

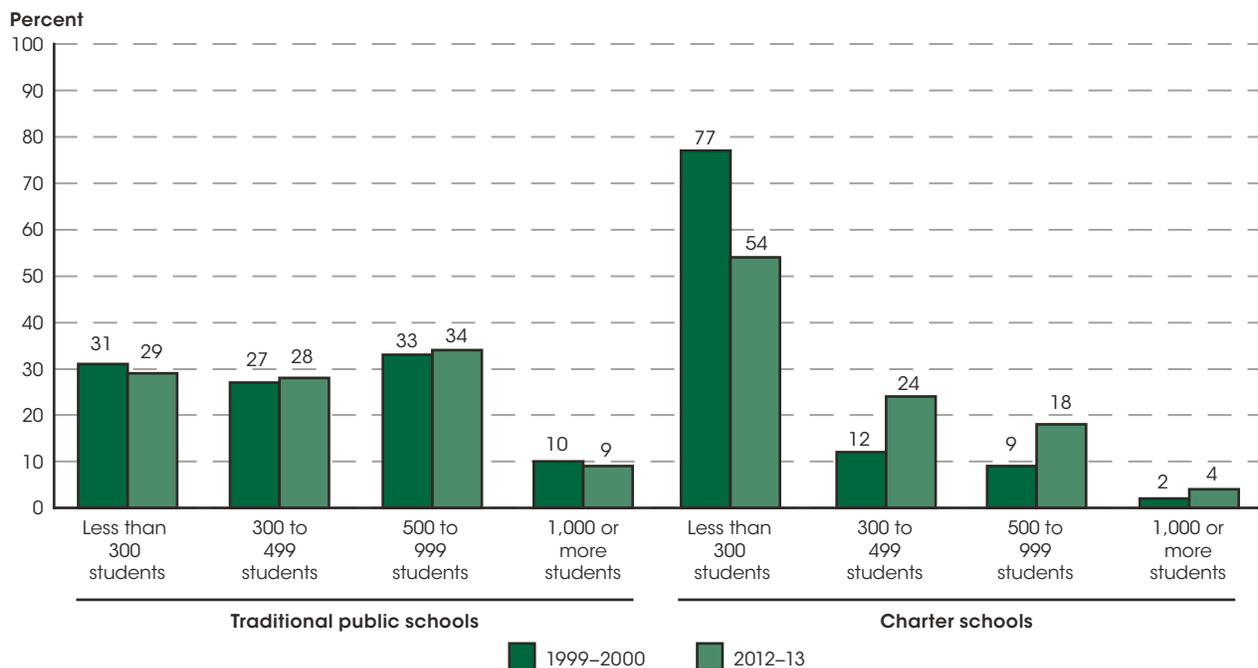
# Characteristics of Traditional Public and Public Charter Schools

*In school year 2012–13, the majority of charter schools (57 percent) were in cities, compared with 25 percent of traditional public schools. In contrast, 11 percent of charter schools were in rural areas, compared with 29 percent of traditional public schools.*

In school year 2012–13, there were 98,454 public schools in the United States, including 92,375 traditional public schools and 6,079 charter schools. The total number of schools was greater in 2012–13 than in 1999–2000, when there was a total of 92,012 public schools, with 90,488 traditional public schools and 1,524 charter schools. Over two-thirds of traditional public schools (69 percent)

were elementary schools in 2012–13, versus 56 percent of charter schools. By contrast, 20 percent of charter schools in 2012–13 were combined schools, meaning that they began with grade 6 or below and extended to grade 9 or above, compared with 6 percent of traditional public schools.

**Figure 1. Percentage distribution of traditional public schools and charter schools, by enrollment size: School years 1999–2000 and 2012–13**



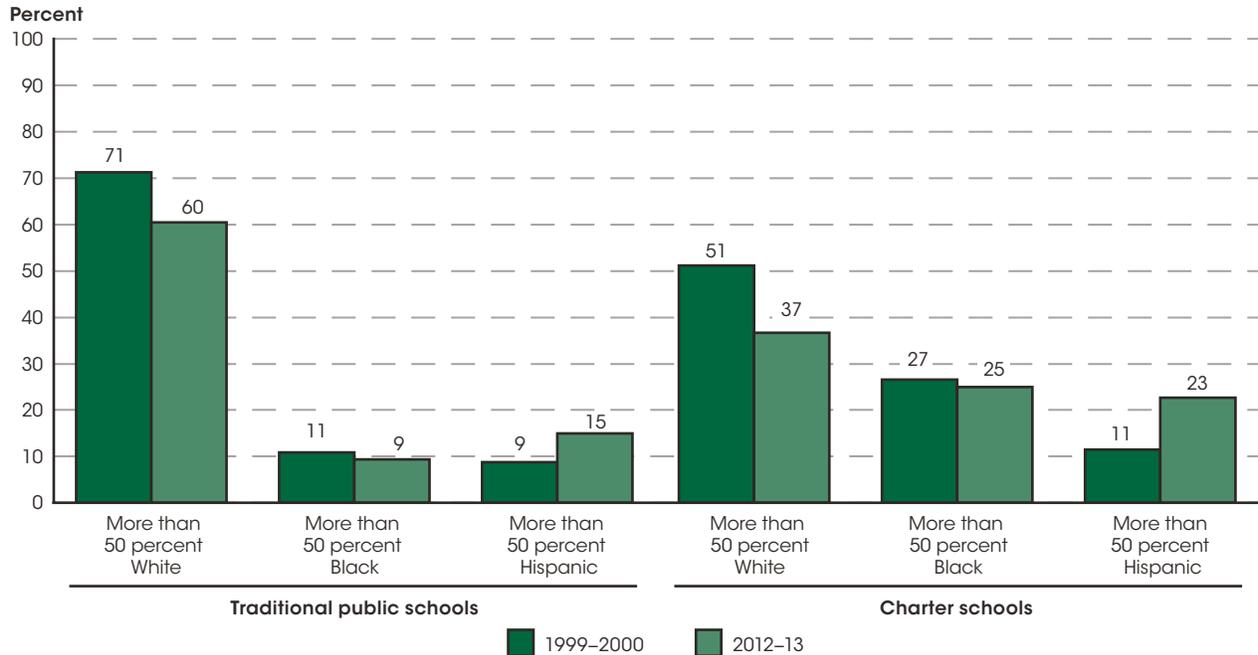
NOTE: Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey," 1999–2000 and 2012–13. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2014*, table 216.30.

In terms of enrollment, charter schools tend to be smaller than traditional public schools. In 2012–13, some 54 percent of charter schools were small (enrollment of fewer than 300 students), compared with 29 percent of traditional public schools. However, the percentage of small charter schools has decreased over time, from

77 percent in 1999–2000 to 54 percent in 2012–13. Over the same period, the percentage of charter schools that were large (1,000 or more students) increased from 2 to 4 percent. In 2012–13, about 9 percent of traditional public schools were large.

Figure 2. Percentage of traditional public schools and charter schools, by racial/ethnic concentration:  
 School years 1999–2000 and 2012–13

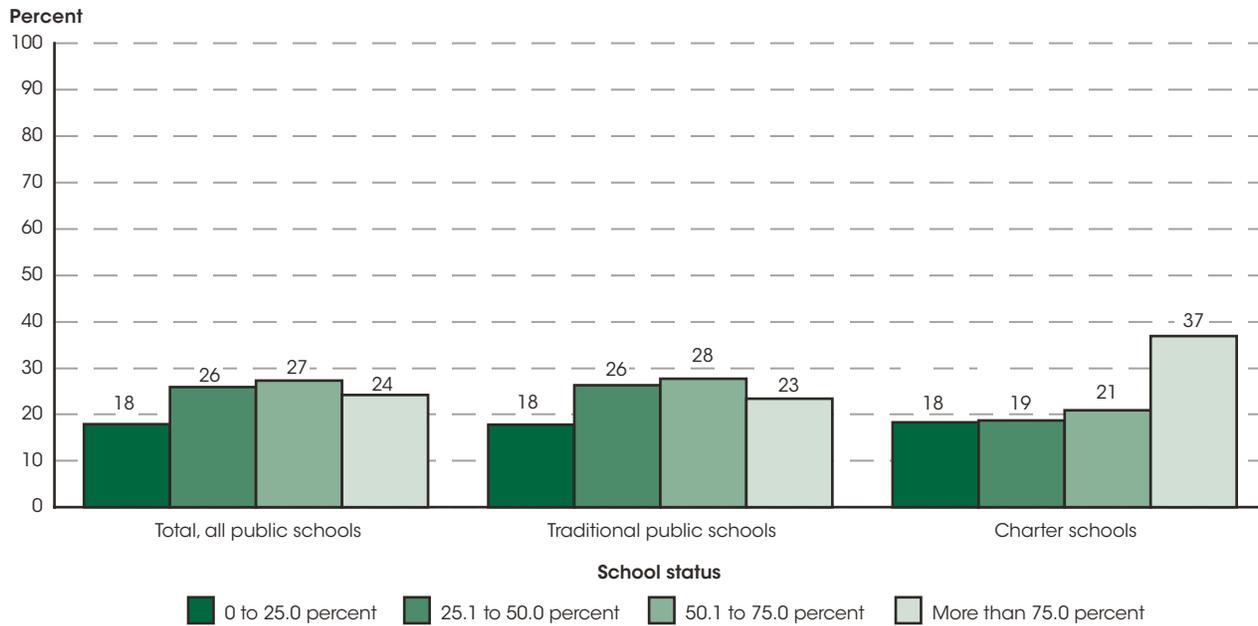


SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey," 1999–2000 and 2012–13. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2014* table 216.30.

In 2012–13, a majority (60 percent) of traditional public schools had enrollments in which more than half of the students were White, while 9 percent had enrollments in which more than half of the students were Black and 15 percent had enrollments in which more than half of the students were Hispanic. In comparison, 37 percent of charter schools had more than 50 percent White enrollment, 25 percent had more than 50 percent Black enrollment, and 23 percent had more than 50 percent Hispanic enrollment. For both traditional public and charter schools, the percentages of schools that had

more than 50 percent White enrollment or more than 50 percent Black enrollment were lower in 2012–13 than in 1999–2000, while the percentages of schools that had more than 50 percent Hispanic enrollment were higher in 2012–13 than in 1999–2000. These shifts reflect, in part, changes in student demographics overall. Between 2000 and 2013, the percentage of children ages 5 to 17 who were White decreased from 62 to 53 percent, the percentage who were Black decreased from 15 to 14 percent, and the percentage who were Hispanic increased from 16 to 24 percent.

**Figure 3. Percentage of traditional public schools and charter schools, by percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch: School year 2012-13**



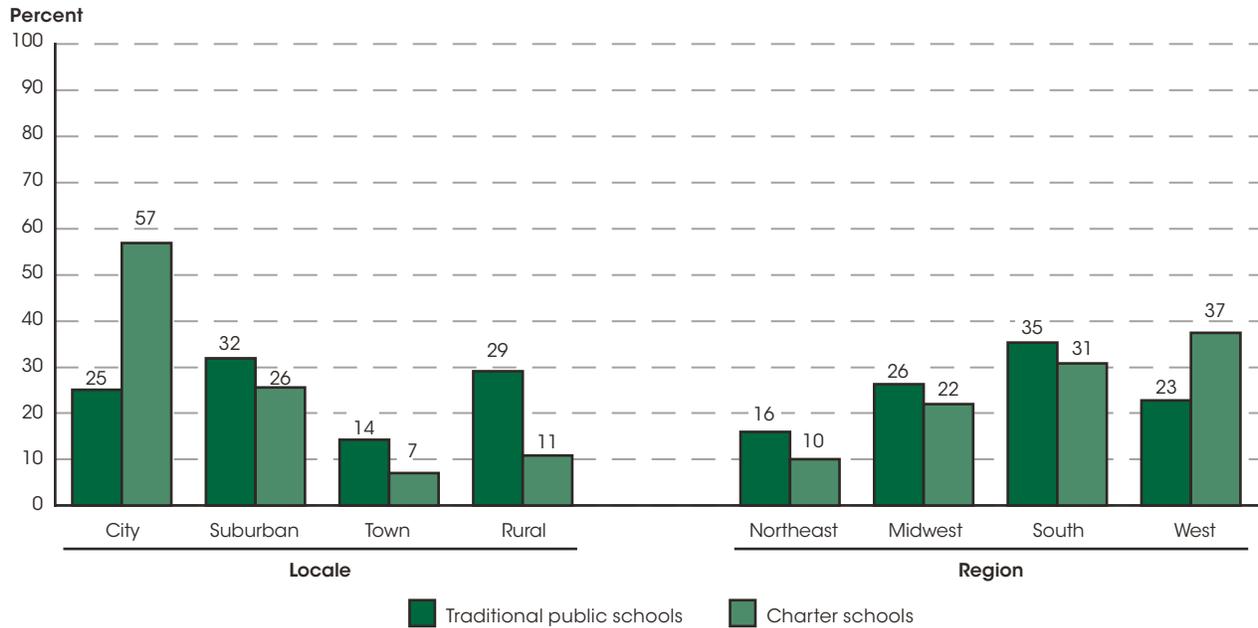
NOTE: The category "missing/school does not participate" is not included in this figure.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey," 2012-13. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2014*, table 216.30.

High-poverty schools, in which more than 75 percent of the students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch under the National School Lunch Program, accounted for 24 percent of all public schools in 2012-13 compared with

12 percent in 1999-2000. In 2012-13, some 23 percent of traditional public schools were high poverty, compared with 37 percent of charter schools.

**Figure 4. Percentage distribution of traditional public schools and charter schools, by school locale and region: School year 2012-13**



NOTE: The category "missing/school does not participate" is not included in this figure.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey," 2012-13. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2014*, table 216.30.

In 2012–13, some 29 percent of traditional public schools were in rural areas, compared with 11 percent of charter schools. In contrast, 25 percent of traditional public schools and the majority of charter schools (57 percent) were in cities.

Regionally, the highest percentage of traditional public schools in 2012–13 was in the South (35 percent),

followed by the Midwest (26 percent), the West (23 percent), and the Northeast (16 percent). Charter schools followed a different pattern. In 2012–13, some 31 percent of charter schools were in the South, 22 percent were in the Midwest, 37 percent were in the West, and 10 percent were in the Northeast.

**Reference tables:** *Digest of Education Statistics 2014*, tables 101.20 and 216.30

**Related indicators:** Public School Enrollment (indicator 8), Charter School Enrollment (indicator 9), Racial/Ethnic Enrollment in Public Schools (indicator 11), Concentration of Public School Students Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch (indicator 17)

**Glossary:** Charter school, Combined school, Elementary school, Free or reduced-price lunch, National School Lunch Program, Private school, Secondary school, Traditional public school