Distribution of Public and Private Schools: Wyoming

In the United States, about 91% of students—more than 49 million—attend one of the nation's 99,000+ public schools.[1] Approximately 29,727 private schools educate 4.7 million (less than 9%) of the nation's students. Most private schools (83.4%) are in or close to urban or suburban areas; only 16.6% are in distant or remote regions.[2] A 2017 study found that only one third of students in rural areas have access to a private school within a 5-mile radius.[3] Most private schools (66%) have a religious orientation.

Why look at public and private school distribution?

As of January 2025, 34 states have policies in place to provide vouchers to parents to pay for non-public school costs.[4] School vouchers—sometimes referred to as tax-credit scholarships, universal school choice, or education savings accounts—allow funding systems to use public funds for private schools. The U.S. Congress is also considering legislation that would utilize the tax code to create a type of school voucher program for families that use non-public schools. This analysis of public and private school distribution provides information on where vouchers would likely be allocated.

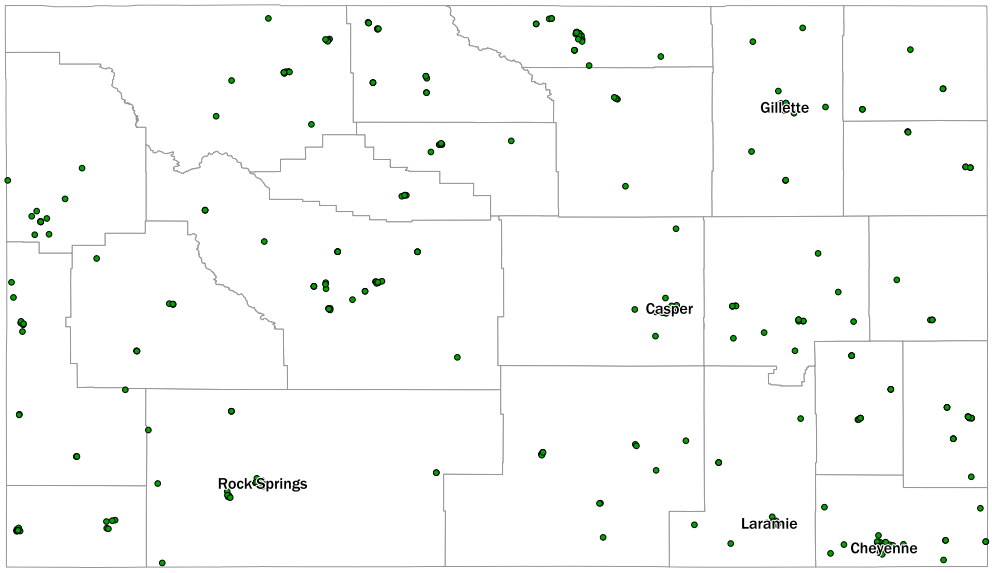
Wyoming facts

The following information comes from the National Center for Education Statistics for the 2021–22 school year.

Key facts:

- There are 359 public schools in Wyoming.
- There are an estimated 33 private schools in Wyoming—8.3% of all schools in the state. An estimated 12 of these private schools are nonsectarian.
- Wyoming's private schools educate 1.8% of students in the state.
- 48.0% of private schools in Wyoming are in urban or suburban areas.

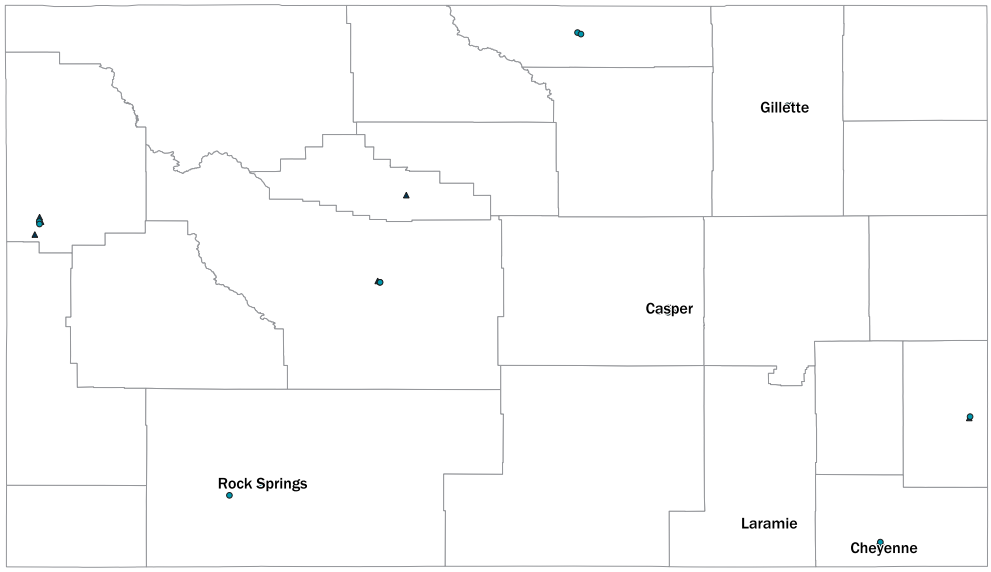
Figure 1. Public Schools in Wyoming, 2021–22



- Public schools

Source: National Center for Education Statistics. (n.d.). *Common Core of Data*. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/ccddata.asp (accessed 02/28/2025).

Figure 2. Private Schools in Wyoming, 2021–22



Private schools
- Religious
- Nonsectarian

Source: National Center for Education Statistics. (n.d.). *Private School Universe Survey, 2021–22*. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pss/ (accessed 02/28/2025).

Table 1. Student Enrollment, 2021–22

School type	Wyoming		United States	
	Enrollment[a]	Percentage	Enrollment[a]	Percentage
Public[b]	93,093	98.2%	49,342,118	91.3%
Private	1,681	1.8%	4,731,303	8.7%

Table 2. Number of Schools, 2021–22

School type	Wyoming		United States	
	Number of schools	Percentage	Number of schools	Percentage
Public[b]	359	91.7%	99,271	77.0%
Private	33	8.3%	29,727	23.0%

Table 3. Location of Private Schools, 2021–22

School location[c]	Wyoming		United States	
	Number of schools	Percentage	Number of schools	Percentage
Urban/Suburban	16	48.0%	24,782	83.4%
Distant and Remote—Rural and Town	17	52.0%	4,945	16.6%

Table 4. Religious Affiliation of Private Schools, 2021–22

School type[d]	Wyoming		United States	
	Number of schools	Percentage	Number of schools	Percentage
Religious	20	62.1%	19,628	66.0%
Nonsectarian	12	37.9%	10,099	34.0%

[a] Student enrollment data do not include students who are homeschooled.

[b] Public schools include both district and charter schools.

[c] Urban/Suburban includes schools defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as urban and suburban and schools designated as fringe towns and fringe rural. Distant and remote schools are those located in towns or rural areas that are defined as distant or remote by the National Center for Education Statistics. See National Center for Education Statistics. (n.d.). *Locale classifications and criteria*. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/annualreports/topical-studies/locale/definitions (accessed 02/28/2025). The estimates included in these tables for distant and remote schools may be less precise in states with small numbers.

[d] The estimates included in these tables for nonsectarian schools may be less precise in states with small numbers.

Sources: All public and private school data represent the 2021–22 school year, the most recent available for private schools. The source of data for public schools is the National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of Data (https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/). The source of data for private schools is the National Center for Education Statistics Private School Universe Survey (https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pss/). Data were accessed 02/28/2025.

Research notes

- All public and private school data represent the 2021–22 school year, the most recent available for private schools.
- Public school data are drawn from the National Center for Education Statistics. (n.d.). *Common Core of Data*. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/ccddata.asp (accessed 02/28/2025).
- Private school data are drawn from the National Center for Education Statistics. (n.d.). *Private School Universe Survey, 2021–22*. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pss/ (accessed 02/28/2025). On average, 75% of a state's private schools responded to the survey. Percentages mapped vary by state.
- The estimates included in these tables for distant/remote and nonsectarian schools may be less precise in states with small numbers.

Endnotes

1. National Center for Education Statistics. (2024, February). *Digest of Education Statistics: 2022*. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d22/ (accessed 02/28/2025).
2. Urban/Suburban includes schools defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as urban and suburban and schools designated as fringe towns and fringe rural. Distant and remote schools are those located in towns or rural areas that are defined as distant or remote by the National Center for Education Statistics. See National Center for Education Statistics. (n.d.). *Locale classifications and criteria*. https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/annualreports/topical-studies/locale/definitions (accessed 02/28/2025).
3. Chingos, M., & Blagg, K. (2017). *Who could benefit from school choice? Mapping access to public and private schools*. The Brookings Institution. https://www.brookings.edu/articles/who-could-benefit-from-school-choice-mapping-access-to-public-and-private-schools/
4. EdChoice. *School Choice in America Dashboard* [Interactive tool]. https://www.edchoice.org/school-choice-in-america-dashboard-scia/ (accessed 02/28/2025).

Acknowledgments

This resource was supported by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation and Raikes Foundation. Core operating support for the Learning Policy Institute is provided by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, Heising-Simons Foundation, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Raikes Foundation, Sandler Foundation, Skyline Foundation, and MacKenzie Scott. The ideas voiced here are those of the authors and not those of our funders.

Suggested citation: Learning Policy Institute. (2025, March). *Public and private school distribution* [Data tool]. https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/2025-public-private-school-distribution

Questions? Please contact info@learningpolicyinstitute.org.

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Document last revised March 20, 2025

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