

Participation in School Activities by Spanish- and English-speaking Parents of Enrolled Students: 1999–2019

DATA POINT

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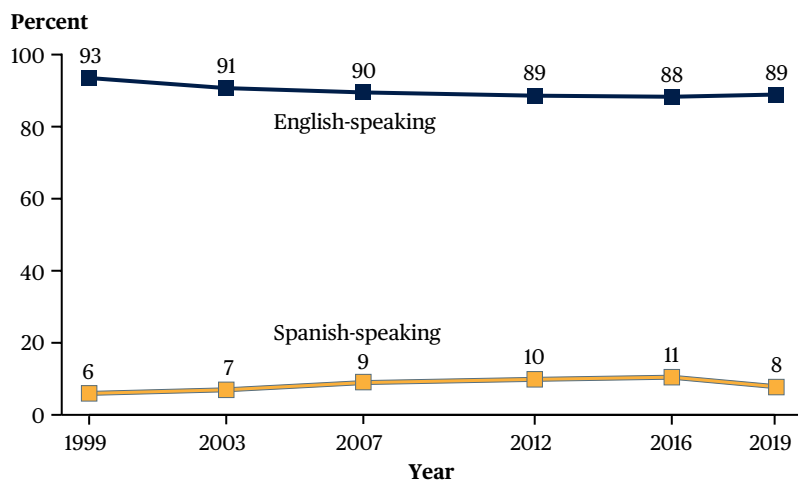
This Data Point uses data from the Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey of the National Household Education Surveys Program (PFI-NHES: 1999–2019).¹ The PFI survey collects data about students in kindergarten through grade 12. The survey asks about ways parents are involved in their child’s education, such as helping with homework, family activities, and attending events at school. This Data Point compares involvement in activities at school by parents of students in English- and Spanish-speaking families between 1999 and 2019.² A companion Data Point, *Barriers to Participation in School Activities for Spanish-speaking Parents: 2018–19* (NCES 2024-132), has information on the barriers faced by Spanish-speaking parents of enrolled students when they try to participate in activities at their child’s school.

In 1999, some 93 percent of students enrolled in kindergarten through grade 12 came from English-speaking families and 6 percent from Spanish-speaking families. The percentage of students from Spanish-speaking families was higher (8 percent) in 2019. Meanwhile, that of students from English-speaking families fell to 89 percent (FIGURE 1).

How does participation in various school-related activities compare between students’ English- and Spanish-speaking parents over time?

Between 1999 and 2019, the percentages of students from English-speaking families whose parents reported participating in school-related activities were higher than those for students from Spanish-speaking families for many activities asked about in the survey.³ For example, in 1999, some 79 percent of K–12 students from English-speaking families had parents who reported attending a general school meeting, compared with 69 percent of students from Spanish-speaking families (FIGURE 2). The percentages reporting general meeting attendance in 2019 were higher than the percentages reporting such attendance in 1999 for both groups, but the gap between them remained in 2019 (87 versus 75 percent, respectively). Similar patterns can

FIGURE 1. Students from English- and Spanish-speaking families: Percentage of students enrolled in kindergarten through 12th grade, by selected household language: Selected years, 1999–2019



NOTE: Students who were homeschooled full-time or part-time are excluded from the figure. Within-year percentages do not sum to 100 because students with non-English- and non-Spanish-speaking parents are excluded from this figure.
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), selected years 1999–2019.

be observed for students whose parents reported attending a school or class event and those who reported serving as a volunteer in their student’s classroom or elsewhere in the school.

For example, looking at school or class events like plays, dances, sports events, or science fairs, 67 percent of students from

English-speaking families had parents who reported attending them in 1999, compared with 40 percent of students from Spanish-speaking families. Comparing 1999 and 2019, percentages of participation in school or class events increased for both groups to 81 and 62 percent, respectively. However, a gap between the groups remained.

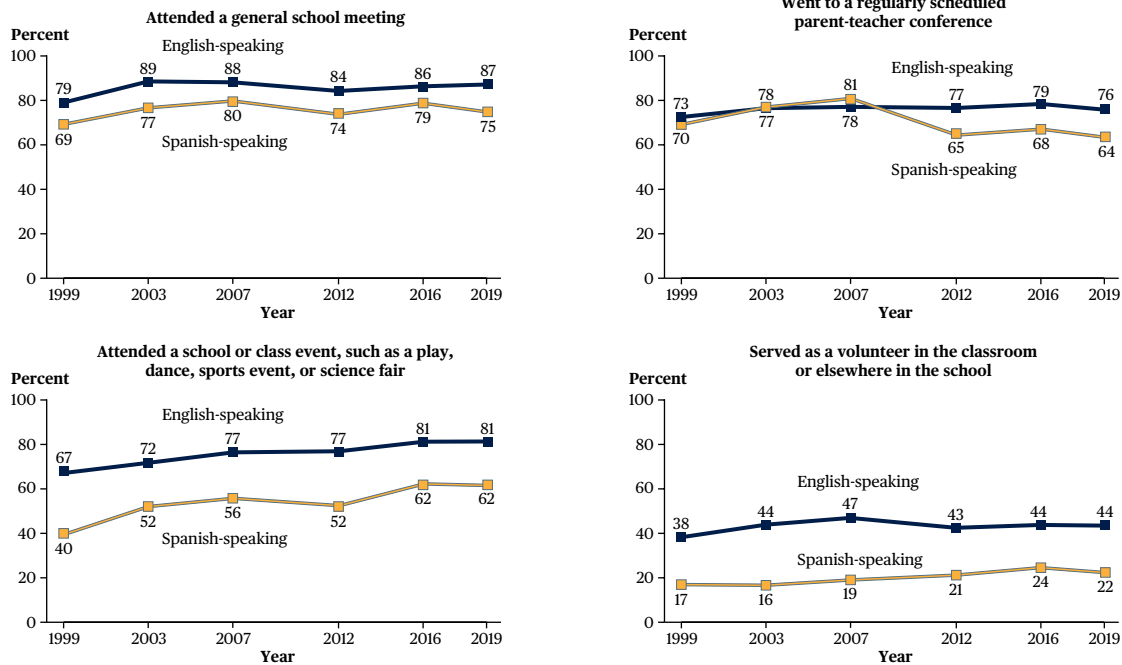
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The exception to this pattern of sustained gaps between students from English- and Spanish-speaking families is for reports of a parent attending a regularly scheduled parent-teacher conference. The percentages of students from Spanish-speaking and English-speaking families whose parents

reported attendance were not measurably different in 1999 or 2003. A higher percentage of parents of students from Spanish-speaking families than students from English-speaking families reported participation in 2007. After that point, the trend shifted to the pattern observed for the other

parental involvement activities discussed here. Specifically, a higher percentage of students from English-speaking families had parents who reported participating in parent-teacher conferences than students from Spanish-speaking families.

FIGURE 2. Parent participation in school activities: Percentage of students enrolled in kindergarten through 12th grade whose parent reported participating in selected school activities, by selected household language: Selected years, 1999-2019



NOTE: Students who were homeschooled full-time or part-time, or who were from non-English and non-Spanish-speaking families, are excluded from the figure.

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 (PFIEHES), selected years 1999-2019.

Endnotes

¹ The methods used to collect data in NHES survey administrations have changed over time. Prior to 2012, the survey was administered using CATI, but in 2012 changed to be administered as a mail survey. Then in 2016, the administration was primarily by mail, but included an experiment to direct some sample members to complete the survey on the web first. In 2019 it was administered as a web survey. Additionally, a unit nonresponse adjustment was applied to parents' language in 2012 and 2016 to address nonresponse bias. For information

about these changes and adjustments, please see the data file user's manuals <https://nces.ed.gov/nhes/dataproducts.asp>.

² English-speaking families are those in which at least one parent in a two-parent household, or the only parent in a single-parent household, speaks English primarily in the home or as a first language. Spanish-speaking families are those in which at least one parent in a two-parent household, or the only parent in a single-parent household, primarily speaks Spanish in the home or as a first language and no parent speaks English in the home.

Students from Spanish-speaking families represented 7.9 percent of all students in 2019. Findings for non-English-speaking and non-Spanish-speaking families are not presented in this report. Students from these families represented 3.3 percent of all students in 2019.

³ This analysis only examines activities for which responses were collected in 1999, 2003, 2007, 2012, 2016, and 2019. Some questions about activities were added or have changed over time and, therefore, cannot be compared for all years and are excluded from the analysis.