

# **Are homeschoolers prepared for life?**

Academic Preparation and Life Outcomes of Homeschoolers

## **Panelists**

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[Post-Pandemic Future of Homeschooling Conference](#)

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## Spoiler alert

*Are homeschoolers prepared for life?*

...is **not answerable** with currently available empirical data.

[Analogy: *Does seeing a doctor help?*]

## Averages & demography

- Today we discuss **averages** among millions of families homeschooling
- Averages are **not** individuals
- We're interested in averages because they can help make **policy and governance** better
- We also discuss **demography** because we care about whether homeschooling is available to everyone



*Tanya Hayles, with her son Jackson, 7. Hayles, founder of Black Moms Connection, an online network of more than 16,000 Black mothers with chapters across North America and Asia (Courtesy of Tanya Hayles [via AP](#)), 2021.*

# Empirical research & homeschooling

- There are many **snapshot**, **convenience sample**, and **small-n** studies of homeschooling
- Almost no studies are **generalizable**
- We care about **overall outcomes** among homeschoolers... but there are no national-level, longitudinal datasets
- We also care about estimating **treatment effects** of homeschooling - uniquely challenging given choice mechanisms & lack of counterfactuals



Sharice Bradley leads her children in a homeschool history lesson on Friday, April 23, 2021 in Eagle River. From left, Connor, 5, Elara, 8, Bradley, Eden, 11, Kael, 12, and Titan the pug. ([Loren Holmes / ADN](#))

## Motivations & outcomes

Outcome measures should align with child and family motivations ([Wearne, 2020](#); [Dwyer & Peters, 2019](#)).

- Motivations to homeschool **don't necessarily match outcome goals.**
- Motivations to homeschool **may change over time.**
- Motivations to homeschool **may vary between parents and students.**



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## Motivations & outcomes

At the moment, we have no clear answers on either the **absolute performance of homeschoolers** or the **treatment effect of homeschooling** in the following domains:

- Religious or moral outcome goals;
- Personal safety outcome goals;
- Outcomes among students homeschooling due to particular student needs (e.g., health, specialized educational needs);
- Outcome goals driven by cultural, pedagogic, or idiosyncratic / individualized interest goals; or
- Career choices



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## Overall P-12 academic achievement

- On average, no clear evidence of **aggregate achievement gains/losses or causal impacts** attributable to homeschooling (we **need more/better data**) (Kunzman & Gaither ([2020](#));
- *Ibid*: “[T]he normal curve of homeschooler academic achievement may have a **wider distribution** spread than that of students attending institutional schools” (p. 272).
- Among those who homeschool, homeschoolers may perform slightly **better on verbal tests than they do on mathematics** (*ibid.*; Lazerus, 2017; Anthony & Burroughs, 2012; Yu et al., 2016; Belfield, 2005; Quaqish, 2007).



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## High school graduation, college GPA & college graduation

- “High school graduation” not clearly defined for homeschoolers; **no consensus on overall graduation rates or treatment effects**
- Some concern about a “**dropout loophole**” for those still of compulsory attendance age that may corrupt understanding of homeschooling ([Coleman, 2019](#); [McCoy, 2019](#))
- No strong evidence that homeschooled students demonstrate significant differences in **college GPA** ([Yu et al., 2016](#)), or on **retention across years** ([Jones & Gloeckner, 2004](#)).



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## Employment

- **No useful data** at scale.
- Sikkink & Skiles (2015, 2018; the [Cardus Survey](#)) suggested that U.S. homeschoolers from religious families may earn lower pay than graduates of other forms of schooling.

## Socialization

- Familiar **empirical challenges**: studies marred by small scale, convenience samples, selection bias and overreliance on self-report measures (parent and student).
- Overall, **no evidence of help or harm** of homeschooling (Kunzman & Gaither, 2020).



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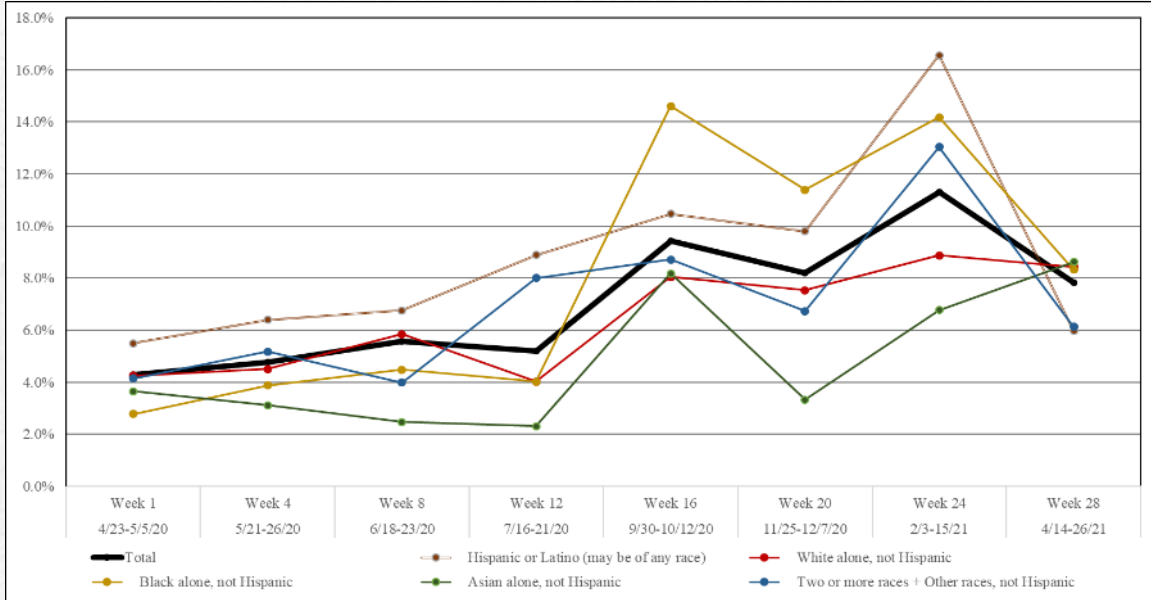
## Subpopulations

- An American homeschooling population in the millions suggests careful research could help illuminate the **diversity of homeschooling experiences**
- Rising interest in **equity-related research questions**
  - *Who has access to homeschooling?*
  - *What impact does homeschooling have on specific populations like students with disabilities, or those identified as gifted and talented?*



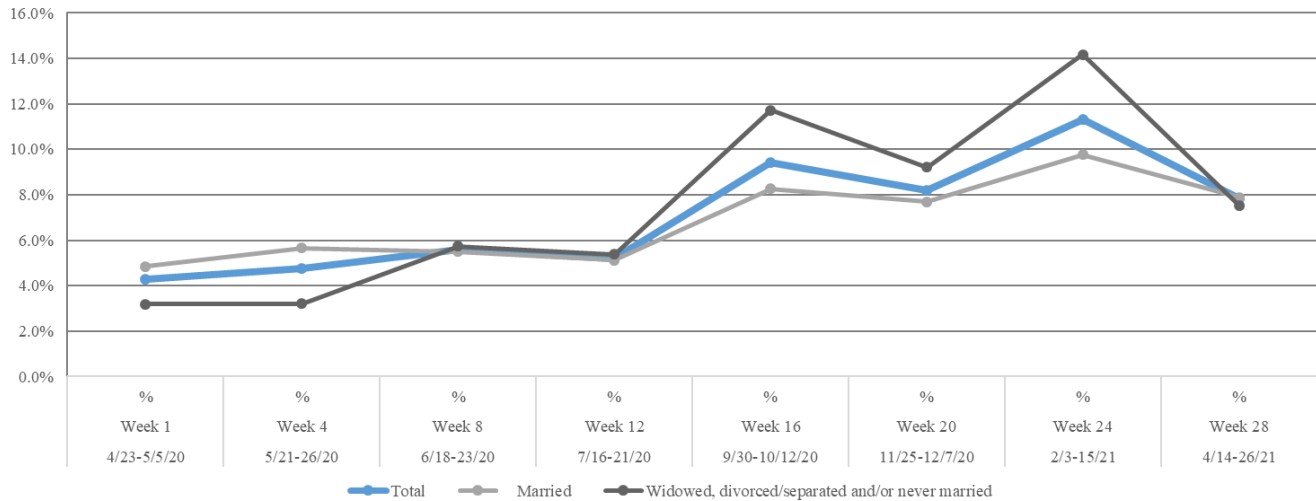
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# COVID-19 shifts



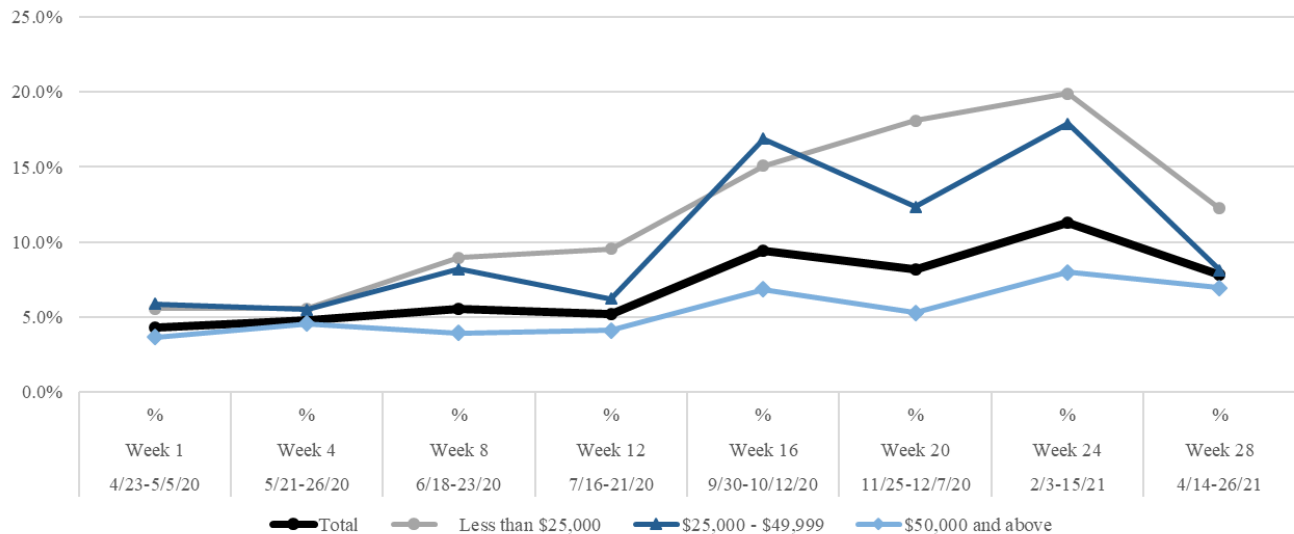
**Fig. 1.** Percent children enrolled in public or private schools whose parents reported "Children normally homeschooled" on the U.S. Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey, Weeks 1-28, by respondent race/ethnicity (4/23/20 through 4/26/21).

# COVID-19 shifts



**Fig. 2.** Percent children enrolled in public or private schools whose parents reported "Children normally homeschooled" on the U.S. Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey, Weeks 1-28 (4/23/20 through 4/26/21), by respondent marital status.

# COVID-19 shifts



**Fig. 3.** Percent children enrolled in public or private schools whose parents reported "Children normally homeschooled" on the U.S. Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey, Weeks 1-28 (4/23/20 through 4/26/21), by respondent household income.

# Is the COVID-19 Homeschooling “bulge” real?

- Rapid declines from peak Fall/Winter levels suggest much of the bulge may be “**crisis schooling**”

## Unknowns:

- What **kinds of experiences** have new “homeschoolers” had during the pandemic? Are they positive?
- When COVID-19 recedes, do motivations concerning homeschool **continuation** change?
- Will the post-pandemic future of homeschooling see any progress in addressing concerns about **equitable access to homeschooling**?



Five-year-old Lois Copley-Jones does her Math studies in her bedroom on January 25, 2021. [Gareth Copley/Getty Images](#)