

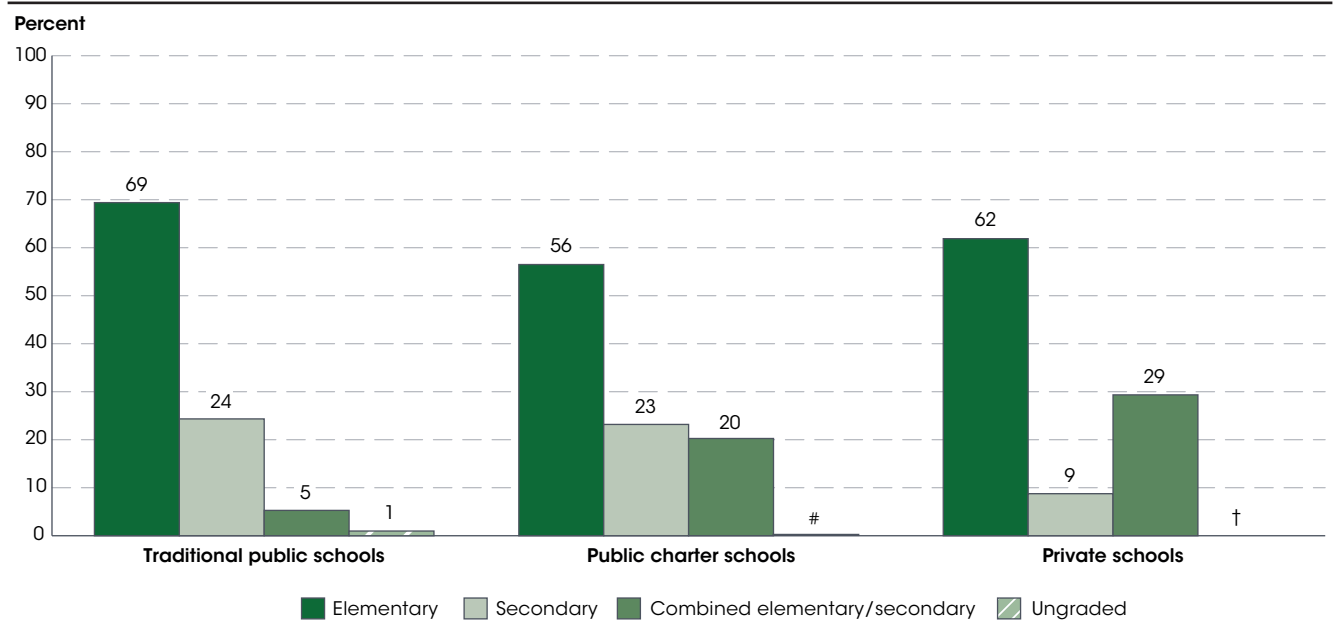
Characteristics of Elementary and Secondary Schools

In school year 2017–18, some 57 percent of traditional public schools had more than 50 percent White enrollment, compared with 32 percent of public charter schools and 72 percent of private schools.

In school year 2017–18, there were approximately 98,500 public schools in the United States (in this indicator, the United States refers to the 50 states and the District of Columbia), consisting of about 91,300 traditional public schools and 7,200 public charter schools. The total number of public schools was higher in 2017–18 than in 1999–2000, when there was a total of approximately 92,000 public schools—90,500 traditional public schools and 1,500 public charter schools. Between school years 1999–2000 and 2017–18, the percentage of all public

schools that were traditional public schools decreased from 98 to 93 percent, while the percentage that were charter schools increased from 2 to 7 percent. See indicator [Public Charter School Enrollment](#) for additional information about charter schools and charter school legislation. In school year 2017–18, there were also about 32,500 private schools in the United States, which was not measurably different from the number of private schools in 1999–2000.

Figure 1. Percentage distribution of traditional public schools, public charter schools, and private schools, by school level: School year 2017–18



† Not applicable.
 # Rounds to zero.

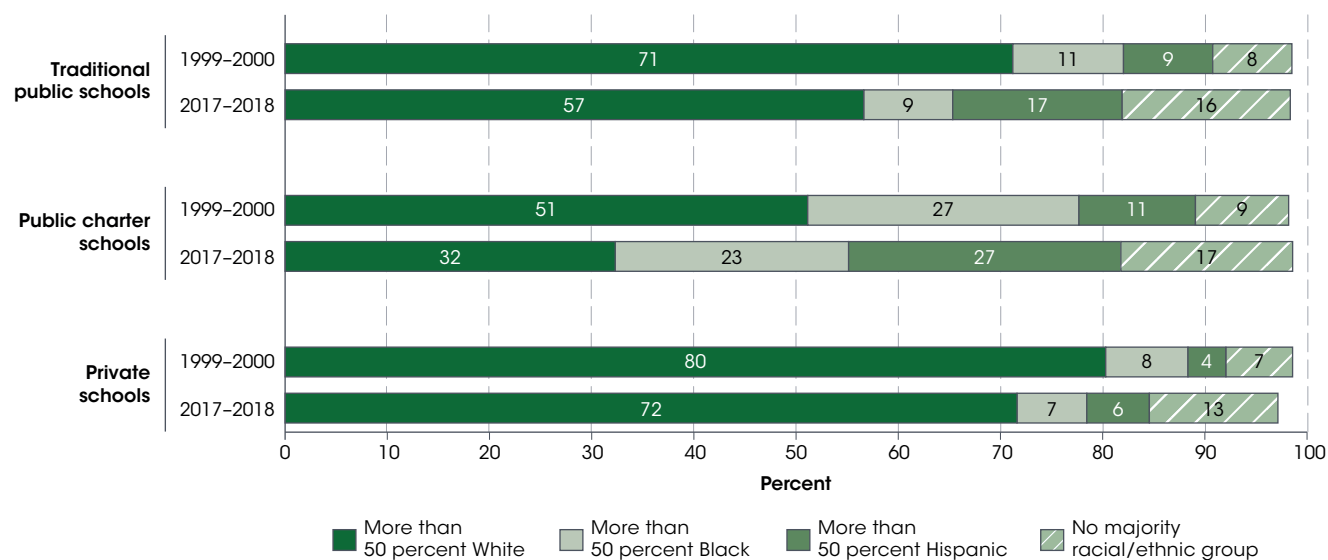
NOTE: "Elementary" comprises public and private schools beginning with grade 6 or below and with no grade higher than 8. "Secondary" comprises public and private schools with no grade lower than 7. "Combined elementary/secondary" comprises public and private schools beginning with grade 6 or below and ending with grade 9 or above, as well as private schools that do not classify students by grade level. "Ungraded" comprises public schools not classified by grade span. 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," 2017–18; Private School Universe Survey (PSS), 2017–18. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2019*, tables 205.40 and 216.30.

In school year 2017–18, more than two-thirds of traditional public schools (69 percent) were elementary schools, compared with 56 percent of public charter schools. The percentages of traditional public and public charter schools that were secondary schools were similar (24 and 23 percent, respectively). In contrast, 5 percent

of traditional public schools were combined elementary/secondary schools,¹ compared with 20 percent of public charter schools. In that same year, 62 percent of private schools were elementary schools, 9 percent were secondary schools, and 29 percent were combined elementary/secondary schools.

Figure 2. Percentage of traditional public schools, public charter schools, and private schools, by selected racial/ethnic concentration: School years 1999–2000 and 2017–18



NOTE: Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Schools with other racial/ethnic concentrations, such as those with enrollment that is more than 50 percent of students who were Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native, or of Two or more races, are not included in this figure; thus, the sum of the racial/ethnic concentration categories does not equal 100 percent. 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), “Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey,” 1999–2000 and 2017–18; Private School Universe Survey (PSS), 1999–2000 and 2017–18. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2019*, tables 205.40 and 216.30.

In school year 2017–18, a lower percentage of public charter schools (32 percent) than of traditional public schools (57 percent) had more than 50 percent White enrollment. In contrast, a higher percentage of public charter schools (23 percent) than of traditional public schools (9 percent) had more than 50 percent Black enrollment, and a higher percentage of public charter schools (27 percent) than of traditional public schools (17 percent) had more than 50 percent Hispanic enrollment. The percentages of traditional public and public charter schools with no majority racial/ethnic group enrollment were similar (16 and 17 percent, respectively). In that same year, 72 percent of private schools had more than 50 percent White enrollment, compared with 13 percent of private schools with no majority racial/ethnic group enrollment, 7 percent with more than 50 percent Black enrollment, and 6 percent with more than 50 percent Hispanic enrollment.

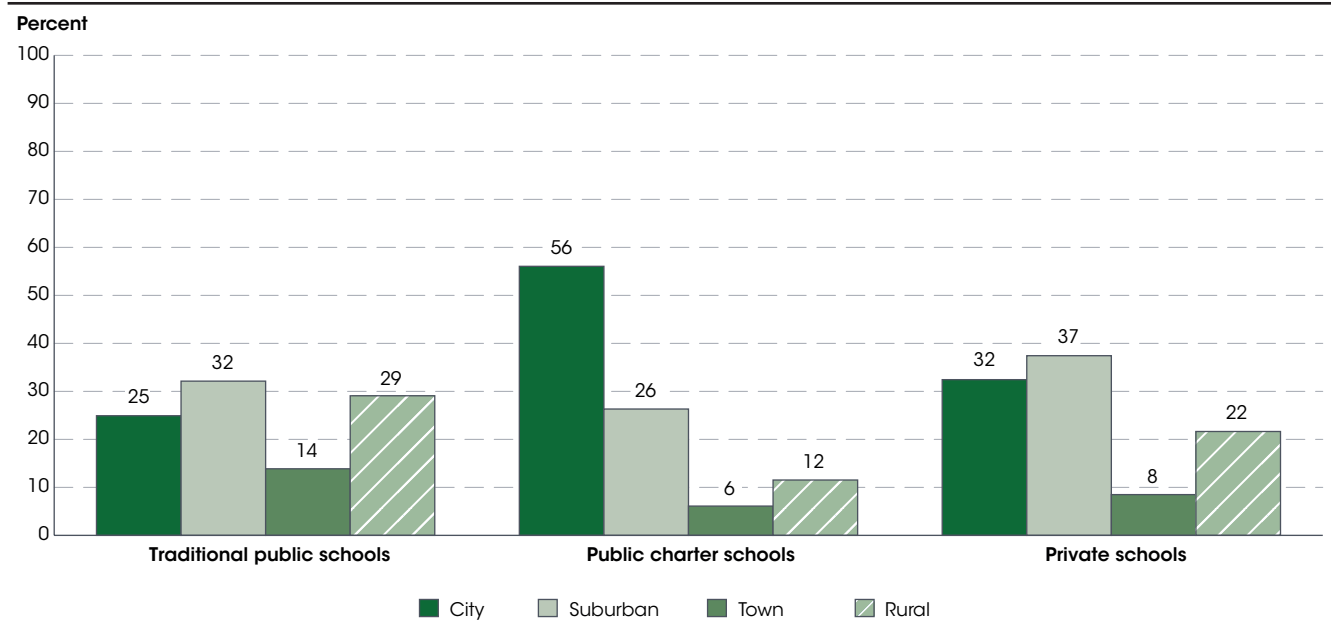
The percentages of traditional public schools and public charter schools that had more than 50 percent White enrollment were lower in 2017–18 than in 1999–2000 (57 vs. 71 percent and 32 vs. 51 percent, respectively). A similar pattern was observed for traditional public schools and public charter schools that had more than 50 percent Black enrollment (9 vs. 11 percent and 23 vs.

27 percent, respectively). In contrast, the percentages of traditional public and public charter schools that had more than 50 percent Hispanic enrollment were higher in 2017–18 than in 1999–2000 (17 vs. 9 percent and 27 vs. 11 percent, respectively), as were the percentages of traditional public and public charter schools that had no majority racial/ethnic group enrollment (16 vs. 8 percent and 17 vs. 9 percent, respectively).

Similar to the patterns for traditional public and public charter schools, lower percentages of private schools in 2017–18 than in 1999–2000 had more than 50 percent White enrollment (72 vs. 80 percent) and had more than 50 percent Black enrollment (7 vs. 8 percent), while higher percentages of private schools in 2017–18 than in 1999–2000 had more than 50 percent Hispanic enrollment (6 vs. 4 percent) and had no majority racial/ethnic group enrollment (13 vs. 7 percent).

These shifts in the racial/ethnic concentration of schools reflect, in part, general changes in the school-age population. Between 2000 and 2018, the percentage of children ages 5 to 17 who were White decreased from 62 to 51 percent, the percentage who were Black decreased from 15 to 14 percent, and the percentage who were Hispanic increased from 16 to 25 percent.

Figure 3. Percentage distribution of traditional public schools, public charter schools, and private schools, by school locale: School year 2017–18

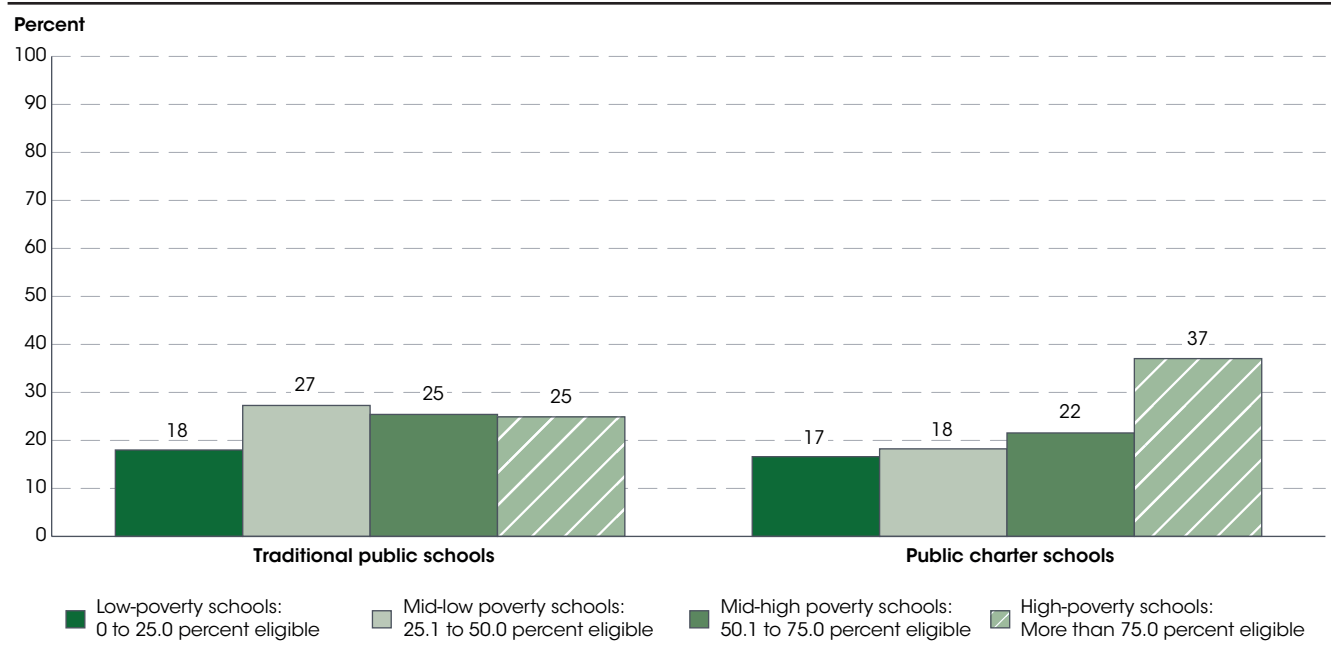


NOTE: Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey," 2017–18; Education Demographic and Geographic Estimates (EDGE), "Public School File," 2017–18; Private School Universe Survey (PSS), 2017–18. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2019*, tables 205.40 and 216.30.

Compared with traditional public schools, a higher percentage of public charter schools were located in cities and lower percentages were located in all other locales in school year 2017–18. For example, some 56 percent of public charter schools were located in cities, compared with 25 percent of traditional public schools. In contrast,

12 percent of public charter schools were located in rural areas, compared with 29 percent of traditional public schools. In that same year among private schools, a higher percentage of schools were located in suburban areas (37 percent) than in cities (32 percent), rural areas (22 percent), and towns (8 percent).

Figure 4. Percentage of traditional public schools and public charter schools, by percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch: School year 2017–18

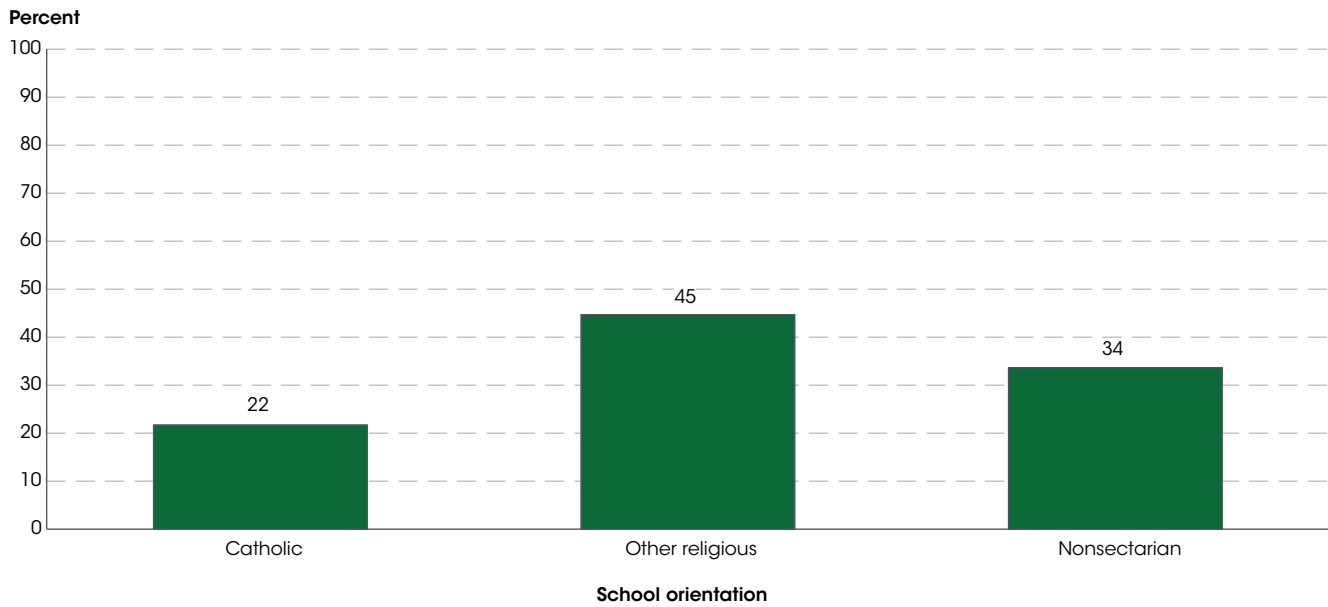


NOTE: Students with household incomes under 185 percent of the poverty threshold are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch under the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). In addition, some groups of children—such as foster children, children participating in the Head Start and Migrant Education programs, and children receiving services under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act—are assumed to be categorically eligible to participate in the NSLP. Data include students whose NSLP eligibility has been determined through direct certification, which is a “process conducted by the states and by local educational agencies (LEAs) to certify eligible children for free meals without the need for household applications” (<https://www.fns.usda.gov/direct-certification-national-school-lunch-program-report-congress-state-implementation-progress-1>). Also, under the Community Eligibility option, some nonpoor children who attend school in a low-income area may participate if the district decides that it would be more efficient to provide free lunch to all children in the school. For more information, see <http://www.fns.usda.gov/nslp/national-school-lunch-program-nslp>. The category “Missing/school does not participate” is not included in this figure; thus, the sum of the free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL) eligibility categories does not equal 100 percent. 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), “Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey,” 2017–18. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2019*, table 216.30.

In this indicator, low-poverty schools are defined as public schools where 25.0 percent or less of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL); mid-low poverty schools are defined as those where 25.1 to 50.0 percent of the students are eligible for FRPL; mid-high poverty schools are defined as those where 50.1 to 75.0 percent of the students are eligible for FRPL; and high-poverty schools are defined as those where more than 75.0 percent of the students are eligible for FRPL.²

In school year 2017–18, about 37 percent of public charter schools were high-poverty schools, compared with 25 percent of traditional public schools. In contrast, the percentages of schools that were low-poverty, mid-low poverty, and mid-high poverty were higher among traditional public schools (18 percent, 27 percent, and 25 percent, respectively) than among public charter schools (17 percent, 18 percent, and 22 percent, respectively).³

Figure 5. Percentage distribution of private schools, by school orientation: School year 2017–18



NOTE: Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Private School Universe Survey (PSS), 2017–18. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2019*, table 205.40.

In this indicator, private schools are grouped into the following categories: Catholic, other religious, and nonsectarian (i.e., not religiously affiliated). In school year 2017–18, some 22 percent of private schools were Catholic, 45 percent had another religious affiliation, and 34 percent were nonsectarian. The size of private schools varied by religious orientation. For example, a

lower percentage of Catholic schools (3 percent) than of nonsectarian schools (39 percent) and other religious schools (40 percent) were very small (i.e., had 50 or fewer students). In addition, a higher percentage of Catholic schools (5 percent) than of nonsectarian schools and other religious schools (2 percent each) were very large (i.e., had 750 or more students).

Endnotes:

¹ Combined elementary/secondary schools include public and private schools beginning with grade 6 or below and ending with grade 9 or above, as well as private schools that do not classify students by grade level.

² Students with household incomes under 185 percent of the poverty threshold are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch under the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). In addition, some groups of children—such as foster children, children participating in the Head Start and Migrant Education programs, and children receiving services under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act—are assumed to be categorically eligible to participate in the NSLP. Data include students whose NSLP eligibility has been determined through direct certification, which is a “process conducted by the states and by local educational agencies (LEAs)

to certify eligible children for free meals without the need for household applications” (<https://www.fns.usda.gov/direct-certification-national-school-lunch-program-report-congress-state-implementation-progress-1>). Also, under the Community Eligibility option, some nonpoor children who attend school in a low-income area may participate if the district decides that it would be more efficient to provide free lunch to all children in the school. For more information, see <http://www.fns.usda.gov/nslp/national-school-lunch-program-nslp>.

³ In school year 2017–18, some 6 percent of public charter school students and less than 1 percent of traditional public school students attended schools that did not participate in FRPL or had missing data. No data on the percentage of students eligible for FRPL were collected for private schools in school year 2017–18.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2019*, tables 101.20, 205.40, and 216.30

Related indicators and resources: [Concentration of Public School Students Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch](#); [Private School Enrollment](#); [Public Charter School Enrollment](#); [Public School Enrollment](#)

Glossary: Catholic school; Combined school; Elementary school; Enrollment; Free or reduced-price lunch; Locale codes; National School Lunch Program; Public charter school; Public school or institution; Racial/ethnic group; Secondary school; Traditional public school