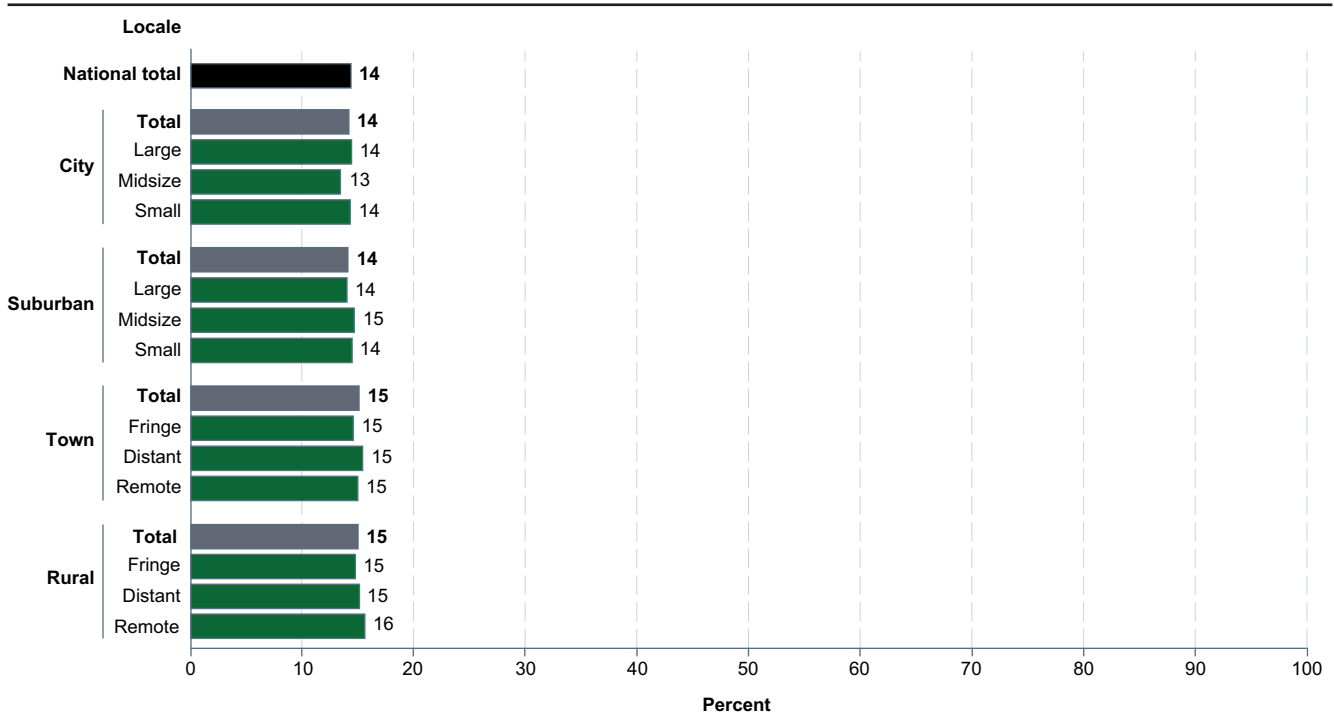
NOTE: Data in this figure represent the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Data are based on locales of school districts rather than locales of schools. Data include all students identified as EL, regardless of program participation. Data on ELs and ELs as a percent of enrollment exclude students who are enrolled in prekindergarten. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "Local Education Agency Universe Survey," 2019-20. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 214.40.

In fall 2019, about 5.1 million students identified as EL were enrolled in public school districts in the United States, of which 327,000 students (6 percent) were enrolled in public school districts in rural areas.

In fall 2019, students identified as EL made up 10 percent of total public school district enrollment in the United States. The percentage of public school students who were identified as EL was generally lower for school districts in more rural areas than for those in more urbanized areas.

Students identified as EL made up 4 percent of total public school district enrollment in rural areas, compared with 7 percent of enrollment in towns, 10 percent of enrollment in suburban areas, and 15 percent of enrollment in cities. The percentage of public school students who were identified as EL was lowest for school districts in distant and remote rural areas (3 and 4 percent, respectively). In other sublocales, the percentage of public school students who were identified as EL ranged from 5 percent in fringe rural areas to 17 percent in large cities.

Figure 2. Percentage of students enrolled in public school districts who were students with disabilities, by school district locale: Fall 2019



NOTE: Data in this figure represent the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Data are based on locales of school districts rather than locales of schools. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "Local Education Agency Universe Survey," 2019–20. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 214.40.

In fall 2019, about 7.3 million students with disabilities served under IDEA were enrolled in public school districts in the United States, of which 1.1 million (16 percent) were enrolled in public school districts in rural areas.

In fall 2019, students with disabilities made up 14 percent of total public school district enrollment in the United States. The percentage of public school students who were students with disabilities was higher in rural areas

and towns (15 percent each) than in cities and suburban areas (14 percent each). The percentage of public school students who were students with disabilities was highest for school districts in remote rural areas (16 percent). In other sublocales, the percentage ranged from 13 percent in mid-sized cities to 15 percent each in fringe and distant rural areas, all three town sublocales, and mid-sized suburban areas.

Endnotes:

¹ Genesee, F., Lindholm-Leary, K., Saunders, W., and Christian, D. (2005). English Language Learners in U.S. Schools: An Overview of Research Findings. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 10(4): 363-385. Retrieved March 14, 2022, from https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327671espr1004_2.

² Please visit NCES's [Education Across America website](#) for the definition of locale.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 214.40

Related indicators and resources: [English Learners in Public Schools](#) [*Condition of Education*]; [Students With Disabilities](#) [*Condition of Education*]

Glossary: Disabilities, children with; English learner (EL); Enrollment; Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); Locale codes; Public school or institution; School district