



Benefits and Services Committee

Item Number 3 – Open Session

Subject: Trends in How Students Obtain Their Education

Presenter(s): Tom Buffalo

Item Type: Information

Date & Time: January 10, 2024 – 10 minutes

Attachment(s): None

PowerPoint(s): Trends in How Students Obtain Their Education

Item Purpose

This item provides trend data for public, private, and homeschool enrollment in California and the four other most-populated states: Texas, Florida, New York, and Pennsylvania.

Recommendation

None

Executive Summary

K–12 public school enrollment decreased in California over the past decade. This trend was also observed in New York and Pennsylvania, while Texas and Florida experienced enrollment increases. K–12 private school enrollment decreased and leveled between 2008 and 2012, possibly due to tightened household budgets stemming from the Great Recession. K–12 homeschool enrollment increased during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Discussion

California K–12 public school enrollment trend

California public school enrollment data is compiled by the California Department of Education. Annual enrollment consists of the number of students enrolled on Census Day (the first Wednesday in October). Data is gathered by local educational agencies and surveys to California charter schools before being reviewed and certified in the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS).

[According to the California Department of Finance, public school enrollment declined to 5,852,500 students in the 2022–23 school year, decreasing for the sixth consecutive year](#) (Figure 1 below). Enrollment decline increased sharply during the COVID-19 pandemic, but it has slowed and appears to have returned to the pre-pandemic trend (Figure 2 below).

Figure 1.

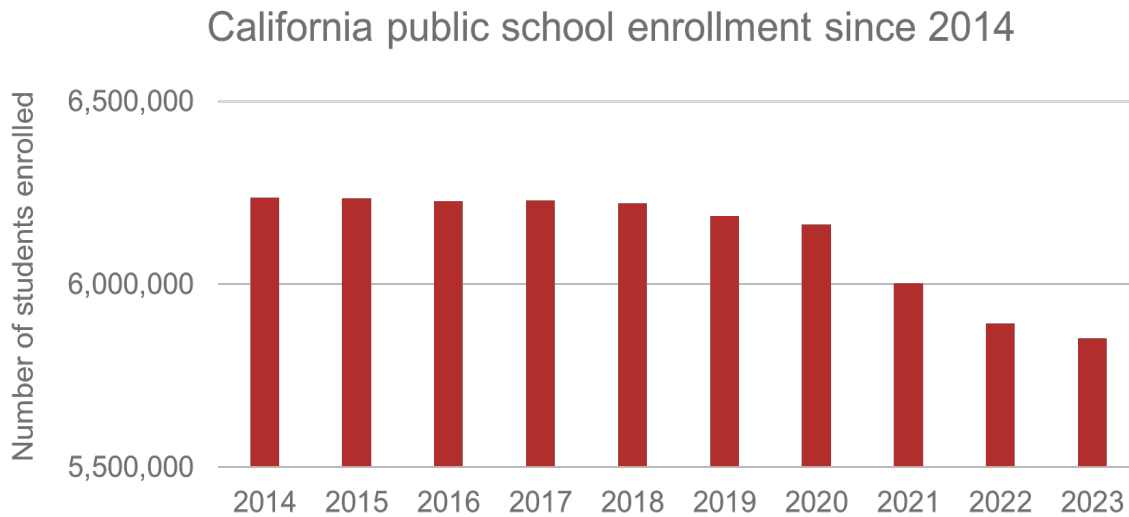
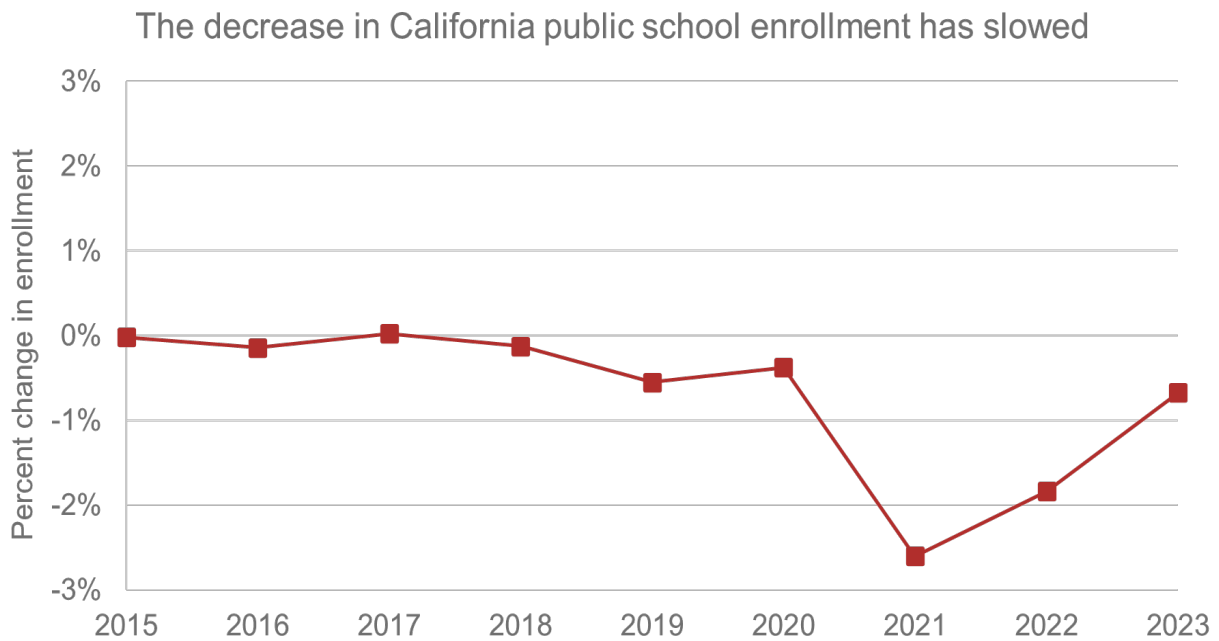


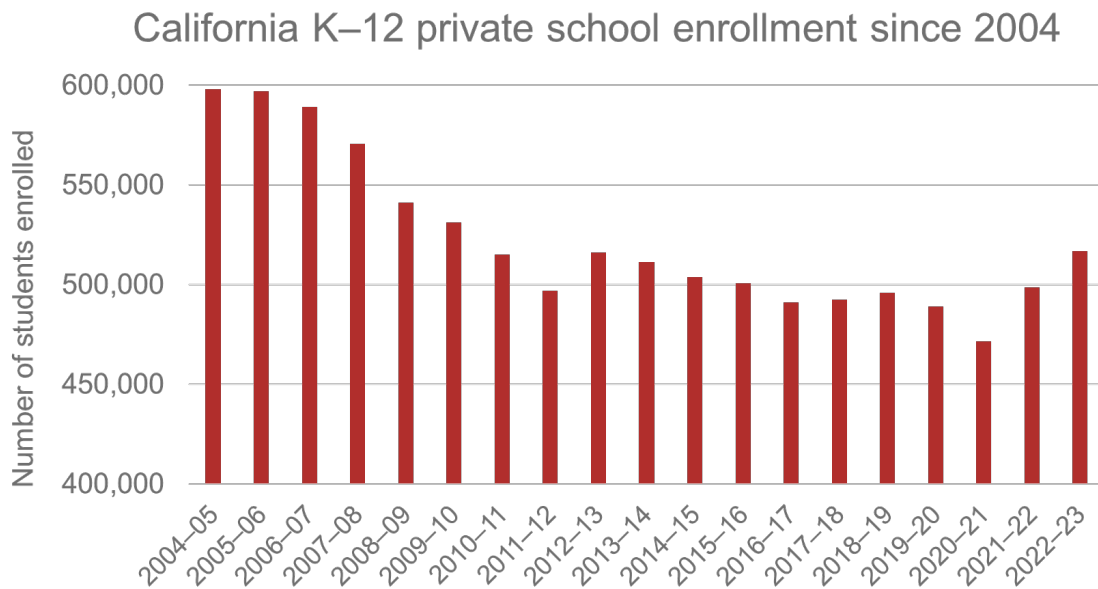
Figure 2.



California K–12 private school enrollment trend

[California private school enrollment data is also compiled by the California Department of Education](#). Private schools are designated as having six or more students reported on their Private School Affidavit. Private school enrollment decreased and leveled between 2008 and 2012, possibly due to tightened household budgets stemming from the Great Recession. Although private school enrollment decreased in the early years of the COVID-19 pandemic, it appears to have returned to the pre-pandemic level (Figure 3 below).

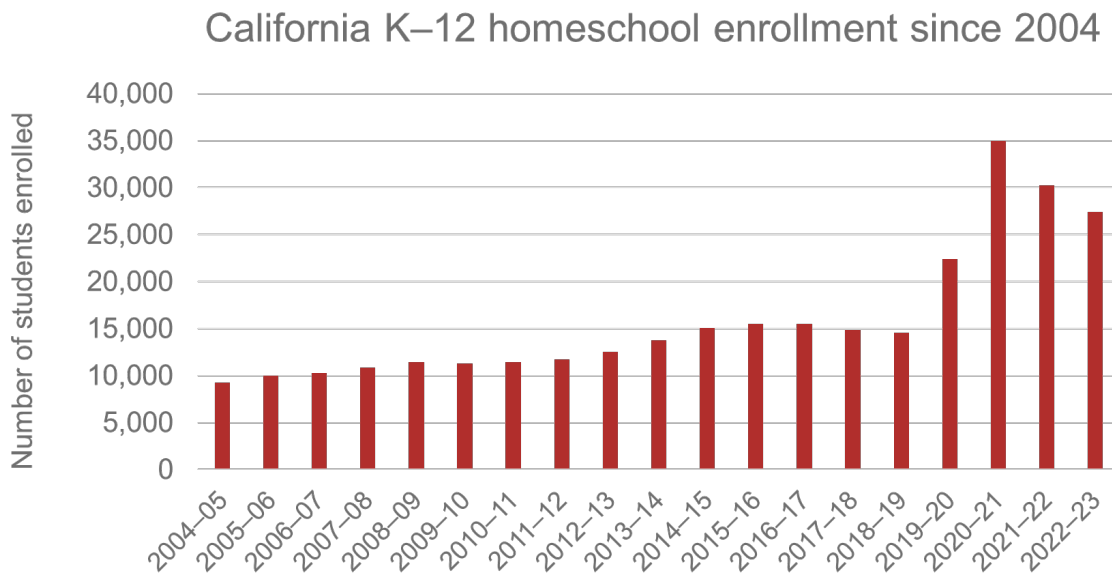
Figure 3.



California K–12 homeschool enrollment trend

[California homeschool enrollment data is also compiled by the California Department of Education](#). Homeschools are designated as having fewer than six students per school. Homeschool enrollment experienced a sharp increase during the COVID-19 pandemic. School-related stay-at-home orders may have contributed to the switch from public and private schools to at-home instruction. While homeschool enrollment has declined from its peak during the pandemic, at-home learning remains higher than pre-pandemic levels—over 25,000 students currently learn at home compared to just under 15,000 prior to the pandemic (Figure 4 on the next page).

Figure 4.

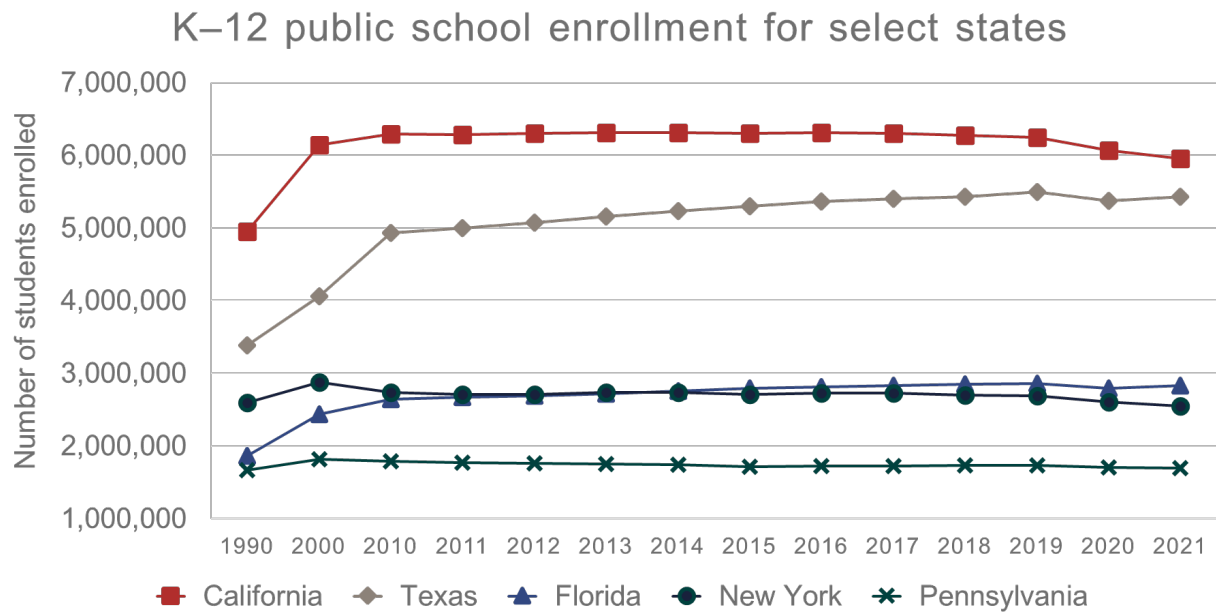


National K–12 public school enrollments

[National public school enrollment data is compiled by the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.](#) California, Texas, Florida, New York, and Pennsylvania were selected for a national enrollment perspective because they are the five most-populated states in the U.S. While public school enrollment decreased in California over the past decade—a trend also observed in New York and Pennsylvania—Texas and Florida experienced enrollment increases (Figure 5 on the next page).

The years of the COVID-19 pandemic show the most noticeable enrollment changes. A possible explanation is families moved to states with fewer school-related pandemic mandates so their children could continue to attend school in person.

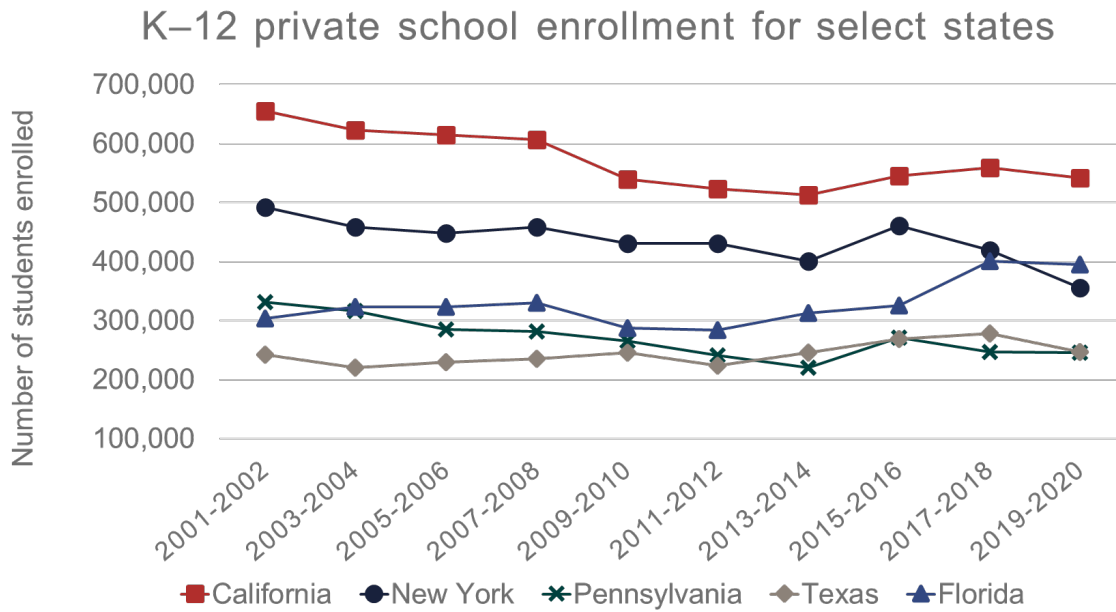
Figure 5.



National K–12 private school enrollment trends

[National private school enrollment data comes from the National Center for Education Statistics, Private School Universe Survey.](#) Private school enrollment in the other select states mirrored California’s trajectory—a decrease and releveling around the Great Recession, followed by a rise that was hindered in the early years of the COVID-19 pandemic (Figure 6 on the next page).

Figure 6.

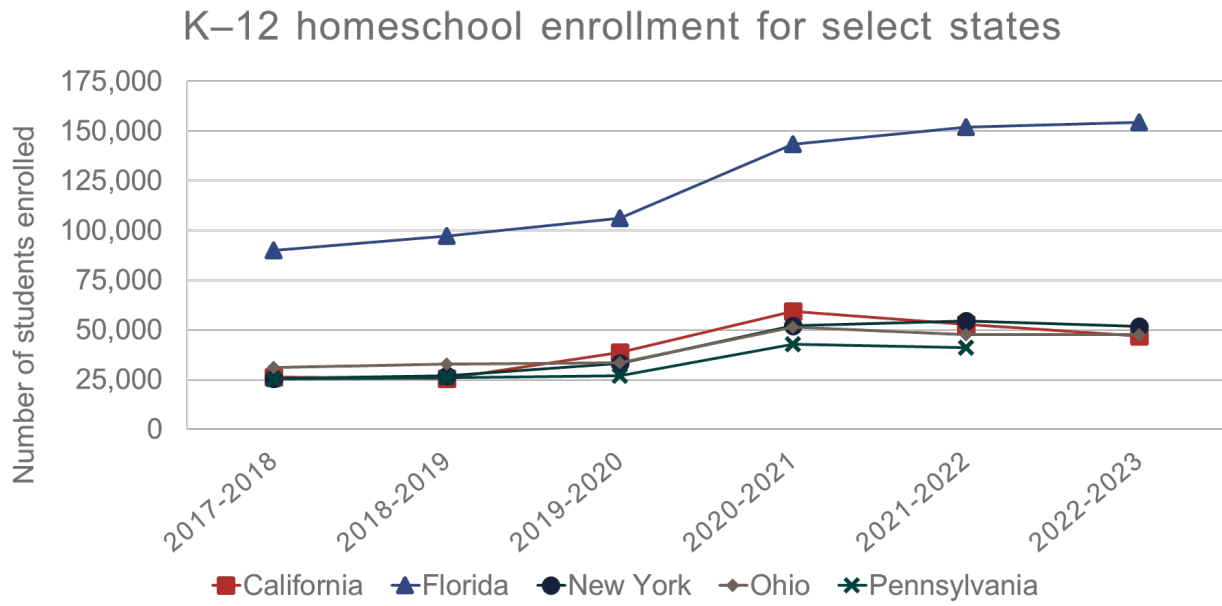


National K–12 homeschool enrollment trends

National homeschool enrollment data is less available than public and private enrollment data because the reporting channels between homeschools and national agencies are sparse. [However, the Washington Post publishes a homeschool dataset \(Texas is not included\).](#) California, Florida, New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio were selected from the Washington Post dataset to provide a national perspective.

As seen with other trend changes influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic, national homeschool enrollment increased across all states by the end of 2021. Generally, national homeschool enrollment declined in the later years of the pandemic, but Florida showed a different trend. Many students in Florida remained in home learning, as the trend continues to rise in the last few years. Florida has the most significant share of homeschool students, with nearly three times as many students learning at home than California (Figure 7 on the next page).

Figure 7.



Strategic Plan Linkage: Goal 2: Leading innovation and managing change.

Board Policy Linkage: [Benefits and Services Committee Charter](#)