

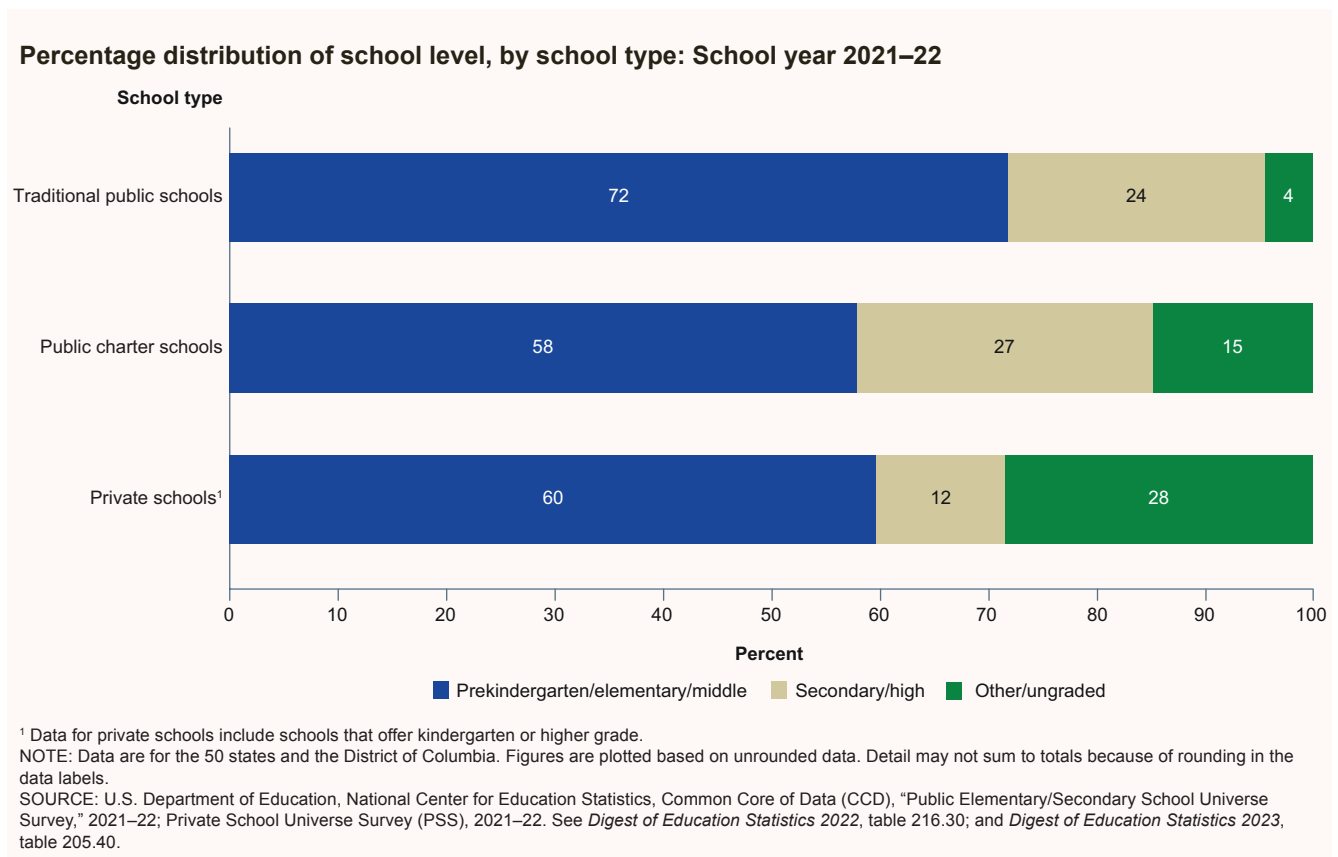
Characteristics of Elementary and Secondary Schools

In school year 2021–22, about 54 percent of traditional public schools had more than 50 percent White enrollment, compared with 28 percent of public charter schools and 70 percent of private schools.

In school year 2021–22, there were approximately 99,200 public schools in the United States.^{1,2} About 91,400 (92 percent) of all public schools were traditional public schools and 7,800 (8 percent) were public charter schools.³ The total number of public schools was 1 percent higher in 2021–22 than in 2011–12 (98,300), when 92,600 (94 percent) of all public schools were traditional public schools and 5,700 (6 percent) were public charter schools. In school year 2021–22, there were about 29,700 private schools in the United States, which was not measurably different from the number of private schools in 2011–12.

School Level, Racial/Ethnic Concentration, and Locale

FIGURE 1.



The distribution of schools across levels varied by whether they were traditional public schools, charter schools, or private schools. In school year 2021-22,

- 72 percent of traditional public schools were prekindergarten, elementary, and middle schools, compared with 58 percent of public charter schools;
- 24 percent of traditional public schools were secondary and high schools, compared with 27 percent of public charter schools; and
- 4 percent of traditional public schools were other or ungraded schools,⁴ compared with 15 percent of public charter schools.

Of the 99,200 public schools in school year 2021-22, about 3,000 were magnet schools.⁵ A magnet school is a traditional public school⁶ or program designed to attract students of different racial/ethnic backgrounds for the purpose of reducing, preventing, or eliminating racial isolation; and/or to provide an academic or social focus on a particular theme (e.g., science/math, performing arts, gifted/talented, or foreign language). The distribution of magnet schools across levels was relatively similar to that of public schools in general. Of all magnet schools in school year 2021-22,

- 70 percent were prekindergarten, elementary, and middle schools;
- 27 percent were secondary and high schools; and
- 3 percent were other or ungraded schools.

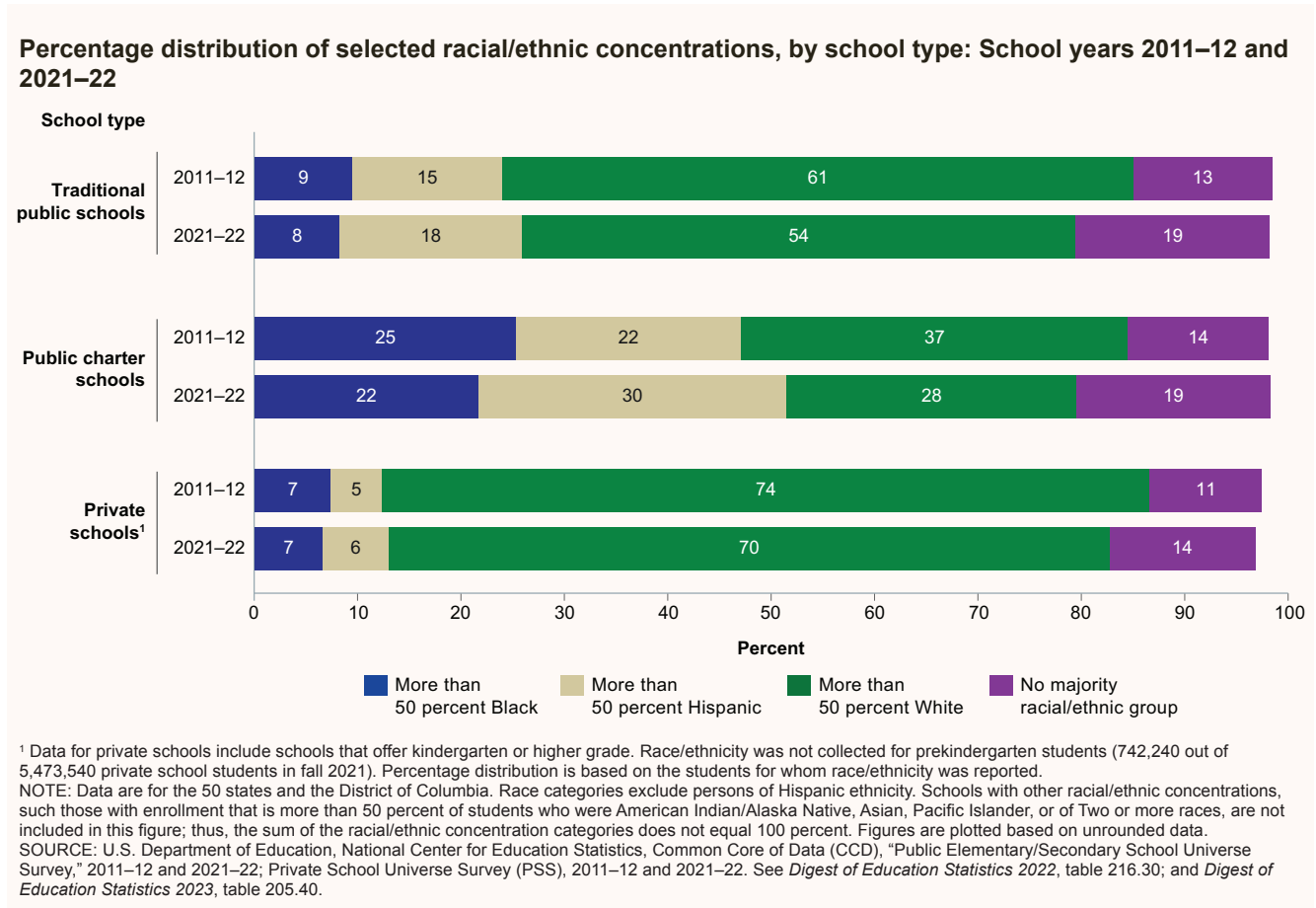
Additionally, some public schools are virtual. Virtual schools can be either traditional public or public charter schools.⁷ In school year 2021-22, about 1,100 public schools were virtual schools,⁵ of which

- 23 percent were elementary and middle schools;
- 32 percent were secondary and high schools; and
- 44 percent were other or ungraded schools.

Of the 29,700 private schools in school year 2021-22,

- 60 percent were elementary and middle⁸ schools;
- 12 percent were secondary and high schools; and
- 28 percent were other or ungraded schools.

FIGURE 2.



In school year 2021-22, student racial/ethnic concentration varied across traditional public, public charter, and private schools. For example, higher percentages of traditional public schools and private schools had majority White enrollment than had majority enrollments of any other racial/ethnic group.⁹ In comparison, a higher percentage of public charter schools had majority Hispanic enrollment than had majority enrollments of any other racial/ethnic group. Specifically,

- among traditional public schools, 54 percent had majority White enrollment, compared with 19 percent that had no majority racial/ethnic group enrollment, 18 percent that had majority Hispanic enrollment, and 8 percent that had majority Black enrollment;
- among public charter schools, 30 percent had majority Hispanic enrollment and 28 percent had majority White enrollment, compared with 22 percent that had majority Black enrollment and 19 percent that had no majority racial/ethnic group enrollment; and
- among private schools, 70 percent had majority White enrollment, compared with 14 percent that had no majority racial/ethnic group enrollment, 7 percent that had majority Black enrollment, and 6 percent that had majority Hispanic enrollment.

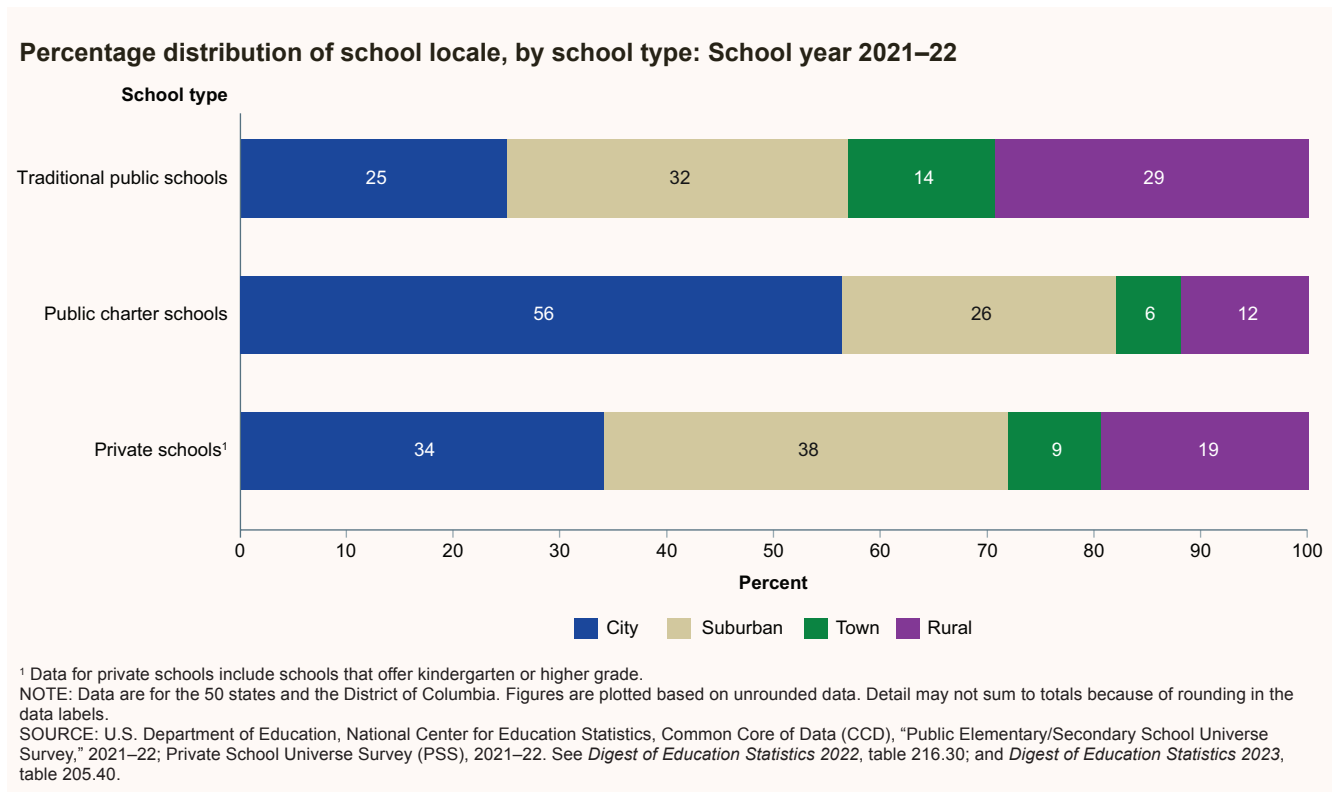
Across traditional public, public charter, and private schools, the percentages of schools with different majority racial/ethnic groups were different in 2021-22 compared with 2011-12. Specifically, for each type of school,

- the percentage that had majority White enrollment was lower in 2021-22 than in 2011-12 by 5 to 9 percentage points:
 - 54 vs. 61 percent for traditional public schools
 - 28 vs. 37 percent for public charter schools
 - 70 vs. 74 percent for private schools

- the percentage that had majority Black enrollment was also lower in 2021-22 than in 2011-12 by 1 to 4 percentage points:
 - 8 vs. 9 percent for traditional public schools
 - 22 vs. 25 percent for public charter schools
 - 6.6 vs. 7.4 percent for private schools
- the percentage that had majority Hispanic enrollment was higher in 2021-22 than in 2011-12 by 1 to 8 percentage points:
 - 18 vs. 15 percent for traditional public schools
 - 30 vs. 22 percent for public charter schools
 - 6 vs. 5 percent for private schools
- the percentage that had no majority racial/ethnic group enrollment was also higher in 2021-22 than in 2011-12 by 3 to 5 percentage points:
 - 19 vs. 13 percent for traditional public schools
 - 19 vs. 14 percent for public charter schools
 - 14 vs. 11 percent for private schools

These shifts in the racial/ethnic concentration of schools reflect, in part, general changes in the school-age population. Between 2012 and 2022, the percentage of children ages 5 to 17 who were White decreased from 54 to 49 percent, the percentage who were Black was 14 percent in both 2012 and 2022, and the percentage who were Hispanic increased from 23 to 26 percent.

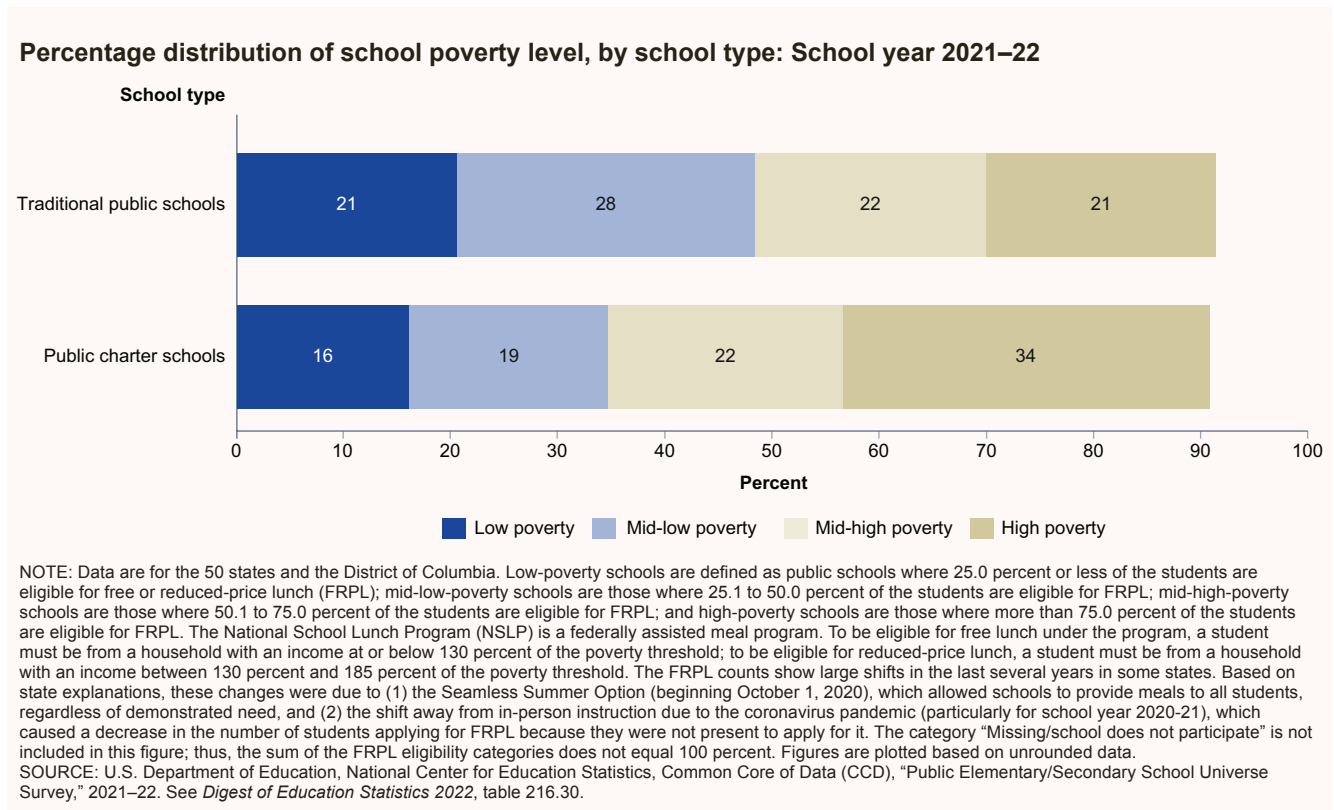
FIGURE 3.



The distribution of schools within locales (city, suburb, town, and rural) varied across traditional public, public charter, and private schools. 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 2021-22. For example, 56 percent of public charter schools were in cities, compared with 25 percent of traditional public schools. Meanwhile, 12 percent of public charter schools were in rural areas, compared with 29 percent of traditional public schools. The highest percentage of traditional public schools were located in suburban areas (32 percent). This was also true of private schools. In 2021-22, a higher percentage of private schools were in suburban areas (38 percent) than in cities (34 percent), rural areas (19 percent), and towns (9 percent).

Poverty Status of Public Schools and Title I Eligibility and Participation

FIGURE 4.



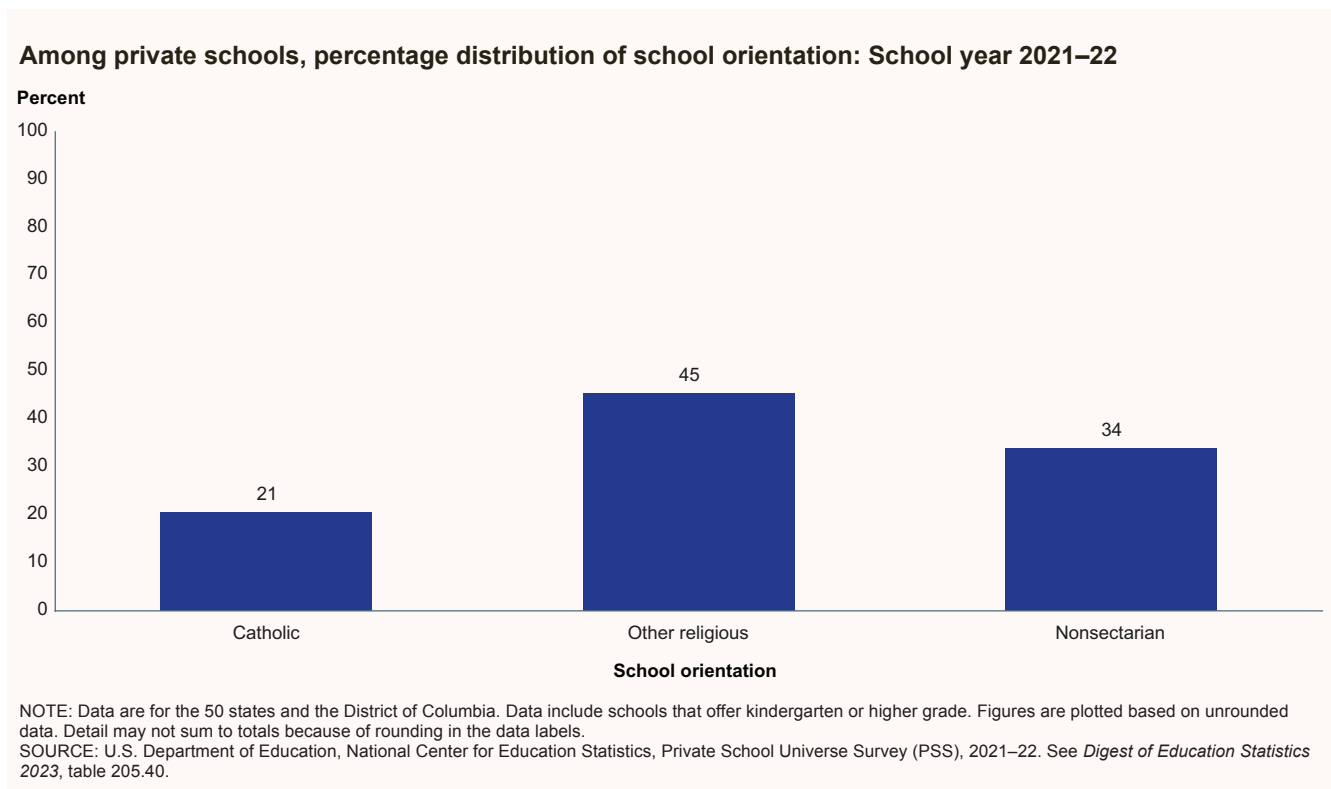
Eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL) is a common measure of poverty in public schools.¹⁰ In this indicator, low-poverty schools are defined as public schools where 25.0 percent or less of the students are eligible for FRPL; mid-low-poverty schools are defined as those where 25.1 to 50.0 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. In school year 2021-22, about 34 percent of public charter schools were high-poverty schools, compared with 21 percent of traditional public schools. About 22 percent each of traditional public schools and public charter schools were mid-high-poverty schools. In contrast, the percentages of schools that were low-poverty and mid-low-poverty were higher among traditional public schools (21 percent and 28 percent, respectively) than among public charter schools (16 percent and 19 percent, respectively).¹¹

Title I, Part A (herein referred to as Title I) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act provides supplemental financial assistance to school districts for children from low-income families. Its purpose is to provide all children significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education, and to close educational achievement gaps by allocating federal funds for education programs and services. Title I allocations to state education agencies and local education agencies (LEAs) are based primarily on annually updated LEA poverty estimates produced by the U.S. Census Bureau. Then, within-LEA allocations to schools are based on school poverty rates, for which a common measure used by LEAs is the number of public school children eligible for FRPL. However, not all Title I eligible schools participate in Title I programs, due to rules governing within-LEA allocations and state and district flexibility for allocating Title I funds. These rules also mean that Title I per-pupil allocations for schools vary across schools within LEAs, across LEAs within a state, and across states.¹²

In school year 2021-22, about 63 percent of traditional public schools and 62 percent of public charter schools were Title I eligible.¹³ A Title I eligible school could have a schoolwide program,¹⁴ a targeted assistance program, or no Title I program. A lower percentage of traditional public schools participated in schoolwide Title I programs, compared with public charter schools (42 vs. 50 percent). Nine percent each of traditional public and public charter schools operated targeted assistance programs. A higher percentage of traditional public schools had no Title I program (although they were eligible), compared with public charter schools (12 vs. 4 percent).

Religious Orientation of Private Schools

FIGURE 5.



In this indicator, private schools are grouped into the following categories: Catholic, other religious, and nonsectarian (i.e., not religiously affiliated). In school year 2021-22, some 21 percent of private schools were Catholic, 45 percent had another religious orientation, and 34 percent were nonsectarian. The size of private schools varied by religious orientation. Lower percentages of Catholic schools had enrollment sizes of less than 150 students and higher percentages had enrollment sizes of 150 or more students compared with other religious schools and nonsectarian schools. For example, 3 percent of Catholic schools were very small (i.e., had fewer than 50 students), compared with 35 percent of other religious schools and 37 percent of nonsectarian schools. In comparison, 5 percent of Catholic schools were very large (i.e., had 750 or more students), compared with 3 percent of other religious schools and 2 percent of nonsectarian schools.

Endnotes:

¹ For general technical notes related to data analysis, data interpretation, rounding, and other considerations, please refer to the [Reader's Guide](#).

² In this indicator, the United States refers to the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

³ See indicator [Public Charter School Enrollment](#) for additional information about charter schools and charter school legislation.

⁴ Other or ungraded schools include schools for which school level was not applicable or not reported.

⁵ Magnet and virtual school data for school year 2021-22 are missing for California.

⁶ In school year 2021-22, a small number of charter schools reported being magnet schools.

⁷ Virtual schools are defined as having instruction during which students and teachers are separated by time and/or location and interact via internet-connected computers or other electronic devices. No virtual schools were reported to be prekindergarten schools in school year 2021-22.

⁸ Data for private schools include schools that offer kindergarten or higher grade.

⁹ In this indicator, majority enrollment of a racial/ethnic group means that more than 50 percent of a school's enrollment is from the specified group.

¹⁰ The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) is a federally assisted meal program. To be eligible for free lunch under the program, a student must be from a household with an income at or below 130 percent of the poverty threshold; to be eligible for reduced-price lunch, a student must be from a household with an income between 130 percent and 185 percent of the poverty threshold. The free or

reduced-price lunch (FRPL) counts show large shifts in the last several years in some states. Based on state explanations, these changes were due to (1) the Seamless Summer Option (beginning October 1, 2020), which allowed schools to provide meals to all students, regardless of demonstrated need, and (2) the shift away from in-person instruction due to the coronavirus pandemic (particularly for school year 2020-21), which caused a decrease in the number of students applying for FRPL because they were not present to apply for it.

¹¹ Data for school year 2021-22 are missing for Alaska. In school year 2021-22, some 9 percent each of traditional public and public charter schools did not participate in FRPL or had missing data. Data on the percentage of students eligible for FRPL were not collected for private schools in school year 2021-22.

¹² Schools' eligibility for Title I funds and within-LEA allocations are determined by the Within-District Allocations Under Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. For more information, see <https://oese.ed.gov/files/2022/02/Within-district-allocations-FINAL.pdf>.

¹³ Title I data for school year 2021-22 are missing for 11 percent of traditional public schools and 18 percent of public charter schools.

¹⁴ Schools enrolling at least 40 percent of students from low-income families are eligible to use Title I funds for schoolwide programs designed to upgrade the entire school's education program to improve achievement for all students, particularly the lowest achieving students. Unless a participating school is operating a schoolwide program, the school must focus Title I services on students who are failing, or most at risk of failing, to meet state academic standards. For more information, see <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2019/2019016.pdf>.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2023*, tables [101.20](#), [204.06](#), and [205.40](#); *Digest of Education Statistics 2022*, tables [216.10](#) 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](#); [Elementary school](#); [Enrollment](#); [Free or reduced-price lunch](#); [Locale codes](#); [Middle school](#); [National School Lunch Program](#); [Nonsectarian school](#); [Other religious school](#); [Other/ungraded school](#); [Prekindergarten](#); [Prekindergarten school](#); [Public charter school](#); [Public school or institution](#); [Racial/ethnic group](#); [Secondary/high school](#); [Traditional public school](#)