

Center for Public Education



Birth Rate, Immigration, and Enrollment Data: Questions School Boards Can Ask

AN **nsha** PUBLICATION

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Introduction

- What the Birth Dearth Means for Public Schools ([Reason Foundation, 11/4/2024](#))
- Baby Bust Will Soon Reshape Public Schools ([The Heritage Foundation, 11/18/2024](#))
- Lower Birth Rates Could Cause Enrollment Issues for Schools ([EdSurge, 7/31/2025](#))
- From Cradle to Classroom: How Falling Birth Rates Are Shaping Colorado's K-12 System ([Common Sense Institute, 5/30/2025](#))
- Declining Births and Lower Demand: Charting the Future of Public School Enrollment in D.C. ([D.C. Policy Center, 7/13/2022](#))

Since 2022, an increasing number of media outlets and policy organizations have sounded alarms about how declining birth rates could affect public schools. As the headlines above illustrate, school board members and district leaders should distinguish between the noise and the information that truly warrants policy attention. The most effective way to separate the two is by examining reliable data and asking meaningful, well-framed questions that guide sound decision-making.

Crisis presents both danger and opportunity. To help district leaders confront emerging challenges and leverage potential opportunities, the Center for Public Education (CPE) developed this report. It contains four core components:

- Analysis of national birth rate trends using data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- Review of immigration data from the U.S. Census Bureau and related sources
- Examination of school enrollment patterns and their alignment with birth, immigration, and interstate migration trends
- Conclusions and a set of meaningful questions that can guide school leaders' decision-making



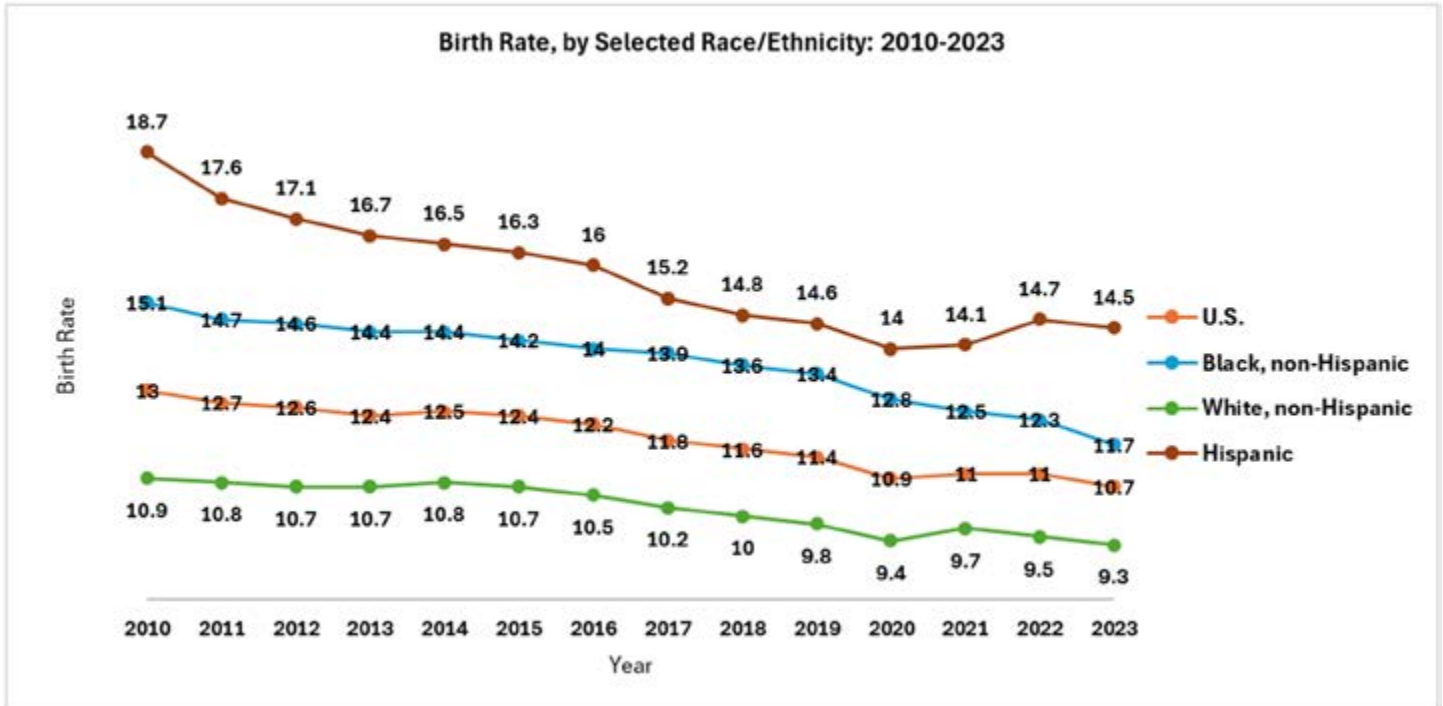
Birth Rates Data: A Declining Trend

On August 27, 2025, the CDC released its [statistics report](#), “Trends in Births and Deaths: United States, 2010–2023.” The report analyzes patterns in U.S. births and deaths over a 14-year period, including comparisons by race and Hispanic origin and by the urban or rural classification of county of residence. It provides descriptive tabulations of national trends in the numbers, rate, and ratio of births and deaths from 2010 through 2023.

The birth rate data show a steady national decline from 2010 through 2023. During this period, the total number of U.S. births fell from approximately 4 million to 3.6 million — a 10% decrease. The crude birth rate (CBR), defined as the annual number of births per 1,000 population, declined by 18% over the same period (see Chart 1).

All racial and ethnic groups experienced declines in the CBR. From 2010 through 2023, the number of births fell by 17% among both Black and White populations. Births among Black Americans declined from 589,808 in 2010 to 491,494 in 2023, and births among White Americans declined from approximately 2.16 million to 1.79 million over the same period. In contrast, births among Hispanic populations remained essentially unchanged, with 945,180 births in 2010 and 945,200 in 2023.

Chart 1. U.S. birth rates (crude birth rates, births per 1,000 people) have been decreasing annually.



Source: [CDC, 2025](#)

What Questions School Boards Can Ask

- Do we have data about the birth rate trend in our school district?
- How do local birth trends over the past 5-10 years translate into projected kindergarten and elementary enrollment?
- Are birth declines uniform across the district, or concentrated in specific neighborhoods, attendance zones, or feeder patterns (e.g., which elementary schools send students to which middle schools; which middle schools send students to which high schools)?



Practice Box 1 — Colorado's Birth Rate Decline: What It Means for Schools

“From Cradle to Classroom: How Falling Birth Rates Are Shaping Colorado's K-12 System”

Researchers report that Colorado's general fertility rate has fallen by roughly 25% since 2020, compared with the annual average from 2001 to 2010, representing the third-largest decline in the nation. Looking ahead to 2030, the state is projected to have 15,035 fewer children ages 0 to 17, a loss equivalent to about 17% of total enrollment in Denver Public Schools. Rural and frontier communities are likely to face even sharper demographic contraction. These trends have significant long-term implications for school sustainability, local labor markets, and regional economic development.



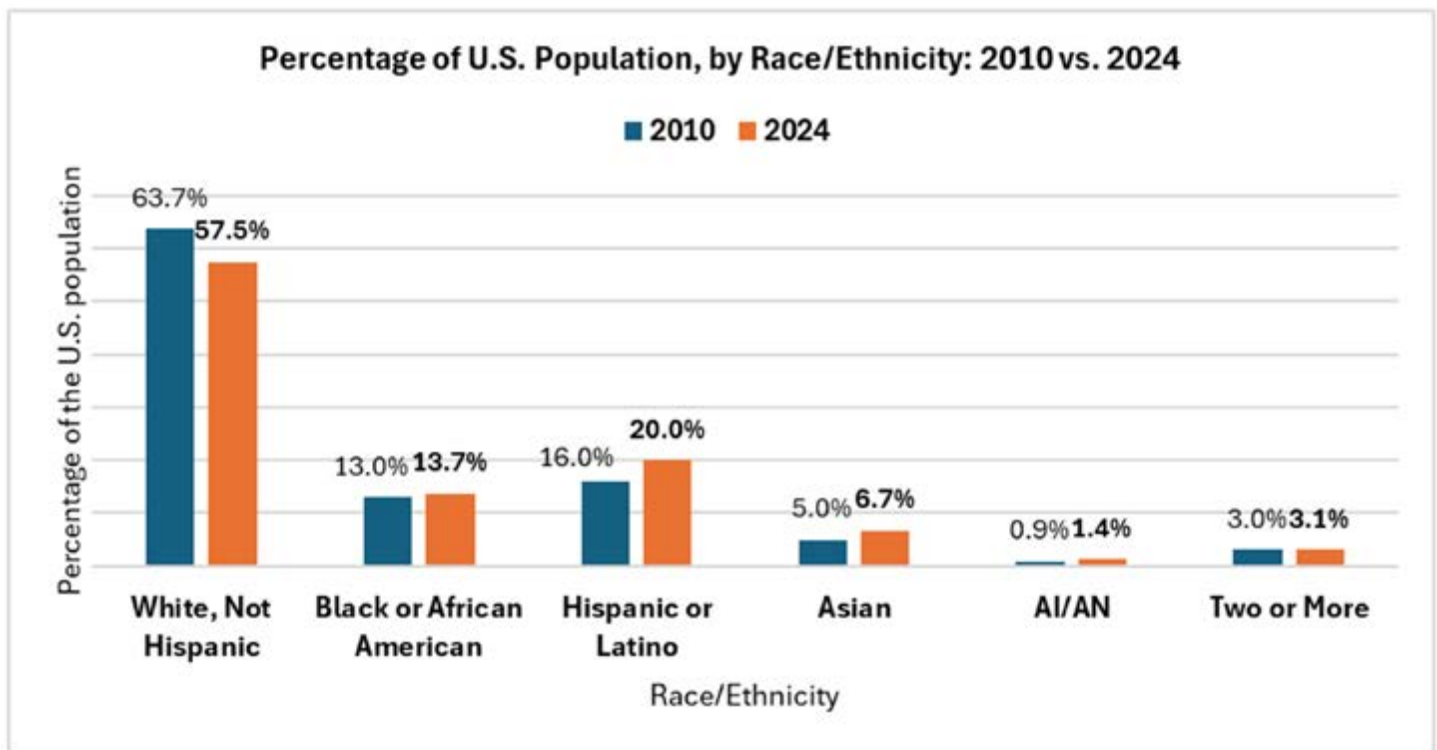
Immigration Data and the Changing Demographic Landscape

Between 2000 and 2024, the United States became markedly more racially and ethnically diverse. The nation's shifting demographic landscape can be understood across five dimensions:

1. Changes in racial and ethnic composition

The Hispanic, Asian, and multiracial populations have grown rapidly, while the non-Hispanic White share of the population declined from about 69% to 57%. The U.S. Hispanic population reached 68 million in 2024, nearly doubling since 2000 ([Pew Research, 2025](#)). Overall population growth was substantial, driven largely by growth in the Hispanic population — which accounted for 56% of the total increase — and by rising levels of immigration ([U.S. Census Bureau, 2024](#)). The Hispanic population accounted for 16% in 2010 and 20% in 2024. (see Chart 2).

Chart 2. Hispanic and Asian populations are growing rapidly, while the non-Hispanic White share has declined substantially.



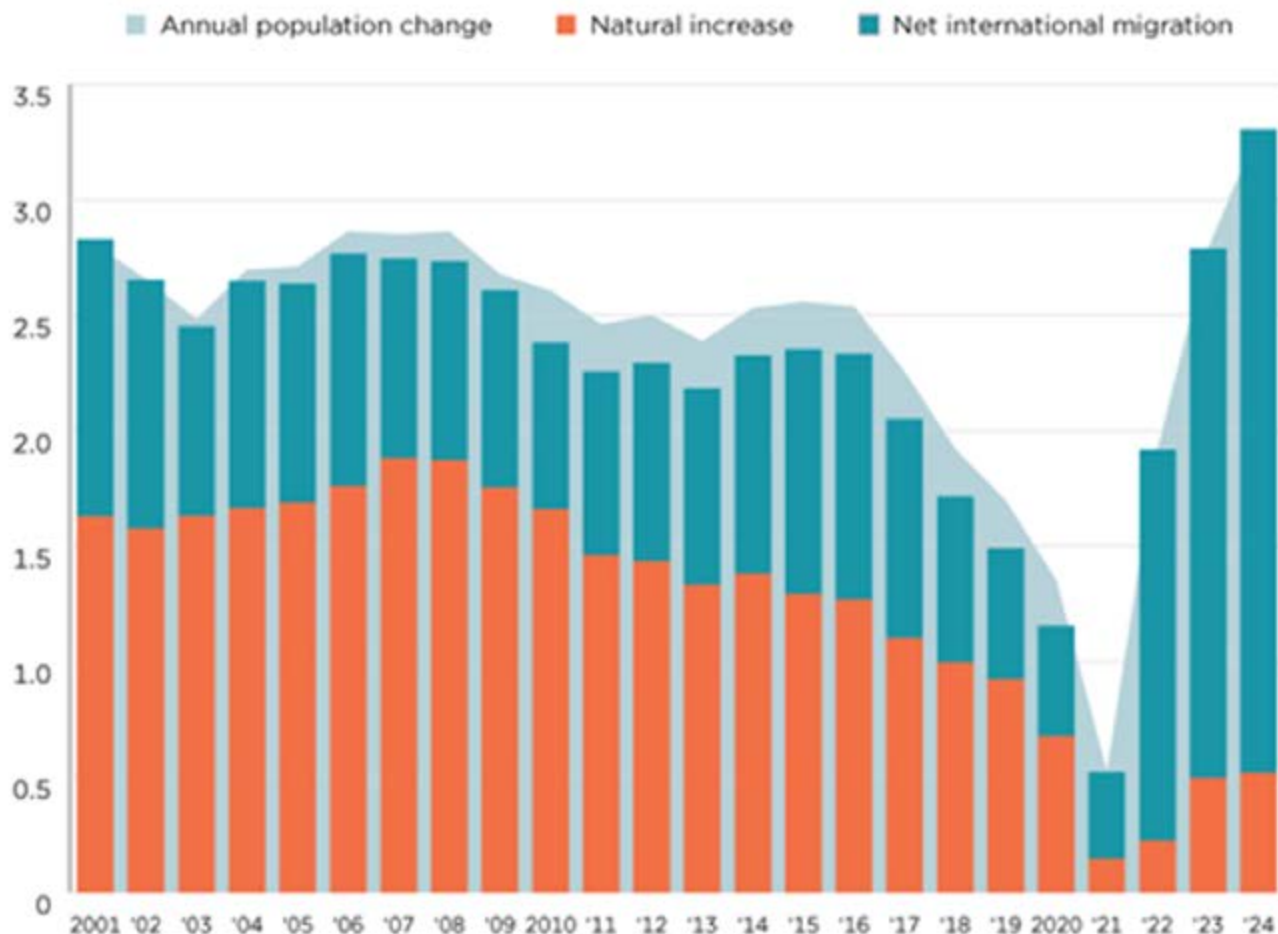
Source: [2010 Census Shows America's Diversity - 2010 Census - Newsroom - U.S. Census Bureau](#); [U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: United States](#)

2. International migration as a driver of U.S. population growth

Historically, natural increase (births minus deaths) has been the primary source of U.S. population growth. In recent years, however, its role has diminished as births have declined and deaths have increased. In contrast, net international migration (immigration minus emigration) has emerged as a major contributor to population growth, accounting for most of the nation's overall increase since 2021 (see Chart 3).

Chart 3. The U.S. population growth from international migration increased significantly between 2021 and 2024.

U.S. Annual Population Change, Natural Increase and Net Migration: July 1, 2000- July 1, 2024 (in millions)

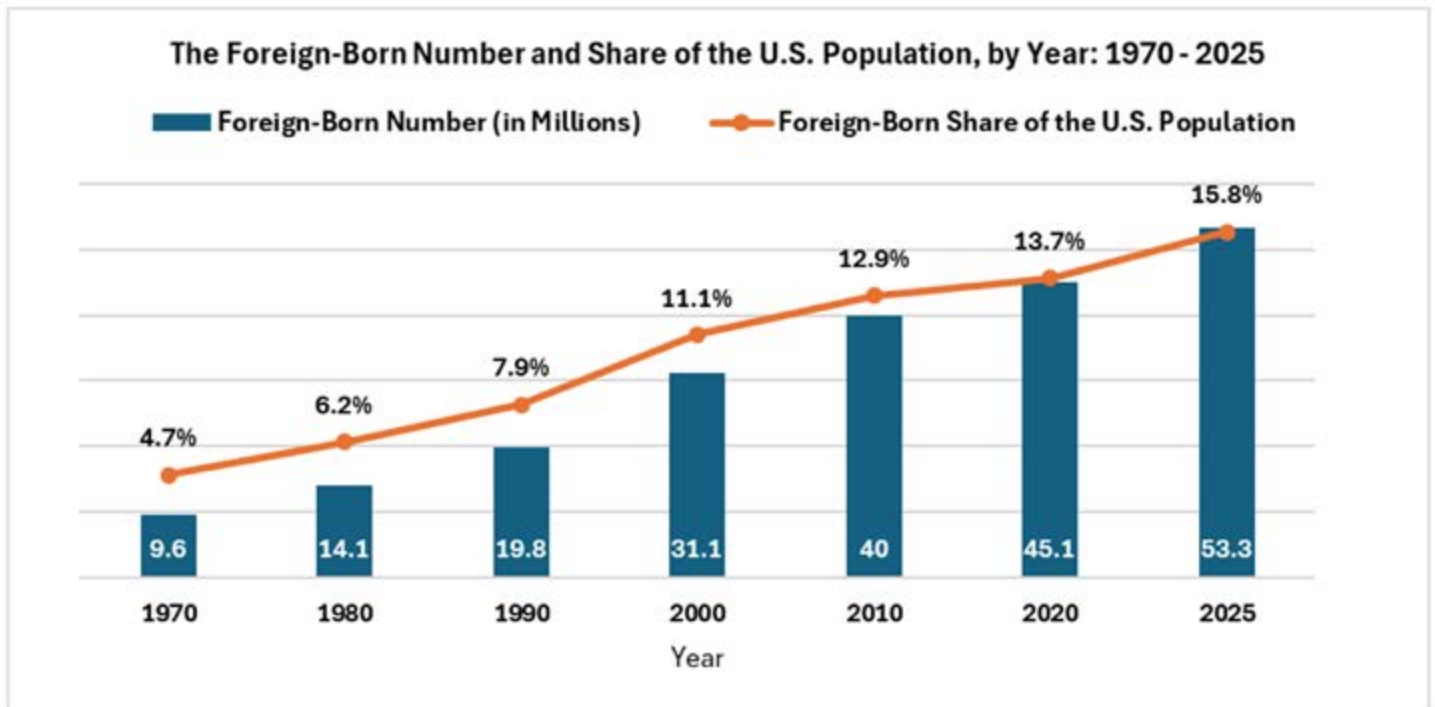


Source: [U.S. Census Bureau, 2024](#)

3. Growth in the foreign-born population

The U.S. Census has tracked the foreign-born population since 1850. Today, the United States has 53.3 million foreign-born residents, accounting for 15.8% of the total population — the highest share in U.S. history (see Chart 4). The immigrant population has grown more than fivefold since 1970, nearly tripled since 1990, and increased by more than two-thirds since 2000.

Chart 4. The U.S. now has the highest number and proportion of foreign-born residents in its history.



Source: [Center for Immigration Studies, 2025](#)



4. Geographic concentration of the foreign-born population

In 2023, most of the nation's 51.8 million immigrants lived in four states: California (11.3 million, 27% of the state population), Texas (6.0 million, 18%), Florida (5.4 million, 22%), and New York (5.0 million, 23%) ([Immigration Research Initiative, 2025](#); [Pew Research, 2025](#)). Immigrants were also heavily concentrated in several metropolitan areas. Twenty metro regions accounted for the majority of the immigrant population, with the New York City metropolitan area alone home to 13% of immigrants nationwide, followed by the Los Angeles metropolitan area (9%), and the Miami metropolitan area (6%) (see Chart 5).

Chart 5. Foreign-born residents are concentrated in four states and 20 metropolitan areas.

20 U.S. metropolitan areas with largest number of immigrants in 2023



Source: [Pew Research Center, 2025](#)

5. Unauthorized immigrant population

The Migration Policy Institute ([MPI](#)), a nonpartisan organization founded in 2001, defines the unauthorized immigrant population as individuals who entered the country without authorization or overstayed a visa, as well as those with liminal (or “twilight”) status. This includes recipients of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), individuals granted humanitarian parole or Temporary Protected Status (TPS), and those with pending asylum applications.

- The Center for Immigration Studies ([CIS, 2024](#)) estimated that likely somewhere between 700,000 and a million school-aged migrant children entered the U.S. without legal status between 2022 and 2024.
- In 2021, the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey estimated that 649,000 children ages 5 to 17 had lived in the United States for three years or less, while an additional 1.5 million immigrant children had lived in the country for four or more years ([MPI, 2023](#)).
- Overall, 1% of children ages 5 to 17 were foreign-born recent arrivals, 3% were foreign-born with longer-term residence, and the remaining 96% were U.S.-born. ([Education Week, 2024](#)).

What Questions School Boards Can Ask

- How many students in the district are foreign-born or recently arrived, and how has that number changed over time?
- In which schools or attendance zones are immigrant students most concentrated?
- Are certain neighborhoods or housing developments driving changes in immigrant enrollment?
- How do immigration trends interact with birth rate declines in overall enrollment projections?
- What assumptions about future migration are built into the district’s enrollment forecasts?



Practice Box 2 — Immigration Law Enforcement and a Sharp Decline in “Newcomer” Students

Reports of Declining New Immigrant Student Enrollment

Since 2022, more than half a million school-age migrant children have arrived in the United States and have likely enrolled in public schools ([Reuters, 2024](#)). Media outlets (e.g., [Reuters, 10/7/2024](#); [Education Week, 6/6/2024](#)) reported that the arrival of newly arrived immigrant students created school budget and operational challenges in some districts. For example, New York City Public Schools estimated that [36,000](#) migrant students enrolled between 2022 and 2024, while Denver Public Schools enrolled approximately [4,700](#) newly arrived students during the 2024 school year. In Chicago, the school district estimated enrollment of 8,900 migrant students, although state data placed the figure closer to [17,000](#).

More recently, changes in immigration enforcement have altered these patterns and appear to be associated with declines in new immigrant student enrollment across several large urban school districts.

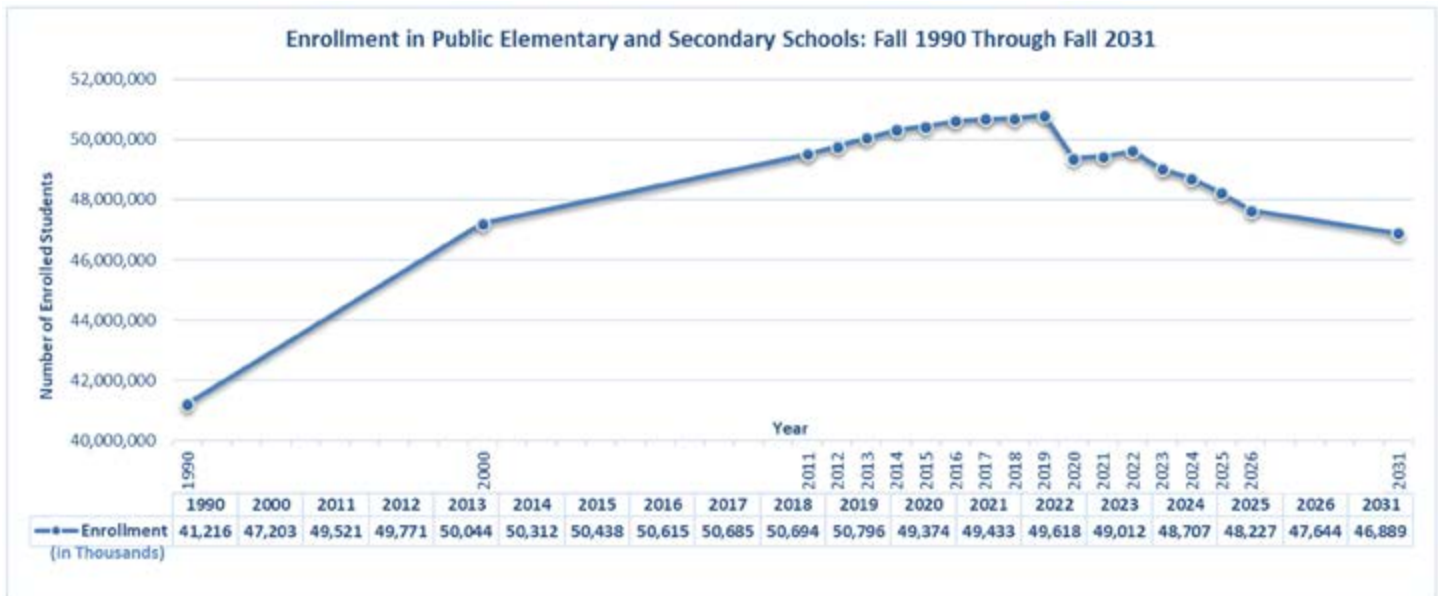
- **Florida:** Miami-Dade County Public Schools enrolled approximately 2,550 students arriving from another country so far this school year, down from nearly 14,000 last year and more than 20,000 two years ago ([U.S. News, 2025](#)).
- **Colorado:** Denver Public Schools enrolled 400 newly arrived immigrant students in the summer of 2025, compared with 1,500 during the previous summer.
- **Illinois:** Waukegan Community Unit School District 60 enrolled about 100 fewer new immigrant students than in prior years.
- **Texas:** Houston Independent School District closed Las Américas Newcomer School — a program serving newly arrived students — after enrollment fell to 21 students, down from 111 the year before.
- **Massachusetts:** Chelsea Public Schools enrolled 152 newly arrived immigrant students in the summer of 2025, compared with 592 the previous summer. Since January 2025, 844 students have withdrawn from the district, up slightly from 805 during the same period last year. District officials report that about one-quarter of departing students are returning to their home countries.
- **California:** Los Angeles Unified School District enrollment declined 4% year over year to 392,654 students for the 2025–26 school year. District leadership attributed the larger-than-expected decline, in part, to heightened immigration enforcement affecting immigrant families ([K-12 Dive, 2025](#)).

Together, these examples suggest that immigration policy shifts are increasingly shaping enrollment patterns for districts that historically serve large numbers of newcomer students.

School Enrollment Patterns in a Changing Demographic Landscape

School enrollment declines became evident after the COVID-19 pandemic. Current projections indicate that enrollment will fall by nearly 7%, from about 50.8 million students in 2019 to 46.9 million by 2031 (see Chart 6). Yet earlier projections anticipated growth. In [2015](#), the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) projected enrollment would increase from roughly 51.2 million in 2019 to 52.9 million in 2024. Similarly, in [2019](#) — just before the pandemic — NCES projected enrollment would rise from about 50.6 million in 2019 to 50.8 million in 2024 and 51.1 million by 2029. Why did these projections differ so markedly from actual trends and current forecasts?

Chart 6. Public school enrollment peaked at 50.8 million students in 2019 and is projected to decline by 8.3% by 2031.



Source: [NCES, 2023](#)



Factors Affecting School Enrollment Projections

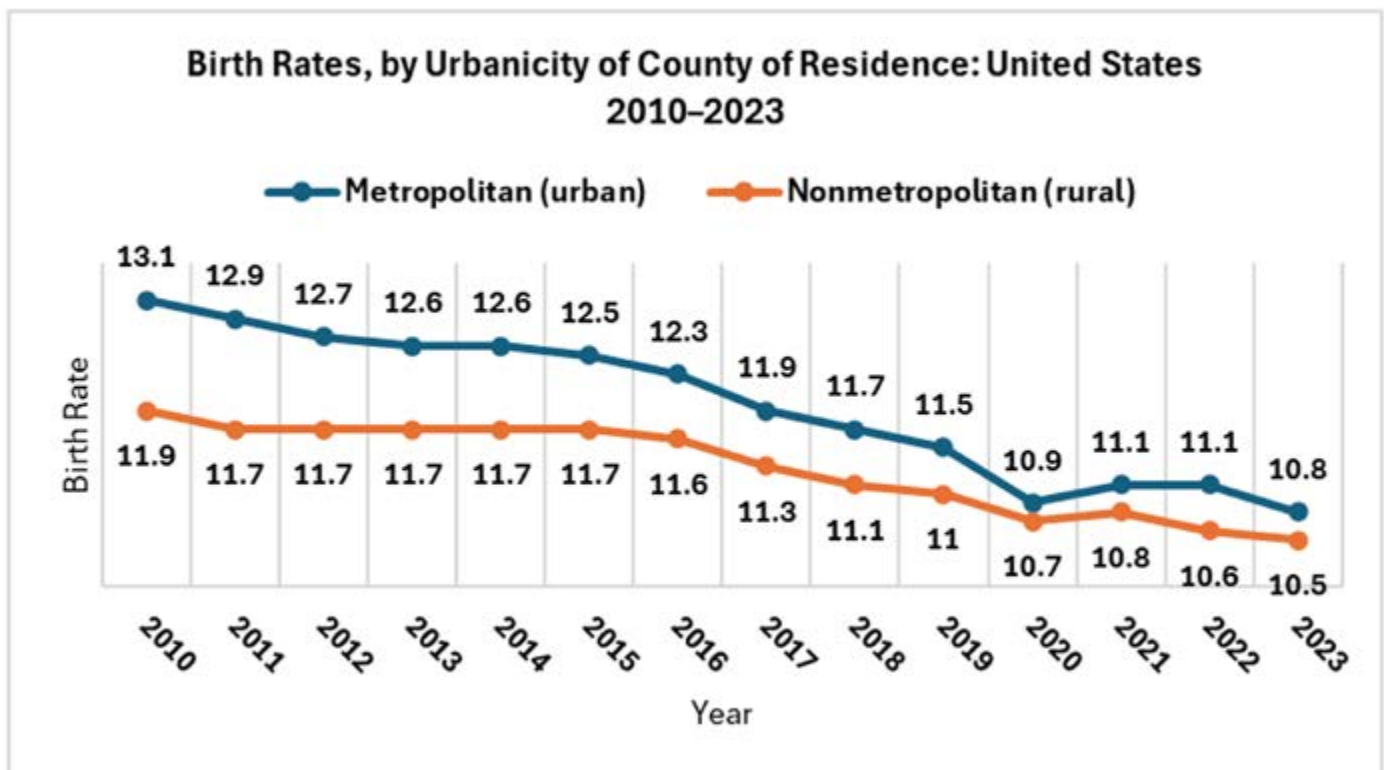
NCES projects K-12 enrollment using statistical models that draw on historical data, U.S. Census Bureau population estimates and projections (including fertility, immigration, and migration), and economic variables, typically forecasting about a decade into the future. These projections rely on past patterns and key demographic trends to estimate future student counts ([NCES, 2019](#)). Specifically, NCES uses the grade progression rate method, which assumes that future enrollment trends will generally follow historical patterns in the factors affecting student enrollment.

Projection errors can arise from factors not included in the models. NCES projections do not assume changes in policies or public attitudes that may affect enrollment levels. For example, they do not account for shifts in state and local policies related to school choice programs; continued expansion of these programs could reduce public school enrollment. In addition, the projections exclude students who are homeschooled.

Different Enrollment Patterns in Urban and Rural School Districts

Birth rates have declined in both urban (nonrural, including city, suburb, and town) and rural counties since 2010. Births in urban counties declined by 10% from 2010 through 2023, while births in rural counties declined by 12% during the same period. However, urban birth rates have declined at a faster pace compared with rural areas (see Chart 7).

Chart 7. U.S. urban birth rates have declined at a faster pace compared with rural areas.



Source: [CDC, 2025](#)

Consistent with birth rate trends, urban (nonrural) school districts — including cities, suburbs, and towns — have experienced enrollment declines since 2012. In contrast, because birth rates have declined more slowly in rural areas and newcomer immigrant students have offset some enrollment losses, certain districts — particularly rural ones — have seen enrollment growth (see Table 1).

Districts with the largest enrollment declines include:

- **Small cities:** More than a 7% decline (territory inside an urban area of 50,000 or more and within a principal city of fewer than 100,000 residents).
- **Mid-sized cities:** More than a 4% decline (territory inside an urban area of 50,000 or more and within a principal city of 100,000 to fewer than 250,000 residents).
- **Large and small suburbs:** Nearly a 3% decline (territory outside a principal city but within an urban area of 50,000 or more residents).
- **Distant towns:** Nearly an 18% decline (territory inside an urban area of fewer than 50,000 residents and located more than 10 but no more than 35 miles from an urban area of 50,000 or more).
- **Distant and remote rural areas:** Around a 6% decline (territory outside an urban area and located at varying distances from urban centers; distant, more than 5 miles but less than or equal to 25 miles from an urban area with population of 50,000 or more, as well as territory outside an urban area that is more than 2.5 miles but less than or equal to 10 miles from an urban area with population less than 50,000; remote, more than 25 miles from an urban area with population of 50,000 or more and is also more than 10 miles from an urban area with population less than 50,000).

Districts that experienced enrollment growth include:

- **Large cities:** Enrollment increased by 1.4%, or approximately 113,000 students (territory inside an urban area of 50,000 or more and within a principal city of at least 250,000 residents).
- **Fringe rural areas:** Enrollment increased by 18.5%, or more than one million students (territory outside an urban area located within 5 miles of an urban area of 50,000 or more, or within 2.5 miles of an urban area of fewer than 50,000 residents).



Table 1. Between 2012 and 2022, school enrollment declined in cities, suburbs, and towns, while rural schools — particularly fringe rural areas — experienced enrollment growth.

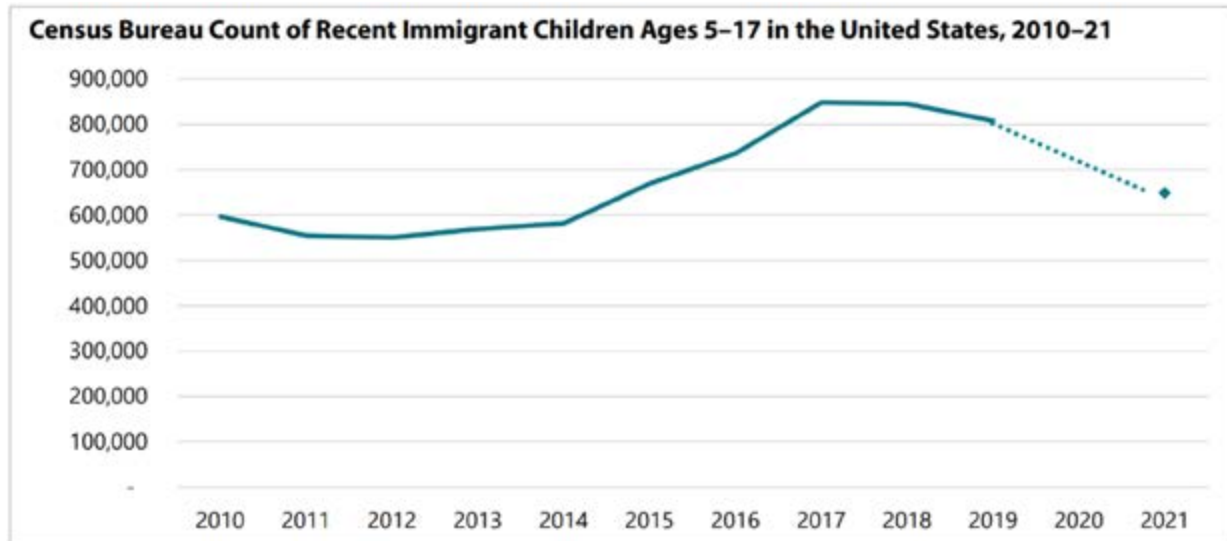
Public Elementary and Secondary School Enrollment (in Thousands), by Locale: Fall 2012, Fall 2021, and Fall 2022										
Year	2012	2021	2022	Change (2021 vs. 2012)	Change (2022 vs. 2021)	2012	2021	2022	Change (2021 vs. 2012)	Change (2022 vs. 2021)
	City					Suburb				
Total (in thousands)	15,026	14,741	14,656	-1.90%	-0.57%	19,661	19,172	19,179	-2.49%	0.04%
Large	7,977	8,090	8,020	1.41%	-0.86%	16,868	16,439	16,433	-2.55%	-0.03%
Mid-size	3,371	3,233	3,220	-4.08%	-0.43%	1,810	1,775	1,786	-1.93%	0.62%
Small	3,678	3,418	3,417	-7.07%	-0.04%	983	958	960	-2.53%	0.20%
	Town					Rural				
Total (in thousands)	5,681	5,325	5,306	-6.27%	-0.35%	9,152	9,867	9,994	7.81%	1.29%
Fringe	1,436	1,382	1,386	-3.73%	0.26%	5,193	6,152	6,260	18.47%	1.76%
Distant	2,504	2,508	2,498	0.17%	-0.40%	2,920	2,738	2,752	-6.23%	0.50%
Remote	1,741	1,435	1,423	-17.62%	-0.84%	1,039	977	983	-5.96%	0.57%

Source: [NCES, 2023](#) (Locale definition: [Geographic](#))

Enrollment of Newcomer Immigrant Students

Census data show that the number of recent immigrant children rose sharply after 2014, leveled off during the first Trump administration, and declined during the COVID-19 pandemic (see Chart 8). During the Biden administration, legal immigration rebounded to pre-pandemic levels in 2022, and encounters involving unauthorized immigrant children at the southwest border reached record highs ([MPI, 2023](#)). As of 2023, the unauthorized immigrant population was estimated at 13.7 million. Between 2021 and 2024, an estimated 500,000 to one million school-age migrant children entered the U.S. and enrolled in schools ([CIS, 2024](#)).

Chart 8. Census data show that the number of recent immigrant children — those who arrived in the United States within three years of the survey year — has increased significantly since 2014.



Source: [MPI, 2023](#)

Public schools play a critical role in serving newcomer immigrant students and their families. About one in three unauthorized immigrant parents has at least one U.S. citizen child under age 18, and more than half of unauthorized immigrant families have very low incomes, living at or below 200% of the federal poverty level (see Table 2).

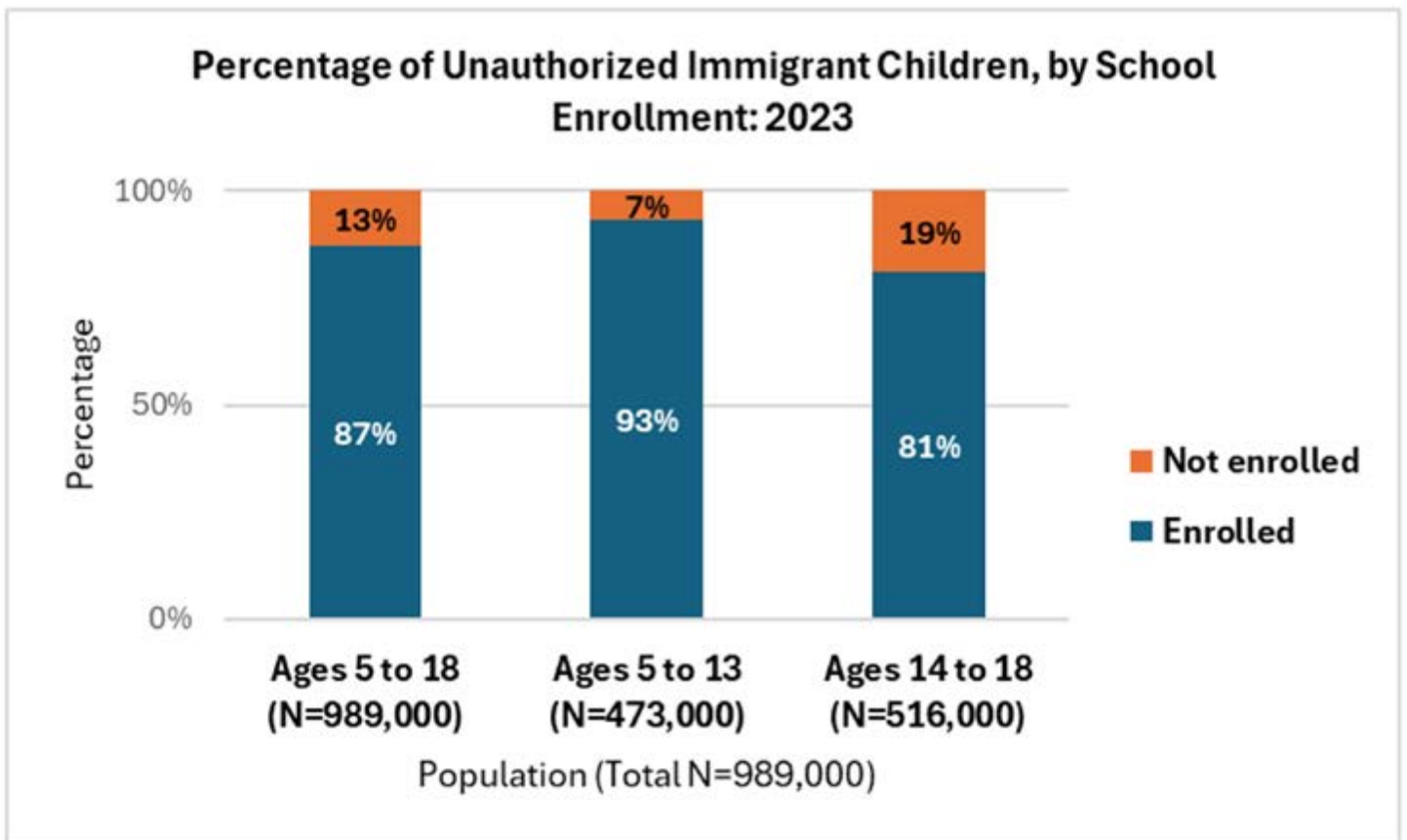
Table 2. Most unauthorized immigrant families live in poverty.

Parental Status	Estimate Number	Percentage of Total
Population ages 15 and older	13,100,000	100%
Reside with at least one U.S.-citizen child under 18	4,197,000	32%
Reside with non-citizen children only under 18	1,339,000	10%
Reside with no children	7,564,000	58%
Family Income		
Below 50% of the poverty level	1,202,000	9%
50-99% of the poverty level	1,461,000	11%
100-149% of the poverty level	1,916,000	14%
150-199% of the poverty level	1,902,000	14%
At or above 200% of the poverty level	7,257,000	53%

Source: [MPI, 2025](#)

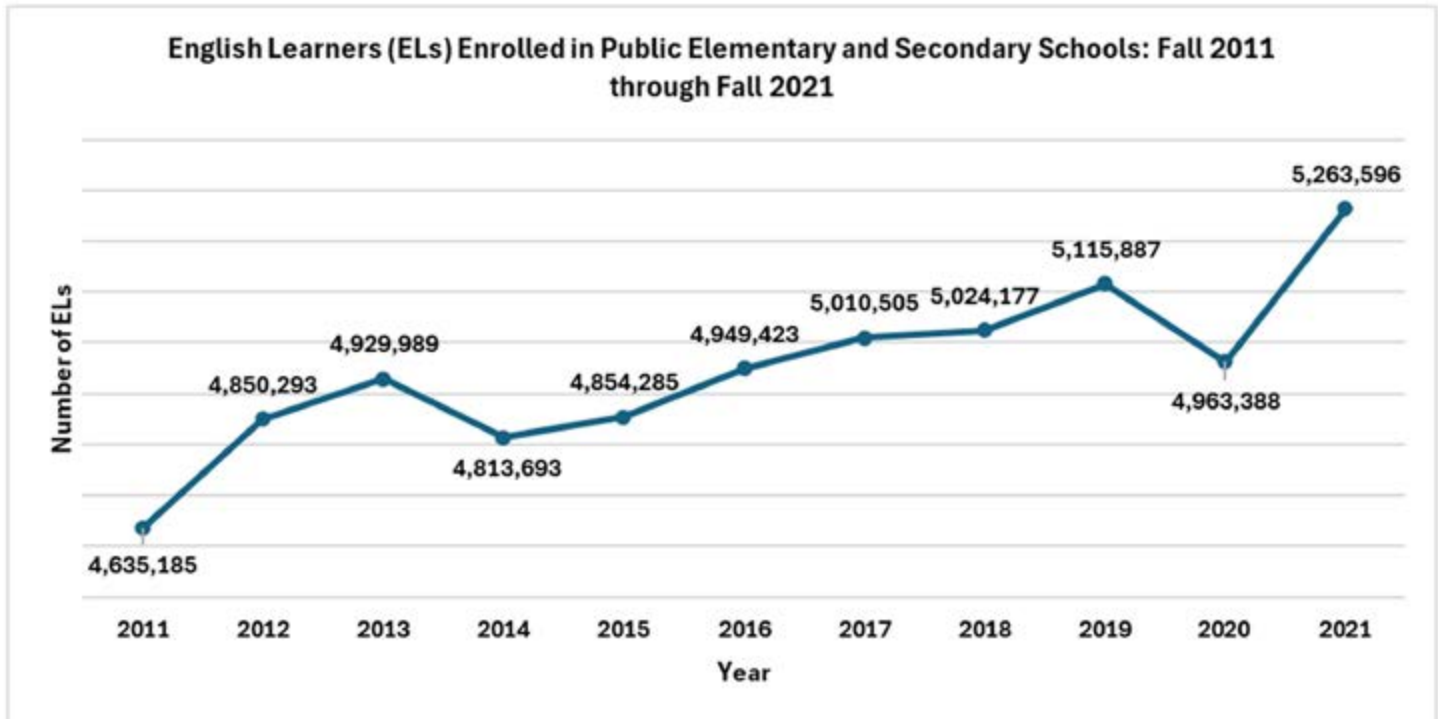
In 2023, 87% of the nearly one million unauthorized immigrant children ages 5 to 18 were enrolled in public schools (see Chart 9). As the number of newcomer immigrant children grew, English learner (EL) enrollment in public schools increased by more than half a million students between 2011 and 2021 (see Chart 10). Consistent with broader enrollment patterns, EL growth was strongest in districts outside large cities and large suburbs, particularly in mid-sized suburbs (21.6%), small suburbs (13.6%), towns (14.7%), and rural areas (42.4%) (see Table 3).

Chart 9. Most unauthorized immigrant children were enrolled in school.



Source: [MPI, 2025](#)

Chart 10. English learner enrollment in public schools increased by more than half a million students between 2011 and 2021.



Source: [NCES, 2024](#)

Table 3. English learner (EL) enrollment increased substantially in schools outside large cities, particularly in towns and rural areas.

English Learners Enrollment (in Thousands) in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools, by Locale: Fall 2012 vs. Fall 2021										
Year	2012	% EL	2021	%EL	Change (2021 vs. 2012)	2012	% EL	2021	% EL	Change (2021 vs. 2012)
Total (in thousands)	City					Suburb				
	2,132	13.6	1,508	9.8	-29.24%	1,777	8.5	1,586	7.9	-10.72%
	1,346	16.1	725	8.5	-46.18%	1,603	8.8	1,380	7.9	-13.90%
	440	12.2	425	12.4	-3.37%	109	5.8	133	7.1	21.58%
	345	9.3	358	10.6	3.83%	64	6.8	73	7.9	13.57%
Total (in thousands)	Town					Rural				
	336	5.9	386	7.5	14.70%	250	3.4	356	4.8	42.39%
	76	5.9	93	7.6	23.18%	155	4.3	241	6.0	56.06%
	148	5.8	173	7.0	17.11%	59	2.1	77	3.1	29.54%
	113	6.1	119	8.3	5.86%	36	3.6	38	4.2	4.82%

Source: [NCES, 2023](#)

Why Enrollment Increased in Some Districts

Not all states and school districts are experiencing enrollment declines. As shown in Table 4, enrollment increased between the 2024–25 school year and the prior year in 14 states and the District of Columbia, particularly in 10 large school districts nationwide. While immigration plays a role, interstate migration and local district policy changes also contribute to these gains. Examining the factors driving enrollment growth in these states and districts may help school board members identify strategies to stabilize or increase enrollment in their own communities.

- **Education leadership.** In the District of Columbia, education leaders attribute recent enrollment growth to the availability of innovative programs across D.C. schools that both meet student needs and increase student engagement ([D.C. Government, 2024](#)). The city's mayor also pointed to historic investments in education and encouraged families to attend events such as EdFEST to explore school options, connect with school representatives, and prepare for the opening of the My School DC lottery application.
- **Interstate migration.** Families often relocate in search of more affordable housing, stronger job opportunities, lower taxes, or to live closer to extended family — an especially important consideration for households with children and grandparents who help with child care ([Tax Foundation, 2025](#)). States with the highest in-migration include Texas, Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee ([U-Haul, 2026](#)).
- **New immigrant families.** According to [Vevea and Amin \(2024\)](#), Chicago Public Schools experienced enrollment growth largely due to an influx of newly arrived immigrant families — particularly Hispanic students — and increases in the early grades (K-5) and among English learners. These gains reversed years of enrollment decline, though the trend may shift in response to changes in federal immigration enforcement.



Table 4. States and Districts Experiencing Enrollment Growth: 2024–25 vs. Prior Year

State	Enrollment Change vs. Prior Year	District	State	2024-25 Enrollment	Change vs. Prior Year
District of Columbia	2.0%	Chicago Public Schools	IL	324,130	0.4%
Arkansas	1.2%	Gwinnett County Public Schools	GA	182,518	0.2%
Minnesota	0.7%	Wake County Public Schools System	NC	163,325	1.1%
North Carolina	0.7%	Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	NC	147,299	2.2%
North Dakota	0.6%	Dallas ISD	TX	139,802	0.4%
South Carolina	0.5%	Prince George's County Public Schools	MD	132,123	0.6%
Indiana	0.5%	Duval County Public Schools	FL	130,054	1.6%
Nebraska	0.4%	The School District of Philadelphia	PA	120,057	1.8%
Texas	0.2%	Polk County Public Schools	FL	111,372	0.3%
Alabama	0.2%	Memphis-Shelby County Schools	TN	111,124	1.0%
Massachusetts	0.2%				
Maryland	0.2%				
New Jersey	0.1%				
Delaware	0.1%				
Washington	0.1%				

Source: [Burbio School Tracker, 2026](#)

In summary, immigration adds students to U.S. schools each year, but not in sufficient numbers to offset the general enrollment declines driven by falling birth rates. Shifts in immigration enforcement further contribute to enrollment volatility, making it more difficult for district leaders to plan budgets and manage educational resources.



Practice Box 3 — Demographic Trends in Oregon: How Researchers Forecast School Enrollment

“Portland Public Schools Enrollment Forecast 2024–25 to 2033–34”

Researchers project that Portland Public Schools (PPS) enrollment will continue to decline from fall 2023 levels, but at a slowing pace, reaching a low of 38,562 students in the 2032–33 school year. Enrollment is then expected to rebound as the unusually small cohorts from the COVID-19 period age out and higher capture rates in the early grades increase the size of incoming classes. Under this baseline scenario, enrollment could recover to 40,108 students by the end of the 15-year projection period, in 2039–40.

Declining Birth Rates Put Continued Pressure on PPS Enrollment

Between 2000 and 2010, the PPS area grew at an annualized rate of 0.8%, from 426,110 persons to 460,694. In the most recent decade, growth accelerated: between the 2010 and 2020 decennial censuses, the population grew at 1.2% per year (to 519,860). The share of Portland’s overall city population residing within the PPS boundary also increased, from 77% in 2010 to 80% in 2020.

The PPS area is, on average, younger than the rest of the state, with a much higher proportion of people between the ages of 20–39 (36% compared to 27% statewide). Despite its younger population, Portland’s birthrate has declined significantly over the past 20 years and is much lower than the rest of the state’s. Approximately 2.5% of women aged 15–50 reported a birth in the past year, compared to 4.6% statewide. The city’s total fertility rate — an estimate of the average number of children a woman is expected to have over her lifetime — has declined from 1.6 in 2000 to fewer than one (approximately 0.8).

This downward trend in births exerts downward pressure on PPS enrollment, which can only be counteracted by more in-migration of children or declines in the share of children in private or homeschooling.

Stabilizing Enrollment Requires More School-Age Children or Higher PPS Participation Rates

PPS enrollment declined by 7.5% between fall 2019 and fall 2021, largely reflecting family decisions during the COVID-19 pandemic, including moving out of the district or choosing alternatives such as private schools, online charter schools, or homeschooling. The steepest declines occurred in the elementary grades, with entering kindergarten cohorts in 2020–21 and 2021–22 far smaller than expected. During this period, the kindergarten capture rate — the share of 4- and 5-year-olds enrolled in PPS — fell from about 80% in 2019 to 70% in 2020 and then stabilized at roughly 71% at the start of the 2021–22 and 2022–23 school years.

Another source of downward pressure on enrollment is the shrinking population of 4- and 5-year-olds eligible to enter kindergarten. This decline reflects falling birth rates since 2010 and is not expected to reverse within the enrollment forecast period. As a result, any future growth in kindergarten and first-grade enrollment will depend on PPS enrolling a larger share of the age-eligible population.

Conclusion: From Statistics to Solutions

Enrollment trends are shaped by a small set of powerful forces — birth rates, migration and immigration patterns, and family decisions about schooling. No single data point tells the full story. Declining births reduce the number of school-age children entering the system, while changes in immigration and domestic migration affect where students live and which districts experience growth or decline. At the same time, enrollment reflects family choices about remaining in or leaving public schools. Taken together, these factors help explain why many districts are facing sustained enrollment pressure, even as a smaller number experience localized growth.

For school boards, parents, and community members, the challenge is not simply to respond to year-to-year enrollment changes, but to interpret demographic and enrollment data holistically. Aligning birth data with immigration trends, housing patterns, and school enrollment figures can provide a clearer picture of what is likely to occur over the next five to 10 years. This broader perspective supports more informed discussions about staffing, facilities, transportation, and program investments — decisions that often have long-term consequences.

Using data in this way does not predetermine outcomes or prescribe a single course of action. Instead, it equips communities to weigh tradeoffs transparently, anticipate fiscal and operational impacts, and plan responsibly for the future. By grounding enrollment conversations in objective demographic evidence, school boards can move from reacting to short-term fluctuations toward making strategic, data-informed decisions that reflect both current realities and future needs.



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About CPE

The National School Boards Association (NSBA) believes that accurate, objective information is essential to building support for public schools and creating effective programs to prepare all students for success. As NSBA's research branch, the Center for Public Education (CPE) provides objective and timely information about public education and its importance to the well-being of our nation. Launched in 2006, CPE emerged from discussions between NSBA and its member state school boards associations about how to inform the public about the successes and challenges of public education. To serve a wide range of audiences, including parents, teachers, and school leaders, CPE offers research, data, and analysis on current education issues and explores ways to improve student achievement and engage support for public schools.

About NSBA

Founded in 1940, the National School Boards Association's (NSBA) purpose is to ensure each student everywhere has access to excellent and equitable public education governed by high-performing school board leaders and supported by the community.

With members spread across the United States, the Virgin Islands, and Canada, NSBA is the only national organization representing school boards. Along with its member state associations and member public school districts representing locally elected school board officials serving millions of public school students, NSBA believes that public education is a civil right necessary to the dignity and freedom of the American people and that each child, regardless of their ability, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, identity, or citizenship, deserves equitable access to an education that maximizes their individual potential.

For more information, visit nsba.org.



NSBA's Position

NSBA supports strengthening local school board governance and community engagement in public schools and recognizes the many options and choices offered to students in our public schools. NSBA opposes vouchers, tuition tax credits and similar programs, and charter schools not subject to oversight of the local school boards, effectively creating a separate, unaccountable system of publicly funded education which: a) diverts public funding to private schools, private home schools, including virtual schools, regardless of whether they are owned or operated by individuals, religious institutions, not-for-profit entities, or corporations; b) diverts public funds outside of locally elected, locally accountable, representative oversight; and c) often has the effect of re-segregating schools. Public funds should only be used within public schools to advance curricular opportunities, including specialized public school programs authorized by local school boards, such as magnet schools, alternative schools, career and technical education partnerships, advanced placement programs and classes, dual credit programs, postsecondary–high school partnerships, and high school–local business partnerships. NSBA urges full accountability of the use of public funds for educational purposes.

NSBA believes public tax dollars should only support public schools. NSBA opposes any efforts to subsidize tuition or expenses at elementary or secondary private schools, religious schools, or private home/ correspondence schools with public tax dollars. Specifically, NSBA opposes vouchers, tax credits, and tax subsidies for use at nonpublic K-12 schools.

