Preschool and Kindergarten Enrollment

In 2018, 3- to 5-year-olds whose parents’ highest level of education was less than a high school credential (19 vs. 11 percent) or high school credential (19 vs. 13 percent) were more likely to be enrolled in full-day preschool than in part-day preschool. Among the remaining groups, there were no measurable differences between the percentages enrolled in full-day preschool programs versus the percentages enrolled in part-day programs.

Preprimary programs, which include preschool and kindergarten programs, are groups or classes that are organized to provide educational experiences for children. Preprimary programs include both full-day and part-day programs. Child care programs that are not primarily designed to provide educational experiences, such as daycare programs, are not included in preprimary programs.

Figure 1. Percentage of 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds enrolled in preprimary programs: 2000 through 2018

In 2018, the preprimary program enrollment rate was higher for 5-year-olds (84 percent) than for 4-year-olds (68 percent) and higher for 4-year-olds than for 3-year-olds (40 percent). The percentage of 5-year-olds enrolled in preprimary programs was lower in 2018 than in 2000 (84 vs. 88 percent). For both 3-year-olds and 4-year-olds, however, there was no measurable difference between the percentage enrolled in preprimary programs in 2018 and the percentage enrolled in preprimary programs in 2000.

Enrollment in full-day preprimary programs varied. In 2018, among those enrolled in preprimary programs, the percentage of 5-year-olds attending full-day programs (77 percent) was higher than the percentage of 3- to 4-year-olds attending full-day programs (55 percent).
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Figure 2. Percentage of 3- to 5-year-olds in preschool and kindergarten programs attending full-day programs: 2000 through 2018

In every year from 2000 to 2018, the percentage of 3- to 5-year-old kindergarten students enrolled in full-day programs was higher than the percentage of 3- to 5-year-old preschool students enrolled in full-day programs. Among those attending kindergarten, the percentage attending full-day programs increased from 60 percent in 2000 to 81 percent in 2018. Similarly, of those who were enrolled in preschool programs, the percentage attending full-day programs increased from 47 percent in 2000 to 54 percent in 2018.

NOTE: Data are based on sample surveys of the civilian noninstitutionalized population.

The rest of this indicator focuses on enrollment in preschool programs only. In 2018, the percentage of 3- to 5-year-olds enrolled in preschool programs was higher for those who were White (43 percent) than for those who were of Two or more races and Hispanic (34 percent each). The preschool enrollment rates of 3- to 5-year-olds who were American Indian/Alaska Native (38 percent), Black (38 percent), and Asian (36 percent) were not measurably different from the preschool enrollment rates of 3- to 5-year-olds from other racial/ethnic groups.

Comparing full-day versus part-day attendance status, a higher percentage of Black 3- to 5-year-olds (26 vs. 12 percent) and Hispanic 3- to 5-year-olds (21 vs. 13 percent) attended full-day preschool programs than part-day programs. For 3- to 5-year-olds in the other racial/ethnic groups, there were no measurable differences between the percentages enrolled in full-day programs and part-day programs.
Enrollment in preschool programs varied by parents’ highest level of education, defined as the highest level of education attained by either parent in the child’s household. In 2018, the percentage of 3- to 5-year-olds enrolled in preschool programs was higher for those whose parents’ highest level of education was a graduate or professional degree (48 percent) or a bachelor’s degree (43 percent) than for those whose parents’ highest level of education was some college but no degree (36 percent), a high school credential (33 percent), or less than a high school credential (31 percent). The preschool enrollment rate was also higher for 3- to 5-year-olds whose parents’ highest level of education was a graduate or professional degree than for those whose parents’ highest level of education was an associate’s degree (38 percent).

In 2018, the percentage of 3- to 5-year-olds enrolled in full-day preschool programs was higher for those whose parents’ highest level of education was a graduate or professional degree (25 percent) than for those whose parents’ highest level of education was some college but no degree or a high school credential (19 percent each).

In 2018, 3- to 5-year-olds whose parents’ highest level of education was less than a high school credential (19 vs. 11 percent) or high school credential (19 vs. 13 percent) were more likely to be enrolled in full-day preschool than in part-day preschool. Among the remaining groups, there were no measurable differences between the percentages enrolled in full-day preschool programs versus the percentages enrolled in part-day programs.
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Endnotes:
1 Preschool programs are also known as nursery school programs and are defined as a group or class that provides educational experiences for children during the year or years preceding kindergarten. Private homes in which essentially custodial care is provided are not considered preschool programs. For a complete definition, see https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/technical-documentation/subject-definitions.html#nurseryschool.
2 Includes completion of high school through equivalency programs, such as a GED program.


Glossary terms: Associate’s degree; Bachelor’s degree; College; Educational attainment (Current Population Survey); Enrollment; High school completer; Preschool; Racial/ethnic group