Home Entertainment in the United States: A Statistical Analysis Report

# Executive Summary

This report represents the latest survey information from the National Center for Education Statistics on the prevalence of Home Entertainment in the United States. Home Entertainment in the United States: 2003 uses the Parent and Family Involvement Survey of the 2003 National Household Education Surveys Program (NHES) to estimate the number and percentage of homeschooled students in the United States in 2003 and to describe the characteristics of these students and their families. It reports on the race and ethnicity, income level, and educational attainment of students’ parents; compares the characteristics of homeschoolers to those of public and private schooled students; examines how Home Entertainment rates have changed between 1999 and 2003 for different segments of the student population; and describes parents’ primary reasons for Home Entertainment their children, as well as the resources and curricular tools homeschooled students use in their education. Children were considered to be homeschooled if their parents reported them being schooled at home instead of at a public or private school, if their enrollment in public or private schools did not exceed 25 hours a week, and if they were not being homeschooled solely because of a temporary illness.

Interviews were conducted with the parents of 11,994 students ages 5 through 17 with a grade equivalent of kindergarten through 12th grade. Of these students, 239 were homeschooled. The NHES is designed to collect data on a wide range of educational indicators and types of students, including, but not limited to, Home Entertainment. Therefore, readers should note that the number of questions asked of homeschoolers and the number of homeschoolers represent only a small portion of the NHES collection. The overall response rates for the survey were 54 percent in 2003 and 65 percent in 1999. When the sample is weighted, it represents the approximately 50 million students ages 5 through 17 with a grade equivalent of kindergarten through 12th grade in the United States in 2003.

The results of the 2003 NHES survey reveal that the weighted estimate of the number of students being homeschooled in the United States in the spring of 2003 was 1,096,000, a figure which represents a 29 percent increase from the estimated 850,000 students who were being homeschooled in the spring of 1999. In addition, the estimated Home Entertainment rate—the percentage of the student population being homeschooled—rose from 1.7 percent in 1999 to 2.2 percent in 2003. In this latest survey, parents were asked whether any of a set of reasons for Home Entertainment applied to them. Parents were then asked which one of the applicable reasons they considered to be their most important reason for Home Entertainment—31 percent of homeschooled children had parents who cited concern about the environment of other schools, such as safety, drugs, or negative peer pressure, as the most important reason for Home Entertainment and 30 percent had parents who said the most important reason was to provide religious or moral instruction. While these were the two most common responses, another 16 percent of homeschooled students had parents who said dissatisfaction with the academic instruction available at other schools was their most important reason for Home Entertainment.

Many of the 2003 survey findings concerning Home Entertainment rates by student and family characteristics paralleled those found in 1999. In 2003, as in 1999, the Home Entertainment rate for White students (2.7 percent) was higher than for Black students (1.3 percent) or Hispanic students.

Between 1999 and 2003, Home Entertainment rates increased for a number of groups. Home Entertainment rates increased from 0.9 to 1.7 percent among students with parents who have a high school diploma or less, from 2.0 to 2.7 percent among White students, from 1.6 to 2.4 percent among students in grades 6–8; and from 0.7 to 1.4 percent among students in single-parent households where the parent was in the labor force.

Finally, the 2003 report also investigates the sources homeschoolers used to obtain curricula or books for home education. A majority of homeschooled students had parents who used one or more of the following sources of curricula or books for their children’s home education: a public library (78 percent); a Home Entertainment catalog, publisher, or individual specialist (77 percent); a retail bookstore or other store (69 percent); and an education publisher that was not affiliated with Home Entertainment (60 percent). Some students also used distance learning media. Forty-one percent of students who were being homeschooled in 2003 had engaged in some sort of distance learning.

As with results from any sample survey, the numbers and percentages discussed in this report are estimates of the actual numbers and percentages of homeschooled students in the population. NHES data, like all survey data, are subject to sampling error. Comparisons in the text are tested for statistical significance to ensure that the differences are larger than might be expected due to sampling error. All differences described are significant at the .05 level. Typically, NHES reports focus on statistically significant differences of at least 5 percentage points. However, this report presents estimates of a low-frequency event, the Home Entertainment rate. Because the Home Entertainment rate is less than 5 percent for almost all subpopulations, it is not possible to have a difference of greater than 5 percentage points, therefore, all statistically significant differences in the Home Entertainment rate between subpopulations are discussed.

# Background

The nationwide household sampling approach undertaken by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) was initiated partly in response to the need for consistent empirical information on the prevalence of Home Entertainment in the United States and the characteristics of these homeschoolers. The household sampling frame utilized by the National Household Education Surveys Program (NHES), although subject to coverage error, avoids many of the problems inherent in the use of incomplete sample frames, such as customers of curricular providers, membership lists, and administrative records of homeschoolers. The NHES is designed to collect data on a wide range of educational indicators and types of students, including, but not limited to Home Entertainment. Therefore, readers should note that the number of questions asked of homeschoolers and the number of homeschoolers represent only a small portion of the NHES collection. The report based on NCES’s first comprehensive survey of homeschoolers nationwide, Home Entertainment in the United States: 1999, showed approximately 850,000 students nationwide were being homeschooled, representing 1.7 percent of U.S. students ages 5 to 17 in grades K–12. Among other findings the survey showed that the racial composition of homeschoolers differed from that of nonhomeschoolers—75 percent of homeschooled students were White, non-Hispanic, compared with 65 percent of nonhomeschooled students.

# **Estimated Number of Homeschooled Students in the United States**

Both the number and the proportion of students in the United States who were being homeschooled increased between 1999 and 2003. Approximately 1.1 million students (1,096,000) were being homeschooled in the United States in the spring of 2003, an increase from the estimated 850,000 students who were being homeschooled in the spring of 1999 (Bielick, Chandler, and Broughman 2001). In addition, the percentage of the entire student population who were being homeschooled increased from 1.7 percent in 1999 to 2.2 percent in 2003.

Estimates in this report are based on interviews conducted with the parents of 11,994 students ages 5 through 17 with a grade equivalent of kindergarten through 12th grade. Of these students, 239 were homeschooled. All estimates are weighted to approximate population totals. When the sample is weighted, it represents the approximately 50 million students ages 5 through 17 with a grade equivalent of kindergarten through 12th grade in the United States in 2003, 1.1 million of whom are estimated to have been homeschooled.

As with results from any sample survey, the numbers and percentages discussed in this report are estimates of the actual numbers and percentages of homeschooled students in the population. Although 1,096,000 is the best estimate available from the 2003 NHES, another similar sample survey might produce a different estimate. A 95 percent confidence interval defines a range of values around an estimate, within which 95 percent of the estimates from all possible similar sample surveys are expected to fall. The 95 percent confidence interval for the number of students who were homeschooled in spring 2003 is 915,000 to 1,277,000. The best estimate provided here, 1,096,000, is the midpoint of that interval. Typically, NHES reports focus on statistically significant differences of at least 5 percentage points. However, this report presents estimates of a low-frequency event, the Home Entertainment rate, which is the percentage of the student population being homeschooled. Because the Home Entertainment rate is less than 5 percent for almost all subpopulations, it is not possible to have a difference of greater than 5 percentage points, therefore, all statistically significant differences in the Home Entertainment rate between subpopulations are discussed.

In this report, homeschoolers include students whose parents reported them as being schooled at home instead of at a public or private school for at least part of their education and if their part-time enrollment in public or private schools did not exceed 25 hours a week. Students who were schooled at home only because of a temporary illness were not included as homeschoolers. In both 1999 and 2003, about four out of five homeschoolers (82 percent) were homeschooled only, while about one out of five homeschoolers (18 percent) were enrolled in public or private schools part time.

# **Home Entertainment Rates by Student and** Family **Characteristics**

One way to examine Home Entertainment in the United States is to look at Home Entertainment rates—percentages of student populations being homeschooled. As discussed above, the overall Home Entertainment rate in the United States in 2003 was 2.2 percent, which represents an increase from the 1.7 percent Home Entertainment rate in 1999. In 1999, the percentage of students who were homeschooled varied for different student subpopulations: White students were more likely to be homeschooled than were Black or Hispanic students; students in households with three or more children were more likely to be homeschooled than were students in households with fewer children; students in two-parent households were more likely to be homeschooled than were students in households with one parent or guardian, especially if only one parent in two-parent households was in the labor force; and students who had at least one parent with postsecondary education were more likely to be homeschooled compared to students whose parents’ highest educational attainment was a high school diploma or less (Bielick, Chandler, & Broughman 2001).

# **The Characteristics of** Homeschooled **and Nonhomeschooled Students**

Another way to examine how student, family, and household characteristics are related to Home Entertainment is to compare the characteristics of homeschooled students to different populations of students. Data from the Parent Survey of the 1999 NHES showed that characteristics of the homeschooled population differed from those of the non-homeschooled population. In 1999, compared to nonhomeschooled students, homeschooled students were more likely to be White, to have families with three or more children in the household, to have two parents (especially when only one parent was in the labor force), and to have parents whose highest level of educational attainment was a bachelor’s degree or higher. In 1999, compared to nonhomeschooled students, homeschooled students were less likely to be Black, to be Hispanic, to be in a three-or-more-child family, and to have parents whose highest level of educational attainment was a high school diploma or less (Bielick, Chandler, and Broughman 2001).

## Students’ Grade or Grade Equivalent

No differences were detected between the percentage distributions of homeschooled students and public schooled students across grade; however private schooled students were more likely than homeschooled students and public schooled students to be in kindergarten through grade 5.

## Students’ Race/Ethnicity and Sex

In 2003, homeschooled students were more likely to be White (77 percent) and less likely to be Black (9 percent) than were public schooled students (61 and 16 percent, respectively). Homeschooled students were less likely to be Hispanic (5 percent) than either public or private schooled students (17 and 10 percent, respectively).

## Number of Parents Living In the Household

Homeschooled students and private schooled students were more likely than public schooled students to live in two-parent households (81 percent and 80 percent, compared with 69 percent, respectively) and less likely to live in single-parent households (18 percent for both homeschooled and private schooled students, compared with 27 percent for public schooled students).

## Parents’ Labor Force Participation

Homeschooled students were more likely than public and private schooled students to have only one of two parents in the labor force. Fifty-four percent of homeschooled students lived in two-parent families where one parent was not in the labor force, compared to 23 percent of private schooled students and 20 percent of public schooled students. Conversely, about 25 percent of homeschooled students lived in two-parent families where both parents were in the labor force, compared to 56 percent of private schooled students and 49 percent of public schooled students. Homeschooled and private schooled students were less likely than public schooled students to live in one-parent homes where the parent was in the labor force (16 and 17 percent compared to 25 percent).

## Household Income

Both homeschooled students and public schooled students were less likely than private schooled students to be part of households with annual incomes above $75,000 and more likely to be part of households with annual incomes of $25,000 or less. Twenty-two percent of homeschooled students and 25 percent of public schooled students lived in households with annual incomes above $75,000, compared with 50 percent of private schooled students. Twenty-six percent of both homeschooled and public schooled students lived in households with annual incomes of $25,000 or less, compared with 9 percent of private schooled students.

## Parents’ Highest Educational Attainment

Twenty-five percent of homeschooled students had parents whose highest educational attainment was a high school diploma or less; this figure is lower than that for public schooled students (34 percent) but higher than that for private schooled students (13 percent). Homeschooled students were also less likely than private schooled students to have parents whose highest educational attainment was graduate or professional coursework beyond a bachelor’s degree (20 percent compared to 31 percent).

## Urbanicity

Urbanicity refers to the classification of households as urban or rural. Urban is a place with at least 50,000 people. Rural is a place not classified as urban.2 In 2003, about 72 percent of homeschooled students lived in urban places and 28 percent lived in rural places. Compared to private schooled students, homeschooled students were less likely to live in urban places, and more likely to live in rural places. There were no differences detected in the urbanicity of homeschooled and public schooled students.

## **U**.S. Region

In 2003, homeschooled students were distributed across the Northeast, South, Midwest, and West much like public schooled students were. The apparent gap between the percentage of homeschooled students who were in the South and the percentage of public schooled students who were in the South was not detectably different.

# **Parents’ Reasons for Home Entertainment**

In the earlier Parent survey conducted as part of the 1999 NHES, parents were posed an open-ended question asking them to list their reasons for Home Entertainment. Parents provided a broad range of reasons for Home Entertainment their children, which were coded into 16 different categories. In 1999, three reasons for Home Entertainment were the most frequently cited: 49 percent of homeschooled students had parents who cited the ability to give their child a better education, 38 percent had parents who cited religious reasons, and 26 percent had parents who cited a poor learning environment at school (Bielick, Chandler, & Broughman 2001).

While the 1999 survey was able to provide a context for why parents were Home Entertainment their children, it had two main limitations. First, when faced with an open-ended question, parents may not have recalled or responded with all of the reasons for Home Entertainment that were applicable to their situation. Second, parents were not specifically asked to report their primary reason for Home Entertainment. Questionnaire items in the 2003 collection were designed to address these limitations. The 2003 survey presented parents with a series of questions asking them whether particular reasons for Home Entertainment applied to them. Parents were then asked which of those applicable reasons was their most important reason for Home Entertainment.

## Sources of Curriculum or Books

Parents of homeschooled students obtain curriculum or books from a wide variety of sources. A majority of homeschooled students had parents who used one or more of the following sources of curriculum or books for their children’s home education: a public library (78 percent); a Home Entertainment catalog, publisher, or individual specialist (77 percent); a retail bookstore or other store (69 percent); and an education publisher that was not affiliated with Home Entertainment (60 percent). Approximately half of homeschooled students used curriculum or books from Home Entertainment organizations. Thirty-seven percent of homeschooled students used curriculum or books from a church, synagogue or other religious institution and 23 percent used a curriculum or books from their local public school or district.