



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

One-third of U.S. Adults Know Someone Who Homeschools Their Child

Two-thirds of adults cite dissatisfaction with academic instruction as a main reason why they think parents in general or they themselves homeschool their children

ROCHESTER, N.Y. – April 14, 2006 – The passage of the No Child Left Behind Act has focused attention not only on public education in the United States, but on alternatives to public education as well. One such alternative is homeschooling, a growing trend in recent years¹. One-third (34%) of U.S. adults know someone who currently homeschools their child. Among those households with children who are old enough to have attended school, eight percent report that their child has been homeschooled at some point in their education.

These are the results of a nationwide Harris Poll of 2,435 U.S. adults surveyed online by Harris Interactive® between March 8 and 14, 2006.

Reasons for homeschooling

U.S. adults think that parents' main reasons or say their own main reasons for homeschooling their children are dissatisfaction with academic instruction (65%), to provide religious or moral instruction (60%), and concern about safety at school or on the school bus (53%). Half of adults (51%) say one of their main reasons for homeschooling or think that other parents homeschool their children is because of dissatisfaction with state or government regulations at school.

Party identification and homeschooling

Republicans are more likely than Democrats to know someone who currently homeschools their child (40% vs. 29%). Party identification also distinguishes adults' views on parents' motivations for homeschooling their children. Republicans are more likely than Democrats to cite religious or moral instruction (69% vs. 56%) and student behavior problems (50% vs. 43%) as main reasons behind homeschooling. In contrast, Democrats are more likely than Republicans to cite schools being too crowded to provide individual attention (44% vs. 35%) and educating children with special needs (42% vs. 33%) as main reasons for homeschooling.

The emphasis on academic instruction in the reasons for homeschooling is also reflected in the perceived quality of education that homeschooling provides, compared to that of U.S. public schools. U.S. adults are

¹ The U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2005). The Condition of Education 2005, NCEES 2005-094, Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.

more likely to rate the quality of education provided by homeschooling as very good or excellent than that provided by public schools at both the elementary and secondary levels, although neither is rated very highly. One-quarter of adults rate homeschool education as excellent or very good compared to fewer than two in 10 adults who rate public school education this highly at the elementary (25% vs. 17%) or the secondary (23% vs. 14%) levels.

TABLE 1
THOSE WHO KNOW SOMEONE WHO CURRENTLY HOMESCHOOLS THEIR CHILD

“Not including you or your spouse/partner, do you know anyone who currently homeschools their child, that is, part or full-time schooling at home instead of in a public or private school?”

Base: All Adults

	All Adults	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
	%	%	%	%
Yes	34	40	29	35
No	66	60	71	65

TABLE 2
WHAT TYPES OF SCHOOLS CHILD HAS ATTENDED

“If applicable, what types of schools has your child(ren) ever attended?”

Base: All Adults

	All Adults	Households with Children Old Enough to Attend School
	%	%
Public school	57	92
Private school, church-related	13	20
Private school, not church-related	5	8
My child(ren) is/was homeschooled	2	8
Charter school	2	7
I don't have a child(ren) or my child is not old enough to attend school yet	39	-

**TABLE 3
REASONS FOR HOMESCHOOLING CHILDREN**

“Why is/was your child(ren) homeschooled? What do you think are the main reasons why parents homeschool their children?”

Base: All Adults

	All Adults	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
	%	%	%	%
Dissatisfaction with academic instruction	65	68	64	68
To provide religious or moral instruction	60	69	56	58
Concern about safety at school (or on the bus)	53	50	55	52
Dissatisfaction with state/government regulations at school	51	51	50	54
Student behavior problems at public/private schools (or on the bus)	47	50	43	51
To provide individualized teaching	42	43	43	42
Schools were too crowded to provide individual attention	41	35	44	43
Child(ren) has special needs/disabilities	39	33	42	41
Too much attention trying to maintain discipline and too little attention to true learning	37	36	39	37
Public/private school does not challenge students	29	30	28	32
To improve family unity	21	23	20	20
Want year-round schooling	13	14	12	14
It was more convenient due to transportation issues	12	11	13	11
Could not get into desired school	10	7	12	9
My child(ren) stopped enjoying learning at public/private school.	9	8	9	10

*Only responses with 1% or more listed.

**TABLE 4
EVALUATION OF QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED IN THE UNITED STATES**

“Overall, how would you rate the quality of education provided by the following in the United States?”
Percent saying excellent/very good

Base: All Adults

	All Adults
	%
Homeschooling, grades K-6	25
Homeschooling, grades 7-12	23
Public schools, grades K-6	17
Public schools, grades 7-12	14

Methodology

The Harris Poll[®] was conducted online within the United States between March 8 and 14, 2006 among 2,435 adults (aged 18 and over). Figures for age, sex, race, education, region and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

All surveys are subject to several sources of error. These include: sampling error (because only a sample of a population is interviewed); measurement error due to question wording and/or question order, deliberately or unintentionally inaccurate responses, nonresponse (including refusals), interviewer effects (when live interviewers are used) and weighting.

With one exception (sampling error) the magnitude of the errors that result cannot be estimated. There is, therefore, no way to calculate a finite "margin of error" for any survey and the use of these words should be avoided.

With pure probability samples, with 100 percent response rates, it is possible to calculate the probability that the sampling error (but not other sources of error) is not greater than some number. With a pure probability sample of 2,435 adults one could say with a ninety-five percent probability that the overall results have a sampling error of +/- 2 percentage points. Sampling error for the sub-samples of Republicans (774), Democrats (814), Independents (642) and households with school-aged children (460) is higher and varies. However that does not take other sources of error into account. This online survey is not based on a probability sample and therefore no theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

These statements conform to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

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About Harris Interactive[®]

Harris Interactive Inc. (www.harrisinteractive.com), based in Rochester, New York, is the 13th largest and the fastest-growing market research firm in the world, most widely known for *The Harris Poll*[®] and for its pioneering leadership in the online market research industry. Long recognized by its clients for delivering insights that enable confident business decisions, the Company blends the science of innovative research with the art of strategic consulting to deliver knowledge that leads to measurable and enduring value.

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To become a member of the Harris Poll OnlineSM and be invited to participate in future online surveys, go to www.harrispollonline.com.

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