

# **REVISITING CONTEMPORARY HOMESCHOOLING: THE CASE OF THE UNITED STATES**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The term “homeschooling” denotes the process of educating, instructing, and tutoring children by parents at home instead of having this done by professional teachers in formal settings.

Although regulation and court rulings vary from one state to another, homeschooling is legal in all fifty American states. Contrary to the growing tendency of parents in the United States to move toward homeschooling in 1999-2012, the rate of homeschooling and the population of those educated in this manner appear to have leveled off in 2012–2016.

This paper aims to explain both phenomena and asks whether a trend is at hand.

***Keywords:** homeschooling; regulations; court rulings; parents in the United States*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The term “homeschooling” denotes the process of educating, instructing, and tutoring children by their parents at home instead of having this done by professional teachers in formal education systems.

Curriculum requirements vary from state to state. Some states require homeschoolers to submit information about their curriculum or lesson plans. Other states just require that certain subjects be taught. While many complete curricula are available from a wide variety of secular and religious sources, many families choose to use a variety of resources to cover the required subjects. Nevertheless, Some states offer public-school-at-home programs [1].

## **CRITIQUE OF FORMAL EDUCATION**

The turbulent atmosphere of western societies during the years after the Second World War which led to the weakening of naïve perception of education and its domineering values as well as academic studies that pointed to the disadvantages of schools aroused a growing critique of education .Critics of school called for educational transformation and reformation and parents

expressed their discontent from the education system by their preference of private schools for their children .

John Caldwell Holt ,a teacher and a lecturer ,is considered as a pioneer educational critic who laid the theoretical foundations of the home-schooling movement .In his first book "How Children Fail" , Holt argued that schools maximized compliance and " good work "at the expense of qualities like curiosity and creativity. The contents of the book were based upon a theory he had developed as a teacher – that the academic failure of schoolchildren was caused primarily by pressure placed on children in schools. This stance remained solid in his second book" How Children Learn ,(1967) "in which he criticized the crowded schools as he believed that children learned best individually or in small groups [2].

Holt's books were followed by other authors whose books questioned the premises and effectiveness of compulsory schooling. The most prominent one was Ivan Illich whose book, "Deschooling Society" (1971) conveyed a critical discourse on education as practised in "modern" economies. In his firm and provocative book, Illich questioned the apparent discrepancies between schooling's promise and its actual outcomes. According to Illich, schooling effectively dulls the student's imagination making it unlikely, even impossible, to imagine meaningful learning experiences occurring in any other context. Learning happens via obligatory attendance to an impersonal relationship in which one has authority over another's interests. In the midst of this criticism, Ivan Illich demanded that society be deschooled; instead, educational webs would heighten the opportunity for each one to transform each moment of his living into one of learning. Illich suggestions of drastic reforms for the education system remained as radical today as they were at the time[3].

## ADVANTAGES & DISADVANTAGES OF HOMESCHOOLING

According to Brown [4], The advantages to homeschooling range in scope and effect. The following advantages are the most commonly cited advantages of homeschooling:

- Control of curriculum – Depending upon the state, one can decide the curriculum upon the child interests.
- Pace of learning – how long the child spends upon a subject is up to one's judgment and the child's capability
- Freedom from external problems and situations such as bullying and peer pressure.
- Control over diet (Home cooking).
- Flexibility of curricula schedule.

As with any human endeavor, there are disadvantages to homeschooling. These include:

- Time – homeschooling can absorb a substantial amount of a parent’s time
- Financial restrictions – In order for one person to remain at home as a teacher, he or she may have to give up their job, effectively reducing the family income
- Too much togetherness – One stays with his/her kids all day, everyday.
- Pupils may have limited involvement in team sports and other extra-curricular activities
- Lack of social interaction – Children do not receive enough exposure to peers. This might affect their ability to develop the correct coping mechanisms required

### HOMESCHOOLING IN U.S.A

Not a new phenomenon, home-based education has been the normative educational practice throughout the world for centuries. Nevertheless, since the early and middle nineteenth century, the state has been held responsible for children’s education in lieu of parents. The passage of compulsory-education laws and their resulting abundance of public schools, coupled with strict truancy laws, has caused the choice of homeschooling to dissipate [5].

Although regulation and court rulings on homeschooling vary from one state to another, homeschooling is legal in all fifty states of the U.S. The legitimacy of homeschooling in the United States has been debated by both advocates and parents since the beginning of compulsory education in 1852.

The first court case concerning parents' fundamental right "to direct the upbringing and education of children under their control" is believed to be *Pierce v. Society of Seven Sisters* (1925). In *Pierce*, the United States Supreme Court ruled that parents should be allowed to choose the type of school in which to enroll their children, public or private, as state (Oregon) law cannot force parents to enroll their children in public schools [6].

In *Wisconsin v. Jonas Yoder* 406 U.S. 205 (1972), the Court upheld Amish parents’ right to keep their children out of public schools for religious reasons. In *Meyer v. Nebraska*, 262 U.S. 390 (1923), the Court acknowledged parents’ elementary right to “establish a home and bring up children” and to “worship God according to the dictates of [their] own conscience” (Shepard, 1990). This combination of rights is the basis for calling homeschooling a fundamental right under the Supreme Court's concept of liberty protected by the due-process clause of the U.S. Constitution (14<sup>th</sup> Amendment). Although the courts have protected parents’ rights since then, they have also defended states’ right to mandate and

extensively regulate educational instruction, as in *Murphy v. State of Arkansas*, 1988 [7].

The aim this paper is to explain both the phenomenon of homeschooling in the US and ask whether a trend is at hand.

## METHOD

Analyzing home schooling statistics. In the Information Age, data is no longer scarce – it’s overpowering. The key is to interpret the statistics implications correctly based upon the introduced graph. The secondary analysis of existing data has become an increasingly popular method of enhancing the overall efficiency of various research to qualified researchers who were not involved in the original research or in the creation of the registry systems.

This article introduces the rationale of existing data taken from U.S. Department of Education, the National Household Education Surveys Program (NHES), 2017.

## RESULTS

### HOMESCHOOLING STATISTICS AND WHAT THEY INDICATE

According to the National Household Education Surveys Program (NHES), conducted by the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), around 1.95 million youngsters are homeschooled in the U.S. today, up from around 1.1 million in 2003. From 1999 to 2012, the percentage of homeschooled students doubled from around 1.7 percent to 3.4 percent. The percent increase, however, appears to have leveled off: in 2016, about 1.7 million students (aged 5–17) were believed to be homeschoolers—3.3 percent of all K–12 students. This rate is not statistically different from the percentage in 2012.

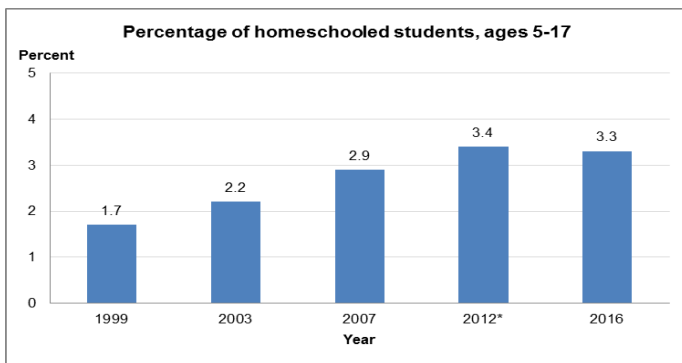


Table 1

Source: U.S. Department of Education, the National Household Education Surveys Program (NHES), 2017, [8].

The most important reason for homeschooling in 2016, as reported to NHES, was “concern about the school environment, such as safety, drugs, or negative peer pressure,” reported by 34 percent of parents of homeschooled students [8]. This was also the most common reason selected by parents in 2012. Parents who view the family as the main socialization agent fear the harmful impact of other agents. Concerned that several elements of the conventional schooling system would emotionally and physically endanger their children, they create safe-haven schools for their own offspring, providing them with a supportive and compassionate environment for learning.

The second most common reason for homeschooling, as reported by homeschooled students’ parents in 2016, was dissatisfaction with academic instruction at other schools (17 percent of parents). Academically oriented parents favor homeschooling because they deem the conventional school incompetent to teach diverse populations generally and special-needs and gifted children particularly.

The third-most important reason for homeschooling in 2016 was the desire to provide religious instruction (16 percent). Religious parents oppose the public schools’ secular orientation, believing it their family’s right to take responsibility for their children’s morals.

## CONCLUSION

Contrary to the growing tendency of parents to move toward homeschooling in 1999–2012, the rates of homeschooling seemed to have leveled off in 2012–2016. Although there are many individualistic reasons why parents choose to homeschool their children or send their children to public schools, there tend to be three broad categories of rationales for homeschooling: (1) empirical — claims of greater efficiency, effectiveness, or pedagogical appropriateness; and (2) ideological – often informed by a religious or political disposition; (3) Socio – Economic Status - individuals or group’s position within a hierarchical social structure. Since the socioeconomic status depends on a combination of variables, including occupation, education, wealth, income and place of residence, it may suit better the tendency to separatism.

The reasons for this, it seems, lie in the economic realm, both in worldwide processes and in personal wealth. In the first respect, the globalization process manifests primarily in economic interaction and integration associated with social and cultural aspects. Schools appear answer these demands more effectively than do the isolated safe havens of homes. The second realm, households’ economic situation, should be viewed through the lens of statistical data that mirror the homeschooling rates in 2012–2016. Namely, despite impressive GDP and

unemployment statistics, many workers have felt scanty recovery in their wages and job security since the financial crisis in 2008. As a case in point, employment rates 64.7 percent in 2012 and 63.5 percent in 2016. Specific to homeschooling, the number of homeschoolers whose households had annual income exceeding \$100,000 declined from 367,000 in 2012 to 319,000 in 2016, and the population of homeschoolers in households composed of a single parent (who is also in labor force) plunged from 274,000 in 2012 to only 189,000 in 2016 [8].

Only the release of a new round of homeschooling statistics for 2020 may determine whether the stagnation in 2016 marked the onset of a trend or represented a temporary decline.

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