

School-Sector Influence on Graduate Outcomes and Flourishing

Findings from the 2023 Cardus Education Survey

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Key Points

- The Cardus Education Survey (CES), conducted in the United States in 2011, 2014, 2018, and again in 2023, examines a range of outcomes for a nationally representative sample of adults aged 24 to 39 who attended public schools, Protestant schools, Catholic schools, nonreligious independent schools, or were homeschooled.
- The CES examines respondents' academic, spiritual, cultural, civic, and relational outcomes, and their life patterns, views, and choices. The 2023 iteration also included questions about mental health and personal values.
- The CES controls for a range of respondents' demographic characteristics in order to estimate the specific effect of school type on graduate outcomes.
- Top-line findings:
 - *High school experiences and quality:* Graduates from Protestant, Catholic, and nonreligious independent schools are significantly more positive in their ratings than those from public schools. Those from Protestant and Catholic schools believe that their schools prepared them well to have a vibrant spiritual life.
 - *Educational attainment and employment outcomes:* Graduates from Catholic or nonreligious independent schools are more likely to attain a graduate degree and have higher income levels. Those from Protestant and Catholic schools are more likely to value having a job that is directly helpful to others.
 - *Civic behaviors and values:* Graduates from Protestant schools and those who were homeschooled have higher rates of charitable giving, regardless of income, and are more likely to volunteer than are graduates from public schools. Graduates from nonreligious independent schools are more likely to cite community involvement and tolerance as very important.
 - *Mental health and well-being:* Graduates who were homeschooled report the lowest levels of depression and anxiety. Graduates from Protestant and Catholic schools have the highest levels of life satisfaction, though this difference disappears after controlling for respondents' demographic characteristics.
 - *Faith formation:* The strongest sector-level effects are observed here. Graduates from Protestant schools or homeschooling are much more likely to report that they believe in God and life after death and regularly engage in religious practices.

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<https://www.cardus.ca/research/education/reports/school-sector-influence-on-graduate-outcomes-and-flourishing/>.