



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on January 10, 2011

Two Million Home Schooled, New Study Estimates

A new study from the National Home Education Research Institute (NHERI) estimates that there are over two million children currently being home schooled in the United States. The author of the study, NHERI's president Dr. Brian D. Ray, analyzed data from both state and federal education agencies as well as private home-school groups, concluding that there are as many as 2.346 million home-schooled students across the nation.



According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2010 there were about 54 million children between the ages of five and 17 in the U.S., meaning that nearly four percent of school-aged kids — or one in 25 — are being home schooled.

Factored into the study was Ray's calculation that an estimated ten percent of home-schooled families are "underground," meaning that parents have chosen not to register their children with the state because of compulsory attendance laws and other concerns.

"Today, home schoolers can be found in all walks of life," noted a press release from the NHERI, "and with ... a proven record of academic as well as social success, home schooling is rapidly becoming a mainstream education alternative."

Michael Smith, president of the [Home School Legal Defense Association](#), called the latest numbers "remarkable," noting that "just 30 years ago there were only an estimated 20,000 home schooled children."

Ray predicts another "notable surge" in home schooling numbers in the next five to ten years, as those who were home schooled in the 1990s choose that education option for their own children as well.

A 2006 study by the Department of Education found that 31 percent of parents who taught their kids at home did so out of concern for the public school environment, citing such issues as "safety, drugs or negative peer pressure." Another 30 percent said that home schooling offered them the ability to "provide their children with religious or moral instruction." An additional 16.5 percent of parents cited dissatisfaction with "the academic instruction available" in the public schools, while about 14 percent said they chose home schooling because of special needs of their children.

While public school officials and education "experts" have tried to denigrate the home schooling option as inferior to the tax-funded marvel of public education, both research and anecdotal evidence has demonstrated that children taught at home perform better than their public school counterparts.

For example, a 2009 study by the NHERI found that home schoolers score an average of 34 to 39 percentile points higher than the norm on standardized achievement tests. According to Dr. Ray, who headed up the research, the national average for home-schooled students ranged from the 84th



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percentile for language, math, and social studies to the 89th percentile for reading.

The study also found that achievement gaps common among public school students do not exist among home schoolers. Among the findings:

- Home-schooled boys (87th percentile) and girls (88th percentile) scored equally well on standardized tests.
- The income level of parents was not an appreciable factor in how home-schooled students performed, with children from poorer households (incomes under \$35,000) scoring in the 85th percentile, and those from wealthier homes (income over \$70,000) scoring in the 89th percentile.
- Although the education level of parents did have somewhat of an impact on the results, even home schoolers whose parents did not have college degrees scored in the 83rd percentile, well above the national average for public school students.

Research also confirms that the high performance of home-schooled students continues when they reach college. The *Journal of College Admission* cited a recent report showing that “home school students possess higher ACT scores, grade point averages (GPAs) and graduation rates when compared to traditionally educated students.”

Research last summer by Dr. Michael Cogan of the University of St. Thomas in Minnesota revealed that home-schooled college students fare better than conventional students on a number of levels:

- They earn a higher first-year GPA (3.41) than the overall average (3.12).
- Similarly, their fourth-year GPA (3.46) bests the overall average (3.16).
- They have a higher college graduation rate (66.7 percent) compared to the overall population (57.5 percent).

According to Gena Suarez, publisher of the *Old Schoolhouse* magazine, on average home schoolers score “37 percentile points above the national average on standardized achievement tests and typically score above average on the SAT and ACT.”

Those numbers have caught the attention of colleges and universities across the nation, particularly private Christian institutions, which often send recruiters and admissions counselors to home school conventions and target families that teach their kids at home through direct-mail campaigns, promotions in home school magazines, and with ads on websites.

Schools such as the prestigious Wheaton College, which boasts that 10 percent of its incoming freshmen are home-school grads, sponsor such events as “Home School College Days,” where potential students can visit campuses and even meet with current college students who were taught at home. Others such as Regent University, founded by Christian media mogul Pat Robertson, flash ads on their websites touting themselves as the “the right choice for home-schooled students.”

But it is not just Christian universities that are reaping the benefits of home-schooled students. Suarez cited one successful home schooler, Seth Back, who got his GED at age 15 and is currently a student at Harvard University. Suarez noted that over the past five years, Back has earned “a juris doctor degree, passed the California Bar Exam, earned a master’s degree in church history, and studied at Oxford — all while managing his own consulting business.”

Back credits home schooling for his success, saying that because of it he was “better prepared for certain college situations than students who had been through the public/private school system.”



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And what about after college? All indications are that home-schooled students are among the most prepared to take their place as productive members of society. A 2004 study by Dr. Ray and NHERI of more than 7,000 home-schooled graduates found that 71 percent had participated in ongoing community service activities compared to 37 percent of U.S. adults of similar ages, and 76 percent had voted in a national or state election, compared to 29 percent of graduates who had not been home schooled.

“Homeschoolers clearly learn about the real world, possibly more than do their public school counterparts,” commented Dr. Michael Romanowski, an education professor at Ohio Northern University. “While the purpose of public education is to educate future citizens who take an active role in improving the social, economic, and political conditions in society, Ray’s research indicates that public schools, not homeschooling, should be scrutinized for their efforts regarding ‘citizenship training.’ ”

As a relevant side-note, home school proponents point out that when [U.S. Representative Jaime Herrera Beutler](#) (R-Wash.) was sworn in for her freshman term on January 3, she became the first home schooler in modern history to be elected to Congress. They are confident that she will not be the last.



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