

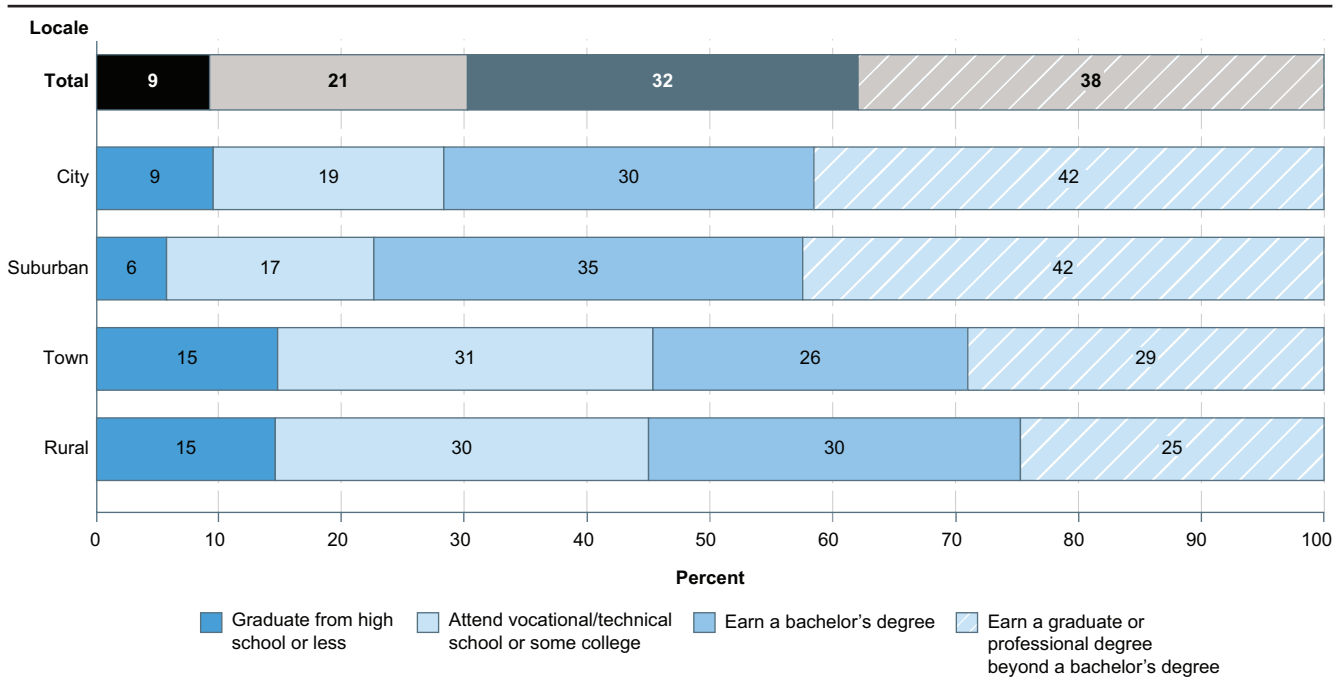
Educational Expectations and Involvement of Parents in Rural Areas

In 2019, parents of students in rural areas, in general, had lower expectations for their children’s education attainment, compared with parents of students in cities and suburban areas. In addition, the percentages of kindergartners through fifth-graders whose parents reported doing various education-related activities outside the home generally were lower for those in rural areas than for those in other locales.

Research has shown correlations between home learning environments and children’s academic achievements and school readiness.^{1,2} This indicator uses data from the 2019 Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey of the National Household Education Surveys Program

(PFI-NHES:2019). It examines parents’ expectations for their children’s educational attainment and participation in various education-related activities with their children across different locale areas, with a focus on students in rural areas.³

Figure 1. Percentage distribution of students enrolled in kindergarten through 12th grade whose parents/guardians reported expectations of specific educational attainment levels, by locale: 2019



NOTE: Excludes children whose parents reported any homeschooling. Locale of student’s household is determined by classifying the household’s residential ZIP code into a set of four major locale categories: city, suburban, town, and rural. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

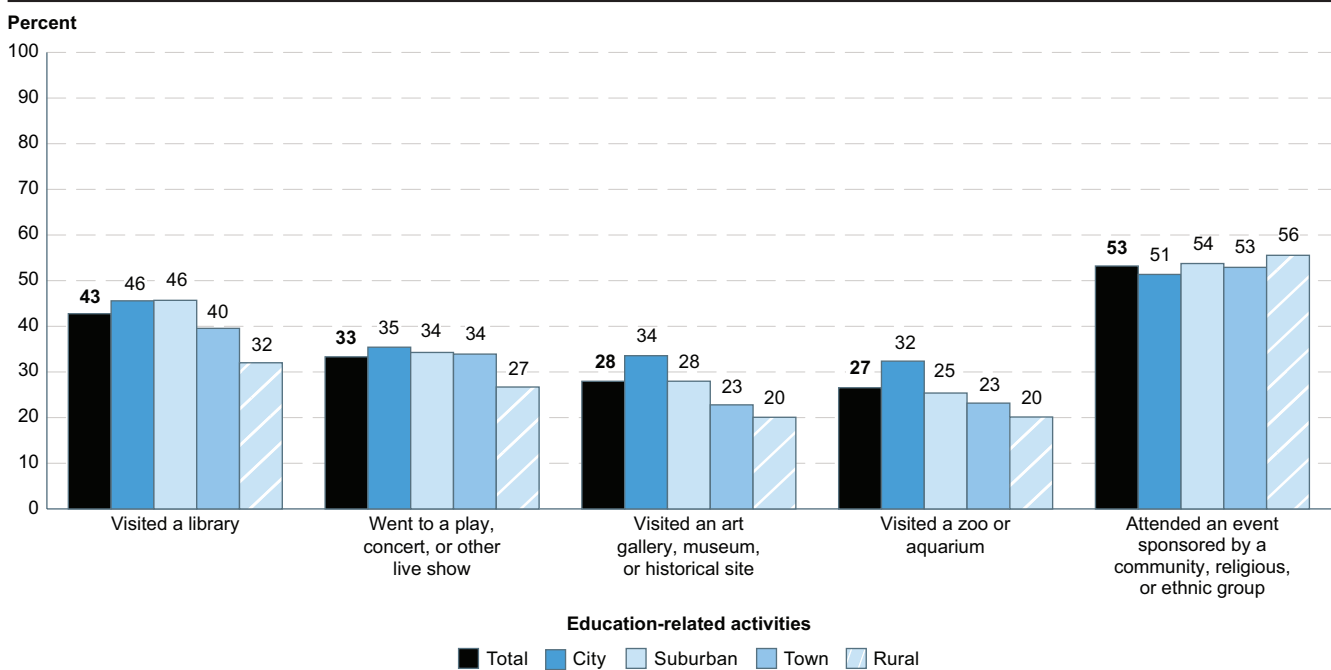
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey of the National Household Education Surveys Program (PFI-NHES:2019). Retrieved February 15, 2022, from <https://nces.ed.gov/nhes/tables/pfi-parentexpectations.asp>.

Prior research has found that parents' expectations for their children's educational attainment are positively associated with their children's actual attainment.⁴ In PFI-NHES:2019, parents of kindergartners through 12th-graders were asked how far they expected their children to go in their education. Parents in rural areas, in general, had lower expectations for their children's educational attainment, compared with parents in cities and suburban areas. For example, the percentage of students in rural areas whose parents expected them to earn a graduate or professional degree (25 percent) was lower than the percentages in suburban areas and cities (42 percent each) and was not measurably different from the percentage in towns. Conversely, 15 percent of students in rural areas had parents who expected them to graduate from high school or less. This percentage was higher than the percentages in cities (9 percent) and suburban areas (6 percent) but was not measurably different from that in towns. In addition, the percentage of students in rural areas whose parents expected them to attend a vocational or technical school or some

college (30 percent) was higher than the percentages in cities (19 percent) and suburban areas (17 percent). One exception to this pattern was that the percentage of students in rural areas whose parents expected them to earn a bachelor's degree was lower than the percentage in suburban areas (35 percent) but was not measurably different from the percentage in cities.

Engagement in education-related activities outside of school has been positively linked to children's academic performance.⁵ For example, reading to one's child has been found to positively influence that child's later reading achievement.⁶ However, participation in these activities can also be impacted by factors such as venue availability and family socioeconomic status. For example, research has shown that families living in neighborhoods without a library were less likely to visit one,⁷ and children living in families below the poverty line were less likely to have been read to by a parent than children living in families above the poverty line.⁸

Figure 2. Percentage of kindergartners through fifth-graders whose parents/guardians reported doing education-related activities with their children in the past month, by selected activity and locale: 2019

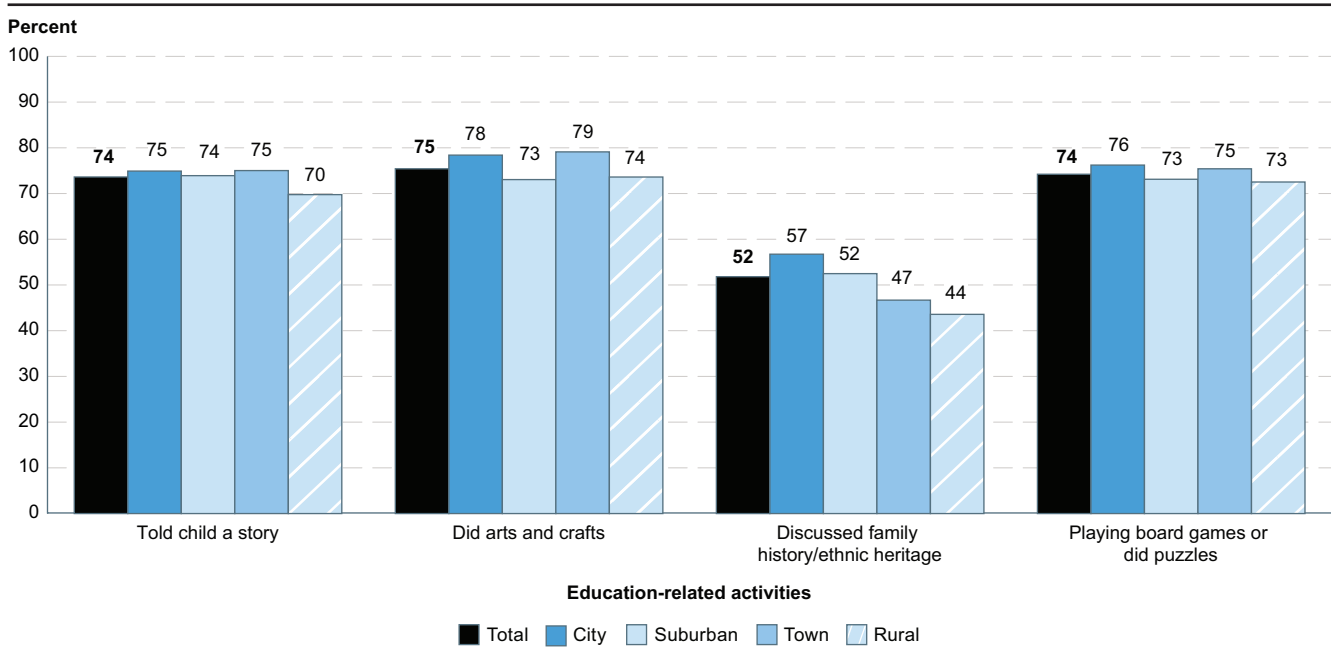


NOTE: Excludes children whose parents reported any homeschooling. Locale of student’s household is determined by classifying the household’s residential ZIP code into a set of four major locale categories: city, suburban, town, and rural. Although rounded numbers are displayed, figures are based on unrounded 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 2020*, table 207.20.

In PFI-NHES:2019, the percentages of kindergartners through fifth-graders whose parents reported doing various education-related activities outside the home generally were lower for those in rural areas than for those in other locales. When parents were asked to report whether they have visited a library or have gone to a play, concert, or other live show with their children in the past month, the percentages were lower for students in rural areas than for students in other locales. For example, in 2019, about 32 percent of students in rural areas had parents who reported visiting a library with their children, compared with 40 percent of students in towns and 46 percent each of students in cities and suburban

areas. Similarly, the percentages of students in rural areas whose parents reported visiting an art gallery, museum, or historical site or reported visiting a zoo or aquarium were also lower than for students in cities and suburban areas. For example, 20 percent of students in rural areas had parents who reported visiting a zoo or aquarium with their children in the past month, compared with 32 percent of students in cities and 25 percent of students in suburban areas. Fifty-six percent of students in rural areas had parents who reported attending an event sponsored by a community, religious, or ethnic group with their children in the past month, which was not measurably different from students in other locales.

Figure 3. Percentage of kindergartners through fifth-graders whose parents/guardians reported doing education-related activities with their children in the past week, by selected activity and locale: 2019



NOTE: Excludes children whose parents reported any homeschooling. Locale of student’s household is determined by classifying the household’s residential ZIP code into a set of four major locale categories: city, suburban, town, and rural. Responding parents reported on their own activities and the activities of their spouse/other adults in the household. Although rounded numbers are displayed, 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 2020*, table 207.30.

The percentages of kindergartners through fifth-graders in rural areas whose parents reported doing education-related activities at home with their children in the past week were generally not measurably different from those of students in other locales. The only exception

is parents who reported discussing family history/ethnic heritage with their children in the past week. In 2019, the percentage was lower for students in rural areas (44 percent) than for students in suburban areas (52 percent) and cities (57 percent).

Endnotes:

- ¹ Farver, J., Xu, Y., Eppe, S., and Lonigan, C. (2006). Home Environments and Young Latino Children’s School Readiness. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 21(2): 196-212. Retrieved February 15, 2022, from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0885200606000238>.
- ² Jong, P., and Leseman, P. (2001). Lasting Effects of Home Literacy on Reading Achievement in School. *Journal of School Psychology*, 39(5): 389-414. Retrieved February 15, 2022, from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0022440501000802>.
- ³ Please visit NCES’s [Education Across America](#) website for the definition of locale.
- ⁴ Wilder, S. (2014). Effects of Parental Involvement on Academic Achievement: A Meta-Synthesis. *Educational Review*, 66(3): 377-397. DOI: [10.1080/00131911.2013.780009](https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2013.780009).
- ⁵ Hill, N.E., and Tyson, D.F. (2009). Parental Involvement in Middle School: A Meta-Analytic Assessment of the Strategies That Promote Achievement. *Developmental Psychology*, 45(3): 740-763.

- Retrieved June 21, 2019, from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2782391/>.
- ⁶ Bus, A.G., Van IJzendoorn, M.H., and Pellegrini, A.D. (1995). *Joint Book Reading Makes for Success in Learning to Read: A Meta-Analysis on Intergenerational Transmission of Literacy*. *Review of Educational Research*, 65(1): 1-21.
- ⁷ Meyer, D., Princiotta, D., and Lanahan, L. (2004). *The Summer After Kindergarten: Children’s Activities and Library Use by Household Socioeconomic Status* (NCES 2004-037). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved July 25, 2022, from <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2004/2004037.pdf>.
- ⁸ Van Voorhis, F.L., Maier, M.F., Epstein, J.L., Lloyd, C.M., and Leung, T. (2013). *The Impact of Family Involvement on the Education of Children Ages 3 to 8: A Focus on Literacy and Math Achievement Outcomes and Social-Emotional Skills*. New York, NY: MDRC.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, tables 207.20 and 207.30; *2019 NHES Table:* <https://nces.ed.gov/nhes/tables/pfi-parentexpectations.asp>

Glossary: Bachelor’s degree; Educational attainment; Locale codes; Socioeconomic status (SES)

Related indicators and resources: [Family Involvement in Education-Related Activities Outside of School \[Condition of Education\]](#); [Home Literacy Activities With Young Children \[Condition of Education\]](#)