

Public School Enrollment

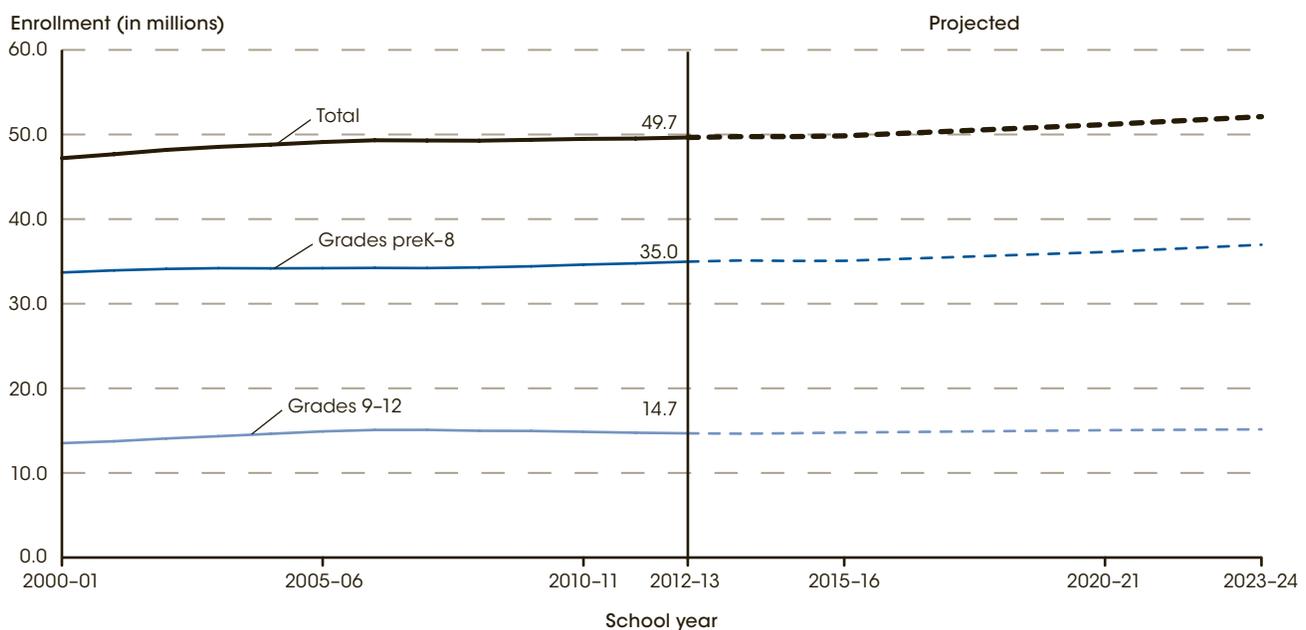
From school years 2011–12 through 2023–24, overall public elementary and secondary school enrollment is projected to increase by 5 percent (from 49.5 to 52.1 million students), with changes across states ranging from an increase of 22 percent in Nevada to a decrease of 11 percent in West Virginia.

Public school enrollment changes are largely reflective of demographic changes. This indicator discusses changes in public school enrollment overall as well as changes in public school enrollment for particular age groups and for U.S. states. In school year 2011–12, some 49.5 million students were enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools. Of these students, 34.8 million were enrolled in prekindergarten (preK) through grade 8 and 14.7 million were enrolled in grades 9 through 12.

After reaching a peak in the early 1970s, public school enrollment declined during the remainder of the 1970s

and early 1980s but began rising in the latter part of the 1980s. Enrollment continued to increase throughout the 1990s, 2000s, and early 2010s. In 1997–98, public school enrollment reached 46.1 million students, surpassing its early 1970s peak. Between 2000–01 and 2011–12, public school enrollment increased by 2.3 million students, reaching a total of 49.5 million students. From 2011–12 to 2023–24 (the last year for which projected data are available), total public school enrollment is projected to increase by 5 percent, to 52.1 million students.

Figure 1. Actual and projected public school enrollment in grades prekindergarten (preK) through 12, by grade level: School years 2000–01 through 2023–24



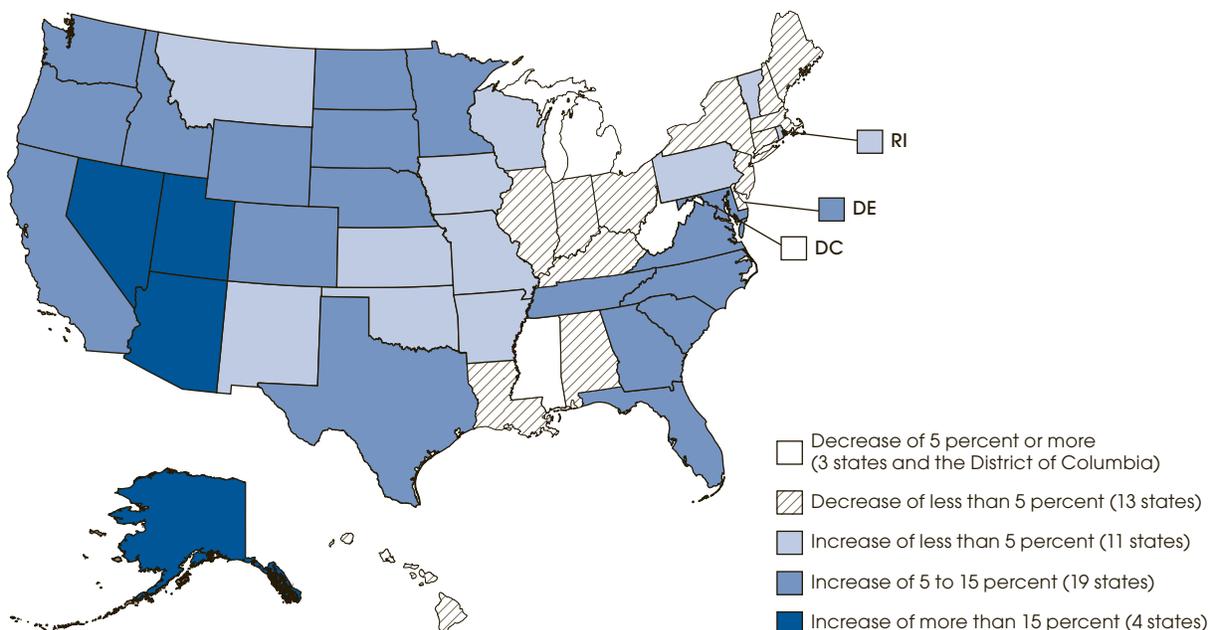
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "State Nonfiscal Survey of Public Elementary/Secondary Education," 2000–01 through 2011–12, and National Elementary and Secondary Enrollment Model, 2000–2012. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2013*, tables 203.20, 203.25, and 203.30.

Enrollment trends in grades preK–8 and 9–12 have differed over time as successive cohorts of students have moved through the public school system. For example, enrollment in grades preK–8 decreased throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, while enrollment in grades 9–12 generally did not begin to decrease until the late 1970s and continued to decrease further into the 1980s than enrollment in grades preK–8 did. Enrollment in grades preK–8 started to rise in the latter part of the 1980s and continued to rise throughout the 1990s and 2000s. Between 2000–01 and 2011–12, enrollment in grades preK–8 increased by 1.1 million students, reaching a total of 34.8 million students. Public school enrollment in grades preK–8 is projected to increase to 37.0 million in 2023–24, an increase of 6 percent over 2011–12. After declining in the 1980s, public school enrollment in

grades 9–12 began to increase again in 1990–91. Despite a period of decline from 2008–09 through 2011–12, the years from 2000–01 to 2011–12 saw a 9 percent increase in enrollment in grades 9–12, reaching a total of 14.7 million students. Enrollment in grades 9–12 is projected to increase by 3 percent between 2011–12 and 2023–24.

Public school enrollment in grades preK–12 increased in 30 states and the District of Columbia from 2000–01 to 2011–12, with the largest increases occurring in Nevada, Utah, Texas, and Arizona (29, 24, 23, and 23 percent, respectively). During this period, total enrollment declined in 20 states, with the largest decreases occurring in Vermont and North Dakota (12 and 11 percent, respectively).

Figure 2. Projected percentage change in public school enrollment in grades prekindergarten (preK) through 12, by state or jurisdiction: Between school years 2011–12 and 2023–24



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "State Nonfiscal Survey of Public Elementary/Secondary Education," 2011–12; and Public State Elementary and Secondary Enrollment Model: 1980–2012. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2013*, table 203.20.

From 2011–12 to 2023–24, Nevada, Arizona, Alaska, and Utah are projected to see the largest percentage increases in total enrollment (22, 20, 18, and 18 percent, respectively), while West Virginia is projected to see the largest percentage decrease (11 percent). From 2011–12 to 2023–24, the changes in public school enrollment in the states are projected to differ at the elementary and secondary school levels. Reflecting the larger national enrollment increase expected at the elementary school

level, 33 states are expected to have enrollment increases in grades preK–8, compared with 31 states in grades 9–12. In preK–8, enrollment is projected to increase by more than 20 percent in Nevada, Arizona, and Alaska, but it is projected to decrease by more than 10 percent in West Virginia. Enrollment in grades 9–12 is expected to increase by more than 20 percent in Utah, but it is projected to decrease by more than 10 percent in New Hampshire, Vermont, Connecticut, and Michigan.

Reference table: *Digest of Education Statistics 2013*, tables 203.20, 203.25, and 203.30; tables ESE 70 through ESE 89 at <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/AnnualReports/historicaltables.asp>.

Glossary: Elementary school, Prekindergarten, Public school or institution, Secondary school

For more information, see the Reader's Guide and the Guide to Sources.