The Common Sense Census Presents: Research Brief

Remote Learning and Digital Equity During the Pandemic

1. Children of color and those from lower-income households have been far more likely to attend school remotely during the pandemic than White children or those from wealthier households.

Since the pandemic, about half (49%) of all 8- to 18-year-olds in the U.S. say they have attended school fully or mostly online, and another 38% have attended virtually for at least part of the time. Thirteen percent say they continued to attend school in person all of the time during the pandemic. Younger students (age 8 to 12) were more likely than teens to attend in person (17% vs. 9% say they attended in person the full time).

Children of color and those from lower-income families were much more likely to attend school online than White children or those from wealthier households. Black and Hispanic/Latino youth were about twice as likely to say they've attended school online "all the time" since the pandemic (48% of Hispanic/Latino and 39% of Black youth, vs. 20% of White youth). Forty-one percent of White children say they have attended mostly or fully in person during the pandemic, compared with 24% of Black and 18% of Hispanic/Latino youth.

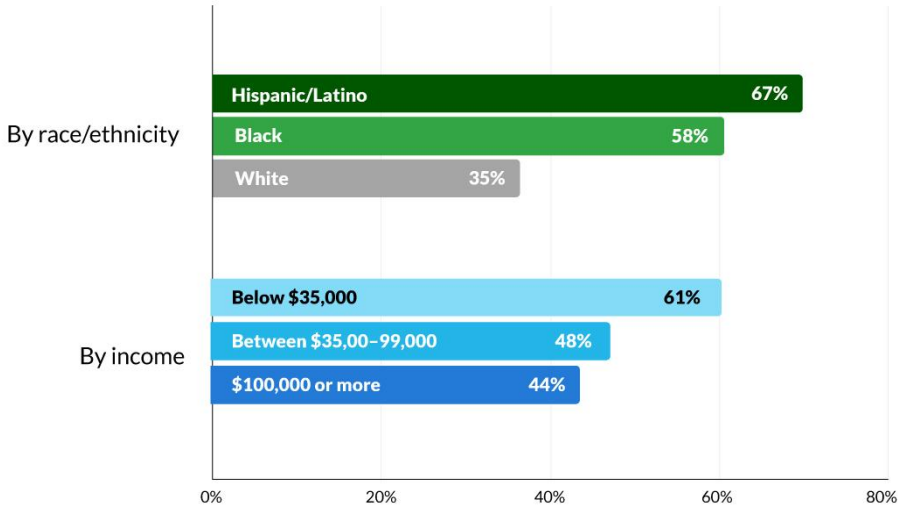
Online vs. In-Person Learning During the Pandemic, by Age, Race/Ethnicity, and Income
During the pandemic, percent of 8- to 18-year-olds who attended school:

	All	By age		By race/ethnicity			By income		
		8–12	13–18	White	Black	Hispanic/ Latino	Lower	Middle	Higher
Fully online	32%	30%	33%	20%[a]	39%[b]	48%[c]	42%[a]	31%[b]	27%[b]
Mostly online	17%	15%[a]	19%[b]	15%	19%	19%	19%	17%	17%
Online half the time	20%	16%[a]	23%[b]	24%[a]	19%	14%[b]	19%	18%	22%
Mostly in person	18%	21%[a]	15%[b]	24%[a]	13%[b]	10%[b]	11%[a]	19%[b]	20%[b]
Fully in person	13%	17%[a]	9%[b]	17%[a]	11%[b]	8%[b]	9%[a]	14%[b]	13%

Note: Lower income is <$35,000; middle is $35,000–99,999; higher is $100,000 or more. Superscripts are used to denote statistical significance. Items with different superscripts differ significantly at the level of p < .05. Items that share a common superscript (and those with no superscript) do not differ significantly. Significance should be read across rows, within each demographic category. Columns may not add up to 100% because of rounding.

***Source:** The data in this brief is from a nationally representative probability-based survey of 1,318 children age 8 to 18 and their parents, conducted in English and Spanish from May 7 to June 3, 2021, by Ipsos Public Affairs for Common Sense.*

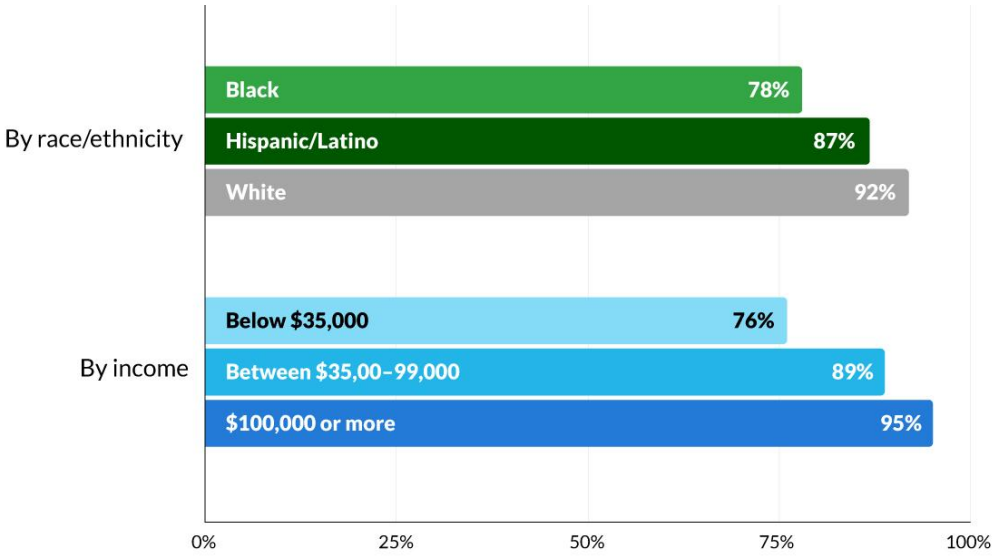
During the pandemic, percent of 8- to 18-year-olds who attended school mostly or fully online:



2. About one in four (24%) children from lower-income households still do not have a computer at home.

Although the vast majority of 8- to 18-year-olds (89%) do have a computer at home, access varies substantially by income and race/ethnicity. For example, nearly one in four (24%) students in this age group from lower-income families (less than $35,000 a year) do not have access to a home computer, compared to just 5% of those in higher-income families ($100,000 or more). Having a computer in the home is no guarantee that students will be able to get the time they need on the device, or that the computer will function properly. But not having a computer is a guarantee that they won't.

Percent of 8- to 18-year-olds with a computer in the home:



3. Nearly one in five (19%) 8- to 18-year-olds still don't have residential broadband.

Eighty-one percent of parents of 8- to 18-year-olds say they have some type of residential broadband at home, such as cable, DSL, or fiber optic. The remainder have either satellite (6%), some other type of service (5%), dial-up service (2%), a school-provided hotspot (1%), or don't know what type of internet they have (3%). Three percent say they have no home internet service. As with home computer access, the quality of home internet access varies substantially by income and race/ethnicity. For example, 61% of lower-income parents report having home broadband, compared with 90% of higher-income parents.

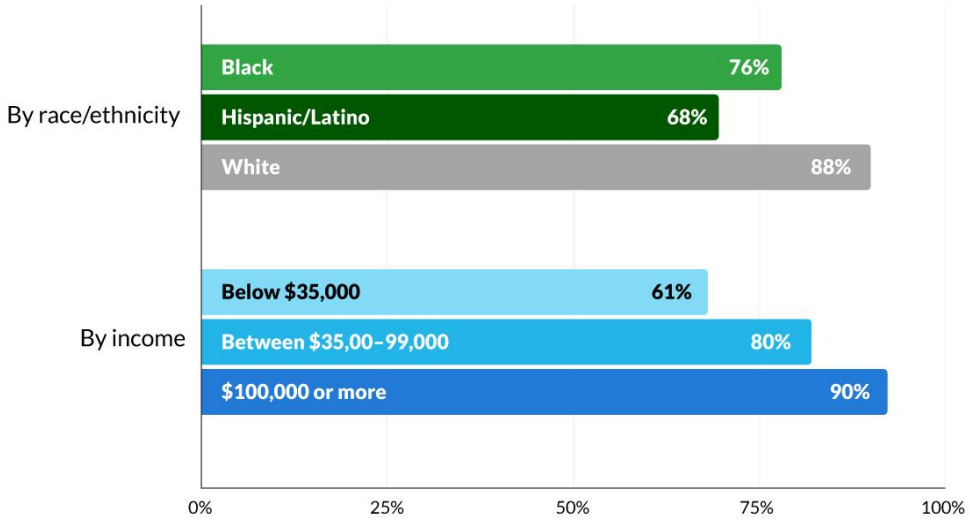
Type of Home Internet Access, by Race/Ethnicity and Income

Among parents of 8- to 18-year-olds, percent who say they have each kind of internet access at home:

	All	By race/ethnicity			By income		
		White	Black	Hispanic/ Latino	Lower	Middle	Higher
Broadband (cable, DSL, fiber optic)	81%	88%[a]	76%[b]	68%[b]	61%[a]	80%[b]	90%[c]
Satellite	6%	5%[a]	3%[a]	11%[b]	8%	7%	5%
School-provided hotspot	1%	1%[a]	3%[b]	1%	3%	1%	0
Dial-up	2%	*[a]	2%[b]	4%[b]	2%	2%	1%
Other	5%	4%[a]	11%[b]	5%[a]	10%[a]	5%[b]	3%[b]
None	3%	2%	4%	3%	7%[a]	2%[b]	1%[b]
Don't know	3%	1%[a]	3%[a]	8%[b]	10%[a]	3%[b]	1%[c]

Note: Lower income is <$35,000; middle is $35,000–99,999; higher is $100,000 or more. Superscripts are used to denote statistical significance. Items with different superscripts differ significantly at the level of p < .05. Items that share a common superscript (and those with no superscript) do not differ significantly. Significance should be read across rows, within each demographic category. Columns may not add up to 100% because of rounding.

Percent of 8- to 18-year-olds with broadband internet access at home:



Note: Broadband was defined as cable, DSL, or fiber optic.

4. Three out of four (75%) children going to school remotely during the pandemic experienced technical issues or a lack of digital access that made it hard for them to attend class or do their schoolwork.

Hispanic/Latino students and those from lower-income families were more likely to experience technical issues or a lack of access: For example, more than half (55%) of Hispanic/Latino students said they experienced such challenges "often" or "sometimes," compared with 38% of White students. Similarly, 55% of children from lower-income households said they often or sometimes experienced this type of disruption in their learning, compared with 37% of children from higher-income households.

Educational Disruptions Due to Inadequate Digital Access, by Age, Race/Ethnicity, and Income
Among 8- to 18-year-olds who have attended school remotely during the pandemic, percent who say that technical issues or lack of access to a computer or the internet have made it hard for them to attend class or do their schoolwork:

	All	By age		By race/ethnicity			By income		
		8–12	13–18	White	Black	Hispanic/Latino	Lower	Middle	Higher
Ever	75%	77%	73%	72%[a]	71%	81%[b]	82%[a]	74%	73%[b]
Often	10%	13%[a]	8%[b]	8%[a]	9%	16%[b]	13%	11%	8%
Sometimes	34%	34%	33%	30%	34%	39%	42%[a]	35%	29%[b]
Once or twice	31%	30%	32%	34%	28%	26%	27%[a]	28%[a]	36%[b]
Never	25%	23%	27%	28%[a]	29%	19%[b]	18%[a]	26%[b]	27%[b]

Note: Lower income is <$35,000; middle is $35,000–99,999; higher is $100,000 or more. Superscripts are used to denote statistical significance. Items with different superscripts differ significantly at the level of p < .05. Items that share a common superscript (and those with no superscript) do not differ significantly. Significance should be read across rows, within each demographic category.

5. Young people without home broadband have experienced more frequent disruptions in their schooling than those with broadband.

Among 8- to 18-year-olds who have gone to school remotely during the pandemic, 41% of those who have some type of home broadband connection say they have "often" or "sometimes" experienced tech-related educational disruptions; among those without home broadband, 56% have experienced disruptions that often.

Educational Disruptions Due to Inadequate Digital Access, by Type of Home Internet Connection
Among 8- to 18-year-olds who have attended school remotely during the pandemic, percent who say that technical issues or lack of access to a computer or the internet have made it hard for them to attend class or do their schoolwork:

	Among those with residential broadband (cable, DSL, fiber optic)	Among those without residential broadband+
Ever	74%	80%
Often	10%	11%
Sometimes	31%[a]	45%[b]
Once or twice	33%	24%
Never	26%	20%

+ Includes satellite, school-provided hotspot, dial-up, "other," and no home internet. The question about home internet access was asked of parents; the question about being unable to attend class or complete schoolwork was asked of students. Parents who didn't know what type of internet access they had at home were excluded from this analysis (n=38).

Suggested citation: Rideout, V.J. & Robb, M.B. *The Common Sense Census presents: Research brief. Remote learning and digital equity during the pandemic.* San Francisco, CA: Common Sense.