

January 24, 2025

**Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill**  
**Commons General Committee**

House of Commons

London

SW1A 0AA

Dear Committee Members:

Are home educating parents unqualified—or worse, dangerous?

This question went “viral” in 2020, and the Cardus Education Survey (CES) was [cited](#) by a Harvard professor as one of a “very small body of professional, methodologically sound homeschooling research.” At the time, I (David Hunt) was the research director at Cardus Education and, with my colleagues, was grateful for the acknowledgement.

The CES began collecting representative data [in 2010](#) on the graduate outcomes from the public, non-religious private, Catholic, Protestant, and home education sectors. As of 2025, the CES has sampled 20,361 high school graduates, between 24 to 39 years old, [across the United States, Canada, and Australia](#). The next round of home education data will be released in February 2025, so we will present the most recent U.S. findings (2018) below.

It is important to understand the context of the data. Researching home educators is difficult, as they are the hardest to put into a proverbial box. The whole premise of home education is its heterogeneity; it is a completely customized educational experience. Not only are no two home educating families the same, but, within a family, the experience will be different for each child. So, of course, no matter how large or representative the sample, we would expect “mixed” results on a whole range of outcomes from home educated students.

Bottomline: Home educated graduates tend to be the most unique. For instance, home educated graduates are the [most likely](#) to get good grades in university, especially after controlling for family background to isolate the “school sector” effect. However, as a cohort, they average the fewest years of education and are the least likely to attend university. [Phase II](#) of the CES found they are also the most likely to earn a doctorate or professional degree. In other words, the data reveals an inverted bell curve.

In another twist, home educated graduates—along with non-religious private (NRP) school graduates—are considerably more likely to be executives or managers. Along with Catholic private school grads, home educated grads are the most likely to be self-employed. However, home educated grads are the lowest income earners, while NRPs make the most money of all grads.

Here’s a clue to some of the aforementioned variances: Home educated grads are the most likely to have (or be) a stay-at-home spouse, and they are by far the [most generous](#) with volunteering their time—factors that may explain the lower average income and fewer years of higher education.

But is not sacrifice for the sake of family and strong communities a desirable outcome? On a range of questions, we find that—along with NRP grads—the sector-level effect of home education is strongest for preparing grads to interact with culture and society.

If there is any remaining doubt that home education is good for society, home education graduates are the most likely to [report](#) having a spouse or partner that they can confide in, and the home education effect is [strongest](#) for close adult friendships across racial lines.

To [quote](#) Cardus senior fellow David Sikkink of the University of Notre Dame, who originally led the CES survey design and research team:

[W]hat kind of survey evidence would we need to justify a major policy decision that overturns a long history of home education in favor of absolute—or at least greatly expanded—state control? Whatever it is, we certainly have yet to see it.

And there is solid evidence from other sources, too. In 2021, Brendan Case and Ying Chen of Harvard’s [Human Flourishing Program](#) wrote in the [Wall Street Journal](#) that “homeschooled children generally develop into well-adjusted, responsible, and socially engaged young adults.” Their analysis of over 12,000 children found that home educated children volunteered at higher rates and were more likely to attend religious services. The title of their article says it well: “A new study suggests [home-schoolers] are healthier, happier and more virtuous than public-school graduates.”

Likewise, a [systematic review of the research](#) on home education in the peer-reviewed *Journal of School Choice*—covering 35 years of studies—found that the home educated do better than their peers, in terms of social and emotional development and success, in adulthood.

Opponents of home education may attempt to correlate it with abuse and neglect. In response to this, Prof. Danish Shakeel (University of Buckingham) and I (Brian Ray) examined nationally representative data in the United States to determine whether home educated students experience more maltreatment than students in conventional schools. They do not. Publishing our [results](#) in the *Journal of School Choice*, we found no evidence to support claims of greater abuse in home education.

In conclusion, the evidence shows that home education is not something to be feared but celebrated. While it may not be optimal for every student, the graduate outcomes indicate that home education, on balance, is a net positive—and not only for students and families but society, too.

Laws already exist to hold negligent guardians accountable in the rare and unfortunate instances of neglect or abuse. The law also presumes innocence, as the overwhelming majority of parents do their best for their child. And in all but the rarest instance, parents care for their children far more than anyone else could even imagine. Why would we not trust them to ensure their child receives the best possible education?

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