



# Home-School Nation

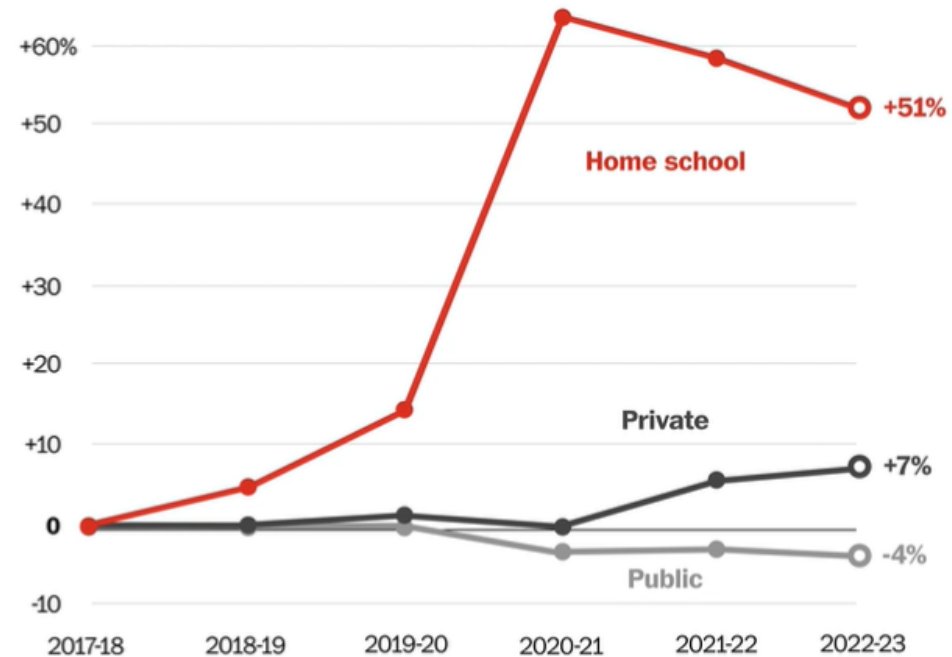
A Washington Post series

# National Data Analysis

HOME-SCHOOL NATION

## Home schooling's rise from fringe to fastest-growing form of education

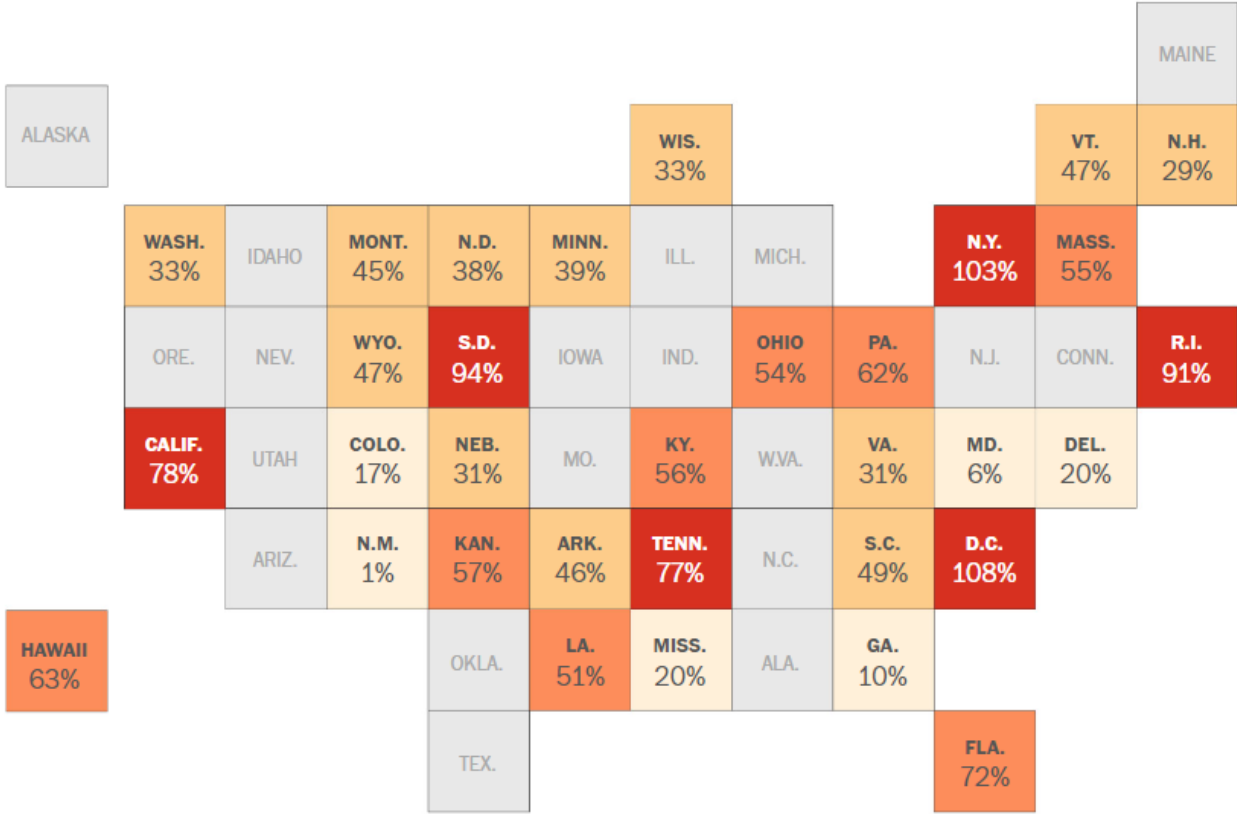
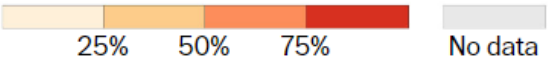
A district-by-district look at home schooling's explosive growth, which a Post analysis finds has far outpaced the rate at private and public schools



By [Peter Jamison](#), [Laura Meckler](#), [Prayag Gordy](#), [Clara Ence Morse](#) and [Chris Alcantara](#)  
Oct. 31 at 7:00 a.m.



Percentage increase in total home-school student enrollment since the 2017-18 school year



Note: Percentages are through the 2022-23 school year. Rhode Island, Pennsylvania and Tennessee are through the 2021-22 school year, the most recent data available.

Percentage increase in home-schooling by state

## Look up home-school numbers in your district

Search by district, state or Zip code

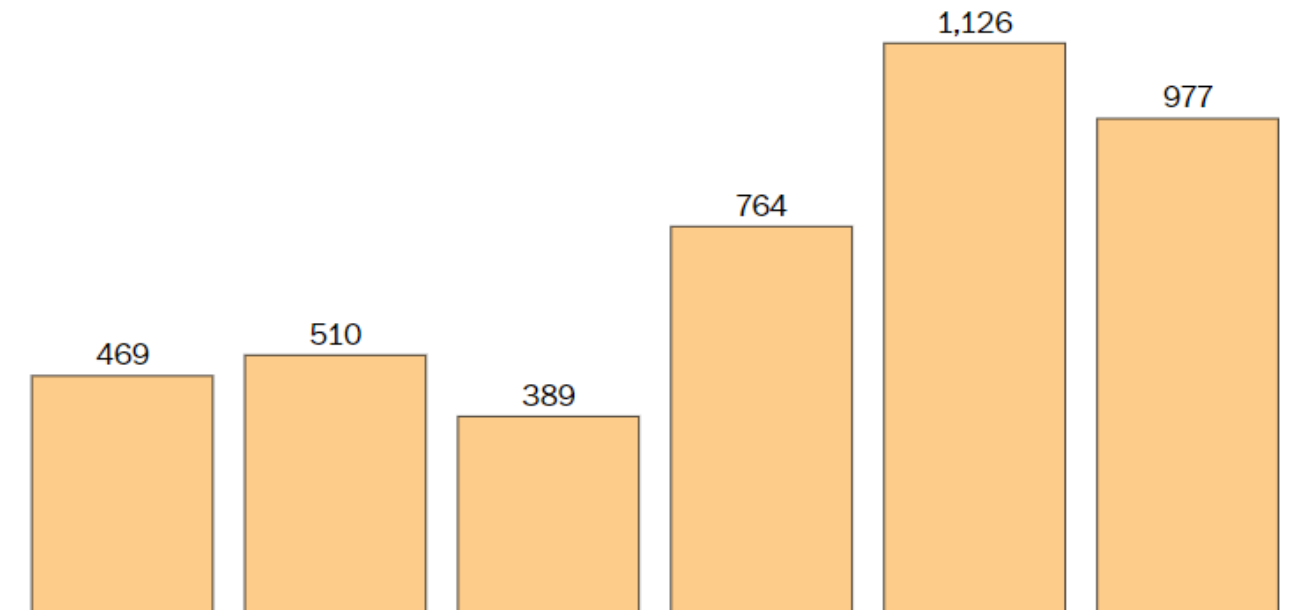
Ex: District of Columbia Public Schools, D.C., 20005



Data is available for 6,517 districts across 29 states and D.C.

Washington, D.C.'s school district saw a **108% increase** in home-school enrollment since the 2017-18 school year. There were 88,626 students enrolled districtwide in the 2021-22 school year.

### Total number of home-school students



Look-up  
tool for  
local  
districts



HOME-SCHOOL NATION

# The revolt of the Christian home- schoolers

They were taught that public schools are evil. Then a Virginia couple defied their families and enrolled their kids.

## First story in the series

About 1,200  
responses to  
our reader  
call-out

The Washington Post

## Tell The Post: Are you a home-schooling parent? Were you home-schooled as a child?

Home schooling has risen in popularity across the U.S., and we want to hear about your experiences. What went well? What didn't? We are interested in hearing from current and former home-school parents and students.

Our names are Peter Jamison (<https://wapo.st/peter-jamison>) and Laura Meckler (<https://wapo.st/laura-meckler>), and we're reporters at The Post. We are writing a series of stories about home schooling and are eager to learn from you.

We will not publish any part of your response without following up, so please provide your contact information below. Fields marked with an asterisk are required.

By submitting, you agree to:

- Our submission and discussion guidelines: [wapo.st/Discussionsubmissionguidelines](https://wapo.st/Discussionsubmissionguidelines)
- Terms of Service: [wapo.st/Termssofservice](https://wapo.st/Termssofservice)
- Privacy policy: [wapo.st/Privacypolicy](https://wapo.st/Privacypolicy)

\* Required

1. Why did you or your parents choose to home school?

Enter your answer

G	H
<p>Did you or your parents choose to home school?            Parents wanted to homeschool because they did not trust the public school system's ability to teach children as individuals who have different needs. They would never have been able to afford private school.</p>	<p>Tell us about your experience with home schooling.            Postpartum depression as well as seasonal affective disorder. A lot of factors went into my health and counseling, but I think getting counseling/therapy could have helped a long time ago.</p>
<p>Parents chose to homeschool for religious reasons. We were closely tied to the IFB and they wanted to protect us from "the dangers of public school"</p>	<p>I never set foot in a public school except for two weeks of drivers ed one semester. I took various curriculums over the years, including Alpha and Omega (also known as Home Schooling) and Bob Jones. My brother was later educated through Classical Conversations and I taught myself. I had videos to watch each day (that I wasn't forced to watch) and papers, etc. I also graded all my own work during this time and reported my grades to the Academy (I would fill everything out and my mom would sign it before I sent it).</p>
<p>Parents chose to homeschool because of religious reasons. They didn't want "government schools" (what they called public schools) teaching us things that went counter to their beliefs.</p>	<p>It was horrible. We spent the first hour singing Sunday school songs and reading the Bible. My mom handed me a stack of text books and told me to figure it out while she worked on solitaire on the computer. I'm 33 and I'm still angry at my parents for withholding education from me. As a child I loved it because I was told daily how great it was. Public school was a nightmare.</p>

Kept track of responses via spreadsheet

# Rise of the microschool ... and more



HOME-SCHOOL NATION

**For many home-schoolers, parents are  
no longer doing the teaching**



For many years, home schooling has conjured images of parents and children working together at the kitchen table. The new world of home schooling often looks very different: **Pods, co-ops, microschoools and hybrid schools**, often outside the home, as well as real-time and recorded virtual instruction. For a growing number of students, education now exists somewhere on a continuum between school and home, in person and online, professional and amateur.

An explosion of new options

**New financial and ideological forces** have revolutionized the broader home-school landscape:

\* **Government:** About a dozen states allow families to use taxpayer funds for home-school expenses. Education Savings Accounts, or ESAs, direct thousands of dollars to families that opt out of public school, whether the destination is a private school or their own homes.

\* **Nonprofits:** School-choice advocates are directing millions of dollars in charitable giving toward home-school organizations — a convergence of two powerful but traditionally separate movements.

\* **Venture capitalists:** Tens of millions of dollars invested in new businesses to serve what they see as a potentially huge market.

Follow the money!



Logan is on the autism spectrum and never had friends in public school, where he was regularly bullied. At Rose's microschool that never happens, even when he shows up wearing his banana costume, which he regularly does, his mother said. (Cheryl Senter for The Washington Post)

# Voices of home-school families

When The Post asked readers to describe their home-schooling experiences, nearly 1,100 responded. Here's what they told us.

By [Praying Gordy](#) and [Peter Jamison](#)

Updated August 18, 2023 at 5:47 p.m. EDT | Published August 17, 2023 at 7:00 a.m. EDT



Ella Bergeson lives in a household with family members who are chronically ill. Her parents decided to home-school her out of concerns about covid. (Amanda Andrade-Rhoades for The Washington Post)

[Listen](#) 31:00 [Share](#) [Save](#)

One parent was fed up with an elementary school's punitive approach to dealing with her 6-year-old son's special needs. Another, home-schooled herself, reluctantly followed the same path with her daughter because of fears about her family's vulnerabilities to covid. A third wanted to impart Christian values while exposing her kids to the food of the Philippines and the museums of Madrid.

Their children are among the hundreds of thousands who have started home-schooling over the last three years — the most significant

# Five sketches- of home-school families



Kaylee Parkin, 12, looks for tardigrades in a microscope while her 10-year-old sister, Sarah, stands behind her at a park in Pennsylvania. (Family photo)

## **Jack Parkin, 46**

*Home-schooling his 10-year-old daughter, 12-year-old daughter and 14-year-old son in Whitehall Borough, Pa.*

“When my son was preparing for preschool, we decided to look around and see what the options were. I had heard about Montessori schools, and it really sounded appealing to me as someone who really did not like public school growing up.

The thing that really stuck out to me during the interview process is they

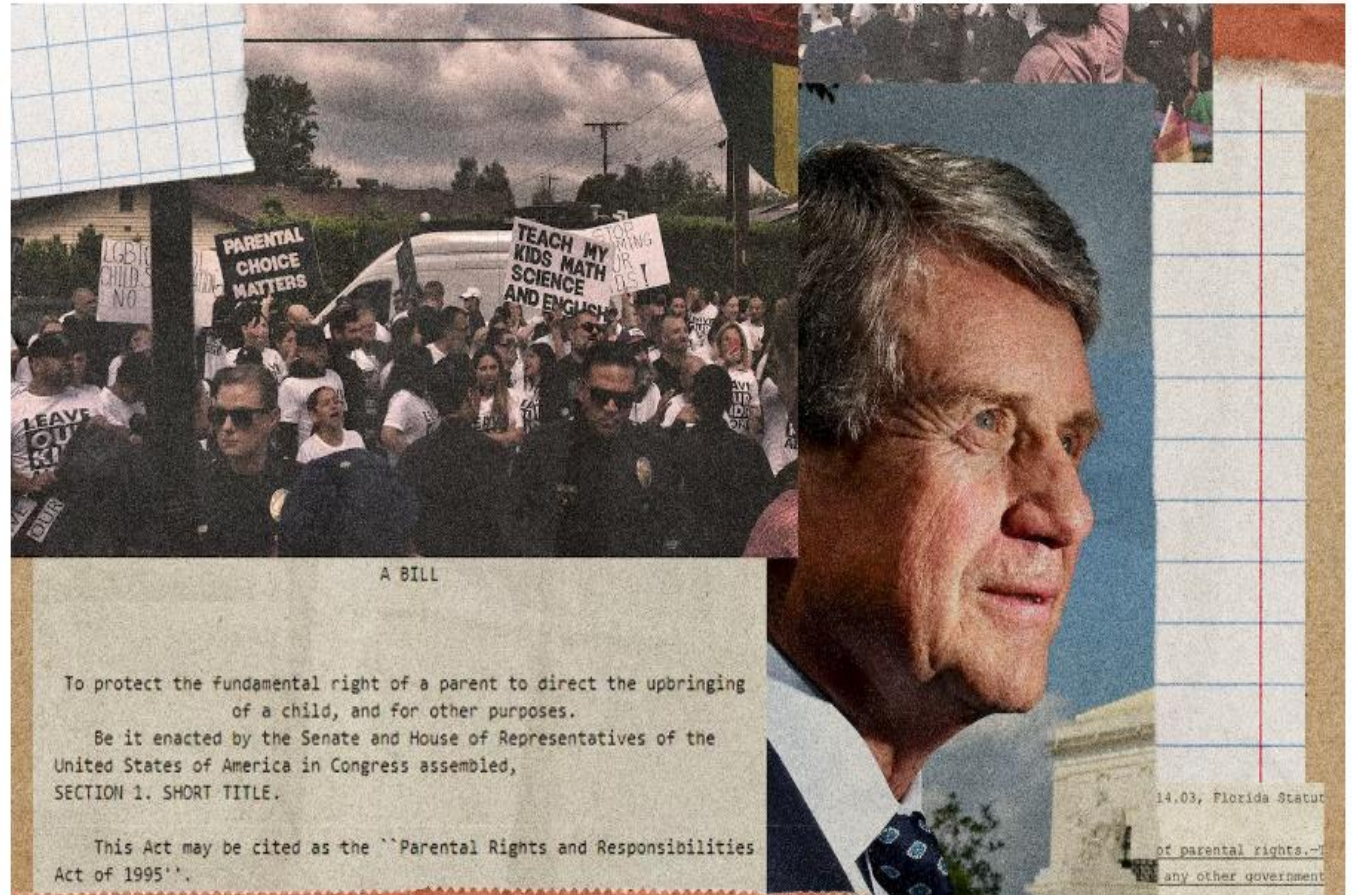
# The Christian home-schooler who made 'parental rights' a GOP rallying cry

On a private call with Christian millionaires, home-schooling pioneer Michael Farris pushed for a strategy aimed at siphoning billions of tax dollars from public schools

By [Emma Brown](#) and [Peter Jamison](#)

August 29, 2023 at 7:00 a.m. EDT

Examination  
of Michael  
Farris and  
today's  
politics



A BILL

To protect the fundamental right of a parent to direct the upbringing of a child, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,  
SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Parental Rights and Responsibilities Act of 1995".

14.03, Florida Statute

of parental rights...  
for any other government

# Home schooling today is less religious and more diverse, poll finds

Fear of school shootings, bullying and indoctrination helped fuel a pandemic-era boom in home schooling, according to an exclusive Washington Post-Schar School survey

By [Laura Meckler](#), [Peter Jamison](#), [Emily Guskin](#) and [Scott Clement](#)

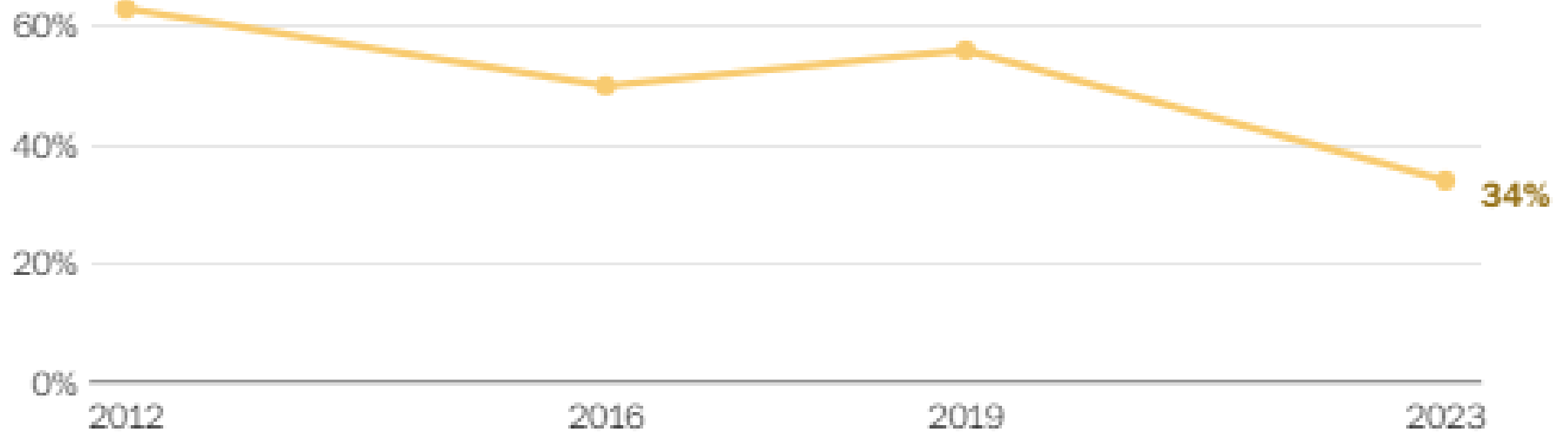
September 26, 2023 at 6:00 a.m. EDT



A  
Washington  
Post poll,  
partnering  
with the  
Schar School

## Religious instruction has dropped sharply as a reason for home schooling

Percent of home-school parents who prefer to teach their child at home to provide religious instruction

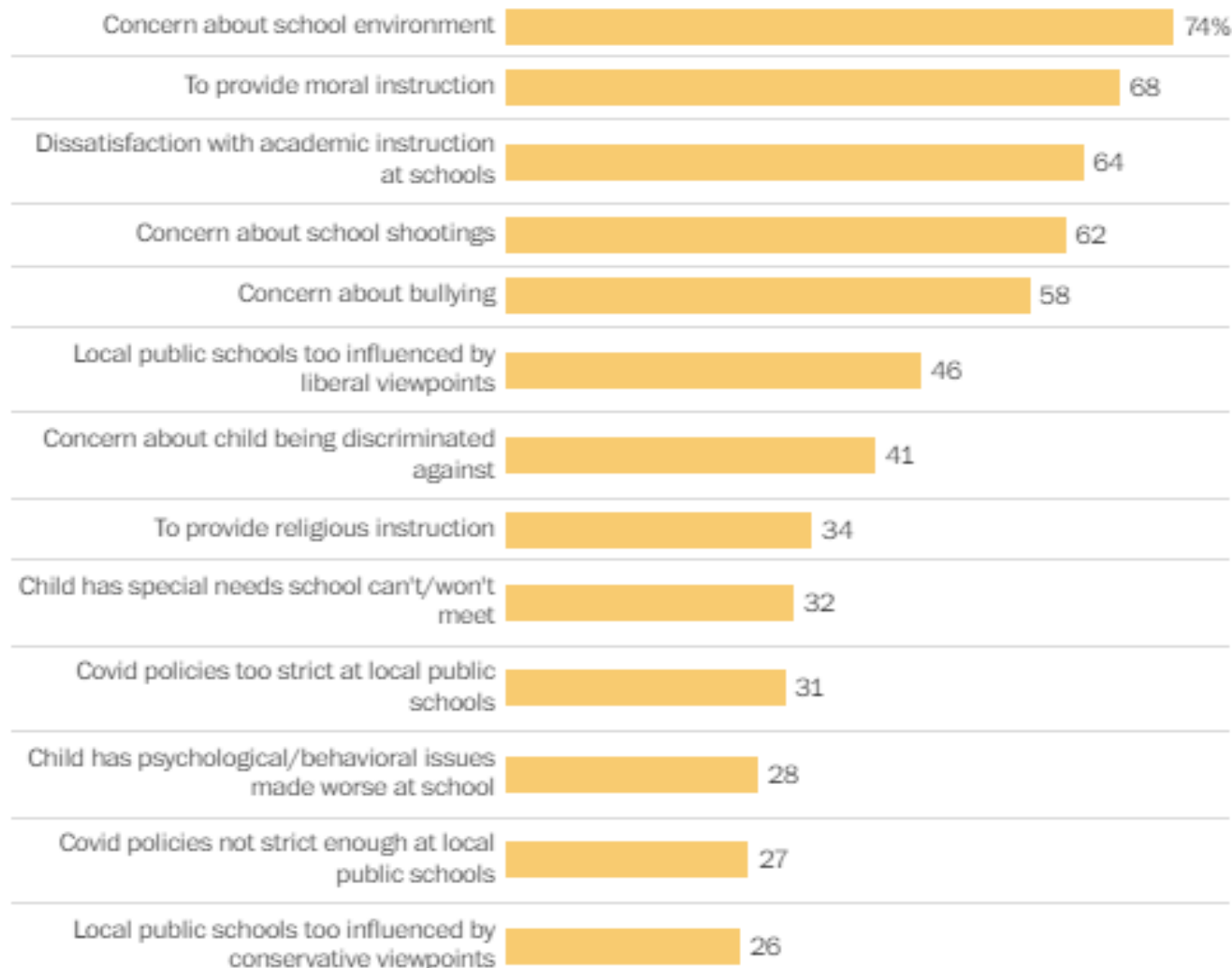


Source: Aug. 1-10, 2023, Washington Post-Schar School poll of 504 parents with home-schooled



## Reasons parents choose to home-school their children

Q: Thinking about some specific reasons, did your family choose to home-school this child because:

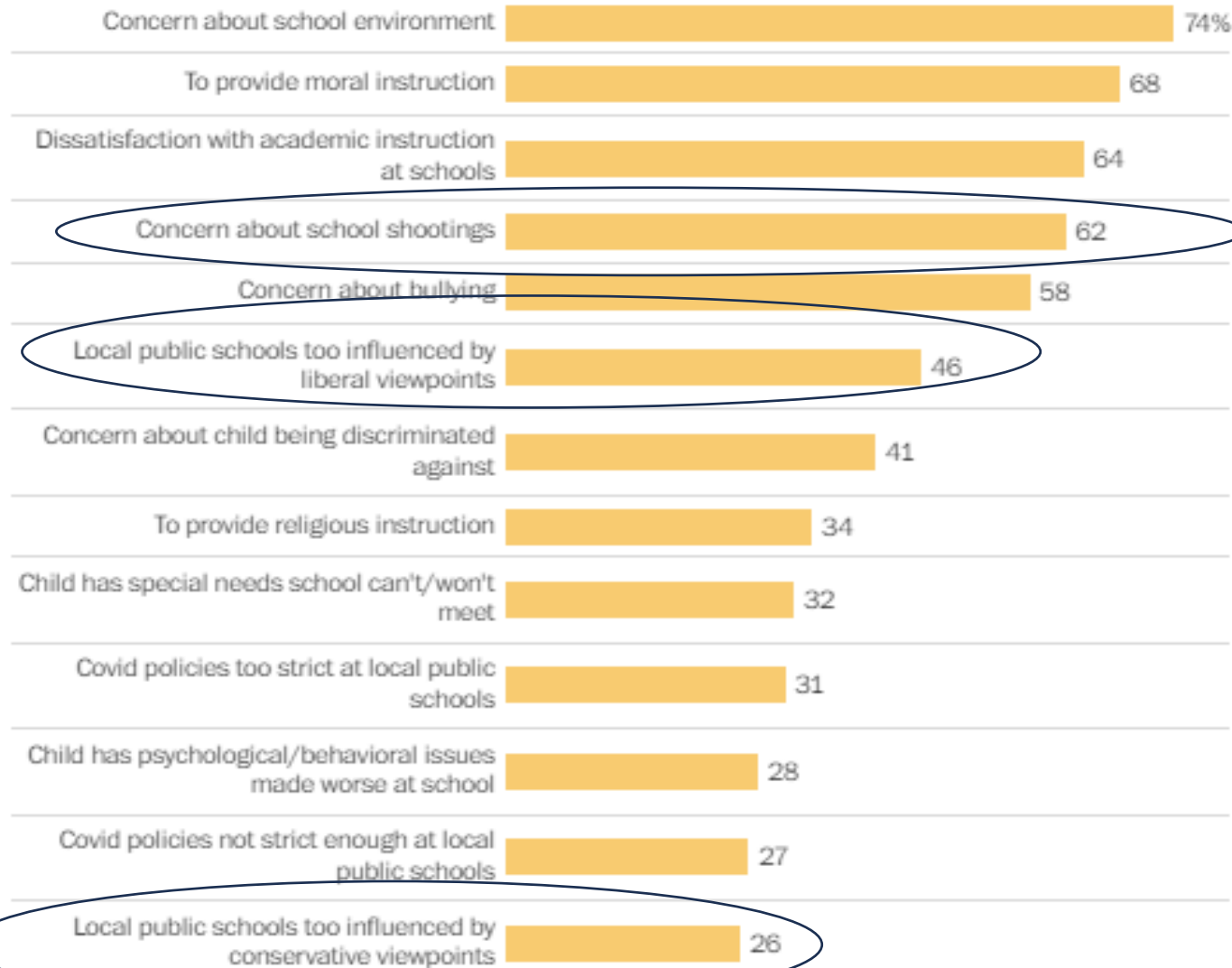


Source: Aug. 1-10, 2023, Washington Post-Schar School poll of 504 parents with home-schooled children with a margin error of +/- 6 percentage points.

EMILY GUSKIN / THE WASHINGTON POST

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EMILY GUSKIN / THE WASHINGTON POST

Takeaways  
pulled  
together  
findings from  
data story and  
poll

HOME-SCHOOL NATION

# The Post examined home schooling's surge in the U.S. Here's what we found.

By [Laura Meckler](#) and [Peter Jamison](#)

October 31, 2023 at 7:00 a.m. EDT



Savannah Bonilla helps her sons Felix, Cohen and Zander with their assignments in the basement turned classroom in their home in Altoona, Iowa. (Kathryn Gambile for the Washington Post)

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In March 2020, an involuntary form of home schooling — remote learning — was thrust upon American families everywhere. Millions could not wait to get their kids back to school, but for hundreds of thousands of others, the idea of teaching their kids at home was

- 1 Even as the pandemic eased, home schooling persisted
- 2 Home schooling comes off the fringe
- 3 Where is home schooling on the rise? All sorts of places.



# Takeaways

- **Even as the pandemic eased, home schooling persisted**
- **Home schooling comes off the fringe**
- **Where is home schooling on the rise? All sorts of places.**
- **Religion recedes as a home-school driver**
- **Home-schoolers are more diverse than ever**
- **Parents do less and less of the teaching**

# What home schooling hides: A boy tortured and starved by his stepmom

Roman Lopez was 11 when he went missing. His years of torment were concealed by home schooling.

A harrowing  
story of  
child torture  
and murder



**Mystery surrounds  
Placerville boy's death**

**Sibling interviews led to murder  
charge for Roman Lopez's parents**

**Placerville police arrest parents  
of child found dead last year**

How do  
home-  
schooled  
children fare  
academically?

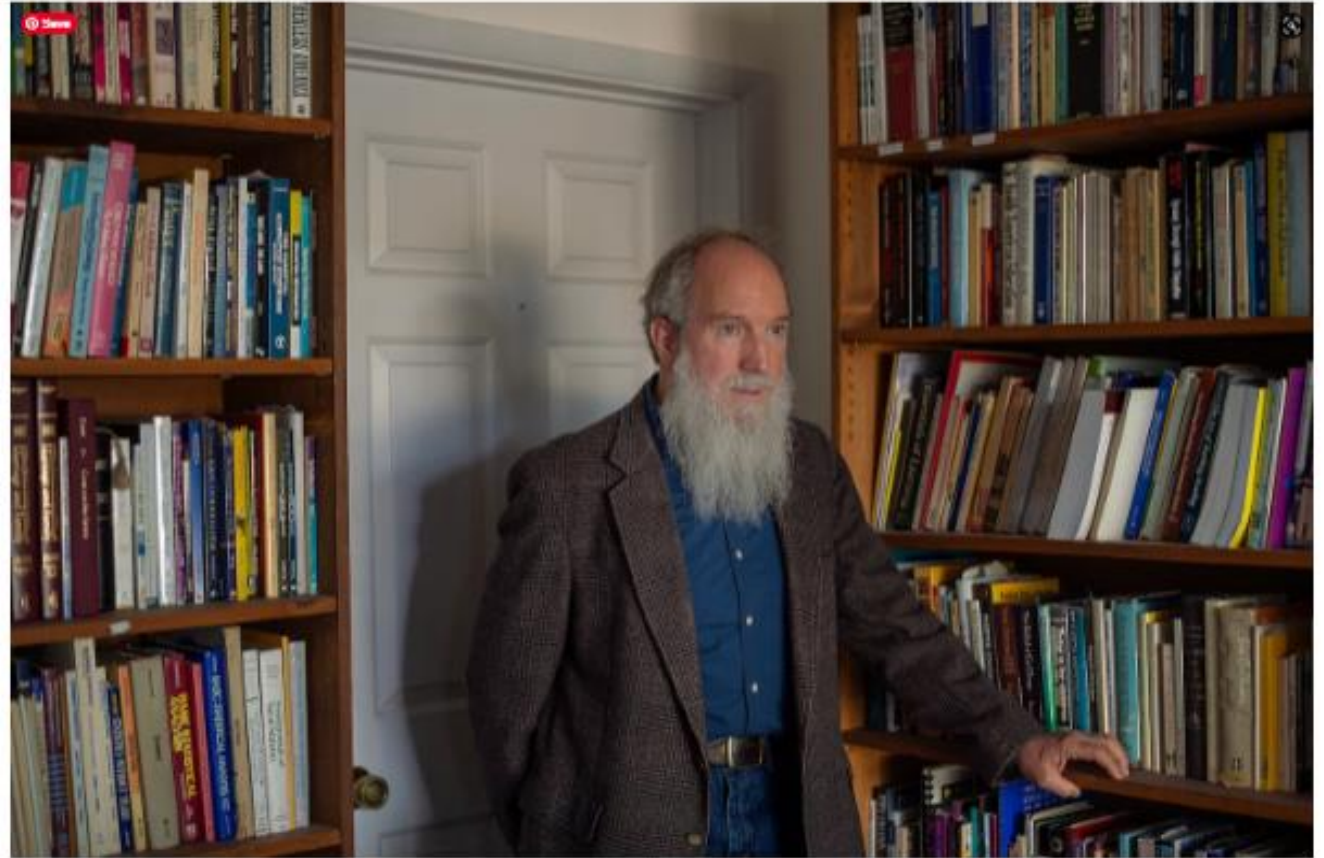
# How a true believer's flawed research helped legitimize home schooling

Brian Ray says home-schooled students do better. His daughter tells a different story.



By [Laura Meckler](#)

December 11, 2023 at 6:00 a.m. PST



Brian Ray, who heads the National Home Education Research Institute, in his office in Salem, Ore. (Amanda Lucior for The Washington Post)

[Listen](#) 22 min [Share](#) [Comment](#) 5233 [Save](#)

Brian Ray has spent the last three decades as one of the nation's top

# Research results were best summarize d like this

## Studies on home schooling show mixed results

LOCATION/YEAR	FINDING
U.S., nationwide (2004)	Home-schoolers performed higher on the SAT college entrance exam than public school students, but the advantage shrunk when differences in family background were controlled.
Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, Canada (2011)	Home-schooled children in structured settings – for instance with organized lesson plans - scored higher on tests than public school children, but those in unstructured settings scored lower.
U.S., nationwide (2011 & 2014, 2018)	Home-schooled students were less likely to study calculus, physics, chemistry and foreign languages than those in public high schools, reported lower SAT scores, attended less selective colleges for shorter periods and worked in jobs with lower pay.
U.S., nationwide (2014)	Home-schoolers ages 12 and up participating in the National Surveys of Drug Use and Health were two to three times as likely as public schoolers to report being behind a grade level.
Kentucky (2018)	Home-schoolers who returned to public school scored about the same as other students in reading but were behind in math.

# The dismantling of home-school regulations... and a new frontier

HOME-SCHOOL NATION

## Home-schoolers dismantled state oversight. Now they fear pushback.

Some states are considering new regulations amid efforts by school-choice advocates to give home-school families taxpayer funding

By [Peter Jamison](#) and [Laura Meckler](#)  
December 28, 2023 at 7:00 a.m. EST



Ohio state Rep. Marilyn John (R) co-sponsored a school choice bill that would have given public money to home schoolers as well as private school students. The state's leading home school organization opposed the bill, fearing it would bring new regulations. (Maddie McGarvey for The Washington Post)

[Listen](#) 14 min [Share](#) [Comment](#) 5250 [Save](#)

When Melanie Elsey stepped up to the lectern at the Ohio Statehouse in April, it looked like a triumphant season for home-schoolers.



# Story ideas to consider

- Data from your area: Has home-schooling increased and where?
- State regulations: Do they exist?
- Local enforcement: Is there any real scrutiny?
- New flavors: microschoools, pods and more formal co-ops
- Impact on local public schools
- Possible abuse cases
- Local outcomes data



Questions?

Feel free to contact us with questions:

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[Peter.Jamison@washpost.com](mailto:Peter.Jamison@washpost.com)

