# 2020 TEXAS HOMESCHOOL REPORT

A glimpse of homeschooling in the U.S., Texas, and your local area

TEXAS HOMESCHOOL COALITION

# O V E R V I E W

This report explores helpful information about growth in homeschooling in the United States, Texas, and various counties and political districts across Texas.

In the 2018-2019 school year, 22,967 students between grades 7-12 withdrew from public schools in Texas to homeschool. Since 1998, a total of 379,815 students between grades 7-12 have withdrawn from public schools in Texas to homeschool. This number has increased at an average of 6.5% per year. Texas public school enrollment rose 1.57% over the same period.

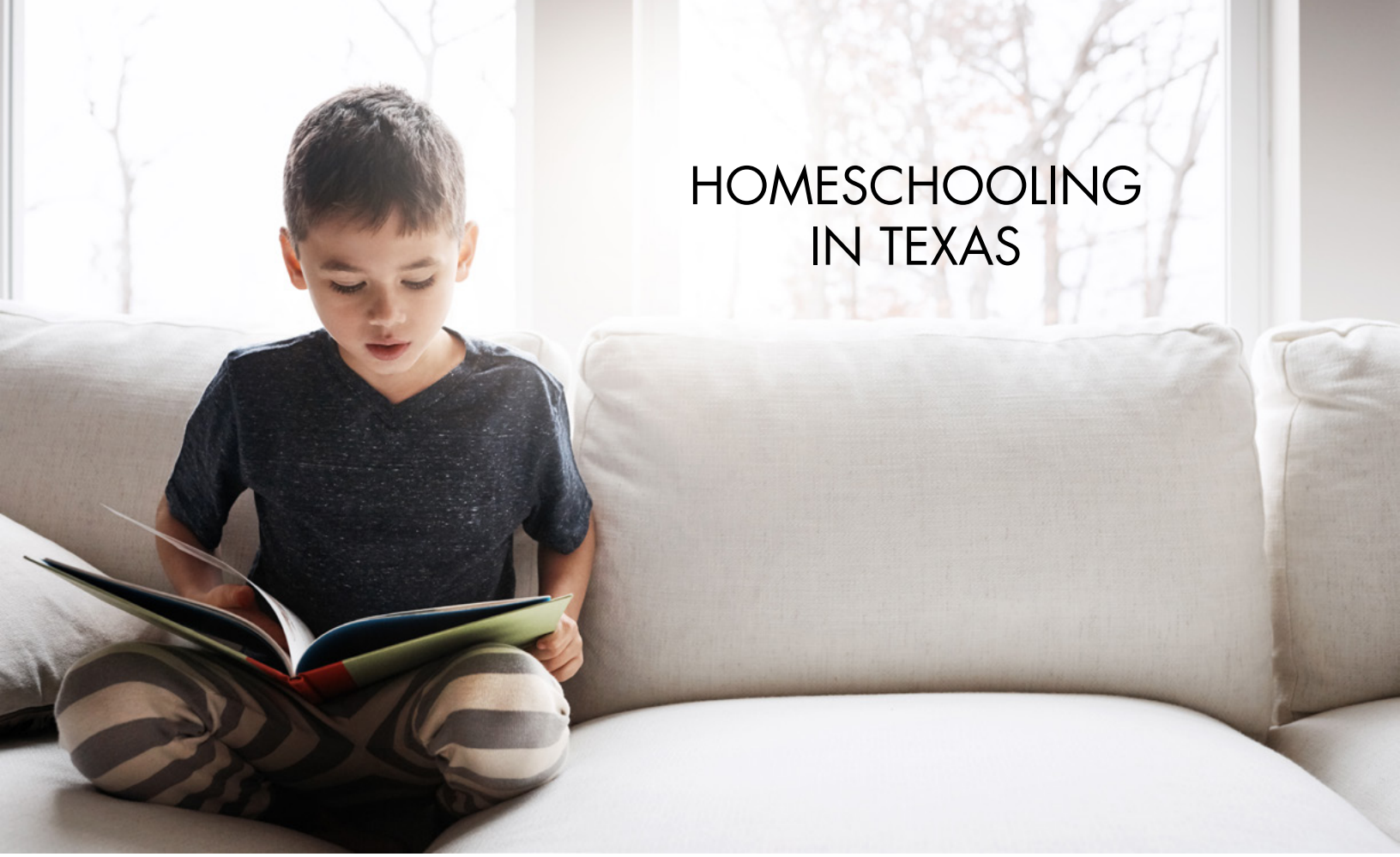
Notably, these numbers track only homeschool withdrawals from public school between grades 7-12 and do not account for the large number of students who began homeschooling without first entering the public school system. As a result, these numbers are helpful as a partial picture of homeschool growth in Texas, but do not provide a comprehensive view of homeschooling growth in Texas.

There are an estimated 2.5 million homeschool students in the United States, which has grown between 2-8% per year and is the fastest-growing form of education in America.

The report also highlights helpful findings related to demographic trends, academic success, and opinion information among homeschool students and families.

The report concludes with a helpful fact sheet providing high-level insights into homeschooling nationwide.

*NOTE: You can view Texas homeschool withdrawal information online by using our interactive map at THSC.org/map. This tool allows you to view withdrawal information broken down by year, county, grade, political district, school district, county, and region of Texas.*



# HOMESCHOOLING IN TEXAS

## A Note on Covid-19 Homeschool Growth:

The Coronavirus has resulted in a tremendous uptick in families choosing to homeschool nationwide. While currently available data makes this trend clear, this report focuses primarily on the hard numbers available for homeschool growth in Texas from the Texas Education Agency (TEA).

Data from the TEA showing withdrawals to homeschool for the fall semester of 2020 is not yet available. As soon as it becomes available, it will be available for viewing through THSC's online tool here: THSC.org/map.

Early numbers indicate that the growth in homeschooling nationwide and in Texas is substantial. A recent survey from Real Clear Opinions found that 40% of registered voters were more likely to enroll their children in a homeschool or a virtual school after the coronavirus.[1]

A survey from Gallup found that the number of families reporting their child would be homeschooled this year had doubled from 5% in 2019 to 10% in 2020.[2]

The Texas Home School Coalition maintains an online tool at THSC.org where families can automatically generate a letter of withdrawal that can be used to withdraw their student from public school in Texas. This tool is a voluntary resource and is not used by all families who withdraw from public school to homeschool in Texas.

The number of families using this tool to withdraw from public school in Texas has skyrocketed. Compared to 2019, usage of this withdrawal tool was up 1700% in July of 2020, 400% in August, and 400% in September.

While hard numbers showing the growth of homeschool withdrawals in Texas are not yet available for the fall of 2020, all available indicators point towards record breaking growth. Once available, homeschool withdrawal information for the fall of 2020 will be viewable online here: THSC.org/map.

[1] https://www.federationforchildren.org/national-poll-40-of-families-more-likely-to-homeschool-after-lockdowns-end/

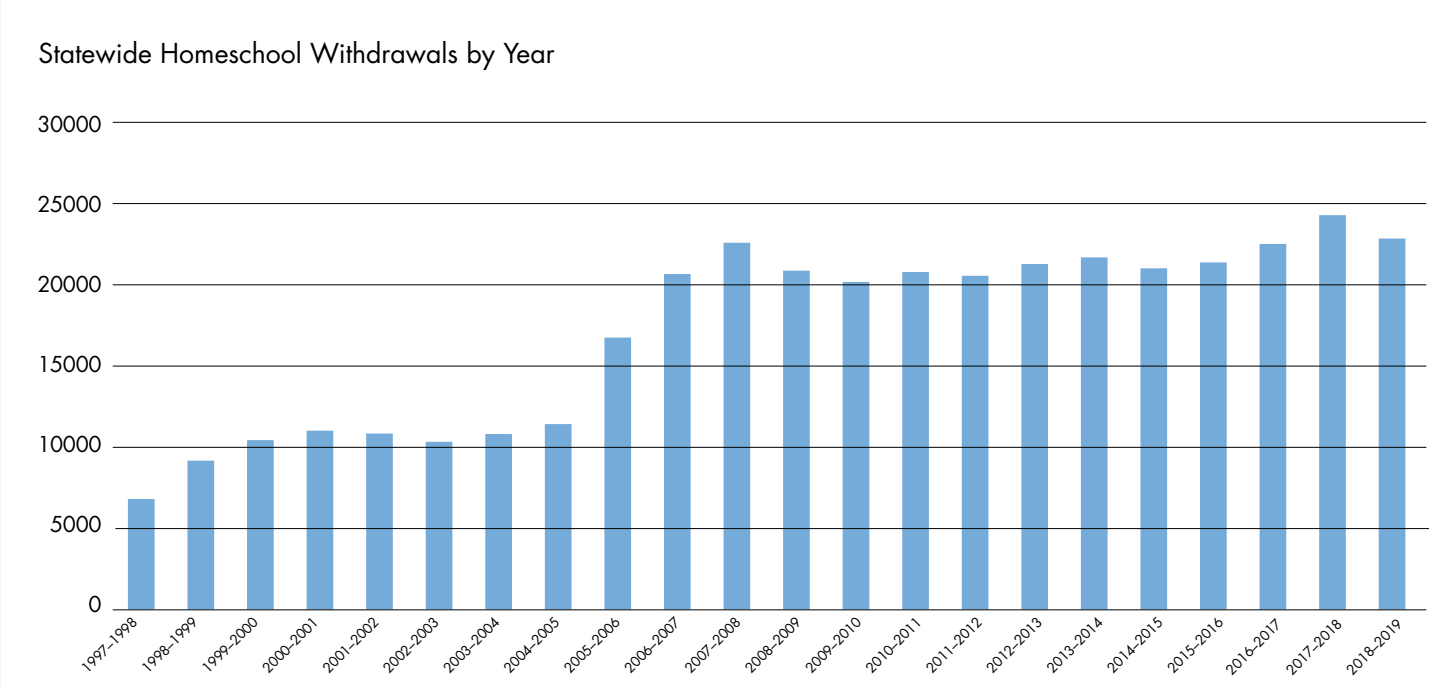
[2] https://news.gallup.com/poll/317852/parents-satisfaction-child-education-slips.aspx

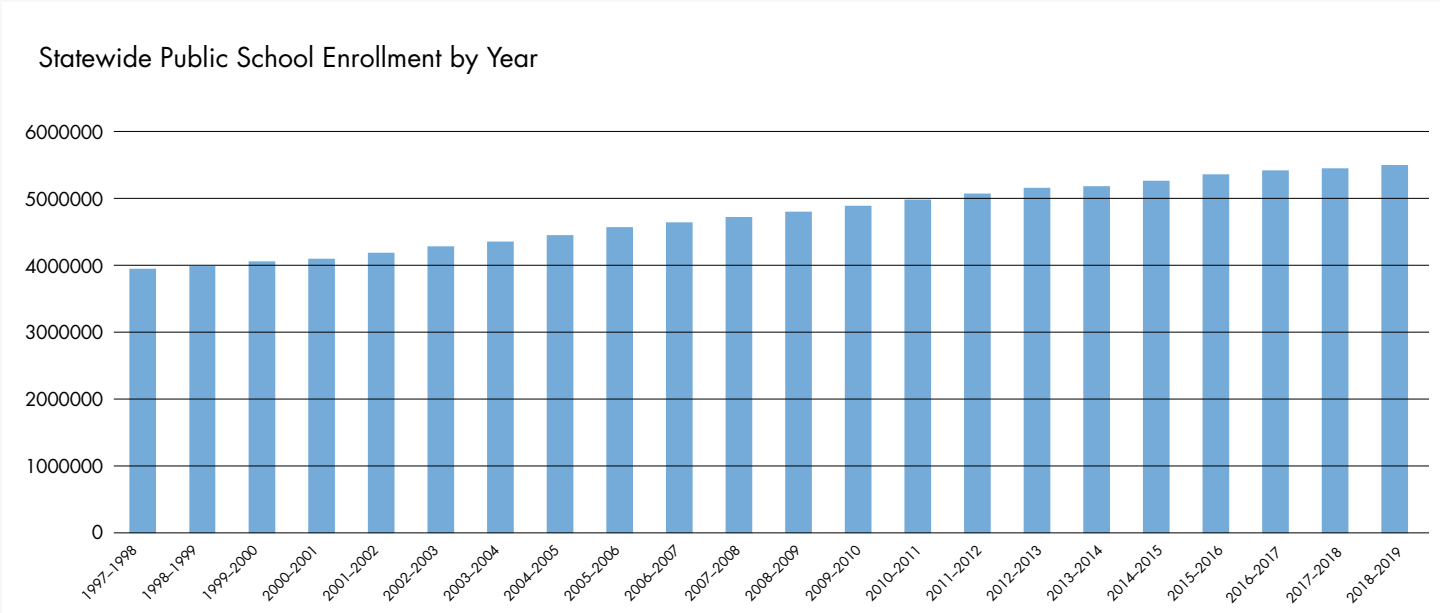
# 1. Statewide enrollment trends

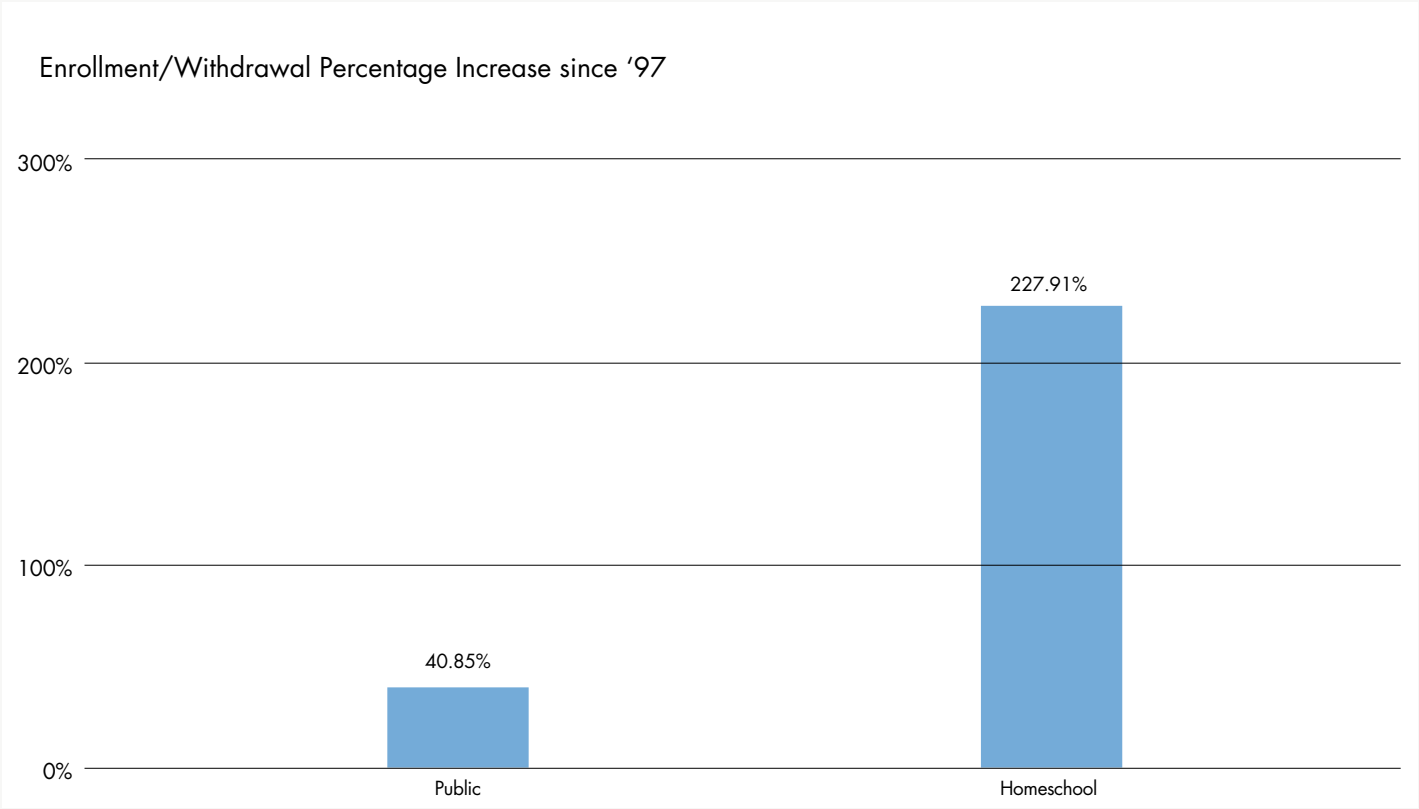
The number of students withdrawing from public school to homeschool has averaged an annual growth rate of 6.5% since 1997. The 2017-2018 school year saw a record high number of students withdrawing to homeschool.

In the following year (2018-2019 school year), the number of students withdrawing from public charter schools declined, while the number of students withdrawing from traditional ISDs increased slightly. This resulted in a net decrease in the number of students withdrawing to homeschool compared to the high in the 2017-2018 school year, but still represented an increase over the 2016-2017 school year.

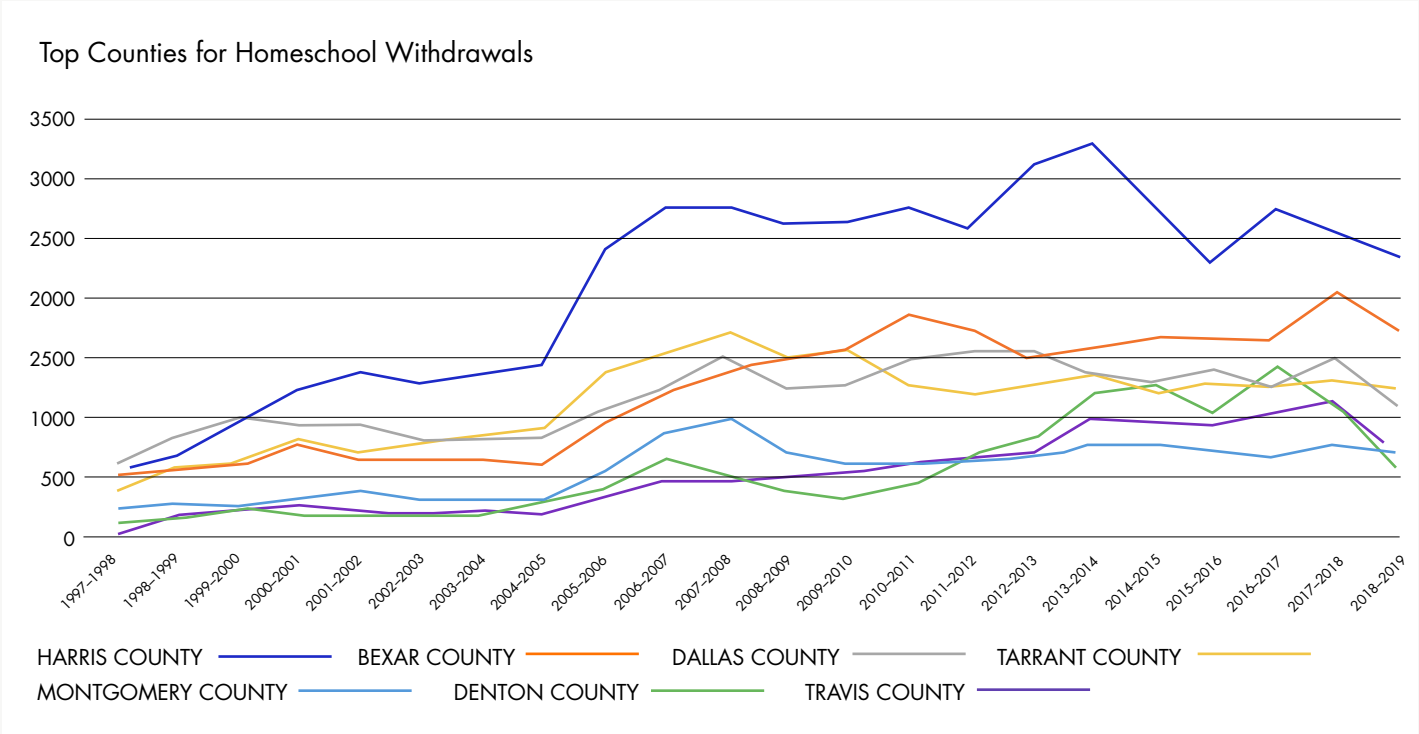
## a. Homeschool growth in Texas compared to public school growth



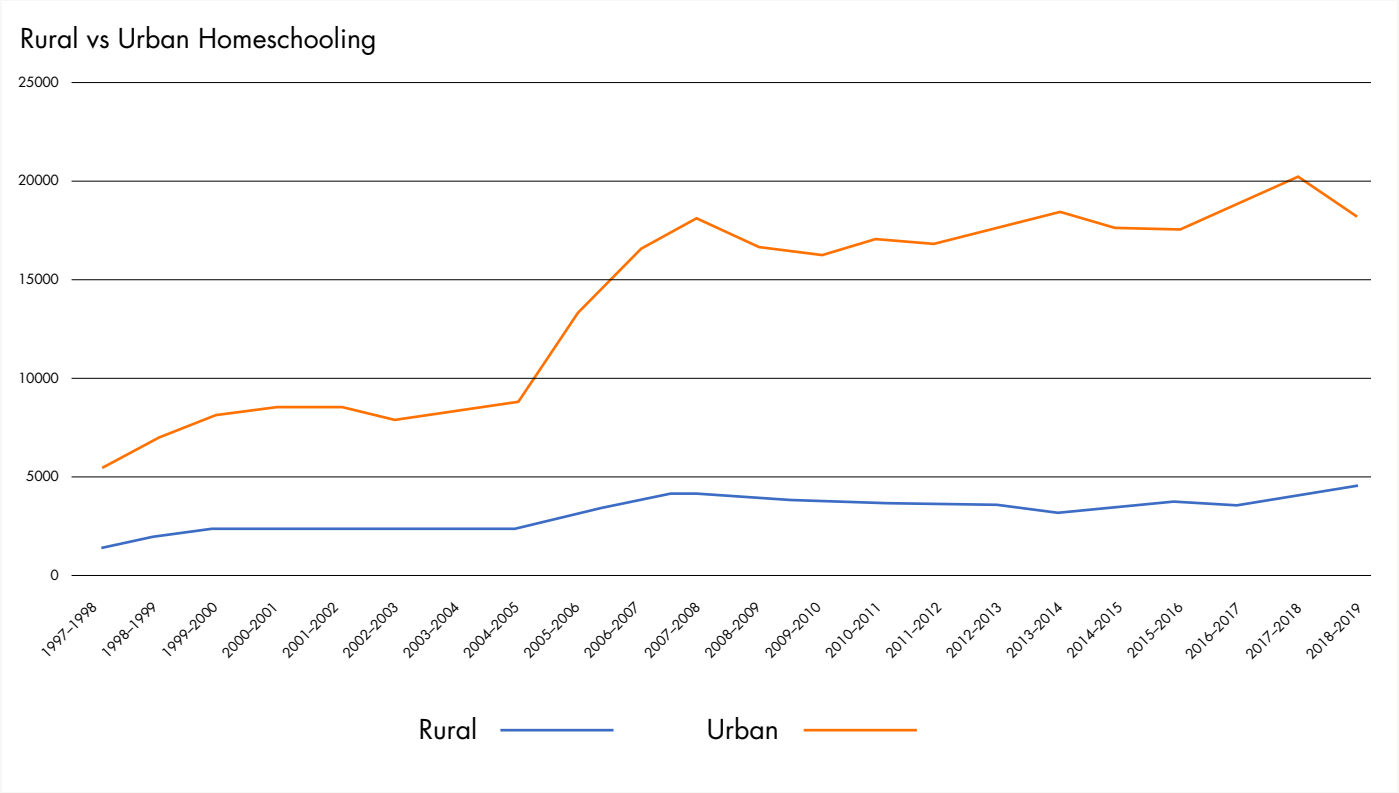





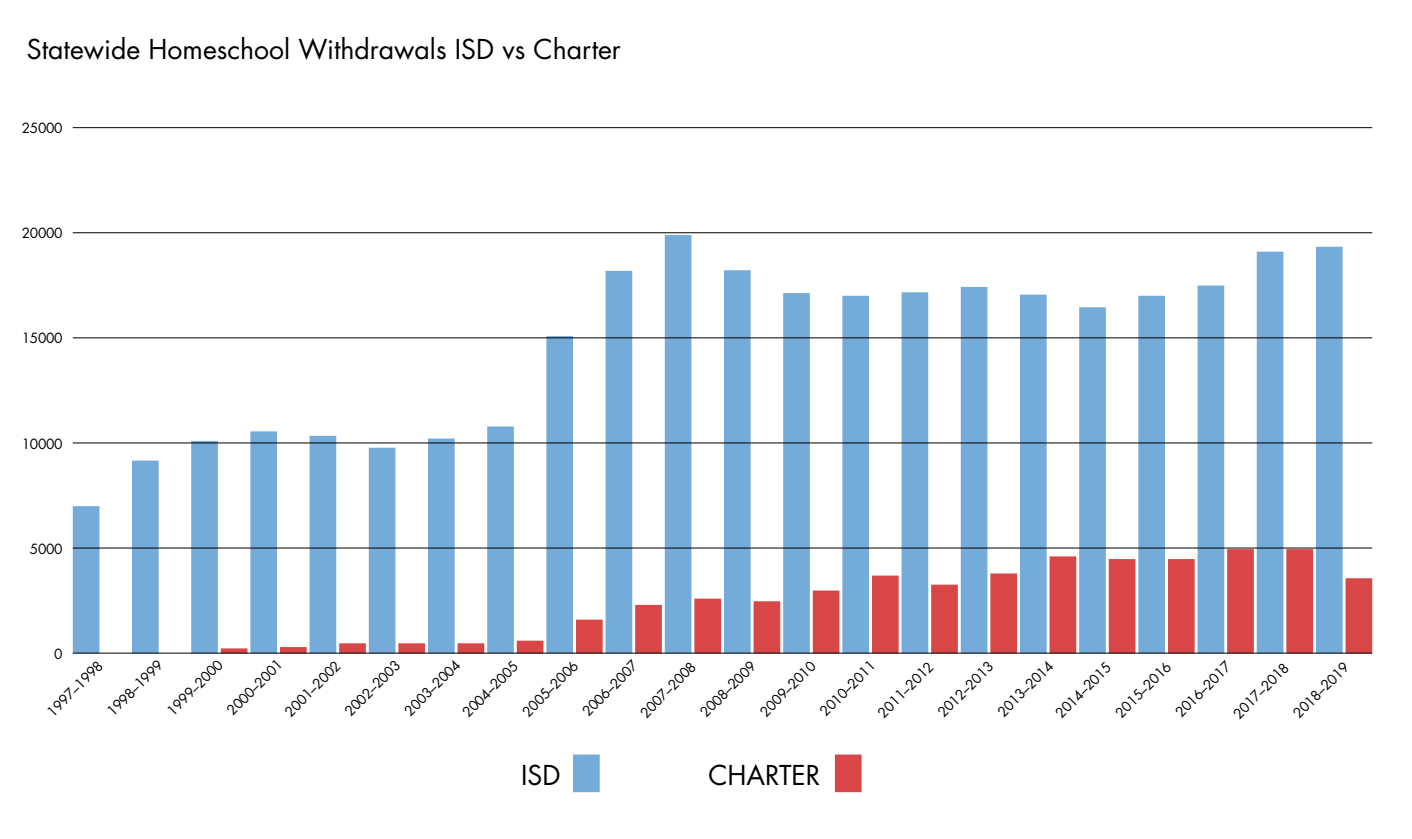

b.Top 7 counties for homeschool withdrawals in Texas



c. Rural vs Urban homeschooling




d. Homeschool withdrawals from ISDs vs charter schools



# 2. Why do families choose to homeschool in Texas?

In a 2017 survey conducted by Ragnar Research, homeschool parents in Texas were asked, "Which of the following best describes the reason that you chose to homeschool your children?"

Parents gave the following responses:

- You prefer to teach religious/Christian/moral based curriculum instruction: 33%
- You are dissatisfied with the academics: 28%
- This child has other special needs that you feel the school can't or won't meet: 10%
- You are concerned about school safety/drugs/gangs: 8%
- You are concerned about peer pressure from other students: 6%
- This child has a physical/ mental health handicap: 4%
- This child has a temporary illness that prevents him/her from going to school: 2%
- Other: 6%
- Don't Know: 4%

On the National Home Education Survey conducted in 2016 by the Department of Education, parents across the United States cited the "most important" reason that they chose to homeschool as:

- A concern about environment of other schools: 34%
- A dissatisfaction with academic instruction at other schools: 17%
- A desire to provide religious instruction: 16%
- A desire to provide a non-traditional approach to child's education: 6%
- Child has other special needs: 6%
- Child has a physical or mental health problem: 6%
- A desire to provide moral instruction: 5%
- Child has a temporary illness: % N/A. Inadequate sample
- Other reasons: 11%

While studying the differences between Texas data and national data related to parental motivations for homeschooling is helpful, direct comparisons between Texas data and national data are difficult because the categories available for parents to choose between these two surveys were different.

Even so, it is clear that dissatisfaction with other schools regarding their academic instruction and environment and a desire to provide moral or religious instruction are highly motivating factors for parents choosing to homeschool.

## 3. Common methods of homeschooling in Texas

The only near-universal trait of homeschooling programs in Texas is variety. According to an non-scientific THSC survey, eighty percent of Texas homeschool families report that they mix and match curricula from different providers. Families often use different styles of instruction for each student in the family, try new methods or tweak old ones each year, and use different solutions for different subjects.

Here are a few common styles of instruction that homeschool families use in Texas.

### Homeschool Co-op:

A homeschool co-op is formed when a group of parents band together to help each other teach each student. Parents usually agree to specific responsibilities related to teaching certain subjects or taking on administrative tasks.

Students then attend co-op classes on a regular basis, often a few days a week or a few days every other week, and complete their remaining school work from home. Thirty-four percent of Texas homeschool families from a 2019 survey reported that they had at least one student who attended a homeschool co-op.

### Online Classes:

Thirty-three percent of families report that at least one of their students uses online classes for all or part of the student's school work. A wide variety of online class providers makes this an easy option for many families.

### Dual Credit:

Many homeschool families in Texas utilize dual credit from their local community college as a central element of their students' high school education. A growing trend in the homeschool community is for students to utilize dual credit to obtain an associates degree by the time they graduate high school.

### Homeschool "Pods":

Similar to a homeschool co-op, "pods" are small groups of parents who band together to help teach each other's children, often meeting on a weekly or bi-weekly basis at each other's houses and alternating responsibilities to help accommodate the needs of each family.

# 4. Texas homeschool opinions and challenges

In 2019, THSC conducted a wide ranging, non-scientific survey of homeschool families in Texas to gather information on homeschool family demographics, preferences, and habits.

When asked what type of educational resource the family most wished they had better access to, by a wide margin families chose "discounts on curriculum and materials."

Sixty-three percent of families reported that they had been homeschooling for less than five years, underscoring the large number of new families that are moving into homeschooling. Twenty-six percent of families surveyed stated that they were homeschooling a special needs child.

When asked what type of homeschooling support/ opportunity families most wished they had better access to, easier access to extracurricular activities was chosen by nearly half of families and was the most common type of opportunity selected. Low-income and rural families were more likely to choose this option than their urban or high-income counterparts.

In a 2017 scientific survey of homeschool parents conducted by Ragnar Research, 77% of families stated that they support giving homeschool families access to extracurricular activities through the University Interscholastic League (UIL) at their local public school.

Support for homeschool student access to UIL was high across the political spectrum. Families who identified as liberal were more likely to support it (84%), but support among conservative homeschool families was also very high (75%).

When asked what issues should be prioritized by the Texas legislature, by a wide margin, education was the issue that homeschool parents believed was the "most important" issue that the legislature should prioritize:

- Education: 23%
- Healthcare/Obamacare: 9%
- State government corruption/mismanagement/ reform: 7%
- Jobs/economy: 7%
- Immigration/border security: 7%
- Taxes/fees: 6%
- Social issues/Abortion/Gay Marriage: 6%
- Government spending: 5%
- Social Security/Medicare/Medicaid: 4%
- Crime/police/law enforcement: 3%
- Transportation/roads/highways/interstate: 2%
- Other: 13%
- Don't Know: 10%

## Homeschool Growth Nationwide

- Homeschooling is growing between 2-8% per year. It is the fastest-growing form of education in the U.S. (public school growth has been 1% over the last 10 years) (Bustamante[3], Ray[4]).
- There are approximately 2.5 million homeschool students in the United States (Ray[5]).
- Homeschooling saves taxpayers approximately $27 billion per year (Ray[6]).
- A recent survey showed that 40% of registered voters were more likely to enroll their children in a homeschool or a virtual school after the coronavirus (Schultz[7]).
- A recent survey from Gallup found that the number of families reporting their child would be homeschooled this year had doubled from 5% in 2019 to 10% in 2020 (Brenan[8]).

## Homeschool Demographics

- Approximately 41% of homeschool families are minorities. Twenty-six percent are Hispanic and 8% are black. The black community appears to be the fastest-growing segment of homeschooling (McQuiggan and Megra p. 18[9]).
- Approximately 21% of homeschool students live in households below the poverty line (McQuiggan and Megra p. 18[10]).
- Approximately 45% of homeschool students live in homes where parents have a bachelor's degree or higher (McQuiggan and Megra p. 18[11]).
- Homeschooling families spend approximately $600 per student per year on education. Public school students average more than $11,000 per year (Ray[12]).

## Reasons to Homeschool

- When citing the most important reason that they chose to homeschool:
- 34% cited concern with the school environment, such as safety, drugs, or negative peer pressure (McQuiggan and Megra p.19[13]).
- 17% cited dissatisfaction with academic instruction at other schools (McQuiggan and Megra p.19[14]).
- 21% cited a desire to provide moral or religious instruction (McQuiggan and Megra p.19[15]).
- Among black homeschoolers, racism in the schools was the second most-common reason cited for why the family chose to homeschool (Mazama and Lundy p. 11[16]).

## Academic Performance

- Homeschool students rank 15-30 percentile points above their public school peers on national achievement tests (Ray, p. 27[17]).
- Homeschool students significantly outperform their public school peers academically regardless of gender, amount of money spent on education, whether the parent had ever been a certified teacher, number of children living at home, degree of structure in homeschooling, amount of time spent on structured learning, or the age at which formal instruction began. None of these factors causes any significant variance in the student's academic test scores (Ray, p. 27[18]).
- The degree of state regulation on homeschooling causes no statistical difference in the academic performance of the students (Ray, p. 27[19]).

## Social, Emotional, and Psychological Development and Performance as Adults

- Homeschool students outperform their peers by a statistically significant margin on social and emotional development issues, measured by peer interaction, self-concept, leadership skills, family cohesion, participation in community service, and self-esteem (Ray[20], Ray, p. 10[21]).
- Homeschool students are more politically tolerant by a statistically significant margin (Ray, p. 12[22]).
- Homeschool graduates are more likely to participate in community service, more likely to attend community meetings, and more likely to vote (Ray[23]).

## Other Facts

- Homeschool students are 40% less likely to die of abuse and neglect and are less likely to experience sexual abuse when compared to students in the general public (Ray[24]).

## Summary:

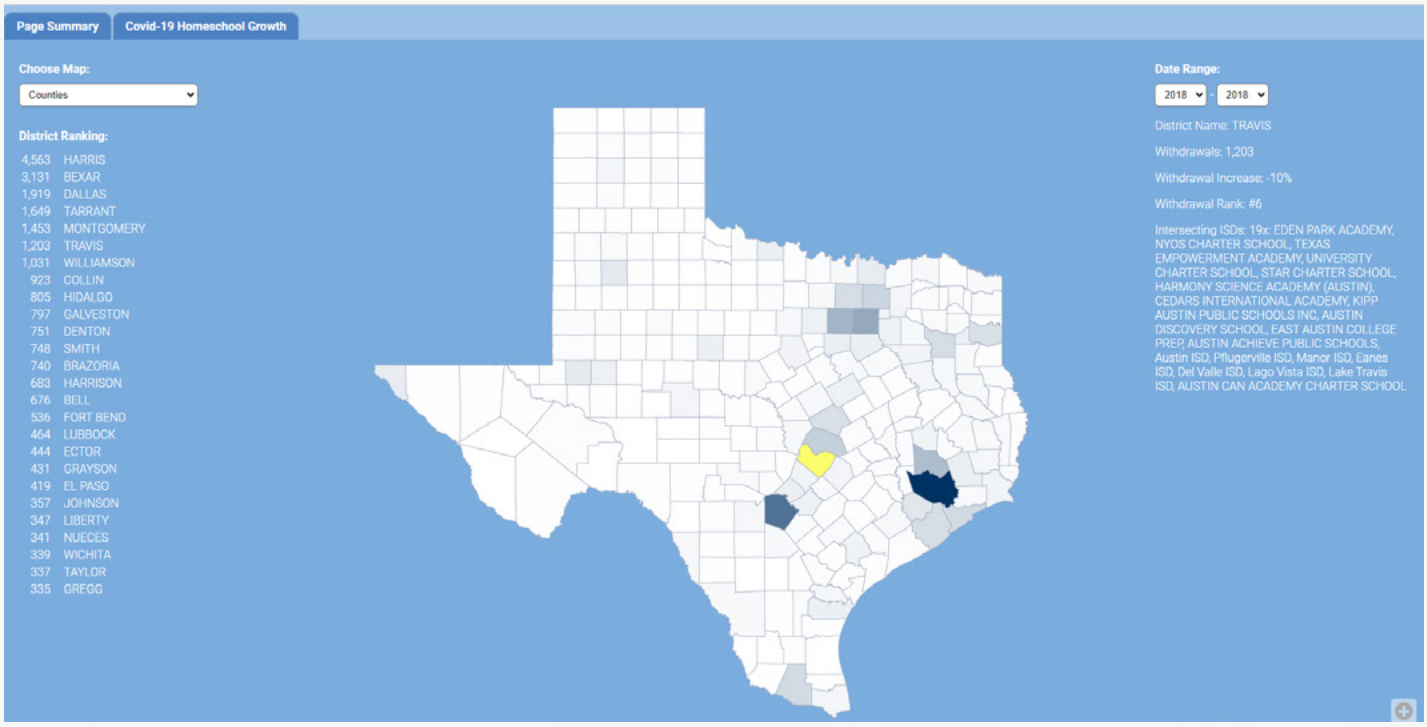
Homeschooling in Texas is growing at an incredible rate compared to other forms of education. Families who choose to homeschool are motivated by a wide range of factors, but when asked for the "most important" factor, families cite dissatisfaction with academics and/or the environment at schools, or a desire to provide moral and religious instruction to their students.

A sizable group of homeschool families in Texas report that they homeschool a special needs child, although most do not cite this as the "most important" reason that they chose to homeschool.

Homeschool parents, particularly rural and low-income parents, cite better access to extracurricular activities as the type of opportunity that they most need better access to and 77% of families support allowing homeschool students to participate in extracurricular activities through UIL at their local public school.

## Homeschool withdrawals in your local area

You can view Texas homeschool withdrawal information online by using our interactive map at THSC.org/map. This tool allows you to view withdrawal information broken down by year, county, grade, political district, school district, county, and region of Texas.




### Methodology

This report was constructed using a variety of sources. Each source is cited in the report alongside the fact that is used from that source.

Data showing the number of withdrawals from Texas public schools to homeschool was obtained from the Texas Education Agency (TEA). School districts in Texas are only required to record homeschool withdrawals between grades 7-12. All TEA data is restricted to these grade levels.

The data records homeschool withdrawals from all Texas public schools, including charter schools, since the 1997-1998 school year. TEA data also does not account for growth in homeschooling from the substantial number of families who choose to homeschool but have never been enrolled in the public school system.

Texas law prevents the disclosure of particularly small withdrawal numbers. Therefore, these numbers were masked in the TEA data. Although larger withdrawal totals are raw (such as total withdrawals per year statewide or withdrawals per year from larger school districts), as reported by the TEA, smaller, masked withdrawal numbers are estimates which have been weighted based on known averages for particular grade levels and years. Only small, masked numbers were estimated by this method. Statewide totals for each year and other large withdrawal numbers are reported raw from the TEA.

Footnotes:

3 Bustamante, Jaleesa. "K-12 School Enrollment & Student Population Statistics." EducationData.Org, 6 Sept. 2019, educationdata.org/k12-enrollment-statistics.

4 Ray, Dr. Brian D. "Homeschooling: The Research." National Home Education Research Institute, 23 Mar. 2020, www.nheri.org/research-facts-on-homeschooling.

5 Id.

6 Id.

7 Schultz, Tommy. "National Poll: 40% of Families More Likely to Homeschool After Lockdowns End." American Federation for Children, 14 May 2020, www.federationforchildren.org/national-poll-40-of-families-more-likely-to-homeschool-after-lockdowns-end.

8 Brenan, Megan. "K-12 Parents' Satisfaction With Child's Education Slips." Gallup.Com, Gallup, 25 Aug. 2020, news.gallup.com/poll/317852/parents-satisfaction-child-education-slips.aspx.

9 McQuiggan, Meghan, and Mahi Megra. "Parent and Family Involvement in Education: Results from the National Household Education Surveys Program of 2016." Nces.Ed.Gov, U.S. Department of Education, Sept. 2017, nces.ed.gov/pubs2017/2017102.pdf.

10 Id.

11 Id.

12 Ray, Dr. Brian D. "Homeschooling: The Research." National Home Education Research Institute, 23 Mar. 2020, www.nheri.org/research-facts-on-homeschooling.

13 McQuiggan, Meghan, and Mahi Megra. "Parent and Family Involvement in Education: Results from the National Household Education Surveys Program of 2016." Nces.Ed.Gov, U.S. Department of Education, Sept. 2017, nces.ed.gov/pubs2017/2017102.pdf.

14 Id.

15 Id.

16 Mazama, Ama, and Garvey Lundy. "African American Homeschooling as Racial Protectionism." Journal of Black Studies, vol. 43, no. 7, 2012, pp. 723–748. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/23414694. Accessed 9 Oct. 2020.

17 Ray, Dr. Brian D. "Academic Achievement and Demographic Traits of Homeschool Students: A Nationwide Study." Academicleadership.Org, Academic Leadership, 3 Feb. 2010, www.nheri.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Ray-2010-Academic-Achievement-and-Demographic-Traits-of-Homeschool-Students.pdf.

18 Id.

19 Id.

20 Ray, Dr. Brian D. "Homeschooling: The Research." National Home Education Research Institute, 23 Mar. 2020, www.nheri.org/research-facts-on-homeschooling.

21 Brian D. Ray (2017) A systematic review of the empirical research on selected aspects of homeschooling as a school choice, Journal of School Choice, 11:4, 604-621, DOI: 10.1080/15582159.2017.1395638

22 Id.

23 Ray, Dr. Brian D. "Homeschooling: The Research." National Home Education Research Institute, 23 Mar. 2020, www.nheri.org/research-facts-on-homeschooling.

24 "Child Abuse of Public School, Private School, and Homeschool Students: Evidence, Philosophy, and Reason." National Home Education Research Institute, 23 Jan. 2018, www.nheri.org/child-abuse-of-public-school-private-school-and-homeschool-students-evidence-philosophy-and-reason.

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