



SNAPSHOT

August 19, 2024

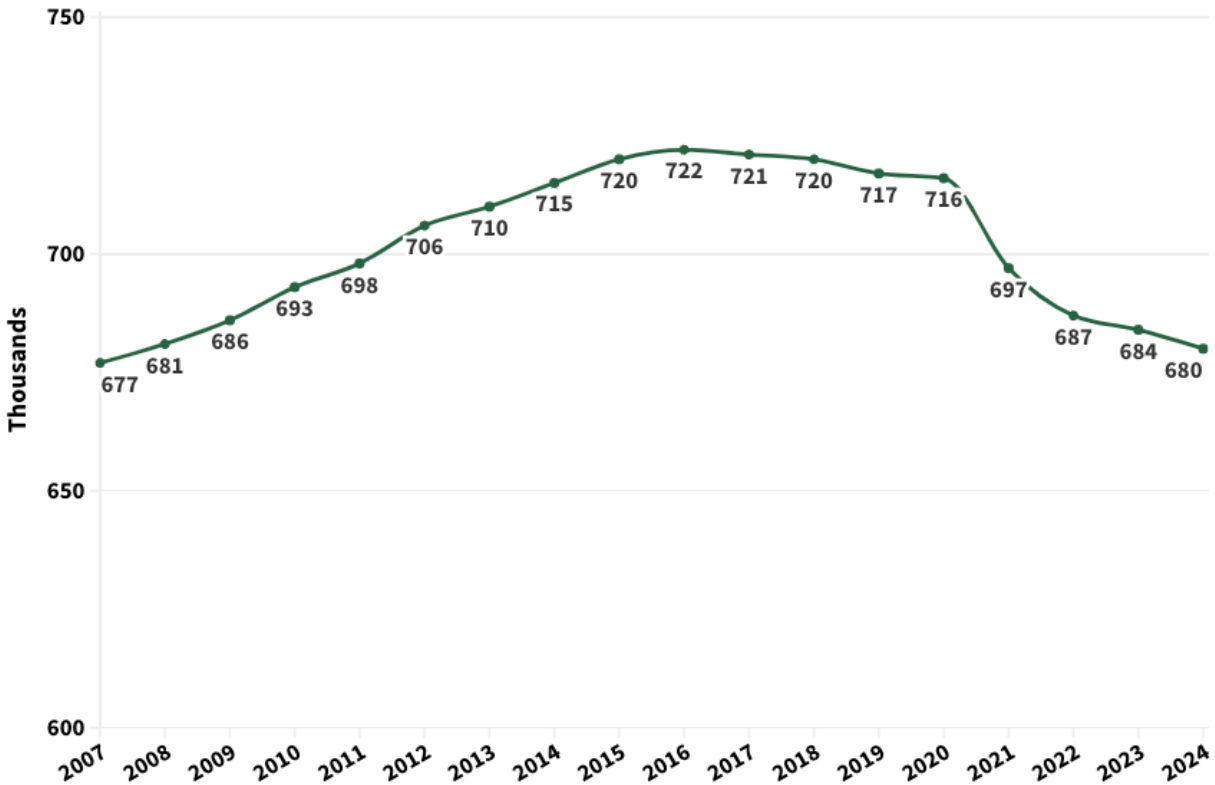
Back to School: Public School Enrollment and Demographics

With the start of the new school year, students are returning to emptier classrooms as the total enrollment in Louisiana's public schools declines to its lowest level in 16 years.

Louisiana had 680,023 students enrolled in K-12 public schools in February 2024, according to the most recent data from the Louisiana Department of Education. That's lower than enrollment in February 2008, when 681,017 students were attending the schools. The numbers include students in public charter schools.

Enrollment grew yearly until 2017, when Louisiana started seeing annual drops in student count. The state's public elementary and secondary schools have lost 41,174 in the years since then, nearly equivalent to the population of Alexandria, the data shows.

Louisiana K-12 Public School Enrollment 2007-2024



Source: Louisiana Department of Education

Louisiana has seen eight consecutive years of declining enrollment, with the steepest drop-off in 2020 during the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Across the last four years, public school enrollment has dropped by 36,393 students, or 5%.

Several factors could explain this downward trend in enrollment.

Louisiana's population has fallen in recent years with more than 75,000 fewer state residents since 2020, according to data from the [U.S. Census Bureau](#). However, the number of school-aged children in Louisiana has been shrinking even longer, declining by 140,000 people or 13% since 2000, the census data shows.

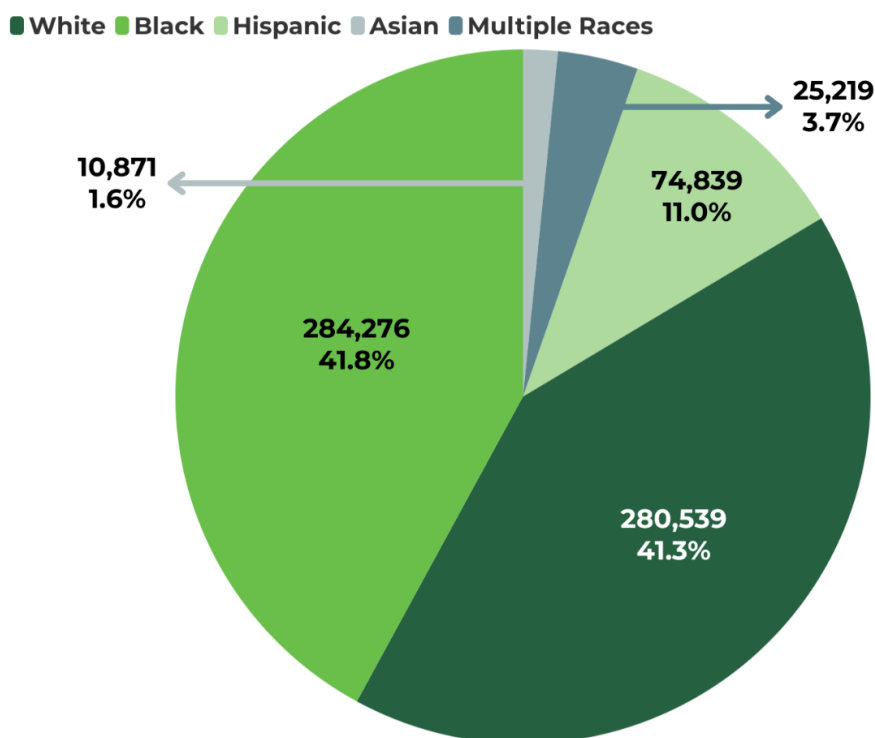
Meanwhile, many parents turned to homeschooling their children during the pandemic, rapidly increasing the numbers of students in such programs. State education department data shows home study enrollment has increased over the past 10 years by 7,251 students, a 74% increase. In the 2023-24 school year, 17,049 students were homeschooled, according to the data.

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates as many as 6% of Louisiana's school-aged children receive their education through homeschooling, according to its Household Pulse Survey data.

Public schools aren't the only ones losing students.

While private school enrollment has returned to pre-pandemic levels, with roughly 110,000 students in attendance, the number of nonpublic school students has fallen across the last decade. The state education department said parochial and other nonpublic schools have 10% fewer students in attendance than they did 10 years ago, a decline of more than 12,000 students.

Racial Demographics of K-12 Public School Students, February 2024



Of the more than 650,000 students enrolled in Louisiana public schools, Black and White students represent similar percentages of the population. Other minority students account for the remaining 16% of enrollment.

As of February 2024, Black students had slightly surpassed White students in enrollment numbers, making up the largest racial group attending Louisiana public schools.

Hispanic students were the only ethnic or racial group to grow in enrollment over the last seven years, with a 59% increase. Almost 4,000 new Hispanic students have enrolled in Louisiana public schools yearly since 2017.

Source: Louisiana Department of Education

About 73% of the students attending the state's public schools, about 495,000 children, are classified as economically disadvantaged.

Louisiana law defines students as economically disadvantaged if they are eligible for food assistance programs for low-income families, Medicaid, reduced-price school meals or other government-financed programs for needy families; are an English language learner whose first language is not English; are identified as homeless or a migrant; or are incarcerated or have been placed in state custody.

More information about public school enrollment is available on the Louisiana Department of Education's data center website at <https://www.louisianabelieves.com/resources/library/student-attributes>.

Part 1 of a three-part series looking at public K-12 education and higher education in Louisiana.