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Gateway Policy Explorer: Early Life Policy Series

USA Compulsory Schooling Policy Details 1900-2024

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Preface

This document is intended for researchers who want to understand the evolution of policy or the policy in place at a particular point in time. This document is not intended for personal advice or to aid in decision-making. The authors have made significant effort to identify and collect historical information pertaining to these policies, to accurately represent these policies, and to communicate how policies may interact to determine legal requirements. The policies presented in this document focus on rules applicable to most individuals aged 50 and older from 1992. Many systems include special policies for specific groups. We encourage all users to complete their own review of literature in this area depending on the research questions they have in mind.

If you have feedback or questions or identify an error, please contact policy@g2aging.org.

Background — Gateway Policy Explorer: Early Life Policy Series

The *Gateway Policy Explorer* (<http://g2aging.org/policy-explorer>) is part of the Gateway to Global Aging Data (<http://g2aging.org>) project. The *Early Life Policy Series* captures historical policy that affects the birth cohorts of respondents in the surveys covered by the Gateway. It was motivated by the rapid evolution of policies affecting older people across the world. As the Health and Retirement Study (HRS) began in 1992 and many of the international network of studies (HRS-INS) cover more than a decade, understanding the policies in place at the time of the survey has become more demanding for researchers.

Why are we tracking past policy? Individuals make choices based on current policies and the outcomes we see today may reflect responses to past policies. When interpreting the survey responses of individuals, an understanding of the policy environment under which those individuals operate is critical. The collection of contextual information in the *Gateway Policy Explorer* aims to support researchers who want to understand or use policy changes in their research and provide context for longitudinal or cross-country differences. Over the period 2023–2027 the *Gateway Policy Explorer* will be expanded to include information on retirement, long-term care, education, and other policies affecting the life cycle.

The key dimensions to the *Gateway Policy Explorer: Early Life Policy Series* are country and time. In the United States, policy is reported at the state level. We prioritize data collection for each country or state based on when respondents, largely born after 1900, would be affected by the policy topic.

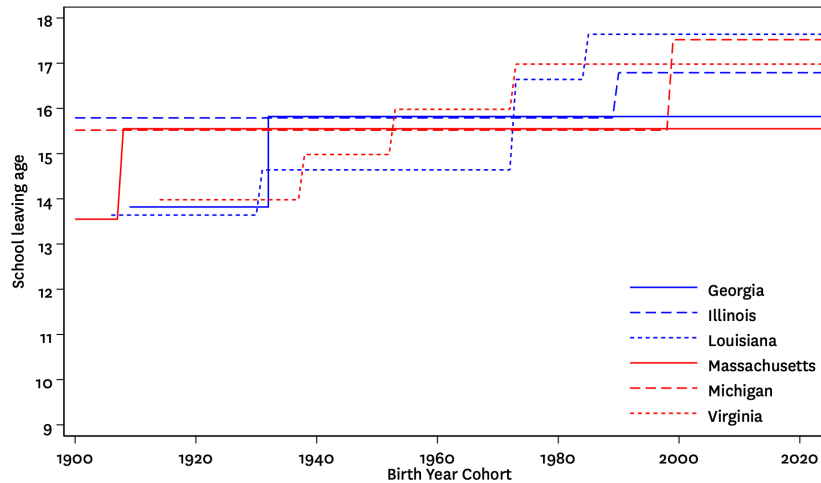
A separate document, like this one, is developed for each policy covered in the *Gateway Policy Explorer: Early Life Policy Series*. Depending on the complexity of the topic, separate documents may be created for each country as well.

USA Compulsory Schooling Policy Details

1900-2024 * †

In the late 1800s, compulsory school attendance laws became a key strategy in mitigating child labor in the United States. Therefore, compulsory schooling laws and laws restricting child labor were often passed simultaneously or within short time frames of one another. These policies became cohesive with one another over time as child labor policies maintain compliance with compulsory schooling laws and vice versa. While there is no federal mandate for compulsory school attendance laws, these laws are enforced in all 50 states, with a typical school starting age of 6 years old.

Figure 1: Selection of School Leaving Policies by Birth Year and State



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* If you have questions or suggestions, please contact policy@g2aging.org.

† Detailed information and definitions are provided in tables, formulas and a glossary at the end of this document. To facilitate switching back and forth, this document is designed with hyperlinks. Most PDF readers have shortcuts that permit a reader to return to the previous location after selecting a hyperlink. In Adobe Acrobat on a PC: "Alt" + "←"; In Adobe Acrobat on a MAC: "command" + "←"; In Preview on a MAC: "command" + "[".

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1. Introduction

Technical Approach

We determine reform dates to compulsory schooling and child labor policies by identifying the original text of the legislation. The original legislation was primarily identified using HeinOnline, a research platform that contains session laws for all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. HathiTrust Digital Library and state legislative websites were also referenced.¹ Reform dates are identified as the effective dates for policies when they are approved unless the legislation explicitly states an effective date or affected cohort or subsequent legislation is identified that alters the interpretation of the intended law (e.g., delays or suspends the schooling policy).

Determining who is affected by a reform generally requires understanding the start and end of the typical academic year in a state's primary and secondary schooling system. A school year (SY) typically does not follow the calendar year, which may lead to confusion regarding who is affected by a compulsory schooling reform. The SY varies based on state laws. In most states, the SY spans from July to June of the following calendar year. We define a SY based on a state's convention. In some states, the [effective SY for enrollment](#) differs slightly from the SY. For example, in California, the effective SY for enrollment typically begins December 1 and is completed by November of the following year. We define the SY in California as December to November. However, in Arkansas, students are permitted to enroll in a SY if they are age eligible by October 1. Consequently, we adjust the effective SY for enrollment to be from October to September of the following calendar year.

Compulsory schooling laws will typically become effective on the first day of the SY, making that the affected school year. Alternatively, the law may specify the affected school year or specify transitional provisions. In cases where the effective date occurs during a SY and no transitional provisions are stated in the law, we adjust effective dates of policies based on the next effective SY for enrollment. The rationale for this assumption is that we do not believe most policies would have required people who have already completed compulsory schooling requirements under the previous policy to return to school. For example, if a school year is from September to August, and a policy is passed in April 1962 raising compulsory school duration from 8 to 9 years, then we assume a person born in September 1946, who started school in the year they reach age 7 and who had the option to leave school at age 14 after completing their 8th consecutive year of schooling in SY 1960-61, would not have been required to return to school less than 1 year later to complete a 9th year of schooling.

A notable exception to the assumption of enforcement beginning with the next SY is when legislation repeals the state's existing compulsory schooling mandate. This is typically seen in southern states in the late 1950s and early 1960s, where several state legislatures repealed compulsory schooling mandates as a means of resisting racial integration in schools in the wake of the US Supreme Court decision in the case of [Brown v. Board of Education](#). When a compulsory schooling mandate is repealed, we assume that enforcement for compulsory schooling law ends on the effective date of the law, even if it is in the middle of a school year. In this instance, we also adjust compulsory schooling durations for each birth cohort to reflect the number of years of compulsory schooling they would have completed before the law was repealed. For more information on desegregation, see Chapter 2 of this document.

It is not uncommon for legislation to vary based on the size, population, or classification of a district. Regions may be classified explicitly based on these parameters, or by their designation as cities of the [first, second, or third class](#). For example, in 1907, Nebraska established a school leaving age of 16 for individuals in cities and metropolitan areas. For students in rural school districts, the leaving age was 15. To enable analysis of policies at the state level, we define the state's policy as the one affecting the greatest share of the population. By definition, this is typically the law applicable to cities and metropolitan areas. Specifically, when a law dictates different compulsory schooling ages for urban and rural areas, we define the law applicable in the urban area as the state's law and include a note on the within-state variation in policy in the chapter summary. In the aforementioned example, the school leaving age for Nebraska in 1907 is specified as 16.

It was also common for the earliest compulsory schooling laws to not require attendance for the full school year. Many states would require attendance for a certain number of weeks and only a portion of those weeks needed to be consecutive. Over time, all states eventually required that individuals of compulsory schooling age attend school for the full academic year. In both situations when attendance was required for only a portion of the year and when it was required for the full school year, affected cohorts were coded as required to attend school.

Compulsory schooling laws in the US generally define the starting age and the leaving age. In some cases, the law specifies the starting age and duration of compulsory schooling.

We develop the following cross-state harmonized measures based on this policy information:

- **Compulsory school starting age:** We define this as the age an individual reaches during the school year that they begin

compulsory schooling. There are a few different ways a state may present this information in law:

- *Age achievement during SY*: This is equivalent to our harmonized definition for starting age. For example, in Florida, compulsory schooling starts in the SY when a person reaches age 6. In this example, they may begin compulsory schooling at age 5 as long as they reach age 6 at some point during the SY.
- *Age achievement before SY*: In this case, we define starting age as 1 year later (e.g., Arkansas).
- **Compulsory school leaving age**: We define this as the age an individual reaches in their last year of compulsory schooling. This may be a full or partial year of schooling. There are several different ways states present this in law:
 - *Leaving age achievement during SY*: This is our harmonized definition for leaving age and is typically a consequence of school starting age and duration being specified by law.
 - *Leaving age achievement*: A person may leave school immediately upon reaching the leaving age, which means their final year may be a partial year.

If the leaving age is specified in the law, we use the age specified according to the rules above. For laws that do not specify the leaving age, we impute this value. In instances where the school leaving age is imputed, we assign the value based on our measure of compulsory school starting age plus our measure of compulsory school duration minus 1.

- **Compulsory schooling duration**: The required duration of compulsory schooling, measured as the sum of completed school years. We follow these conventions:
 - **Type 1 —duration specified by law**: We assign the value established in law. It is equal to the total elapsed years of education between our measures of starting age and leaving age, which is equivalent to the difference between these two ages plus 1.
 - **Type 2 —duration imputed**: We impute a measure equal to the total elapsed years of education from our measure of starting age to the leaving age, which is equivalent to the difference between these two ages.

We use these cross-state harmonized measures to calculate the first birth cohort affected by compulsory schooling reforms. Across measures, the first individuals affected by a policy are those who reached a certain age in the affected school year. Our rationale for this approach is that the cohort that reaches the new school starting or leaving age in the first SY of the policy being enforced is the first cohort to compulsorily attend school for the full duration required by the new law.

The first birth cohort affected by the first institution of a compulsory schooling law is calculated by subtracting the school starting age from the effective date of the policy.

- Example: A compulsory schooling law established as effective in September 1915 with a starting age of 8 (based on our harmonized definition of compulsory school starting age) and a leaving age of 14 would first affect individuals born in September 1907, who would reach age 8 in SY 1915-16 and be required to enroll in their first year of compulsory schooling.

The first birth cohort affected by a reform changing our measure of the leaving age is calculated by subtracting from the effective date of the policy from the original leaving age.

- Example 1: A policy effective in SY 1966-67 increasing the schooling leaving age from 14 to 15 would affect people born in SY 1952-53 who would be 14 in SY 1966-67 when the policy went into effect, and therefore these individuals would be required to remain for an additional year of school. People born in SY 1951-52 would have reached age 14 in SY 1965-66 and completed their compulsory schooling requirement. Our approach assumes that these individuals would not be required to return to school. We operate under this assumption unless transitional provisions are specified in the law.
- Example 2: A policy effective in SY 1945-46 lowering the school leaving age from 15 to 14 would affect those born in SY 1930-31 who would be 15 in the SY when the policy went into effect. This cohort would not be required to enroll in school in SY 1945-46 and they would be the first cohort for whom the compulsory schooling requirement ends at age 14.

The first birth cohort affected by a reform changing our measure of the starting age is calculated by subtracting the lesser of the original and new starting age from the effective date of the policy.

- Example 1: A policy effective in SY 2017-18 decreasing the school starting age from 7 to 6 would affect people born in SY 2011-12 who would reach age 6 in SY 2017-18 when the policy went into effect, and therefore these individuals would be required to start schooling 1 year earlier.
- Example 2: A policy effective in SY 1946-47 increasing the school starting age from 6 to 7 would first affect people born in SY 1940-41. These individuals would reach age 6 in SY 1946-47 and because of the new reform, they would not be required to start school until SY 1947-48 (when they reach age 7).

For US states, we also identify the minimum ages to be eligible for work permits. The effective cohort for the first work permit policy in a state is calculated as the first cohort reaching the full-time work permit age on the effective date of the policy. For example, a policy establishing a work permit age of 14 in September 1915 would first affect individuals born in September 1901.

When a policy changes the full-time work permit age, the first birth cohort affected is calculated by subtracting the lesser of the original and new work permit age from the effective date of the policy.

- Example 1: A policy effective in January 1965 that increases the full-time work permit age from 14 to 15 would first affect people born in January 1951. This birth cohort would reach age 14 in January 1965, but due to the new policy, would need to wait an additional year until they reached age 15 to obtain a full-time work permit.
- Example 2: A policy effective in January 1930 that lowers the full-time work permit age from 15 to 14 would first affect individuals born in January 1916. This cohort would reach age 14 when the reform went into effect, becoming eligible for work permits.

This document records compulsory schooling policy changes going back to the middle of the 19th century, when these policies were first being implemented in several states. However, when calculating birth cohorts, we begin with January 1900 to encompass those individuals who are covered in the Health and Retirement Study (HRS), which began in 1992 and surveys people in the United States aged 51 and older.

Notes:

1. Other scholars have not referenced the original compulsory schooling legislation to the same extent when conducting their analyses. Lleras-Muney (2002) relies upon the Biennial Survey of Education, a collection of statistics gathered and made available every two years by the U.S. Office of Education. Angrist and Krueger (1991) use Census data. While the Biennial Surveys and Census data are easily accessible and informative, their main limitation is that they do not collect compulsory schooling data annually and are instead looking at a 2-10 year period. It is possible that changes in the compulsory schooling ages reported by these sources may be attributed to a period after the implementation year.

2. USA Federal Policies

Editor's note

Compulsory school attendance policies in the United States are enacted and enforced at the state level. There is no federal mandate requiring school attendance for minors. However, the federal government has imposed regulations on state authority in enforcing compulsory school attendance laws, primarily through judicial decisions made in the Supreme Court.

In addition to education, states have also historically established and enforced laws regulating the employment of minors. While many states enforce more stringent laws regulating child labor than the federal government requires, the federal government has nevertheless been essential in establishing minimum standards for the employment of minors.

This chapter provides a brief historical overview of legislative and judicial regulations passed by the United States federal government, offering important context for compulsory schooling laws legislated at the state level.

State-level governance on compulsory schooling was shaped by federal-level decisions on 3 key issues: the scope of state regulatory authority over schools, racial segregation of schools, and child labor. These issues are detailed below.

Regulatory Authority

In 1922, the state of Oregon passed a compulsory school attendance law that required all minors between the ages of 8 and 16 to attend public school for the full academic year (Jorgenson, 1968). The law provided exemptions for minors who resided far away from schools, and for those with mental or physical disabilities. In effect, this policy eliminated parental school choice in the state of Oregon. A case was brought against the state of Oregon by two organizations that operated private schools: The Society of Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary and the Hill Military Academy. Both cases named the governor of Oregon, Walter Pierce, as the defendant. The Supreme Court jointly ruled on these cases in March 1925, stating that the 1922 law unconstitutionally interferes with the liberty of parents to direct their children's education (*Pierce v. Hill Military Academy*, 1925; *Pierce v. Society of Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary*, 1925). While the Supreme Court upheld the right to school choice for parents and guardians, the court also upheld states' rights to exercise regulatory control over education in both public and private schools.

Parental rights were further upheld in 1972 (*Wisconsin v. Yoder*, 1972). The Supreme Court ruled that the State of Wisconsin could not require that Amish children follow compulsory schooling laws beyond the 8th grade, citing an infringement of their parents' freedom of religion. This case became an important precedent for religious exemptions to compulsory schooling mandates.

Racial Segregation

In 1892, the Supreme Court upheld race-based segregation in public schools (*Plessy v. Ferguson*, 1896). Although the case adjudicated was about public transportation, the Supreme Court ruled that in general, segregated public facilities did not violate the Equal Protections Clause of the Constitution provided that the facilities were equal in quality. Through this ruling, and under the doctrine of "separate but equal," the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of race-based segregation in the public school system.

Westminster School Dist. of Orange County v. Mendez (1946) was one of the first court cases to challenge the "separate but equal" doctrine (National Park Service, n.d.). Citing the social and psychological harms of isolating Mexican students based on their ancestry, a U.S. District Court ruled in favor of Mendez and ordered the desegregation of California schools. The decision was upheld in an appellate court and codified into state law in 1947 in the Anderson Bill, making California the first state to desegregate its public schools (National Park Service, n.d.). This case, while not brought to the Supreme Court, set the stage for federal desegregation efforts in the following years.

The *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling was overturned in the 1954 decision on *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, 1954). In this case, the Supreme Court ruled that the use of separate facilities based on race is inherently unequal, and therefore violates the Equal Protections Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. While this ruling determined race-based discrimination in schools to be unconstitutional, the Supreme Court did not elicit action from state and local school boards until the case was re-argued

in 1955 (*Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka - 2*, 1955). In this ruling, the Supreme Court placed the onus on school authorities to take action in complying with the first ruling. A consequence of these rulings was that state and local school boards were required to actively desegregate public schools in a reasonable but emergent time frame. Between 1955 and 1956, more than 70 % of school districts in the border states (middle-ground states of the American Civil War: Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri, and West Virginia) were desegregated (Pahowka, 2006).

“Massive Resistance” to Desegregation

While desegregation efforts were initiated in many states, some state and local authorities reacted to the mandate with attempts to resist or circumvent the implementation of the Supreme Court’s ruling (Pahowka, 2006). This resistance was both implicit, through lackluster implementation and enforcement of desegregation strategies, and explicit, through codified legislative efforts to undermine the Supreme Court’s ruling. These efforts were embraced in a plan initiated by Senator Harry Byrd of Virginia, known as “Massive Resistance” (Legal Defense Fund, n.d.). This plan was proliferated in the Southern Manifesto, a document that expressed discontent with the Supreme Court’s decision in *Brown*, citing an overreach of the judicial branch’s power over states’ rights (Byrd, 1956). The Southern Manifesto garnered the support of 19 US senators and 82 members of the House of Representatives. The sections below provide a brief overview of the implementation of the Massive Resistance movement in selected states.

The sections below provide a brief overview of the implementation of the Massive Resistance movement in selected states, and succinctly discuss how each state’s strategy either affected or had the potential to affect compulsory schooling.

Arkansas

Arkansas engaged in multiple efforts to resist desegregation following the *Brown* decision. Early in 1957, the state legislature decreed that no minor would be required to attend an integrated school (Arkansas State Legislature, 1957). Later that same year, Governor Orval Fabus ordered the state National Guard to block the entry of nine Black students into Little Rock Central High School (Lonnie Bunch, n.d.). While the latter effort was ultimately unsuccessful, resistance to integration in Arkansas remained. In 1959 a pupil placement law was passed that allowed local boards of education to assign and transfer students and teachers to any school within or outside of their jurisdiction. This law remained in place until its repeal in 1983 (Arkansas State Legislature, 1983). While these policies did not directly affect compulsory schooling in Arkansas, together they created circumstances in which it was more difficult for Black students to attend school.

Georgia

Following the first *Brown* ruling, the legislature of Georgia amended the state’s constitution with a provision to stop funding any school district that attempted to desegregate (O’Brien, 1993). Although this amendment was struck down in courts, the state continued to actively resist the desegregation of its public schools. In 1956, the state legislature also authorized the governor to close public schools, provide tuition grants to students enrolling in private schools, and to use public education funds and infrastructure for private schools (Legislature of the State of Georgia, 1956). Many public schools that were ordered to desegregate by courts were closed and replaced with private schools. Students who were affected by these closures were eligible for tuition grants, although these grants were not equally distributed to Black and White students (O’Brien, 1993). In 1961, under a new governor, the State of Georgia repealed its school segregation laws and began the process of desegregating public schools. Although these practices did not directly impact compulsory schooling as a whole in Georgia, they severely curbed the ability of Black students to attend school.

Mississippi

The state of Mississippi’s initial attempts to resist desegregation were made through funding for Black schools. In July 1954, state officials proposed an expansion of the state’s existing equalization program, promising equal resources to Black and White schools provided that members of the Black delegation would not advocate for an end to racial segregation in the state (Bolton, 2017).

In 1956, the state legislature passed a statute ending the compulsory school attendance mandate, ensuring that White students would not have to attend desegregated schools (Mississippi State Legislature, 1956). Building on this measure after the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Mississippi implemented freedom of choice, allowing students to enroll in any school across the state regardless of their place of residence (Bolton, 2009). However, social pressures and discrimination discouraged Black parents from enrolling their children in better-funded White schools.

The state began to desegregate schools after a 1968 federal court order, although students were still not compelled to enroll in schools.¹ The Mississippi legislature re-established a compulsory schooling law in 1977, but this law did not penalize noncompliance and was therefore not enforced (Mississippi State Legislature, 1977). Mississippi finally began to enforce compulsory school attendance through

House Bill No. 15 of 1982, which went into effect for school year (SY) 1983-84 (Mississippi State Legislature, 1982). In summary, from 1956 to 1983, individuals in Mississippi were not required to attend school.

Although Mississippi schools have been under federal scrutiny since the 1960s, desegregation efforts in Mississippi are still underway. Schools in Cleveland, Mississippi were forced to desegregate in 2017, and 32 school districts remain in litigation with federal courts for segregation practices as of 2023 (Associated Press, 2023).

Missouri

Prior to the state's adoption of compulsory schooling laws, in 1865, the Missouri state legislature passed a law that allowed for the closure of schools for Black students if their average daily attendance per month was less than twelve students (Morice & Hunt, 2007). In the coming decades, this attendance threshold was lowered several times, and it was eight by 1893. Since Missouri's Black population was quite small during the late 19th Century, this law meant that the threshold was often difficult to meet, and schools for Black students were frequently closed as a result. If their school closed, Black students could either choose to attend another school – which was often not practical due to distance – or to stop their education. Missouri's prohibitive attendance threshold law for Black students remained in place until the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954.

North Carolina

Following *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954, 1955), the state of North Carolina formed a special advisory committee on education which was tasked with creating policies to preserve the segregated structure of the public school system. On March 30, 1955, following recommendations of the committee, the legislature of the state of North Carolina passed the Pupil Assignment Act, delegating desegregation efforts to local school districts. This act was intended to delay integration of public schools (Miller, 2017). In 1956, the state legislature passed the Pearsall Plan, which comprised of statutes codified with the intent of preserving racial segregation in the public school system (Miller, 2017). The Pearsall Plan included tuition grants for White children to attend private schools, voluntary school assignment, and a waiver of the compulsory school attendance law for any minor who was assigned to a racially integrated school against their will (North Carolina State Legislature, 1956). Compulsory schooling remained in place throughout the state, however; the Pearsall Plan created new exemptions to attendance rules but did not redefine them. The Pupil Assignment Act was repealed in 1969 following a district court's ruling in *Goodwin v. Johnson* that the state, not local school districts, was in charge of desegregating public schools (Goodwin v. Johnson, 1964). The Pearsall Plan was struck down by courts in the following year in *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* (1971). Desegregation efforts commenced in North Carolina in the 1970s, but many districts remained under court orders to desegregate well into the 1990s (Miller, 2017).

South Carolina

South Carolina employed two principal strategies to resist the integration of the state's schools. First, they engaged in a massive equalization campaign to uphold the “separate but equal” doctrine established by *Plessy v. Ferguson*. In 1951, the state established its first sales tax to improve the quality of Black schools, and in the next five years, \$124,329,394 was raised, with approximately ⅓ of the funds going to Black schools (Lowcountry Digital History Initiative, n.d.).

Governor James F. Byrnes also established the South Carolina School Committee in 1951, which became known as the Gressette Committee after its chairman, State Senator Marion Gressette. The committee was tasked with developing alternatives to desegregation, the most notable of which was the repeal of the state's compulsory attendance laws in 1955 (Solomon, 1955; Southern Education Reporting Service, 1955b). While the law did eliminate compulsory schooling for all students across the state, its language was evasive; rather than explicitly stating that attendance was no longer required, the state legislature redesignated “attendance teachers” as “visiting teachers” who could “interest... nonattending children” in school and seek to “influenc[e] them by means of persuasion to attend school regularly,” but who could not compel them to do so (Legislature of South Carolina, 1955; Southern Education Reporting Service, 1955a). In 1967, South Carolina ruled to reinstitute compulsory attendance, and this measure went into effect statewide in 1974 (Legislature of South Carolina, 1967). Therefore, individuals in South Carolina were not legally required to attend school from 1955 to 1974.

Virginia

Virginia created a Pupil Placement Board in 1956 with the task of assigning students to specific schools within their districts (Hershman, 2021). To avoid violating the Fourteenth Amendment, the board placed students in schools based on multiple criteria, in attempt to obscure the fact that student placement was racially motivated. Students who were placed in integrated schools were provided tuition grants to attend segregated private schools. These laws were passed along with 11 other statutes in the Stanley Plan, a strategy intended to ensure continuity in racial segregation in the state's public schools despite the court ruling (Vaughan, 2008). State legislators went

as far as forcing the closure of public schools in districts that attempted to desegregate.² Public schools in Virginia remained segregated until 1959 when desegregation orders were enforced by federal courts. Although these practices did not eliminate compulsory schooling, they limited the ability of Black students to attend high-quality schools.

Federal courts continued to uphold the ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* in the decades following the ruling, incrementally pressuring states to desegregate, and maintaining the government's de jure, or legal, stance against race-based segregation. However, through discriminatory practices, many school districts across the country remained racially segregated. One strategy for circumventing federal desegregation policies and perpetuating de facto segregation (segregation in practice) was through the proliferation of private schools and channeling of public funds into these schools rather than into the public school system. There was an uptick in attendance at private and charter schools shortly after the *Brown* rulings, especially in southern states where integration was the most contentious. Between 1950 and 1965, southern states experienced their highest growth in private school enrollment (Tailsa Trevino et. al., 2024). During this time period, White families typically had the resources to send their children to private and charter schools. For White families that could not afford private school, tuition vouchers were granted (Pierce, 2024). Although the increased prevalence of private schools and tuition assistance for private schools was framed as promoting school choice, Black students were systematically excluded from these schools through subjective admissions standards and criteria for tuition vouchers (Ford, Johnson, & Partelow, 2017).

Segregation in the public school system is particularly prevalent in metropolitan areas based on data from the 2017-18 Private School Universe Survey and Common Core of Data (Potter, 2022). Because students are placed in public schools depending on their area of residency, another significant component of de facto segregation is the composition of neighborhoods. The Federal Housing Administration (FHA) rates neighborhoods or zones based on their overall value, thereby influencing property values and the allocation of resources and investments within the neighborhood. The FHA often historically provided the lowest ratings to neighborhoods that are racially diverse or predominantly comprising minority communities. This practice was termed as “redlining” because these low-rated zones were marked with the color red on FHA maps. Although the practice of redlining has been illegal since 1968, the effects lingered for much longer. The rise of suburbs after World War 2 enabled White families to move away from redlined districts in cities and into predominantly white neighborhoods with their own school districts, furthering the relegation of diverse neighborhoods (Ramsey, n.d.). Due to this and other socioeconomic factors, many schools are still implicitly segregated in the present.

Child Labor Laws

Child labor was prevalent in the United States in the early 20th century. The 1900 census revealed that over 2 million minors were employed in manufacturing, agriculture, mills, mines, and retail across the United States (Schuman, 2017). In response, the federal government passed HR 8234 on September 1, 1916, effective September 1, 1917 (United States Congress, 1916). Known as the Keating-Owen Act of 1916, this act restricted interstate commerce for firms that used child labor in their production processes. The Keating-Owen Act banned the sale of goods from manufacturing establishments employing minors under 14, from mines employing minors under 16, and from any firm employing minors between the ages of 14 and 16 overnight, for over 8 hours in one day, or for six days in one week. The Keating-Owen Act had limited effectiveness, as it only restricted trade for firms that sold products across state lines. Even so, the act was considered an overreach of federal authority and a violation of the sanctity of contract by the Supreme Court in 1918 (Hammer v. Dagenhart, 1918).

To replace the Keating-Owen Act, Congress included a tax on the employment of children in the 1918 Revenue Bill. Effective February 24, 1919, this stipulation would have levied a 10% tax on the net profits of any firm employing minors under 14, and on any mine operator employing minors under the age of 16 (United States Congress, 1919). This act was also ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 1922 (Bailey v. Drexel Furniture Co., 1922).

During the Great Depression (1929-1939), difficult working conditions led to a movement by workers for federal regulations on employment. This movement culminated in the passage of the [Fair Labor Standards Act](#), a comprehensive policy that placed regulations on worker conditions and wages for all employees in the United States. The act was signed into law on July 25, 1938 and effective October 24, 1938 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023). Among other regulations, the Fair Labor Standards Act established a federal minimum wage and the 40-hour work week, required overtime pay, required record-keeping of work hours and wages, and created protections for minors.

The child labor regulations imposed by the Fair Labor Standards Act established a minimum work permit age: individuals are able to work full-time beginning at age 16 and outside of school hours beginning at age 14 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023). The law also placed regulations on the hours of work for people under age 18 and restricted them to employment in non-hazardous occupations. With amendments, the 1938 Fair Labor Standards Act is still applicable for all employers in the United States. FLSA provides a set of minimal protections for children in the workplace; no state can have a full-time work permit age of less than 16 or a vacation permit age of less than 14. Many states, however, regulate child labor more stringently than required by the Fair Labor Standards Act, either establishing a higher work permit age, setting minimum literacy requirements that individuals must satisfy before they are able to leave school to work full-time, or both. In cases where state regulations are more strict than the federal regulations, the state regulations supersede FLSA.

Considering child labor legislation is crucial to understanding the context of compulsory schooling laws. Full-time work permits, part-time work permits, and hardship work permits all provide exemptions to full-time compulsory school attendance to different degrees. Studying when and under what circumstances individuals were able to leave school, when they otherwise would have attended school full-time, can provide valuable insights into late-life outcomes.

Notes:

1. The Supreme Court ruled that freedom of choice was an ineffective desegregation method in 1968 (Green v. County School Board of New Kent City, 1967).
2. In 1958, a federal judge ordered the desegregation of schools in Warren County, Charlottesville, and Norfolk. In response, the state cut funding for public schools in these counties and forced their closure (Vaughan, 2008).

3. Alabama

School Attendance

Alabama's first compulsory schooling law became effective in 1917 and required that all people ages 8 to 15 attend school. Since 2014, individuals ages 6 to 17 have been required to attend school.

Key Dates

First law: 1917

Major changes since 1917: 1919, 1931, 1995, 2009, 2014

Alabama's first compulsory attendance law, passed in 1915 and effective in 1917, required all individuals ages 8 to 15 to attend school for a minimum of 80 days per academic year (Legislature of Alabama, 1915, Act No. 470, §1). Local boards of education could reduce the annual compulsory attendance period to a minimum of 60 days, and people were exempt from attendance requirements if they had completed the seventh grade, lived over 2.5 miles from the nearest school, or needed to work to support their families. In 1919, the state legislature raised the school leaving age to 16 and mandated that individuals attend for the full academic year, while allowing local boards of education to reduce the annual attendance period to 100 days (Legislature of Alabama, 1919, Act No. 442, Article 15, §§1-2). The next amendment to Alabama's compulsory attendance law was in 1956 when the state legislature changed the compulsory schooling ages to 7 to 16 (Legislature of Alabama, 1956, Act No. 117, §6). Also in 1956, and in response to *Brown v. Board*, Alabama legislators determined that school boards could close schools rather than integrate them; however, this measure was not carried out in practice, as many White families elected to send their children to separate schools rather than to integrated schools (Hannah-Jones, Nikole, 2017; Harvey, Gordon, 2023). In 1961, the state established that residents could test out of compulsory schooling requirements if they had completed at least the 12th grade of the standard curriculum (Legislature of Alabama, 1961, Chapter 273, §5). Several decades later, in 2009, the school leaving age changed to 17 (Legislature of Alabama, 2009, Act No. 564, §1). As of 2014, Alabama has mandated that all people ages 6 to 17 attend school, although individuals who are 6 years old may delay enrollment for one year with parental consent (Legislature of Alabama, 2014, Act No. 403, §1).

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in Table 1.

Table 1: Alabama–Compulsory Schooling Ages by Birth Cohort (1908–2024)

Birth Cohort	Start Age	Leaving Age	Duration
October 1908 - August 1948	9	16	8
September 1948 - August 1993	8	16	9
September 1993 - August 2007	8	17	10
September 2007 - Present	7	17	11

Source: Legislature of Alabama (1915, 1919, 1956, 2009, 2014)

Notes:

- Starting ages and leaving ages are established in the law. Starting ages are adjusted to reflect the age a person reaches during their first full year of compulsory schooling. Starting ages are therefore 1 year later than the age in the law. Compulsory schooling duration is imputed based on start age and leaving age.
- The starting date for birth cohorts is January 1900 to reflect the population of interest in the Health and Retirement International Network of Studies, which are individuals aged 51 and older.

In 1915, Alabama established that individuals who had reached compulsory schooling age by October 1, 1917 would be required to attend school (Legislature of Alabama, 1915, Act No. 470, §1). The law affected people who were age 8 by the cutoff date, meaning they would reach age 9 in their first year of schooling. The first cohort affected was born in October 1908 and reached age 9 in school year (SY) 1917–18. The 1919 reform raised the school leaving age to 16 and further indicated that the compulsory schooling requirement is determined based on the individual's age at the start of the school year (Legislature of Alabama, 1919, Act No. 442, Article 15, §1, §6). The school year in Alabama typically begins in September. The law was effective September 26, 1919, and we interpret its enforcement to begin with SY 1920–21 based on the rules established in the introduction of this document. Individuals born in September 1905 would reach age 15 in SY 1920–21 and would be required to remain in school for an additional year. However, this cohort was born before the first cohort affected by Alabama's compulsory schooling law. The first cohort affected, therefore, is the one that began compulsory schooling under the 1915 law.

The school starting age was lowered to 7 in April 1956 (Legislature of Alabama, [1956](#), Act No. 117, §1). The first cohort affected would have been born in September 1948, have reached age 7 before SY 1956-1957, and would therefore have been required to enroll in school during that school year. We adjust the starting age to 8, which is the age that these individuals would have achieved in their first year of primary school.

The school leaving age in Alabama was increased to 17 in 2009, effective SY 2009-2010 (Legislature of Alabama, [2009](#), Act No. 564, §1). Individuals who were born in 1993 would reach age 16 in SY 2009-10 and be required to remain in school for an additional year. Therefore, the first cohort affected was born in September 1993.

We use the same logic as the 1956 reform to calculate the first cohort affected by the 2014 reform that decreased the school starting age to 6, which we adjust to age 7 (Legislature of Alabama, [2014](#), Act No. 403, §1). The first cohort affected by this reform was born in September 2007.

Comparison with Existing Analyses

There are limited differences between the compulsory schooling ages in Alabama identified through our research and those identified by other authors.

Lleras-Muney ([2002](#)) records 1935 as the year in which the starting age decreased from 8 to 7, implying that the first cohort affected was born in 1927. However, our research indicates that the law was passed in 1956 and according to our calculations, the first cohort affected was born in 1948. Lleras-Muney also indicates that Alabama's first compulsory schooling law was effective in 1916, since it was passed in 1915. However, according to the text of the legislation, the law was effective from October 1, 1917 (Legislature of Alabama, [1915](#), Act No. 470, §1). These discrepancies are likely because Lleras-Muney ([2002](#)) relied on the federal Biennial Survey of Education for their data, whereas we have directly examined the legislation for each year.

Angrist and Krueger ([1991](#)) report school leaving ages by state in 1960, 1970, and 1980. According to Angrist and Krueger's data, the school leaving age in Alabama was 16 in all three of their reported years. This is consistent with our understanding of the law.

Work Permits

The Alabama state legislature first started to regulate child labor in 1915, establishing a full-time work permit age of 13. Since the passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act in 1938, the full-time employment age has been 16 and the vacation permit age has been 14.

Key Dates

First law: 1915

Major changes since 1915: 1916, 1938

Alabama's first child labor law was enacted in 1915 and established a full-time work permit age of 13. Receipt of a permit was contingent upon having attended school for a minimum of 60 days in the previous academic year (Legislature of Alabama, 1915, Act No. 169, §1, §10). In 1916, the full-time work permit age was raised to 14 (Legislature of Alabama, 1915, Act No. 169, §1). Several years later, in 1919, the Alabama state legislature determined that to receive a work permit individuals needed to have either completed the fourth grade or to have attended school for a minimum of 120 days during the previous academic year (Legislature of Alabama, 1919, Act No. 629, §10(1)). In 1921, only the completion of the fourth grade was required to receive a full-time work permit (Legislature of Alabama, 1919, Act No. 629, §10(2)). Between 1924 and 1934, the minimum grade completion requirement increased gradually, so that by 1934, individuals needed to have completed the eighth grade (Legislature of Alabama, 1931, Act No. 356, §1(2)). In 1980, people needed to have a satisfactory schooling record to work full-time, and in 1995, either a satisfactory schooling record or regular attendance was necessary (Legislature of Alabama, 1980, Act No. 748, §1; Legislature of Alabama, 1995, Act No. 604, §§15-17). Since 1938, Alabama has implicitly followed the child labor provisions of the [Fair Labor Standards Act](#) (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023).

For a complete list of changes to Alabama's work permit literacy requirements and ages, see [Table 2](#) and [Table 3](#), respectively.

Table 2: Alabama–Work Permit Literacy Requirements (1915-2024)

Effective Date	Minimum Literacy
September 1915 - August 1919	Sufficient school attendance in the prior academic year
September 1919 - August 1921	Completion of grade 4 or sufficient school attendance in the prior academic year
September 1921 - August 1924	Completion of grade 4
September 1924 - August 1926	Completion of grade 5
September 1926 - August 1932	Completion of grade 6
September 1932 - August 1934	Completion of grade 7
September 1934 - April 1980	Completion of grade 8
May 1980 - June 1995	Satisfactory prior schooling record
From July 1995	Satisfactory prior schooling record or sufficient school attendance

Source: Legislature of Alabama (1915, 1919, 1931, 1980, 1995)

Table 3: Alabama–Work Permit Minimum Ages (1915-2024)

Effective Date	Full-Time	Part-Time	Vacation	Hardship
September 1915 - August 1916	13	.	.	.
September 1916 - June 1931	14	.	.	.
July 1931 - September 1938	14	.	14	.
From October 1938	16	.	14	.

Source: Legislature of Alabama (1915, 1931) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in [Table 4](#).

Table 4: Alabama–Full-time Work Permit Ages by Birth Cohort (1902-2024)

Birth Cohort	Full-Time Permit Age
September 1902 - August 1903	13
September 1903 - September 1924	14
October 1924- Present	16

Source: Legislature of Alabama ([1915](#), [1931](#)) and U.S. Department of Labor ([2023](#))

Alabama's first child labor law, establishing a full-time work permit age of 13, was effective September 1915 (Legislature of Alabama, [1915](#), Act No. 169, §1, §10). We obtain the first cohort affected by subtracting the full-time work permit age from the effective date of the law. The first cohort affected was born in September 1902.

The full-time work permit age was increased to 14 in 1916 (Legislature of Alabama, [1915](#), Act No. 169, §1). Individuals born in September 1903 would reach age 13 when the law became effective and have to wait an additional year before being able to work.

The raising of the full-time work permit age to 16 in October 1938 first impacted students who reached age 14 that year, and who now needed to stay in school for an additional 2 years before being able to work (U.S. Department of Labor, [2023](#)). These students were born starting in October 1924.

4. Arizona

School Attendance

Arizona's first compulsory schooling policy was passed in 1899 and mandated attendance for all individuals ages 8 to 14. Since 1994, people ages 6 to 16 have been required to attend school.

Key Dates

First law: 1899

Major changes since 1899: 1912, 1994

Arizona's earliest compulsory attendance law was passed in 1899 and required that people ages 8 to 14 attend school for a minimum of 12 weeks per year, 6 of which needed to be consecutive (Arizona State Legislature, 1899, Chapter 13, §1). If individuals had already learned the material required in the compulsory schooling curriculum or lived over 2.5 miles from the nearest school, then they were exempt. In 1907, the state legislature determined that people ages 14 to 16 were also required to attend school if they were unable to read and write in English (Arizona State Legislature, 1907, Chapter 67, §2). Furthermore, the law required individuals to attend school for at least 6 months, 20 weeks of which needed to be consecutive. The school leaving age was raised to 16 in 1912, and people were mandated to attend for the full academic year (Arizona State Legislature, 1912, Chapter 77, §89). The starting age for compulsory schooling was lowered to 6 in 1994, and since then, people ages 6 to 16 have been required to attend school (Arizona State Legislature, 1994, Chapter 314, §13).

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in Table 5.

Table 5: Arizona–Compulsory Schooling Ages by Birth Cohort (1900–2024)

Birth Cohort	Start Age	Leaving Age	Duration
January 1900 - August 1987	9	16	8
September 1987 - Present	7	16	10

Source: Arizona State Legislature (1912, 1994)

Note: Starting ages and leaving ages are established in the law. Starting ages are adjusted to reflect the age a person reaches during their first full year of compulsory schooling. Starting ages are therefore 1 year later than the age in the law. Compulsory schooling duration is imputed based on start age and leaving age.

For cohorts born at the start of the 20th century, the compulsory schooling ages were defined as 8 to 16 (Arizona State Legislature, 1907, Chapter 67, §2; Arizona State Legislature, 1912, Chapter 77, §89). We adjust the starting age forward by one year to reflect the age achieved during the first year of compulsory schooling.

In 1994, the compulsory school starting age was lowered to 6 (Arizona State Legislature, 1994, Chapter 314, §11). The act also specifies that schooling age is determined by the age an individual reaches by September 1 of the school year (Arizona State Legislature, 1994, Chapter 314, §13). The [effective school year for enrollment](#), therefore, is from September to August of the following year. The first cohort affected by this reform would be those who reached age 6 before the September 1 cutoff date for school year (SY) 1994–95. They would reach age 7 during their first year of compulsory schooling.

Comparison with Existing Analyses

There are no differences between the compulsory schooling ages in Arizona identified through our research and those identified by other authors.

Lleras-Muney (2002) names a school starting age of 8 and a school leaving age of 16 for 1915 to 1939. Based on our calculations above, our reported school starting and leaving ages for Arizona are consistent with those reported by Lleras-Muney.

Angrist and Krueger (1991) report a school leaving age of 16 in 1960, 1970, and 1980, corresponding to cohorts born in 1944, 1954, and 1964 respectively. Based on our calculations above, the school leaving ages calculated in our data are consistent with those reported by Angrist and Krueger.

Work Permits

Arizona's first child labor law in 1907 set a full-time employment age of 14. After 1972, the full-time permit age has been 16, and the part-time and vacation permit ages have been 14.

Key Dates

First law: 1907

Major changes since 1907: 1938, 1972

Arizona began to regulate child labor in 1907, when the state legislature established that individuals could work full-time at age 14 if they were able to read and write in English (Arizona State Legislature, 1907, Chapter 67, §2). In 1912, more stringent literacy requirements were implemented: in addition to being able to read and write in English, people also needed to have had satisfactory school attendance in the previous year; to have completed the equivalent of fifth grade instruction in reading, spelling, writing, English grammar, and geography; and to be familiar with fundamental arithmetic operations, including fractions (Arizona State Legislature, 1912, Chapter 32, §§1-2, §15). Arizona implicitly adopted the provisions of the [Fair Labor Standards Act](#) in 1938, which changed the full-time employment age to 16 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023). In 1972, the state legislature determined that individuals ages 14 and 15 can work three hours per day on days when school is in session (Arizona State Legislature, 1972, Chapter 40, §6).

Refer to [Table 6](#) and [Table 7](#) for more information on changes to Arizona's work permit minimum literacy and age requirements over time.

Table 6: Arizona–Work Permit Literacy Requirements (1907-2024)

Effective Date	Minimum Literacy
July 1907 - July 1912	Ability to read and write in English
August 1912 - September 1938	Ability to read and write in English; regular school attendance; completion of the 5th grade; coursework in geography; familiarity with basic arithmetic, up to and including fractions
From October 1938	.

Source: Arizona State Legislature (1907, 1912) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

Table 7: Arizona–Work Permit Minimum Ages (1907-2024)

Effective Date	Full-Time	Part-Time	Vacation	Hardship
July 1907 - July 1912	14	.	.	.
August 1912 - September 1938	14	.	14	.
October 1938 - March 1972	16	.	14	.
From April 1972	16	.	14	14

Source: Arizona State Legislature (1907, 1912, 1972) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in [Table 8](#).

Table 8: Arizona–Full-time Work Permit Ages by Birth Cohort (1900-2024)

Birth Cohort	Full-Time Permit Age
January 1900 - September 1924	14
October 1924 - Present	16

Source: Arizona State Legislature (1907, 1912) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

In the early 1900s, the full-time work permit age in Arizona was 14 (Arizona State Legislature, 1907, Chapter 67, §2; Arizona State Legislature, 1912, Chapter 32, §§1-2).

The raising of the full-time work permit age to 16 in October 1938 first impacted students who reached age 14 that year, and who now

needed to stay in school for an additional 2 years before being able to work (U.S. Department of Labor, [2023](#)). These students were born starting in October 1924.

5. Arkansas

School Attendance

The first statewide compulsory schooling law in Arkansas was passed in 1917 and established that all individuals must attend school from ages 7 to 15. Since 1991, attendance has been compulsory for people ages 5 to 17.

Key Dates

First law: 1917

Major changes since 1917: 1987, 1989, 1991

Arkansas originally passed two compulsory attendance laws in 1909 which only applied to certain counties. Initially in one set of counties, individuals needed to attend school at least half time from ages 8 to 14 as well as from 14 to 16 if they were unemployed (Arkansas State Legislature, 1909, Act 347, §1). This law was superseded shortly after by a provision affecting a larger portion of the state that mandated that people attend school at least half time from ages 8 to 16 as well as from 16 to 20 if they were unemployed (Arkansas State Legislature, 1909, Act 234, §1, 7). It was not until 1917 that a policy was in place that covered the entire state. Individuals ages 7 to 15 were required to attend school for at least three quarters of the time that school was in session and exemptions were granted to those who had completed the seventh grade or who needed to work to support their widowed mother (Arkansas State Legislature, 1917, Act 294, §1). Beginning in 1947, people needed to attend school for the full academic year beginning (Arkansas State Legislature, 1947, Act 340, §1). In 1987, the school leaving age increased to 16, and by 1989, the school starting age had changed to 5 (Arkansas State Legislature, 1987, Act 319, §1; Arkansas State Legislature, 1989, Act 598, §1). As of 1991, people ages 5 to 17 have been required to attend school (Arkansas State Legislature, 1991, Act 320, §1).

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in [Table 9](#).

Table 9: Arkansas–Compulsory Schooling Ages by Birth Cohort (1909–2024)

Birth Cohort	Start Age	Leaving Age	Duration
September 1909 - September 1972	8	15	8
October 1972 - August 1975	8	16	9
September 1975 - September 1983	8	17	10
October 1983 - Present	6	17	12

Source: Arkansas State Legislature (1915, 1987, 1989, 1991)

Note: Starting ages and leaving ages are established in the law. Starting ages are adjusted to reflect the age a person reaches during their first full year of compulsory schooling. Starting ages are therefore 1 year later than the age in the law. Compulsory schooling duration is imputed based on start age and leaving age.

Arkansas's first compulsory schooling policy explicitly defines the cutoff date for compulsory schooling ages to be September 1, 1917 (Arkansas State Legislature, 1917, Act 294, §1). The first cohort affected would be the one who reached age 7 prior to the start of school year (SY) 1917–18 and turned 8 years old during their first year of compulsory schooling. Accordingly, this first cohort was born in September 1909.

The 1987 reform increased the school leaving age to 16, and the first cohort affected would have been the one reaching age 15 in SY 1987–88. According to Act 1029 of 1985, compulsory schooling ages are based on an individual's age by October 1 of the school year (Arkansas State Legislature, 1985, Act 1029, §1). Therefore, the [effective school year for enrollment](#) spans from October to September of the following year. An individual born in October 1972 would begin their compulsory schooling in SY 1980–81 at the age of 8, and would reach age 15 in SY 87–88. Under this reform, they would be required to stay in school for an additional year. Therefore, the first cohort affected was born in October 1972.

The 1989 reform lowered the compulsory schooling start age to 5, effective SY 1989–90 (Arkansas State Legislature, 1989). The legislation also states that the effective school year for enrollment begins on October 1 (Arkansas State Legislature, 1989, Act 598, §2). The first cohort affected by this reform would be the one reaching age 6 during SY 1989–90. The cohort born in October 1983 would be the first cohort affected. Although the 1989 legislation declares a leaving age of 16 for this cohort, a subsequent reform in 1991 would require them to remain in school until the age of 17 (Arkansas State Legislature, 1991, Act 320, §1).

The first cohort affected by the 1991 reform is calculated using the same logic as the 1987 reform. Individuals born in SY 1975-76 would reach age 8 during their first year of compulsory schooling in SY 1983-84. They would reach age 16 during their 9th year of compulsory schooling in SY 1991-92 and be required to remain enrolled for an additional year.

Arkansas has made changes to its [effective school year for enrollment](#) over time. In 1997, the state established an enrollment cutoff date of September 1 (Arkansas State Legislature, [1997](#), Act 1230, §2). The cutoff date became September 15 in 1999 (Arkansas State Legislature, [1999](#), Act 570, §2) and as of 2013, the cutoff date for enrollment is August 1 (Arkansas State Legislature, [2013](#), Act 424, §12).

Comparison with Existing Analyses

There are several differences between the compulsory schooling ages in Arkansas identified through our research and those identified by other authors.

Lleras-Muney ([2002](#)) reports that the starting age for compulsory schooling was lowered from 8 to 7, and the leaving age was lowered from 20 to 15, in 1918. Our interpretation based on the reform dates reported by Lleras-Muney is that the first cohort affected was born before 1900. Because we use the month of birth in addition to the year to calculate the first cohort affected, we report that the first cohort affected by this policy was born in September 1909. While the compulsory schooling ages reported by Lleras-Muney for 1918 are consistent with our findings, our research does not indicate that a compulsory schooling law existed in Arkansas prior to 1917. Lleras-Muney further reports an increase in the school leaving age from 15 to 16 in 1929. At this time, we have not been able to locate evidence that this amendment occurred prior to 1987. These discrepancies are likely because Lleras-Muney relied on the federal Biennial Survey of Education for their data, whereas we have directly examined the legislation for each year.

Angrist and Krueger ([1991](#)) report a school leaving age of 16 in 1960 and 1970, and a leaving age of 15 in 1980, corresponding to cohorts born in 1944, 1954, and 1964 respectively. Based on our calculations above, the school leaving age for cohorts born in 1944, 1954, and 1964 is 15, under (Arkansas State Legislature, [1917](#), Act 294, §1). These differences are likely because Angrist and Krueger relied on Census records for their data, while we reviewed each year's legislation.

Work Permits

Arkansas first passed a child labor law in 1909 that set a full-time employment age of 14. Following the passage of FLSA in 1938, the state's full-time work permit age has been 16 and its vacation work permit age has been 14.

Key Dates

First law: 1909

Major changes since 1909: 1915, 1938

The first child labor law that impacted the entire state of Arkansas was passed in 1915 and established a minimum full-time employment age of 14 (Arkansas State Legislature, 1915, Initiative Act No. 1, §1). The law also stated that individuals could not be employed unless they had completed the fourth grade. Since 1938, Arkansas has followed the child labor requirements established by the federal [Fair Labor Standards Act](#) (FLSA) (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023). In 2023, the state stopped issuing work permits to people under age 16; however, Arkansas must continue to comply with FLSA requirements regarding the age at which individuals may work (Arkansas State Legislature, 2023, H.B. 1410, §1).

See [Table 10](#) and [Table 11](#) for a summary of changes to minimum literacy and work permit age requirements in Arkansas.

Table 10: Arkansas–Work Permit Literacy Requirements (1915–2024)

Effective Date	Minimum Literacy
January 1915 - September 1938	Completion of grade 4
From October 1938	.

Source: Arkansas State Legislature (1915) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

Table 11: Arkansas–Work Permit Minimum Ages (1915–2024)

Effective Date	Full-Time	Part-Time	Vacation	Hardship
September 1915 - September 1938	14	.	.	.
From October 1938	16	.	14	.

Source: Arkansas State Legislature (1915) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in [Table 12](#).

Table 12: Arkansas–Full-time Work Permit Ages by Birth Cohort (1901–2024)

Birth Cohort	Full-Time Permit Age
September 1901 - September 1924	14
October 1924 - Present	16

Source: Arkansas State Legislature (1915) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

Arkansas' first child labor law was effective September 1915 (Arkansas State Legislature, 1915, Initiative Act No. 1, §1). We obtain the first cohort affected by subtracting the full-time work permit age from the effective date of the law. The first cohort affected was born in September 1901.

The raising of the full-time work permit age to 16 in October 1938 first impacted students who reached age 14 that year and who now needed to stay in school for an additional 2 years before being able to work (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023). These students were born starting in October 1924.

6. California

School Attendance

California first required all individuals ages 8 to 14 to attend school in 1874. Since 1987, people ages 6 to 18 have been required to attend school full-time.

Key Dates

First law: 1874

Major changes since 1874: 1905, 1921, 1987

California's first compulsory education policy was enacted in 1874 and mandated that all individuals between the ages of 8 and 14 attend school for 2/3 of the academic year, and for at least 12 weeks consecutively (Office of the Chief Clerk of California, 1874, Chapter 516). In 1903, the schooling requirement was increased to five months, and by 1905 students were required to attend for the entire academic year (Office of the Chief Clerk of California, 1903, Chapter 270). In 1919, the compulsory schooling leaving age was raised to 16 (Office of the Chief Clerk of California, 1919, Chapter 258, §1). Changes were made to California's compulsory schooling ages throughout the early 20th century, and by 1921, attendance was compulsory for people up to the age of 18 (Office of the Chief Clerk of California, 1921, Chapter 885 §1(5)). Individuals over 16, however, were only required to attend school part-time until 1987 (California. Laws, Statutes, Etc., 1929, §1.351; Office of the Chief Clerk of California, 1987, Chapter 1452, §411). In 1967, the state lowered the start age to 6, effective from SY 1967-68 (Office of the Chief Clerk of California, 1967, Chapter 1382, §1). The original policy granted an exemption for people who had "already acquired good knowledge" of the general schooling curriculum, and later amendments would establish minimum literacy tests that individuals could take to be exempt from compulsory schooling (Office of the Chief Clerk of California, 1919, Chapter 258, §4). The current compulsory education policy exempts individuals with a high school diploma or an equivalent through testing.

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in Table 13.

Table 13: California–Compulsory Schooling Ages by Birth Cohort (1900-2024)

Birth Cohort	Start Age	Leaving Age	Duration
January 1900 - November 1904	9	15	7
December 1904 - November 1960	9	16	8
December 1960 - November 1971	7	16	10
December 1971 - Present	7	18	12

Source: Office of the Chief Clerk of California (1874, 1911, 1921, 1967, 1987)

Note: Starting ages and leaving ages are established in the law. Starting ages are adjusted to reflect the age a person reaches during their first full year of compulsory schooling. Starting ages are therefore 1 year later than the age in the law. Compulsory schooling duration is imputed based on start age and leaving age.

The school year in California begins in July and spans to June of the following year (California. Laws, Statutes, Etc., 1929, §3.22). However, the [effective school year for enrollment](#) differs from these dates. In 1929, the effective school year for enrollment began on January 1. The 1929 school code states that enrollment in the first grade of primary school is based on the age a student will reach within six months of the start of the school year (California. Laws, Statutes, Etc., 1929, §3.22). Since the school year begins on July 1, the effective school year for enrollment is from January 1 to December 31. Chapter 1010 of 1976 amended this cutoff date, stating that a student must be aged five years and nine months by September 1 of the school year in which they will begin primary schooling (Office of the Chief Clerk of California, 1977, Chapter 1010, Article 2, §48011). This amendment implies that they must reach age 6 by December 1 of the school year in order to enroll. The enrollment cutoff date was amended in 2010 (Office of the Chief Clerk of California, 2010, Chapter 705, §4) with a gradual shift to an enrollment cutoff date of September 1. For school year (SY) 2012-13, the cutoff date was November 1. For SY 2013-14, it was October 1, and for SY 2014-15 and thereafter, the enrollment cutoff date is September 1.

For birth cohorts born starting in 1900, the compulsory schooling requirement in California was for people ages 8 to 15 (Office of the Chief Clerk of California, 1911, Chapter 258). The starting age of 8 is adjusted to 9 to reflect the age an individual would achieve during their first year of compulsory schooling.

The 1919 reform increased the school leaving age to 16 (Office of the Chief Clerk of California, 1919, Chapter 258, §1). An individual born in December 1904 would have been in the first cohort affected by the policy, since they began their first year of compulsory schooling

at age 8 in SY 1913-14. They would reach age 15 in SY 1919-20 and be required to remain in school for an additional year.

In 1967, the compulsory schooling start age was lowered to 6 (Office of the Chief Clerk of California, 1967, Chapter 1382, §1). Following the method outlined in the introduction of this document, we calculate the first cohort affected as the one reaching age 7 in SY 1967-68. The first cohort affected by this reform was born in December 1960.

The 1987 reform increased the school leaving age to 18 in California (Office of the Chief Clerk of California, 1987, Chapter 1452, §411). Using the same logic as the 1919 reform, we obtain December 1971 as the first cohort affected by this policy. This cohort would reach age 7 in their first year of compulsory schooling in SY 1978-79 and reach age 16 in SY 1987-88. They would be required to remain in school for an additional two years until SY 1989-90.

Comparison with Existing Analyses

There are limited differences between the compulsory schooling ages in California identified through our research and those identified by other authors.

Lleras-Muney (2002) reports that the school starting age increased from 7 to 8 in 1918. While a school starting age of 8 in 1918 is consistent with our findings, our research also indicates that the start age prior to 1918 was also 8 (Office of the Chief Clerk of California, 1874, Chapter 516, §1; Office of the Chief Clerk of California, 1903, Chapter 270; Office of the Chief Clerk of California, 1905, Chapter 333; Office of the Chief Clerk of California, 1911, Chapter 258). Lleras-Muney also reports that the school leaving age increased to 16 in 1921, implying the first cohort affected by this reform was born in 1906. However, Chapter 258 of 1919 states that the school leaving age was increased to 16 effective July 22, 1919 (Office of the Chief Clerk of California, 1919, Chapter 258, §1). Based on the methods outlined in the introduction of this document and our understanding of California's school law, this reform was effective from SY 1919-20, and the first cohort affected was born in December 1904. These discrepancies are likely because Lleras-Muney (2002) relied on the federal Biennial Survey of Education for their data, whereas we have directly examined the legislation for each year.

Angrist and Krueger (1991) report a school leaving age of 16 in 1960, 1970, and 1980, corresponding to cohorts born in 1944, 1954, and 1964 respectively. Based on our calculations above, the school leaving ages calculated in our data are consistent with those reported by Angrist and Krueger.

Work Permits

California began regulating child labor for all industries in 1905, when a minimum employment age of 14 was established. Since 1987, the full-time employment age in the state has been 18 and the vacation employment age has been 14.

Key Dates

First law: 1905

Major changes since 1905: 1907, 1938

A 1905 amendment to the compulsory schooling law first established an exemption from school attendance for individuals with work permits (Office of the Chief Clerk of California, 1905, Chapter 333, §1). This exemption was granted to students ages 12 to 14, but a subsequent act regulating child labor would make it impossible to obtain a work permit until age 14 unless an individual's parents were incapable of working (Office of the Chief Clerk of California, 1905, Chapter 18, §2). This act also established the state's first literacy test requirement for individuals to be eligible for employment. In 1921, California began to require that employed individuals under age 18 enroll in part-time schools, and regular attendance at these schools is a condition for continued work permit eligibility (Office of the Chief Clerk of California, 1921, Chapter 885, §1(5)).

For a complete list of changes to minimum literacy requirements and work permit ages over time, see [Table 14](#) and [Table 15](#).

Table 14: California–Work Permit Literacy Requirements (1913-2024)

Effective Date	Minimum Literacy
August 1913 - July 1921	Certificate of completion of grade 5
August 1921 - May 1975	Certificate of completion of grade 7
From June 1975	Satisfactory school record

Source: Office of the Chief Clerk of California (1911, 1921, 1967)

Table 15: California–Work Permit Minimum Ages (1905-2024)

Effective Date	Full-Time	Part-Time	Vacation	Hardship
July 1905 - July 1913	14	.	12	12
August 1913 - June 1919	12	.	12	12
July 1919 - July 1921	15	.	12	14
August 1921 - June 1967	16	.	14	14
July 1967 - October 1971	15	.	14	14
November 1971- August 1987	16	14	14	12
From September 1987	18	16	14	14

Source: Office of the Chief Clerk of California (1905, 1911, 1919, 1921, 1967, 1987)

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in [Table 16](#).

Table 16: California–Full-time Work Permit Ages by Birth Cohort (1900-2024)

Birth Cohort	Full-Time Permit Age
January 1900 - July 1901	14
August 1901 - June 1907	12
July 1907 - August 1971	16
September 1971 - Present	18

Source: Office of the Chief Clerk of California (1905, 1911, 1919, 1921, 1987) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

For people born before 1900, the minimum age for full-time employment was 14 (Office of the Chief Clerk of California, 1905, Chapter

333, §1). The 1913 policy decreased the full-time work permit age to 12, effective August 1913. We calculate the first cohort affected as the one reaching age 12 by the effective date. This cohort was born in August 1901.

The 1919 reform, effective July 1919, increased the full-time work permit age to 15. Individuals born in July 1907 would have reached age 12 by the effective date of the policy, and would be required to wait three more years to obtain a work permit to leave school full-time. However, by the time that these individuals reached age 15 in July 1922, the full-time work permit age had been increased to 16, effective August 1921 (Office of the Chief Clerk of California, 1921, Chapter 885, §1(5)). These individuals therefore would have had to wait an additional year to become eligible for full-time work permits in July 1923. The first cohort for whom the work permit age was higher than age 12, therefore, was born in July 1907.

The 1987 law increased the full-time work permit age to 18, effective September 1987 (Office of the Chief Clerk of California, 1987, Chapter 1452, §411). This reform first affected people who reached age 16 in September 1987, when the law went into effect. The cohort born in September 1971 would reach age 16 when the law went into effect, and be required to wait two additional years to receive a full-time work permit.

7. Colorado

School Attendance

Colorado's first compulsory schooling law was passed in 1889 and mandated that people ages 8 to 14 attend school. As of 2007, all individuals ages 6 to 17 have been required to attend.

Key Dates

First law: 1889

Major changes since 1889: 1903, 1963, 2006, 2007

The Colorado state legislature passed its first compulsory schooling law in 1889, mandating that people ages 8 to 14 attend school for a minimum of 12 weeks per year, 8 weeks of which needed to be consecutive (Legislature of Colorado, 1889, S.B. 118, §2). Individuals were exempt if they lived over 2 miles away from the nearest school. Ten years later, in 1899, individuals in [districts of the first or second class](#) needed to attend school for a minimum of 20 weeks, and 10 of which were consecutive; in all other cases, students needed to attend for the full academic year (Legislature of Colorado, 1899, Chapter 136, §1). In 1903, the school leaving age was raised to 16 and all individuals had to attend for the full academic year, although people who had completed the eighth grade or who had to work to support their families were exempt (Legislature of Colorado, 1903, Chapter 164, §1). The state legislature lowered the starting age to 7 in 1963 and determined that individuals were exempt from compulsory schooling requirements if they had already graduated (Legislature of Colorado, 1963, Chapter 243, §5). People ages 7 to 17 were required to attend school in 2006, and in 2007, the starting age was lowered to 6 (Legislature of Colorado, 2006, Chapter 265, §1; Legislature of Colorado, 2007, Chapter 28, §1).

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in [Table 17](#).

Table 17: Colorado–Compulsory Schooling Ages by Birth Cohort (1900–2024)

Birth Cohort	Start Age	Leaving Age	Duration
January 1900 - July 1955	9	16	8
August 1955 - July 1990	8	16	9
August 1990 - July 2000	8	17	10
August 2000 - Present	7	17	11

Source: Legislature of Colorado (1903, 1963, 2006, 2007)

Note: Starting ages and leaving ages are established in the law. Starting ages are adjusted to reflect the age a person reaches during their first full year of compulsory schooling. Starting ages are therefore 1 year later than the age in the law. Compulsory schooling duration is imputed based on start age and leaving age.

The [effective school year for enrollment](#) in Colorado was defined in 2007, with an enrollment cutoff date of August 1, implying an effective school year for enrollment from August to July of the following year (Legislature of Colorado, 2007, Chapter 28, §1). Since earlier compulsory schooling legislation does not specify an enrollment deadline, we operate under the assumption that the August 1 date applies to previous policies when calculating birth cohorts.

For cohorts born at the start of the 1900s, the compulsory schooling law in Colorado applied to individuals between the ages of 8 and 16 (Legislature of Colorado, 1903, Chapter 164, §1).

The 1963 reform decreased the school starting age to 7 (Legislature of Colorado, 1963, Chapter 243, §5). The first cohort affected was the one reaching age 7 before school year (SY) 1963–64. These individuals were born in August 1955 and they would reach age 8 during their first year of compulsory schooling.

The 2006 reform increased the leaving age to 17, affecting individuals who would reach age 16 in SY 2006–07 (Legislature of Colorado, 2006, Chapter 265, §1). The cohort born in 1990 would reach age 16 in SY 2006–07 and be required to remain in school for an additional year.

We apply the same logic as the 1963 reform to the 2007 reform that lowered the starting age to 6 (Legislature of Colorado, 2007, Chapter 28, §1). The first cohort affected by this policy was born in 2000. Act 28 of 2007 specifies that compulsory schooling begins when an

individual reaches age 6 by August 1 of the school year (Legislature of Colorado, [2007](#), Chapter 28, §1). Thus, the effective school year for enrollment spans from August to July of the following year, and the first cohort affected by this policy was born in August 2000.

Comparison with Existing Analyses

There are no differences between the compulsory schooling ages in Colorado identified through our research and those identified by other authors.

Lleras-Muney ([2002](#)) reports a school starting age of 8, a leaving age of 16, and a compulsory schooling duration of 8 years from 1915 to 1939, consistent with our findings.

Angrist and Krueger ([1991](#)) report a school leaving age of 16 in 1960, 1970, and 1980, corresponding to cohorts born in 1944, 1954, and 1964 respectively. Based on our calculations above, the school leaving ages calculated in our data are consistent with those reported by Angrist and Krueger.

Work Permits

Colorado first started to regulate child labor in 1889, although a minimum full-time employment age of 14 was not established until 1911. Since 1963, the full-time employment age has been 16 and the vacation and part-time work permit ages have been 14.

Key Dates

First law: 1889

Major changes since 1889: 1911, 1938, 1963

Colorado began regulating child labor in 1889, specifying that individuals under age 14 could not work during school hours without a permit (Legislature of Colorado, 1889, S.B. 118, §1). A minimum employment age was not formally established until 1911, when the state legislature determined that people under 14 could not work at all (Legislature of Colorado, 1911, Chapter 95, §§7-9). To be employed during this period, people ages 14 to 16 needed to be able to read and write in English; if they could not, then they were required to attend an evening school. Colorado began to follow the child labor requirements established by the [Fair Labor Standards Act](#) in 1938 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023). In 1963, a part-time work permit age of 14 was established, and the state legislature determined that receipt of a work permit is contingent upon an individual having a satisfactory schooling record and test scores (Legislature of Colorado, 1963, Chapter 179, §9).

To review changes to Colorado's minimum literacy requirements and work permit ages, see [Table 18](#) and [Table 19](#).

Table 18: Colorado–Work Permit Literacy Requirements (1899-2024)

Effective Date	Minimum Literacy
April 1899 - April 1911	Sufficient school attendance; ability to read and write in English
May 1911 - May 1963	Ability to read and write in English
From June 1963	Satisfactory school record; satisfactory test scores

Source: Legislature of Colorado (1899, 1911, 1963)

Table 19: Colorado–Work Permit Minimum Ages (1911-2024)

Effective Date	Full-Time	Part-Time	Vacation	Hardship
May 1911 - September 1938	14	.	14	.
October 1938 - June 1963	16	.	14	.
From July 1963	16	14	14	.

Source: Legislature of Colorado (1911, 1963) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in [Table 20](#).

Table 20: Colorado–Full-time Work Permit Ages by Birth Cohort (1900-2024)

Birth Cohort	Full-Time Permit Age
January 1900 - September 1924	14
October 1924 - Present	16

Source: Legislature of Colorado (1911, 1963) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

In Colorado in the early 1900s, the full-time work permit age was 14 (Legislature of Colorado, 1911, Chapter 95, §§7-9).

The raising of the full-time work permit age to 16 in October 1938 first impacted students who reached age 14 that year, and who now needed to stay in school for an additional 2 years before being able to work (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023). These students were born starting in October 1924.

8. Florida

School Attendance

Florida first passed a compulsory attendance law in 1915, directing all individuals ages 8 to 14 to attend school. As of 2003, the Florida legislature has required that all people ages 6 to 16 attend school.

Key Dates

First law: 1919

Major changes since 1919: 2002

Florida's first compulsory school attendance policy, passed in 1915, mandated that individuals between the ages of 8 and 14 attend school for a minimum of 80 days annually (Florida State Legislature, 1915, Chapter 6831, §20). This law only affected people living in districts where the compulsory schooling mandate was adopted. Exemptions were granted to individuals who resided more than 2 miles from the nearest school and to those who could demonstrate a need to work to support themselves or their families. The compulsory schooling ages were changed to ages 7 to 16 in 1919, and people now needed to attend for the full academic year (Florida State Legislature, 1919, Chapter 7808, §1). The 1919 amendment also determined that individuals who had completed the eighth grade were exempt from attending school. In 2002, the compulsory schooling law was amended to compel attendance for all people between the ages of 6 and 16, and these changes became effective in 2003 (Florida State Legislature, 2002, Chapter 387, §116).

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in Table 21.

Table 21: Florida–Compulsory Schooling Ages by Birth Cohort (1906–2024)

Birth Cohort	Start Age	Leaving Age	Duration
July 1906 - June 1911 (only in certain districts)	9	16	8
July 1911 - January 1997	8	16	9
February 1997 - Present	7	16	10

Source: Florida State Legislature (1915, 1919, 2002)

Note: Starting ages and leaving ages are established in the law. Starting ages are adjusted to reflect the age a person reaches during their first full year of compulsory schooling. Starting ages are therefore 1 year later than the age in the law. Compulsory schooling duration is imputed based on start age and leaving age.

Act 6831 of 1915 specifies that the school year begins July 1, and that the state's first compulsory schooling law is effective from school year (SY) 1915–16 (Florida State Legislature, 1915, Chapter 6831, §9, §20). The law applies to people starting in the SY closest to their 8th birthday (Florida State Legislature, 1915, Chapter 6831, §9). The first cohort affected, therefore, is the one born in July 1906, reaching age 9 in SY 1915–16. This policy, however, only affected individuals living in districts where the compulsory schooling mandate was adopted.

The first state-wide policy was adopted in 1919. The 1919 law reduced the starting age to 7, effective July 1, 1919 (Florida State Legislature, 1919, Chapter 7808, §1). We adjust the starting age forward by one year to reflect the age reached during the first year of compulsory schooling. Individuals born in July 1911 would reach age 7 prior to SY 1919–20, and be the first cohort affected by this policy. They would reach age 8 during their first year of primary school in SY 1919–20. The 1919 law also increased the leaving age to 16. The first cohort affected by this increase is the one born in July 1906. This cohort was the first to be affected by any compulsory schooling requirement in Florida and would reach age 13 in SY 1919–20, and be required to stay in school for an additional three years due to the reform.

Act 387 of 2002 lowered the school starting age to 6, and specified a cutoff date of February 1 of the school year (Florida State Legislature, 2002, Chapter 387, §116). This means that the **effective school year for enrollment** is from February to January of the following year. §1065 states that the law became effective on January 7, 2003 (Florida State Legislature, 2002, Chapter 387, §1065). Based on the rules established in the introduction of this document, we assume that this law is first enforced in the beginning of the following school year (SY 2003–04). We use the same logic as the 1919 reform to calculate the first cohort affected by this policy. Individuals born in February 1997 would reach age 6 in February 2004. They would therefore be the first cohort required to enroll in school at age 6, in the beginning of SY 2003–04.

Comparison with Existing Analyses

There are limited differences between the compulsory schooling ages in Florida and those identified by other authors.

Lleras-Muney (2002) published one of the first papers using compulsory schooling in the state of Florida in their research. The author reports the state's first law as effective in 1916 with a start age of 8 and a leaving age of 14. The starting and leaving ages reported are consistent with our calculations. As for the effective date of the law, Act 6831 states that the law was effective from SY 1915-16, meaning that it was first enforced in 1915 (Florida State Legislature, 1915, Chapter 6831, §9). These discrepancies are likely because Lleras-Muney (2002) relied on the federal Biennial Survey of Education for their data, whereas we have directly examined the legislation for each year.

Lleras-Muney also reports that the compulsory schooling law was amended to affect those aged 7 years to 16 years in 1921. According to the original legislation, this reform was implemented in SY 1919-20, effective July 1, 1919 (Florida State Legislature, 1919, Chapter 7808, §1). At this time, we have not located any further amendments that would indicate that implementation of the reform was delayed to 1921.

Angrist and Krueger (1991) report a school leaving age of 16 in 1960, 1970, and 1980, corresponding to cohorts born in 1944, 1954, and 1964 respectively. Based on our calculations above, the school leaving ages calculated in our data are consistent with those reported by Angrist and Krueger.

Work Permits

Florida began to regulate child labor in 1913, establishing a full-time employment age of 13. Since 1986, the full-time work permit age has been 17 and the vacation permit age has been 14.

Key Dates

First law: 1906

Major changes since 1913: 1938, 1941, 1957, 1975, 1986

The state of Florida began to regulate child labor before establishing a compulsory education policy. In 1913, the state issued work permits only to individuals over 13 years of age (Florida State Legislature, 1913, Chapter 6488, §§1-4). This policy was amended in 1941, when all people below the age of 16 were prohibited from working during school hours (Florida State Legislature, 1941, Chapter 20955, §1, §3, §7). However, the state implicitly adopted this higher full-time work permit age in 1938, when the [Fair Labor Standards Act](#) was passed (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023). In 1957, Florida legislated that people between the ages of 14 and 16 could work for a maximum of three hours on school days. Effectively, the state established a part-time work permit age of 14, and a full-time work permit age of 16 (Florida State Legislature, 1957, Chapter 224, §2). In the 1975 amendment, Florida permitted individuals to work full-time only if they were over the age of 15, regardless of whether the work would be carried out during the school year or vacation time (Florida State Legislature, 1975, Chapter 195, §1). However, the Fair Labor Standards Act, effective from October 1938, had already established a minimum work permit age of 16 during the school year. People who could demonstrate financial hardship were permitted to begin working at the age of 14. The full time work permit age was increased to 17 in 1986, with an exemption for individuals over the age of 16 who have completed high school (Florida State Legislature, 1986, Chapter 13, §1). As of 2023, all iterations of Florida's child labor law have authorized school districts to evaluate students' prior schooling records to determine their eligibility for work permits.

For a summary of minimum literacy requirements and work permit ages over time, see [Table 22](#) and [Table 23](#) respectively.

Table 22: Florida–Work Permit Literacy Requirements (1914–2024)

Effective Date	Minimum Literacy
January 1914 - June 1941	Ability to read and write in English
From July 1941	Satisfactory schooling record

Source: Florida State Legislature (1913, 1941)

Table 23: Florida–Work Permit Minimum Ages (1914–2024)

Effective Date	Full-Time	Part-Time	Vacation	Hardship
January 1914 - June 1941	13	.	13	.
October 1938 - June 1957	16	.	14	.
July 1957 - June 1975	16	14	14	12
July 1975 - June 1985	16	14	15	15
From July 1986	17	14	15	14

Source: Florida State Legislature (1913, 1957, 1975, 1986) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in [Table 24](#).

Table 24: Florida–Full-time Work Permit Ages by Birth Cohort (1900–2024)

Birth Cohort	Full-Time Permit Age
January 1901 - September 1924	14
October 1924 - June 1970	16
July 1970 - Present	17

Source: Florida State Legislature (1913, 1986) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

Florida's first work permit policy, effective from January 1914, established a full-time work permit age of 13 (Florida State Legislature, [1913](#), Chapter 6488, §§1-4). The first cohort affected was born in January 1901.

The raising of the full-time work permit age to 16 in October 1938 first impacted students who reached age 14 that year, and who now needed to stay in school for an additional 2 years before being able to work (U.S. Department of Labor, [2023](#)). These students were born starting in October 1924.

The 1986 law increased the full-time work permit age to 18, effective July 1986 (Florida State Legislature, [1986](#), Chapter 13, §1). This reform first affected people who reached age 16 in July 1986, when the law went into effect. The cohort born in July 1970 would reach age 16 when the law went into effect, and be required to wait an additional year to receive a full-time work permit.

9. Georgia

School Attendance

Georgia first mandated compulsory school attendance for individuals ages 8 to 14 in 1916. Since 2000, the state has required that people ages 6 to 16 attend school full-time.

Key Dates

First law: 1917

Major changes since 1917: 1925, 1945, 2000

The state of Georgia first passed a state-wide compulsory schooling policy in 1916, and the law went into effect in 1917. This policy mandated school attendance for a minimum of four months for individuals between the ages of 8 and 14 (Legislature of the State of Georgia, 1916, Act No. 576, §5). Exemptions were granted to individuals who needed to work to support their families and to those residing more than three miles from the nearest school. A 1919 amendment increased the attendance requirement to six months of the school year and provided an exemption for people who had completed the 7th grade (Legislature of the State of Georgia, 1919, Act No. 217, §171). No changes were made to Georgia's compulsory schooling policy until 1945, when the law was changed to mandate school attendance for individuals ages 7 to 16 years for the entire academic year (Legislature of the State of Georgia, 1945, Chapter 340, §1). In 2000, Georgia lowered the school starting age to 6 (Legislature of the State of Georgia, 2000, Act No. 685, §97).

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in [Table 25](#).

Table 25: Georgia–Compulsory Schooling Ages by Birth Cohort (1908-2024)

Birth Cohort	Start Age	Leaving Age	Duration
September 1908 - August 1931	9	14	6
September 1931 - August 1937	9	16	8
September 1937 - August 1993	8	16	9
September 1993 - Present	7	16	10

Source: Legislature of the State of Georgia (1916, 1946, 2000)

Note: Starting ages and leaving ages are established in the law. Starting ages are adjusted to reflect the age a person reaches during their first full year of compulsory schooling. Starting ages are therefore 1 year later than the age in the law. Compulsory schooling duration is imputed based on start age and leaving age.

Since 1985, the [effective school year for enrollment](#) in Georgia has started on September 1 (Legislature of the State of Georgia, 1985, Act No. 770, Part 3). Since earlier compulsory schooling legislation does not specify an enrollment deadline, we operate under the assumption that the September 1 date applies to previous policy when calculating birth cohorts.

Georgia's first compulsory schooling law became effective in January 1917 (Legislature of the State of Georgia, 1916, Act No. 576, §5). Based on the rules established in the introduction of this document, we determine that the law was first enforced in school year (SY) 1917-18. Individuals born in January 1908 have been the first affected cohort, since they reached age 9 during their first year of compulsory schooling in SY 1917-18.

The 1945 reform changed the school start age and leaving age to 7 and 16, respectively (Legislature of the State of Georgia, 1945, Chapter 340, §1). Since the law was approved in March, we assume that it was first effective in SY 1945-46. The first cohort affected by the decrease in start age is the one turning 7 prior to SY 1945-46. This cohort was born in September 1937; they reached age 8 during their first year of compulsory schooling and age 16 during their last year of compulsory schooling. The first cohort affected by the increase in leaving age from 14 to 16, however, is the one reaching age 14 in SY 1945-46. The cohort born in September 1931 began compulsory schooling in SY 1940-41 and reached age 9 in their first year of compulsory schooling. They would reach age 14 during their 6th year of compulsory schooling in SY 1945-46 and be required to stay in school for an additional two years. For this cohort, the school start age is 8 and leaving age is 16.

The 2000 reform lowered the starting age to 6 (Legislature of the State of Georgia, 2000, Act No. 685, §62). The law specifies an effective date of July 1, 2000, meaning it was first enforced in SY 2000-01 (Legislature of the State of Georgia, 2000, Act No. 685, §97). The first

affected cohort is the one reaching age 6 before September 2000. The cohort born in September 1993 would begin primary school in SY 2000-01 and reach age 7 during their first year of compulsory schooling.

Comparison with Existing Analyses

There are limited differences between the compulsory schooling ages in Georgia identified through our research and those identified by other authors.

Lleras-Muney (2002) published one of the first papers using compulsory schooling in Georgia in her research. The author reports the state's first law as effective in 1916 with a start age of 8 and a leaving age of 14. The starting and leaving ages reported are consistent with our calculations. As for the effective date of the law, Act 576 of 1916 states that the law was effective from January 1917, which means that at the earliest, it was enforced from SY 1917-18 (Legislature of the State of Georgia, 1916, Act No. 576, §5).

Lleras-Muney also reports that the compulsory schooling law was amended to affect those aged 7 years to 14 years in 1939. However, our review of Georgia Legislature documents indicates that the law lowering the start age to 7 was not passed until 1945, first affecting those born in September 1937 (Legislature of the State of Georgia, 1945, Chapter 340, §1). This discrepancy is likely because Lleras-Muney relied on the federal Biennial Survey of Education for their data, whereas we have directly examined the legislation for each year.

Angrist and Krueger (1991) report a school leaving age of 16 in 1960, 1970, and 1980, corresponding to cohorts born in 1944, 1954, and 1964 respectively. Based on our calculations above, the school leaving ages calculated in our data are consistent with those reported by Angrist and Krueger.

Work Permits

Georgia began to regulate child labor in 1906, establishing a full-time employment age of 10. Since 1938 with the passage of FLSA, the full-time work permit age has been 16 and the vacation permit age has been 14.

Key Dates

First law: 1906

Major changes since 1906: 1915, 1917, 1926, 1938

Georgia's first policy regulating child labor was passed in 1906, a decade prior to the passing of its first compulsory schooling policy (Legislature of the State of Georgia, 1906, Act No. 399, §§2-4). The 1906 law, which was effective in 1907, banned the employment of individuals under the age of 12 unless their services were rendered necessary to support their household. The law also stipulated that in 1908 the minimum employment age would be raised to 14 and people would need to be able to read and write in English and attend school for at least 12 weeks prior to receiving a work permit. Individuals over age 12 who were eligible for a hardship permit were exempt from this restriction. A 1914 amendment further increased the requirements for a work permit by also requiring a satisfactory past schooling record, not just school attendance (Legislature of the State of Georgia, 1914, Act No. 426, §§1-2). This law remained in effect until the federal [Fair Labor Standards Act](#) in 1938, which established a full-time work permit age of 16 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023). In 1946, new legislation restricted employment to only 4 hours a day on school days and declared the minimum work permit eligibility age to be 14 —this applied to vacation and part-time work permits (Legislature of the State of Georgia, 1946, Act No. 495, §§1-8). As of 2004, the state once again mandates that satisfactory school attendance and a satisfactory prior schooling record are required for work permit eligibility (Legislature of the State of Georgia, 2004, Act No. 449, §21a).

For changes in work permit literacy requirements and work permit eligibility ages over time, see [Table 26](#) and [Table 27](#) respectively.

Table 26: Georgia–Work Permit Literacy Requirements (1906-2024)

Effective Date	Minimum Literacy
July 1906 - December 1906	12 weeks of school attendance in the current academic year
January 1907 - December 1907	Sufficient school attendance in the prior academic year
January 1908 - December 1914	Read and write English; satisfactory prior schooling record
January 1915 - June 1946	Sufficient school attendance; satisfactory prior schooling record
July 1946 - April 2004	.
From May 2004	Sufficient school attendance; satisfactory prior schooling record

Source: Legislature of the State of Georgia (1906, 1914, 2004)

Table 27: Georgia–Work Permit Minimum Ages (1906-2024)

Effective Date	Full-Time	Part-Time	Vacation	Hardship
July 1906 - December 1906	10	.	.	10
January 1907 - December 1907	12	.	.	10
January 1908 - December 1914	14	.	.	10
January 1915 - December 1916	14	.	.	12
January 1917 - December 1925	14	.	14	12
January 1926 - September 1938	14	.	14	14
October 1938 - June 1946	16	.	14	14
July 1946 - March 1981	16	.	12 for boys 14 for girls	14
Since April 1981	16	.	12	14

Source: Legislature of the State of Georgia (1906, 1914, 1925, 1946, 1981) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in [Table 28](#).

Table 28: Georgia–Full-time Work Permit Ages by Birth Cohort (1900-2024)

Birth Cohort	Full-Time Permit Age
January 1900 - September 1924	14
October 1924 - Present	16

Source: Legislature of the State of Georgia ([1906](#), [1914](#)) and U.S. Department of Labor ([2023](#))

In the early 1900s, the full-time work permit age in Georgia was 14 (Legislature of the State of Georgia, [1906](#), Act No. 399, §§2-4).

The raising of the full-time work permit age to 16 in October 1938 first impacted students who reached age 14 that year, and who now needed to stay in school for an additional 2 years before being able to work (U.S. Department of Labor, [2023](#)). These students were born starting in October 1924.

10. Illinois

School Attendance

In 1883, Illinois originally mandated that all individuals ages 8 to 14 attend school. As of 2014, the school starting age in Illinois is 6, and the school leaving age is 17.

Key Dates

First law: 1883

Major changes since 1883: 1907, 2004, 2014

Illinois's first compulsory school attendance policy in 1883 required all individuals ages 8 to 14 to attend school for a minimum of 12 weeks (Illinois State Legislature, 1883, Chapter 123, §133). Students residing more than 2 miles from the nearest school were exempt from this policy. An amendment passed in 1889 lowered the school starting age to 7 and required 16 weeks of attendance (Illinois State Legislature, 1889a, Chapter 122, §313). By 1903, attendance was required for the full academic year (Illinois State Legislature, 1903, Chapter 122, §313). In 1907, the law was amended to compel attendance for people between the ages of 7 and 16 (Illinois State Legislature, 1907, Chapter 122, §313). Illinois began to mandate that employed individuals of compulsory schooling age enroll in part-time evening school to remain eligible for a work permit in 1921 (Illinois State Legislature, 1921, H.B. No. 564). School districts with less than 20 employees of compulsory schooling age were not required to comply with this amendment, and as of 2024, Illinois's school laws still exempt students in rural school districts from this part-time schooling requirement.

In 1921, the state also began to require part-time schooling for individuals over 16. This law was enacted incrementally, with compulsory part-time schooling for people ages 16 to 17 in the academic years beginning in 1923 and 1924, and for individuals ages 16 to 18 for the academic year beginning in 1925 and thereafter. This provision remained in effect until 2007, when part-time compulsory schooling requirements for people over the full-time compulsory schooling age ended (Illinois State Legislature, 2007). Illinois increased the school leaving age for full-time compulsory school to 17 in 2004, and lowered the school starting age to 6 in 2014 (Illinois State Legislature, 2004, 93-0859, §5; Illinois State Legislature, 1889b, PA 98-0944, §5).

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in Table 29.

Table 29: Illinois–Compulsory Schooling Ages by Birth Cohort (1900–2024)

Birth Cohort	Start Age	Leaving Age	Duration
January 1900 - August 1989	8	16	9
September 1989 - August 2007	8	17	10
From September 2007	7	17	11

Source: Illinois State Legislature (1889b, 1907, 2004)

Note: Starting ages and leaving ages are established in the law. Starting ages are adjusted to reflect the age a person reaches during their first full year of compulsory schooling. Starting ages are therefore 1 year later than the age in the law. Compulsory schooling duration is imputed based on start age and leaving age.

For cohorts born starting in the early 20th century, the compulsory schooling law required attendance for 9 years between the ages of 7 and 16 (Illinois State Legislature, 1907, Chapter 122, §313). We adjust the starting age forward one year to reflect the age an individual will reach during their first year of compulsory schooling.

The 2004 reform increased the school leaving age to 17 (Illinois State Legislature, 2004, 93-0859, §5). The law became effective January 2005, implying its enforcement began in school year (SY) 2005-06. According to Illinois school code, the cutoff date for enrollment is September 1 of the school year, starting in SY 1990-91 (Illinois General Assembly, 2024, pp. 5/10–20.12). The first cohort affected by the 2004 reform would reach age 16 during SY 2005-06 and be required to remain in school for an additional year. Thus, the first cohort affected by this policy was born in September 1989.

The 2013 reform lowered the compulsory schooling start age to 6 (Illinois State Legislature, 1889b, PA 98-0944, §5). The law specifies a cutoff date for enrollment of September 1, and also specifies that the law is effective from SY 2014-15. The first cohort affected, therefore, is the one that reaches age 7 during their first year of primary school in SY 2014-15. Individuals born in September 2007 would reach

age 6 before September 1 of SY 2014-15. They would be required to enroll in school and reach age 7 during their first year of compulsory schooling.

Comparison with Existing Analyses

There are no differences between the compulsory schooling ages in Illinois identified through our research and those identified by other authors.

Lleras-Muney (2002) published one of the first papers using compulsory schooling in the state of Illinois in her research. The author reports a school starting age of 7 and a school leaving age of 16 for 1915 to 1939. These ages are consistent with our findings.

Angrist and Krueger (1991) report a school leaving age of 16 in 1960, 1970, and 1980, corresponding to cohorts born in 1944, 1954, and 1964 respectively. Based on our calculations above, the school leaving ages calculated in our data are consistent with those reported by Angrist and Krueger.

Work Permits

Illinois first began regulating child labor in 1891 when the state legislature established a full-time employment age of 14. Since the passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act in 1938, the full-time employment age has been 16 and the vacation age has been 14.

Key Dates

First law: 1895

Major changes since 1891: 1897, 1938

The state of Illinois passed its first child labor law in 1891, banning the employment of individuals under the age of 13 (Illinois State Legislature, 1891, Chapter 38, §53f). Under this law, people under age 13 were allowed to work if they could pass a literacy test and demonstrate financial hardship. By 1897, all individuals seeking work permits were required to pass a literacy test administered by their local school board (Illinois State Legislature, 1897, Chapter 48, §32). The minimum work permit age was also increased to 14 in 1897, and although they were above compulsory school attendance age, people aged 14 to 16 were required to obtain a work permit to be lawfully employed. Individuals who did not pass the literacy test were required to enroll in part-time evening school to maintain their work permit eligibility. In 1917, the law was amended to require completion of the 5th grade to work (Illinois State Legislature, 1917, Chapter 48, §20). The minimum literacy requirement was raised to 6th grade in 1921 and 8th grade in 1929 (Illinois State Legislature, 1921, H.B. No. 795, §6; Illinois State Legislature, 1929, S.B. No. 244, §6). The 1921 amendment also required employed individuals under age 18 to enroll in part-time school. Effective 1947, the state legislature granted districts the authority to determine minimum literacy requirements, and districts now utilize either literacy tests or schooling records to determine an individual's eligibility to obtain a work permit (Illinois State Legislature, 1945, H.B. No. 508, §12; "Proclamation 2714—Cessation of Hostilities of World War II," 1946). Illinois implicitly adopted the provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act in 1938, raising the full-time employment age to 16 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023).

For changes to minimum literacy requirements and work permit ages over time, see Table 30 and Table 31 respectively.

Table 30: Illinois–Work Permit Literacy Requirements (1891-2024)

Effective Date	Minimum Literacy
July 1891 - June 1917	Read and write English
July 1917 - August 1921	Completion of grade 5
September 1921 - August 1929	Completion of grade 6
September 1929 - February 1947	Completion of grade 8
From March 1947	Satisfactory schooling record

Source: Illinois State Legislature (1891, 1917, 1921, 1929, 1945)

Table 31: Illinois–Work Permit Minimum Ages (1891-2024)

Effective Date	Full-Time	Part-Time	Vacation	Hardship
July 1891 - June 1897	13	.	13	.
July 1897 - September 1938	14	.	14	.
From October 1938	16	.	14	.

Source: ILLeg1947; Illinois State Legislature (1891, 1897) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in [Table 32](#).

Table 32: Illinois–Full-time Work Permit Ages by Birth Cohort (1900-2024)

Birth Cohort	Full-Time Permit Age
January 1900 - September 1924	14
October 1924 - Present	16

Source: Illinois State Legislature ([1897](#)) and U.S. Department of Labor ([2023](#))

In the early 20th century, the full-time work permit age in Illinois was 14 (Illinois State Legislature, [1897](#), Chapter 48, §32).

The raising of the full-time work permit age to 16 in October 1938 first impacted students who reached age 14 that year, and who now needed to stay in school for an additional 2 years before being able to work (U.S. Department of Labor, [2023](#)). These students were born starting in October 1924.

11. Indiana

School Attendance

The state of Indiana passed its first compulsory attendance law in 1897, requiring that individuals ages 8 to 14 attend school. Since 2023, Indiana has mandated school attendance for all people ages 7 to 18.

Key Dates

First law: 1897

Major changes since 1897: 1913, 1921, 1992, 2006

Indiana's first compulsory school attendance policy was passed in 1897 and mandated that individuals ages 8 to 14 attend school for at least 12 consecutive weeks per academic year (Indiana State Legislature, 1897, PL 165, §1). Exemptions were granted to individuals who lived over 2 miles away from the nearest school. Two years later, in 1899, the school starting age decreased to 6, and individuals were now required to attend school for the full academic term (Indiana State Legislature, 1899, PL 244, §1). However, people ages 13 and 14 who needed to work to support themselves or their families were only required to attend for 12 consecutive weeks per school year. In 1901, the law was amended again, raising the starting age to 7 (Indiana State Legislature, 1901, PL 209, §1). In 1913, the law changed so that attendance was still compulsory for all individuals ages 7 to 14, but was now also required for people ages 14 to 16 who were not regularly employed (Indiana State Legislature, 1913, PL 24, §11). Although the school leaving age was increased to 18 in 1992, students were now permitted to withdraw at age 16 with parental consent (Indiana State Legislature, 1992, PL 19, §16). From 2006 until the present, Indiana residents have been required to attend school from ages 7 to 18 unless they have graduated or completed an exit interview (Indiana State Legislature, 2006, PL 185, §12).

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in Table 33.

Table 33: Indiana–Compulsory Schooling Ages by Birth Cohort (1897–2024)

Birth Cohort	Start Age	Leaving Age	Duration
January 1900 - June 1990	8	16	9
July 1990 - Present	8	18	11

Source: Indiana State Legislature (1897, 1899, 1901, 1913, 2006)

Note: Starting ages and leaving ages are established in the law. Starting ages are adjusted to reflect the age a person reaches during their first full year of compulsory schooling. Starting ages are therefore 1 year later than the age in the law. Compulsory schooling duration is imputed based on start age and leaving age.

For cohorts born beginning in the early 1900s, the compulsory schooling start age was 7, and the compulsory school leaving age was 16 (Indiana State Legislature, 1913, PL 24, §11). Because the starting age in the law is based on the age achieved prior to the first year of compulsory schooling, we adjust it forward one year to meet our harmonized definition of start age, as the age achieved during the first year of compulsory schooling.

Although the compulsory school leaving age was increased to 18 in 1992, students were allowed to leave school at age 16 provided they had parental consent. We interpret this law as having an effective leaving age of 16 (Indiana State Legislature, 1992, PL 19, §16). Public Law 185 of 2006, effective July 2006, changed the criteria for this exit pathway, granting it only to individuals who had written parental consent and a court-approved validation of financial hardship, meaning that the school leaving age was effectively increased from 16 to 18 (Indiana State Legislature, 2006, PL 185, §12). The first cohort affected would be the one reaching age 16 in school year (SY) 2006–07, who would no longer have access to the exit pathway, and would be required to remain in school until age 18. The first cohort affected by this amendment was born in July 1990.

Comparison with Existing Analyses

There are no differences between the compulsory schooling ages in Indiana identified through our research and those identified by other authors.

Lleras-Muney (2002) reports a school starting age of 7 and a school leaving age of 16 for 1915 to 1939. These ages are consistent with our findings.

Angrist and Krueger (1991) report a school leaving age of 16 in 1960, 1970, and 1980, corresponding to cohorts born in 1944, 1954, and 1964 respectively. Based on our calculations above, the school leaving ages calculated in our data are consistent with those reported by Angrist and Krueger.

Work Permits

Indiana began regulating child labor in 1899, creating a hardship permit for people ages 13 and older. Since 2006, the full-time and hardship work permit ages have been 16, and the part-time work permit age has been 14.

Key Dates

First law: 1899

Major changes since 1899: 1907, 1938

During the 1913 legislative session, Indiana passed its first two labor laws impacting the entire state. The first of these established that employed people aged 14 to 16 needed to attend school part-time for at least five hours per week. The second law established that to receive a work permit, individuals ages 14 and older needed to have completed the fifth grade (Indiana State Legislature, 1913, PL 24, §11, PL 213, §2). The minimum literacy requirement changed to the completion of the eighth grade in 1921, and it remains so in the present (Indiana State Legislature, 1921, PL 132, §7). Indiana adopted a full-time employment age of 16 in 1938 following the passage of the [Fair Labor Standards Act](#) (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023). In 1967, a part-time work permit age of 14 was established (Indiana State Legislature, 1967, PL 217, §2).

See [Table 34](#) and [Table 35](#) for changes to minimum literacy requirements and work permit ages, respectively.

Table 34: Indiana–Work Permit Literacy Requirements (1913–2024)

Effective Date	Minimum Literacy
March 1913 - February 1921	Completion of grade 5
From March 1921	Completion of grade 8

Source: Indiana State Legislature (1913, 1921)

Table 35: Indiana–Work Permit Minimum Ages (1913–2024)

Effective Date	Full-Time	Part-Time	Vacation	Hardship
February 1913 - September 1938	14	.	14	.
October 1938 - February 1967	16	.	14	.
March 1967 - June 2006	16	14	14	.
From July 2006	16	14	14	16

Source: Indiana State Legislature (1913, 1967, 2006) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in [Table 36](#).

Table 36: Indiana–Full-time Work Permit Ages by Birth Cohort (1900–2024)

Birth Cohort	Full-Time Permit Age
January 1900 - September 1924	14
October 1924 - Present	16

Source: Indiana State Legislature (1913) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

The first full-time work permit age policy in Indiana was passed in 1913, establishing a full-time work permit age of 14 (Indiana State Legislature, 1913, PL 24, §11, PL 213, §2). The first cohort affected was born prior to 1900.

The raising of the full-time work permit age to 16 in October 1938 first impacted students who reached age 14 that year, and who now needed to stay in school for an additional 2 years before being able to work (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023). These students were born starting in October 1924.

12. Iowa

School Attendance

Iowa's first compulsory attendance law went into effect in 1902, mandating that people ages 7 to 14 attend school. As of 1991, all individuals ages 6 to 16 have been required to attend.

Key Dates

First law: 1902

Major changes since 1902: 1909, 1983, 1991

Iowa passed its first compulsory attendance law in 1902, requiring that people ages 7 to 14 attend school for a minimum of 12 consecutive weeks per school year (Legislature of Iowa, 1902, Chapter 128, §1). Individuals who lived over 2 miles from the nearest school, as well as those who had received equivalent instruction elsewhere, were exempt from this mandate. Shortly thereafter, in 1904, the state legislature determined that students needed to attend for 16 consecutive weeks, and in 1909 the period was extended to the full academic year for [cities of the first and second class](#) and to 24 weeks for the rest of the state (Legislature of Iowa, 1904, Chapter 116, §§1-2; Legislature of Iowa, 1909, Chapter 187, §1). By 1913, the school leaving age had been raised to 16, although individuals who had completed the eighth grade or who were 14 years old and employed were exempt (Legislature of Iowa, 1913, Chapter 255, §1). It was not until 1983 that all students needed to attend school for the full academic year (Legislature of Iowa, 1983, Chapter 17, §2). Since 1991, Iowa residents have been required to attend school from the ages of 6 to 16; however, if a child is 4 years old and enrolled in pre-kindergarten, or is 5 years old and enrolled in kindergarten, then they are also considered to be of compulsory schooling age (Legislature of Iowa, 1991, Chapter 200, §4; Legislature of Iowa, 2012, Chapter 1119, §40; Legislature of Iowa, 2013, Chapter 78, §§1-3). Notably, since 1967, members of a church or religious denomination that has been established in Iowa for ten years can request that individuals who are members be exempt from compulsory schooling laws (Legislature of Iowa, 1909, Chapter 186; Legislature of Iowa, 1967, Chapter 248).

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in [Table 37](#).

Table 37: Iowa–Compulsory Schooling Ages by Birth Cohort (1902–2024)

Birth Cohort	Start Age	Leaving Age	Duration
January 1900 - September 14, 1984	8	16	9
September 15, 1984 - Present	7	16	10

Source: Legislature of Iowa (1902, 1913, 1991)

Note: Starting ages and leaving ages are established in the law. Starting ages are adjusted to reflect the age a person reaches during their first full year of compulsory schooling. Starting ages are therefore 1 year later than the age in the law. Compulsory schooling duration is imputed based on start age and leaving age.

For cohorts born starting in the early 20th century, the compulsory schooling ages were defined as 7 to 16 (Legislature of Iowa, 1913, Chapter 255, §1). We adjust the starting age forward by one year to reflect the age achieved during an individual's first year of compulsory schooling.

In 1991, the compulsory schooling start age was lowered, requiring people to enroll in school if they reached age 6 by September 15 of that school year (Legislature of Iowa, 1991, Chapter 200, §4). The law was approved in May 1991, and based on the rules in the introduction of this document, we interpret it as being effective from school year (SY) 1991-92. The first cohort affected, therefore, would be the one reaching age 7 after September 15, 1991—they were born September 15, 1984.

Comparison with Existing Analyses

There are no differences between the compulsory schooling ages in Iowa identified through our research and those identified by other authors.

Lleras-Muney (2002) reports a school starting age of 7 and a school leaving age of 16 for 1915 to 1939. These ages are consistent with our findings.

Angrist and Krueger (1991) report a school leaving age of 16 in 1960, 1970, and 1980, corresponding to cohorts born in 1944, 1954, and 1964 respectively. Based on our calculations above, the school leaving ages calculated in our data are consistent with those reported

by Angrist and Krueger.

Work Permits

Iowa's first child labor law in 1906 set a full-time employment age of 14. Since the passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act in 1938, the full-time work permit age has been 16 and the vacation work permit age has been 14.

Key Dates

First law: 1906

Major changes since 1906: 1938

Shortly after Iowa passed its first compulsory schooling law in 1902, it established a minimum employment age of 14 in 1906 (Legislature of Iowa, 1906, Chapter 103, §1). In 1915, the state legislature stipulated that to be employed, people ages 14 to 16 needed to be able to read and write in English and to have completed sixth grade coursework (Legislature of Iowa, 1915, Chapter 266, §5). With the passage of the [Fair Labor Standards Act](#) of 1938, Iowa established a full-time employment age of 16 and maintained a vacation permit age of 14 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023). As of 1970, the state legislature no longer includes minimum literacy requirements to receive a work permit (Legislature of Iowa, 1970, Chapter 1054, §§4-12).

Refer to [Table 38](#) and [Table 39](#) for a detailed record of changes to Iowa's minimum literacy requirements and work permit ages.

Table 38: Iowa–Work Permit Literacy Requirements (1915-2024)

Effective Date	Minimum Literacy
July 1915 - June 1970	Ability to read and write in English; completion of grade 6
From July 1970	.

Source: Legislature of Iowa (1915, 1970)

Table 39: Iowa–Work Permit Minimum Ages (1906-2024)

Effective Date	Full-Time	Part-Time	Vacation	Hardship
July 1906 - September 1938	14	.	14	.
From October 1938	16	.	14	.

Source: Legislature of Iowa (1906) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in [Table 40](#).

Table 40: Iowa–Full-time Work Permit Ages by Birth Cohort (1906-2024)

Birth Cohort	Full-Time Permit Age
January 1900 - September 1924	14
October 1924 - Present	16

Source: Legislature of Iowa (1906) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

In the early 20th century, the full-time work permit age in Iowa was 14 (Legislature of Iowa, 1906, Chapter 103, §1).

The raising of the full-time work permit age to 16 in October 1938 first impacted students who reached age 14 that year, and who now needed to stay in school for an additional 2 years before being able to work (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023). These students were born starting in October 1924.

13. Kansas

School Attendance

The Kansas state legislature first regulated compulsory schooling in 1874, requiring all individuals ages 8 to 14 to attend school. After numerous amendments during the twentieth century, the 1997 law established compulsory schooling for people ages 7 to 18, which remains in place today.

Key Dates

First law: 1874

Major changes since 1874: 1903, 1919, 1923, 1997

Kansas began to regulate compulsory schooling in 1874, mandating that all individuals ages 8 to 14 attend school for a minimum of 12 weeks per year (Kansas State Legislature, 1874, Chapter 123, §1). Exemptions were granted to people who had completed equivalent schooling or if there were no schools within two miles of their residence. In 1903, compulsory attendance ages changed to 8 to 15 and students now needed to attend the entire school year (Kansas State Legislature, 1903, Chapter 423, §1). Individuals were exempt if they had graduated or if they were 14 years old and needed to work to support themselves or their families. The Kansas state legislature increased the school leaving age to 16 in 1919. In 1923, they decreased the starting age to 7 (Kansas State Legislature, 1919, Chapter 272, §1; Kansas State Legislature, 1923, Chapter 182, §1). Since 1997, individuals in Kansas have to attend school from ages 7 to 18 unless they are at least 16 and have graduated or withdrawn with parental consent (Kansas State Legislature, 1997, Chapter 157, §1).

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the birth cohorts and dates reported in Table 41.

Table 41: Kansas–Compulsory Schooling Ages by Birth Cohort (1900–2024)

Birth Cohort	Start Age	Leaving Age	Duration
January 1900 ^a - December 1903	9 ^b	15	7
January 1904 - December 1915	9 ^b	16	8
January 1916 - August 1981	8 ^b	16	9
September 1981 - Present (December 2024)	8	18	11

Source: Kansas State Legislature (1903, 1919, 1923, 1997)

Notes: Starting ages and leaving ages are established in the law. The starting ages shown in the table are adjusted to reflect the age an individual reaches by the end of their first school year. Starting ages are therefore 1 year later than the age in the law. Compulsory schooling duration is imputed based on start age and leaving age.

^a Not a cohort birth year associated with a reform. The starting date for birth cohorts is January 1900 to reflect the population represented in the Health and Retirement Study.

^b For school cohorts grouped based on a calendar year enrollment deadline, students with birthdays after the start of the school year (i.e., September–December) will be 1 year younger at the end of their first school year.

For cohorts born in 1900, schooling in Kansas was compulsory from age 8 to 15 (Kansas State Legislature, 1903, Chapter 423, §1). We adjust the starting age forward by 1 year, to 9, to reflect that individuals turned 9 years old during the school year (SY).

The 1919 reform was approved March of that year, which we interpret as first affecting students in SY 1919–20. The reform raised the minimum leaving age to 16 (Kansas State Legislature, 1919, Chapter 272, §1). The enrollment deadline during this period was December 31 (Kansas State Legislature, 1919, Chapter 258, §1). The first cohort affected by this policy were those born in January 1904, who were 15 when the policy took effect. These students would remain in school for an additional year.

The 1923 reform was approved March of that year, which we interpret as first affecting students in SY 1923–24. This reform lowered the starting age to 7 in 1923. We report this start age as age 8 in the table above to reflect the age reached at the end of the school year (Kansas State Legislature, 1923, Chapter 182, §1). The first affected individuals were those born in January 1916 who would have reached age 8 during SY 1923–24.

The 1997 policy raised the leaving age to 18, effective for SY 1997–98 (Kansas State Legislature, 1997, Chapter 157, §1). The school enrollment deadline during this period was August 31 (Kansas State Legislature, 1994, Chapter 318, §1). Therefore, the first students

affected by this reform were born August 31, 1981. These individuals reached 16 years old in SY 1997-98, and were the first cohort required to stay until they turned 18 in SY 1999-2000.

Comparison with Existing Analyses

There are limited differences between the compulsory schooling ages in Kansas identified through our research and those identified by other authors.

Lleras-Muney (2002) reports the change in the school leaving age from 15 to 16 as occurring in 1918; however, we find that this reform occurred in 1919. Consequently, the first cohort affected in Lleras-Muney was born in January 1915, 1 year earlier than the cohort we identify as first affected by this reform. This discrepancy is likely because Lleras-Muney relied on the federal Biennial Survey of Education for their data, whereas we have directly examined the legislation for each year.

Angrist and Krueger (1991) report a school leaving age of 16 in 1960, 1970, and 1980, corresponding to cohorts born in 1944, 1954, and 1964 respectively. This is consistent with our findings.

Work Permits

The first child labor policy in Kansas that regulated full-time employment was passed in 1917 and established that individuals aged 14 and older could work rather than attend school if they had a permit. After numerous amendments in the early 1900s, the federal Fair Labor Standards Act in 1938 established a full-time work permit age of 16 and a vacation work permit age of 14.

Key Dates

First law: 1917

Major changes since 1917: 1938

Kansas first adopted legislation regulating full-time child labor employment in 1917, when it established that individuals needed to be at least 14 years old to work during school hours (Kansas State Legislature, 1917, Chapter 227, §1). To receive a full-time work permit, people needed to have completed the elementary school course. Individuals were also able to work outside of school hours at age 14. The full-time work permit age increased to 16 with the passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act in 1938 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023).

For a detailed list of changes to work permit minimum literacy requirements and work permit ages in Kansas, please reference [Table 42](#) and [Table 43](#).

Table 42: Kansas–Work Permit Literacy Requirements (1917–2024)

Effective Date	Minimum Literacy
May 1917 - Present (December 2024)	Completion of the elementary school course

Source: Kansas State Legislature (1917)

Table 43: Kansas–Work Permit Minimum Ages (1903–2024)

Effective Date	Full-Time	Part-Time	Vacation	Hardship
April 1903 - April 1917	.	.	.	14
May 1917 - September 1938	14	.	14	.
October 1938 - Present (December 2024)	16	.	14	.

Source: Kansas State Legislature (1903, 1917) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the birth cohorts and dates reported in [Table 44](#).

Table 44: Kansas–Full-time Work Permit Ages by Birth Cohort (1900–2024)

Birth Cohort	Full-Time Permit Age
January 1900 ^a - April 1909	No Policy
May 1909 - September 1924	14
October 1924 - Present (December 2024) (potentially as early as October 1922) ^b	16

Source: Kansas State Legislature (1917) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

Notes:

^a Not a cohort birth year associated with a reform. The starting date for birth cohorts is January 1900 to reflect the population represented in the Health and Retirement Study.

^b The first cohort fully affected by this reform was born in October 1924 and needed to wait 2 additional years to work. Cohorts born as early as October 1922 may also have been partially affected.

The Kansas state legislature established a full-time work permit age of 14 in 1923 (Kansas State Legislature, 1923, Chapter 182, §1). This change first affected individuals born in May 1909, who reached age 14 at the time the law went into effect.

The full-time work permit age increased to 16 in October 1938 with the passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act (U.S. Department of Labor, [2023](#)). This law first fully impacted people who were 14 years old at the time of implementation, because they now needed to remain in school for an additional 2 years before they could leave to work. These individuals were born starting in October 1924.

14. Kentucky

School Attendance

Kentucky's first compulsory schooling policy was passed in 1896 and mandated that all individuals ages 7 to 14 attend school. People ages 6 to 18 have been required to attend school since 2019.

Key Dates

First law: 1896

Major changes since 1896: 1910, 1978, 2017

The Kentucky state legislature began to regulate compulsory schooling in 1896, requiring that all individuals ages 7 to 14 attend school for a minimum of eight consecutive weeks (General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, 1896, Chapter 36, §1). Students were exempt if they had already completed equivalent schooling or if there were no segregated schools within two miles of their home. Schools in the districts of the [first](#), [second](#), [third](#), and [fourth class](#) began to require attendance for the full academic year in 1904 (General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, 1904, Chapter 94, §1). These cities extended the school leaving age to 16 in 1910 (General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, 1910, Chapter 80, §1). In 1978, all individuals in the state were required to attend school from ages 6 to 16 (General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, 1978, Chapter 136, §3). Beginning in 2013, local boards of education could vote to extend the school leaving age to 18; once 55% of all districts in Kentucky adopted this policy, then the remainder of districts were required to implement it within the following four years (General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, 2013, Chapter 11, §1). The 55% threshold was reached shortly after the 2013 policy became effective, and the policy reform went into effect for the entire state at the beginning of SY 2017-18 (Rodriguez, N., 2013).

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in [Table 45](#).

Table 45: Kentucky—Compulsory Schooling Ages by Birth Cohort (1900-2024)

Birth Cohort	Start Age	Leaving Age	Duration
January 1900 - December 1971	8	16	9
January 1972 - July 2001	7	16	10
August 2001 - Present	7	18	12

Source: General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky (1910, 1978, 2013)

Note: Starting ages and leaving ages are established in the law. Starting ages are adjusted to reflect the age a person reaches during their first full year of compulsory schooling. Starting ages are therefore 1 year later than the age in law.

For cohorts born in the early 1900s, the compulsory schooling law in Kentucky applied to all people ages 8 to 16 (General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, 1910, Chapter 80, §1).

The reform in 1978 lowered the starting age to 6 (General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, 1978, Chapter 136, §2-3). This change was effective for school year (SY) 1978-79, which had an enrollment deadline of December 31. We record a starting age of 7 for this reform, since the first birth cohort affected by the policy would turn 7 years old in SY 1978-79. These individuals were born beginning in January 1972.

The leaving age was raised to 18 in 2017, which increased the compulsory schooling duration from 10 years to 12 years (General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, 2013, Chapter 11, §1; Rodriguez, N., 2013). Kentucky's [effective school year for enrollment](#), starting SY 2017-18, was August 1 (General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, 2015, Chapter 62, §1). Students born starting in August 2001 would have turned 16 years old when the law became effective in SY 2017-18, and therefore they would have been the first cohort who needed to stay an additional 2 years in school, until they reached age 18.

Comparison with Existing Analyses

There are no differences between the compulsory schooling ages in Kentucky identified through our research and those identified by other authors.

Lleras-Muney (2002) reports a school starting age of 7 and a school leaving age of 16 for 1915 to 1939. These ages are consistent with our

findings.

Angrist and Krueger (1991) report a school leaving age of 16 in 1960, 1970, and 1980, corresponding to cohorts born in 1944, 1954, and 1964 respectively. Based on our calculations above, the school leaving ages calculated in our data are consistent with those reported by Angrist and Krueger.

Work Permits

Kentucky's earliest child labor law was passed in 1906 and established a full-time employment age of 14. Since 1970, the full-time work permit age has been 18, the part-time work permit age has been 16, and the vacation work permit age has been 14.

Key Dates

First law: 1906

Major changes since 1906: 1935, 1948, 1970

Kentucky's first child labor legislation in 1906 established a minimum employment age of 14 (General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, 1906, Chapter 52, §2). Minimum literacy requirements to receive an employment certificate were introduced in 1908: people needed to be able to read and write in English, to have satisfactory a school attendance record, and to have received instruction in reading, spelling, writing, geography, and arithmetic, including common fractions (General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, 1908, Chapter 66, §4, 6). In 1914, the minimum literacy requirements were changed so that individuals needed to have completed the fifth grade, and in 1920, they needed to have completed the eighth grade (General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, 1914, Chapter 72, §1; General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, 1920, Chapter 43, §3). An additional component of the 1920 policy was that if people ages 14 to 16 had not completed the eighth grade, then they were required to attend a continuation school, if offered by their district, for four to eight hours per week. Starting in 1935, the full-time employment age was 16, and hardship permits could be issued to individuals aged 14 if they had completed the eighth grade or to individuals aged 15 if they had completed the seventh grade (General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, 1935, Chapter 65, Article VI, §4). In 1970, the full-time employment age became 18, and a part-time employment age of 16 was established (General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, 1970, Chapter 143, §2).

For a detailed list of changes to minimum literacy requirements and work permit ages in Kentucky, please reference [Table 46](#) and [Table 47](#).

Table 46: Kentucky–Work Permit Literacy Requirements (1908-2024)

Effective Date	Minimum Literacy
September 1908 - May 1914	Ability to read and write in English; satisfactory school attendance; familiarity with basic arithmetic, including fractions; coursework in geography; satisfactory schooling record
June 1914 - May 1920	Completion of grade 5
July 1920 - May 1948	Completion of grade 8 or attendance at continuation school for 4 to 8 hours per week
From June 1948	Satisfactory schooling record

Source: General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky (1908, 1914, 1920, 1948)

Table 47: Kentucky–Work Permit Minimum Ages (1906-2024)

Effective Date	Full-Time	Part-Time	Vacation	Hardship
June 1906 - May 1935	14	.	14	.
June 1935 - May 1948	16	.	14	14
June 1948 - May 1970	16	.	14	.
From June 1970	18	16	14	.

Source: General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky (1906, 1935, 1948, 1970)

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in [Table 48](#).

For those born before 1900, the full-time work permit age was 14 (General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, 1906, Chapter 52, §2).

The full-time work permit age increased from 14 to 16 in June 1935 (General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, 1935, Chapter 65, Article VI, §4). Individuals who were 14 years old at the time of the law's implementation were the first affected by the policy, since

Table 48: Kentucky–Full-time Work Permit Ages by Birth Cohort (1900-2024)

Birth Cohort	Full-Time Permit Age
January 1900 - May 1921	14
June 1921 - May 1954	16
June 1954 - Present	18

Source: General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky ([1906](#), [1935](#), [1948](#), [1970](#))

they now needed to stay in school for an additional 2 years before leaving to work. We use the same logic as the 1935 reform to compute the cohort affected by the reform in 1970. In 1970, the full-time employment age increased to 18, which first impacted individuals born in June 1954 (General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, [1970](#), Chapter 143, §2).

15. Louisiana

School Attendance

Louisiana first required that individuals ages 8 to 14 attend school in 1910. From 2001 to the present, attendance has been compulsory for people ages 7 to 18.

Key Dates

First Law: 1914

Major Changes since 1914: 1916, 1944, 1987, 2001

Louisiana's first compulsory school attendance policy, passed in 1910, required people between the ages of 8 and 14 who resided in the Parish of Orleans to attend school for a minimum of 90 days (Louisiana State Legislature, 1910, Act 222, §1). Exemptions were granted to individuals who resided more than 20 blocks from their nearest school, and to those who had completed primary school. This law was amended in 1912, requiring attendance for the full academic term, but still only applied to people in the Parish of Orleans (Louisiana State Legislature, 1912, Act 232, §1). In 1932, individuals between the ages of 14 and 16 were required to attend school for the full academic year if they were not employed to work (Louisiana State Legislature, 1932, Act 49, §1). The first statewide policy was passed in 1914 and required all people between the ages of 8 and 14 to attend school for a minimum of 4 months of the school year (Louisiana State Legislature, 1914, Act 91, §1). This law applied to all cities with more than 25,000 residents except for those under the jurisdiction of the Parish of Orleans. A 1916 amendment lowered the school starting age to 7 and required attendance for the full academic year (Louisiana State Legislature, 1916, Act 27, §1). Compulsory schooling laws between the Parish of Orleans and the rest of the state of Louisiana were unified in 1944, when the compulsory schooling age became 7 to 15 for all Louisiana residents (Louisiana State Legislature, 1944, Act 239, §1). Amendments in 1987 and 2001 increased the school leaving age to 17 and 18, respectively (Louisiana State Legislature, 1987, Act 504, §1; Louisiana State Legislature, 2001, Act 1151, §1).

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in Table 49.

Table 49: Louisiana–Compulsory Schooling Ages by Birth Cohort (1905–2024)

Birth Cohort	Start Age	Leaving Age	Duration
October 1905 - September 1908 (potentially as early as September 1901)	9	14	6
October 1908 - September 1930	8	14	7
October 1918 - September 1930 (Parish of Orleans only)	9	16	8
October 1930 - September 1972	8	15	8
October 1972 - September 1984	8	17	10
October 1984 - Present	8	18	11

Source: Louisiana State Legislature (1910, 1914, 1916, 1932, 1944, 1987, 2001)

Note: Starting ages and leaving ages are established in the law. Starting ages are adjusted to reflect the age a person reaches during their first full year of compulsory schooling. Starting ages are therefore 1 year later than the age in law.

Louisiana's [effective school year for enrollment](#) begins September 30. This date was first mentioned in a law from 2014 (Louisiana State Legislature, 2014, Act 411, §1). Since earlier compulsory schooling legislation does not specify an enrollment deadline, we operate under the assumption that the September 1 date applies to previous policy when calculating birth cohorts.

The 1914 reform set a starting age of 8 and a leaving age of 14 (Louisiana State Legislature, 1914, Act 91, §1). Individuals born beginning in 1905 would have reached age 9 during their first year of schooling in school year (SY) 1914–15, and therefore would have been the first group of students affected by this policy across Louisiana. However, the Parish of Orleans had the same starting and leaving ages in place since SY 1910–11. Therefore, the earliest cohort that would have been affected by these measures was born in 1901.

The next reform impacting the entire state was effective for the 1916–17 school year, lowering the starting age to 7 (Louisiana State Legislature, 1916, Act 27, §1). This change would have first affected students born starting in September 1908, who reached age 8 in SY 1916–17. The next reform impacting only the Parish of Orleans, meanwhile, was effective for the 1932–33 SY and kept the starting age

of 8 while raising the leaving age to 16 (Louisiana State Legislature, [1932](#), Act 49, §1). This policy first affected people born starting in September 1918 who would reach age 14 in SY 1932-33 and who now were required to stay in school for an additional 2 years.

Louisiana's compulsory schooling policies were unified with the 1944 reform, which mandated that people "between the ages of seven and fifteen years" attend school (Louisiana State Legislature, [1944](#), Act 239, §1). The earliest cohort affected by this policy were those born starting in September 1930, who reached age 15 during the 1944-45 academic year and who now needed to stay in school for 1 additional year.

The 1987 reform raised the school leaving age from 15 to 17, thus increasing duration from 8 to 10 years (Louisiana State Legislature, [1987](#), Act 504, §1). Using the same logic as the 1932 and 1944 reforms, we obtain September 1972 as the first cohort affected by this policy. People born during this time would have reached age 8 during their first year of compulsory schooling in SY 1980-81, and would have reached age 15 during SY 1987-88. They would have then needed to remain in school until they turned 17 in SY 1989-90.

The leaving age became 18 in 2001 (Louisiana State Legislature, [2001](#), Act 1151, §1). Following the same logic as the 1987 policy, the first students impacted by this policy would have been those born starting in September 1984 who reached age 17 in the 2001-02 SY, and who needed to stay in school for 1 additional year.

Comparison with Existing Analyses

There are limited differences between the compulsory schooling ages in Louisiana identified through our research and those identified by other authors.

Lleras-Muney ([2002](#)) reports a starting age of 8 and a leaving age of 16 in 1915. While we agree with the starting age of 8, our review of the 1914 law indicates that the leaving age at this time was 14 (Louisiana State Legislature, [1914](#), Act 91, §1).

Lleras-Muney also identifies several other policy changes that we were unable to locate through our research, and these differences in compulsory schooling ages lead to differences in birth cohort calculations.

In 1921, Lleras-Muney reports a leaving age of 16, whereas we report a leaving age of 14 (Louisiana State Legislature, [1916](#), Act 27, §1). We have not located a state-wide compulsory schooling policy in Louisiana that specifies a leaving age of 16. Lleras-Muney indicates that the school starting age was lowered to 7 in 1929, but our research indicates that this occurred in 1921. Finally, in 1930, the author identifies a starting age of 7 and a leaving age of 15, whereas we find that this change did not happen until 1944. A 1930 reform date suggests that the individuals first affected by this policy change were born September 1915, whereas our analysis indicates that the first cohort affected was born in September 1930. These discrepancies are likely because Lleras-Muney relied on the federal Biennial Survey of Education for their data, whereas we have directly examined the legislation for each year.

Angrist and Krueger ([1991](#)) report a school leaving age of 16 in 1960, 1970, and 1980, corresponding to cohorts born in 1944, 1954, and 1964 respectively. Based on our calculations above, the school leaving ages calculated in our data are inconsistent with those reported by Angrist and Krueger. We find that the school leaving age during these periods was 15. These differences are likely because Angrist and Krueger relied on Census records for their data, while we reviewed each year's legislation.

Work Permits

The first child labor policy affecting the state of Louisiana was passed in 1914 and established a full-time employment age of 14. Since 1938, the full-time work permit age has been 16 and the vacation work permit age has been 14.

Key Dates

First law: 1914

Major changes since 1914: 1938

Louisiana's first child labor law in 1908 restricted individuals to working in non-hazardous occupations only, but did not set a minimum employment age (Pride, 1908). In 1914, the state passed a law banning the employment of people under the age of 14 (Louisiana State Legislature, 1914, Act 133, §2). While Louisiana did establish a financial hardship exemption from compulsory schooling in 1916, the legislation did not specify a minimum age at which this exemption could be granted; financial hardship exemptions were granted at each district's discretion (Louisiana State Legislature, 1916, Act 27, §3). The state of Louisiana did not make significant amendments to its child labor laws after 1926, but instead began to utilize regulations set by the [Fair Labor Standards Act](#) (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023).

For changes to work permit ages over time, see [Table 50](#).

Table 50: Louisiana–Work Permit Minimum Ages (1914–2024)

Effective Date	Full-Time	Part-Time	Vacation	Hardship
September 1914 - September 1938	14	.	14	.
From October 1938	16	14	14	.

Source: Louisiana State Legislature (1914, 1926) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in [Table 51](#).

Table 51: Louisiana–Full-time Work Permit Ages by Birth Cohort (1900–2024)

Birth Cohort	Full-Time Permit Age
September 1900 - September 1924	14
October 1924 - Present	16

Source: Louisiana State Legislature (1914) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

Louisiana established a full-time work permit age of 14 in September 1914, which first impacted individuals born September 1900 (Louisiana State Legislature, 1914, Act 133, §2). The age was raised to 16 with the implementation of the Fair Labor Standards Act in 1938 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023). This change affected individuals born in October 1938. They were 14 years old when the law was passed, and now needed to wait an additional 2 years before they could leave school to work full-time.

16. Maine

School Attendance

Maine's first compulsory schooling law was passed in 1875 and mandated school attendance for individuals ages 9 to 15. After numerous amendments to the compulsory schooling legislation, the 2019 law established that people must attend school from ages 6 to 17.

Key Dates

First law: 1875

Major changes since 1875: 1887, 1899, 1977, 2019

The Maine state legislature first passed a compulsory attendance law in 1875, requiring all individuals ages 9 through 15 to attend school for at least 12 weeks per year. People were exempted if there was no public school within 1.5 miles of their residence (Maine State Legislature, 1875, Chapter 24, §1). The school starting age was reduced to 8 in 1887, and people of compulsory schooling age were then required to attend for a minimum of 16 weeks, unless they had received an equivalent level of education outside of public schools (Maine State Legislature, 1887, Chapter 22, §1). The starting age decreased to 7 in 1899, and people now needed to attend for the full school year (Maine State Legislature, 1899, Chapter 80, §1). The Maine state legislature amended the compulsory schooling policy in 1909 to specify that while all individuals ages 7 through 15 needed to attend school, people ages 15 to 17 were also required to attend if they were unable to read and write simple sentences in English; furthermore, in unorganized townships, all individuals ages 7 to 17 were required to attend (Maine State Legislature, 1909, Chapter 57, §49; Maine State Legislature, 1909, Chapter 87, §2). By 1920, the unorganized township stipulation was no longer in place, but an additional provisions had been adopted: individuals ages 15 and 16 were required to also attend school if they had not completed the 6th grade (Maine State Legislature, 1920, Chapter 5). Later, in 1927, the English fluency provision was abolished and the grade completion specification was changed to the 8th grade (Maine State Legislature, 1927, Chapter 87). In 1977, all students were mandated to attend school from ages 7 to 17, unless they had completed secondary school (Maine State Legislature, 1977, Chapter 499, §1). Since 1979, there has been an exemption for students aged 15 or who have completed the 9th grade and who have the permission of their parents and the school board to withdraw from school (Maine State Legislature, 1979, Chapter 1979, §1). From 2019 to present (December 2024), students have been required to attend school from ages 6 to 17; however, if they are voluntarily enrolled in public kindergarten at age 5, then they are required to attend school (Maine State Legislature, 2019, Chapter 508, §1).

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the birth cohorts and dates reported in [Table 52](#).

Table 52: Maine–Compulsory Schooling Ages by Birth Cohort (1900–2024)

Birth Cohort	Start Age	Leaving Age	Duration
January 1900 ^a - October 15, 1963	8	15	8
October 16, 1963 - October 15, 2012	8	17	10
October 16, 2012 - Present (December 2024)	7	17	11

Source: Maine State Legislature (1899, 1977, 2019)

Notes: Starting ages and leaving ages are established in the law. The starting ages shown in the table are adjusted to reflect the age a child reaches by the end of their first school year. Starting ages are therefore 1 year later than the age in the law. Compulsory schooling duration is imputed based on start age and leaving age.

^a Not a cohort birth year associated with a reform. The starting date for birth cohorts is January 1900 to reflect the population represented in the Health and Retirement Study.

In 1981, the Maine state legislature established an October 15 enrollment age deadline for school entry (Maine State Legislature, 1981, Chapter 693, §5). Since earlier compulsory schooling legislation does not specify an enrollment deadline, we operate under the assumption that the October 15 date applies to previous policies when calculating birth cohorts.

For cohorts born in 1900, schooling in Maine was compulsory from age 7 to 15 (Maine State Legislature, 1899, Chapter 80, §1). We adjust the starting age forward by one year to reflect the age achieved during the first year of compulsory schooling.

The 1977 reform was approved October of that year, which we interpret as first affecting students in school year (SY) 1978–79. The policy specified that all individuals must attend school in Maine between their 7th and 17th birthdays (Maine State Legislature, 1977, Chapter

499). We interpret the starting age as age 8. Individuals born after October 15, 1963 would have been the first impacted by this policy, since they reached 15 years of age in SY 1978-79 and now needed to remain in school for an additional 2 years.

The 2019 policy was effective September 2019, which we interpret as first affecting students in SY 2019-20. The reform reduced the starting age to 6 (Maine State Legislature, 2019, Chapter 508, §1). This amendment would have first affected people born after October 15, 2012, who would have been age 6 at the start of SY 2019-20 and reached 7 years of age during that SY.

Comparison with Existing Analyses

There are several differences between the compulsory schooling ages in Maine identified through our research and those identified by other authors.

Lleras-Muney (2002) reports a change in the leaving age from 15 to 17 beginning in 1921, whereas we do not find that this change occurred until 1977. A 1921 reform date suggests that individuals first affected by this policy change were born October 1906, whereas our analysis indicates that the first cohort affected was born October 1963. This difference is likely because the Maine legislature passed a law in 1920 specifying that the compulsory schooling ages in the state were ages 7 to 15, but individuals who were unable to read and write in English also needed to attend from ages 15 to 17 (Maine State Legislature, 1920, Chapter 5). That is, Lleras-Muney (2002) uses the age for those unable to read, while we use the age for everyone.

Lleras-Muney also notes that the leaving age became 16 in 1939. The first cohort affected by this policy would have been born October 1923. We were unable to find evidence of this policy change through our review of the original legislation.

Angrist and Krueger (1991) report a school leaving age of 15 in 1960, and 17 in 1970 and 1980, corresponding to cohorts born in 1944, 1954, and 1964 respectively. We also identify a leaving age of 15 in 1960 and 17 in 1980, but in 1970, we find a leaving age of 15. This difference is likely because Angrist and Krueger relied on Census records for their data, while we reviewed each year's legislation.

Work Permits

Maine first set a full-time employment age for all industries in 1915: boys could begin working full-time at age 16, while girls had to wait until age 18. After a series of reforms throughout the twentieth century, since 1991 Maine has had a full-time work permit age of 17 and a vacation work permit age of 14.

Key Dates

First law: 1915

Major changes since 1915: 1917, 1919, 1938, 1945, 1979, 1991

Maine's first child labor law that affected all industries was passed in 1915. This legislation established that the minimum employment age for boys was 16, while the minimum age for girls was 18 (Maine State Legislature, 1915, Chapter 350, §§1-2). Two years later, in 1917, the full-time employment age for everyone was lowered to 14. In addition, the 1917 law specified that to receive a work permit, individuals needed to be able to read and write in English and perform basic arithmetic (Maine State Legislature, 1917, Chapter 146). The full-time employment age was raised to 15 in 1919, a vacation work permit age of 14 was adopted, and the minimum literacy requirements were modified so that in addition to being able to read and write in English, people needed to have completed the 6th grade (Maine State Legislature, 1919, Chapter 190, §§1-2). The federal Fair Labor Standards Act was passed in 1938, setting a full-time work permit age of 16 and keeping Maine's vacation work permit age of 14 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023). Shortly thereafter, in 1945, Maine adopted a more restrictive vacation work permit age of 15, and the minimum literacy requirements were modified so that completion of elementary school grades was necessary to work during school hours (Maine State Legislature, 1945, Chapter 277, §§1-2). In 1979, the vacation work permit age returned to 14 (Maine State Legislature, 1979, Chapter 468, §2). Maine again elected to adopt child labor provisions that were more stringent than FLSA in 1991, when they stipulated that individuals under age 17 could not work during the hours that public schools are in session (Maine State Legislature, 1991, Chapter 544, §5).

Look to [Table 53](#) and [Table 54](#) for a list of changes to Maine's work permit minimum literacy requirements and work permit ages, respectively.

Table 53: Maine–Work Permit Literacy Requirements (1917-2024)

Effective Date	Minimum Literacy
July 1917 - June 1919	Read and write English sentences; perform basic arithmetic
July 1919 - June 1945	Read and write English sentences; completion of grade 6
July 1945 - May 1992	Read and write English sentences; completion of grade 8
June 1992 - Present (December 2024)	Completion of grade 8

Source: Maine State Legislature (1917, 1919, 1945, 1991)

Table 54: Maine–Work Permit Minimum Ages (1915-2024)

Effective Date	Full-Time	Part-Time	Vacation	Hardship
July 1915 - June 1917 for girls	18	.	.	.
July 1915 - June 1917 for boys	16	.	.	.
July 1917 - June 1919	14	.	.	.
July 1919 - September 1938	15	.	14	.
October 1938 - June 1945	16	.	14	.
July 1945 - August 1979	16	.	15	.
September 1979 - September 1991	16	.	14	.
October 1991 - Present (December 2024)	17	.	14	.

Source: Maine State Legislature (1915, 1917, 1919, 1977, 1979, 1991) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the birth cohorts and dates reported in [Table 55](#).

Table 55: Maine–Full-time Work Permit Ages by Birth Cohort (1900-2024)

Birth Cohort	Full-Time Permit Age
January 1900 ^a - June 1903 for girls	18
January 1900 ^a - June 1903 for boys	16
July 1903 - June 1905 (potentially as early as July 1899) ^b	14
July 1905 - September 1923	15
October 1923 - September 1975	16
October 1975 - Present (December 2024)	17

Source: Maine State Legislature ([1915](#), [1917](#), [1919](#), [1977](#), [1979](#), [1991](#)) and U.S. Department of Labor ([2023](#))

Notes:

^a Not a cohort birth year associated with a reform. The starting date for birth cohorts is January 1900 to reflect the population represented in the Health and Retirement Study.

^b The first cohort fully affected by this reform was born in October 1924 and needed to wait 2 additional years to work. Cohorts born as early as July 1899 may also have been partially affected.

For cohorts born in the early 1900s, boys could work full-time at age 16 and girls could work full-time at age 18 (Maine State Legislature, [1915](#), Chapter 350, §§1-2).

Maine lowered its full-time work permit age to 14 in July 1917 (Maine State Legislature, [1917](#), Chapter 146). This change impacted all students born in July 1903. The next change to the full-time employment age came in July 1919, when the state legislature increased it to 15 (Maine State Legislature, [1919](#), Chapter 190, §1). This amendment first affected those born in July 1905, who turned 14 years old when the law was passed and now had to wait an additional year to be able to work. The passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act in October 1938 increased the full-time work permit age to 16, which first impacted those born in October 1923 (U.S. Department of Labor, [2023](#)). The full-time employment age increased to 17 in October 1991, first affecting those who were born in October 1975 (Maine State Legislature, [1991](#), Chapter 544, §5).

17. Maryland

School Attendance

In 1902, Maryland first mandated that individuals ages 8 to 16 attend school. Since 2017, the compulsory schooling ages are 5 to 18.

Key Dates

First law: 1902

Major changes since 1902: 1931, 1969, 1992, 2015, 2017

Maryland's first compulsory schooling policy in 1902 required that all people ages 8 to 12 attend school for the full academic year (Maryland State Legislature, 1902, Chapter 269, §1). Individuals ages 12 to 16 who were not regularly employed were also mandated to attend. In 1922, the city of Baltimore lowered its school starting age to 7; the rest of the state did not do so until 1931 (Maryland State Legislature, 1922, Chapter 474, §1; Maryland State Legislature, 1931, Chapter 159, §1). In 1969, the state legislature decreased the starting age to 6, and in 1991, it became 5 (Maryland State Legislature, 1969, Chapter 405, §1; Maryland State Legislature, 1991, Chapter 463, §1). In 2015, the school leaving age became 17, and since 2017, it has been 18 (Maryland State Legislature, 2012, Chapter 494, §1). People who have already graduated or who need to work to support their families are exempt from these attendance requirements.

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in Table 56.

Table 56: Maryland–Compulsory Schooling Ages by Birth Cohort (1900–2024)

Birth Cohort	Start Age	Leaving Age	Duration
January 1900 - August 1923	9	16	8
September 1914 - August 1923 (City of Baltimore only)	8	16	9
September 1923 - August 1962	8	16	9
September 1962 - August 1986	7	16	10
September 1986 - August 1999	6	16	11
September 1999 - August 2000	6	17	12
September 2000 - Present	6	18	13

Source: Maryland State Legislature (1902, 1922, 1931, 1969, 1991, 2012)

Note: Starting ages and leaving ages are established in the law. Starting ages are adjusted to reflect the age a person reaches during their first full year of compulsory schooling. Starting ages are therefore 1 year later than the age in law.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the [effective school year for enrollment](#) in Maryland begins September 1 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020).

For cohorts born in the early 1900s, the compulsory schooling law in Maryland applied to all individuals ages 9 to 16 (Maryland State Legislature, 1902, Chapter 269, §1).

The 1931 reform specified that compulsory schooling ages in Maryland were “between seven and fourteen years,” and extended to 16 years if individuals were not regularly employed (Maryland State Legislature, 1931, Chapter 159, §1). We code the starting age as 8, since people born starting in September 1923 would have turned 8 years old during their first year of schooling in school year (SY) 1931–32.

The first cohorts affected by the 1969 and 1991 reforms are calculated following the same logic as the 1931 reform (Maryland State Legislature, 1969, Chapter 405, §1). Students born beginning in September 1962 would have reached age 7 during their first year of schooling in SY 1969–70.

Individuals born starting in September 1986 would have been the first group affected by the 1991 reform. They were required to begin school in the year in which they turned 6 years old, which was SY 1992–93 (Maryland State Legislature, 1991, Chapter 463, §1).

The leaving age became 17 in 2015 (Maryland State Legislature, 2012, Chapter 494, §1). People born starting in September 1999 would have entered school in 2005, and would have reached age 16 during SY 2015–2016. They would have been the first required to stay enrolled for an additional year.

The leaving age was increased again, in 2017, to age 18 (Maryland State Legislature, [2012](#), Chapter 494, §1). Following the same logic as the 2015 reform, the first students impacted would have been those who were born starting in September 2000 who reached age 17 during SY 2017-18, and who needed to continue to attend school for 1 more year.

Comparison with Existing Analyses

There are several differences between the compulsory schooling ages in Maryland identified through our research and those identified by other authors.

Lleras-Muney ([2002](#)) records a starting age of 7 and a leaving age of 15 from the period 1918-1920. The first cohort affected by this policy would have been born starting in September 1903. Whereas before, these individuals would have needed to attend school until age 16, they were now able to leave at age 15 in 1918. However, we have a starting age of 8 and a leaving age of 16 during this period, as established by the 1902 reform. Later, Lleras-Muney notes that the compulsory schooling ages changed to 7 to 16 in 1924, although we found that this change did not occur until 1931. Consequently, the earliest affected cohort according to Lleras-Muney's data would have been born starting in September 1916, while we calculated September 1923 as the first affected cohort. Lleras-Muney also records the leaving age as increasing to 17 in 1928, which would have first impacted individuals born starting in September 1912. We were unable to locate this policy change through our research. These discrepancies are likely because Lleras-Muney relied on the federal Biennial Survey of Education for their data, whereas we have directly examined the legislation for each year.

Angrist and Krueger ([1991](#)) report a school leaving age of 16 in 1960, 1970, and 1980, corresponding to cohorts born in 1944, 1954, and 1964 respectively. Based on our calculations above, the school leaving ages calculated in our data are consistent with those reported by Angrist and Krueger.

Work Permits

Maryland began to regulate child labor in 1902, when the state legislature set a full-time employment age of 12. Since 2015, the full-time work permit age in Maryland has been 16, and the vacation work permit age and hardship work permit age has been 14.

Key Dates

First law: 1902

Major changes since 1902: 1912, 1938, 2015

Maryland began to regulate child labor in the same year that it started to regulate compulsory schooling, in 1902 (Maryland State Legislature, 1902, Chapter 269, §1). That year, the state legislature determined that individuals could begin working full-time at age 12 if they were able to read and write in English or were attending an evening school. Maryland's full-time employment age increased to 14 in 1912 when a vacation permit age of 12 was established (Maryland State Legislature, 1912, Chapter 731, §1). Minimum literacy requirements for employment also increased in 1912: in addition to being able to read and write in English, people also needed to have satisfactory school attendance in the previous year and to have completed fifth grade coursework, including classes in geography and basic arithmetic. By 1931, people needed to have completed the eighth grade to be employed during school hours (Maryland State Legislature, 1931, Chapter 159, §1). Since 1950, Maryland's full-time work permit age has been 16, and the vacation and hardship permit ages have been 14 (Maryland State Legislature, 1950, Chapter 8, §1).

Look to [Table 57](#) and [Table 58](#) for a list of changes to Maryland's minimum literacy requirements and work permit ages, respectively.

Table 57: Maryland–Work Permit Literacy Requirements (1902-2024)

Effective Date	Minimum Literacy
September 1902 - November 1912	Read and write English sentences or regular attendance at an evening school
December 1912 - March 1929	Read and write English sentences; completion of grade 5; familiarity with basic arithmetic (up to and including fractions); coursework in geography
April 1929 - May 1950	Completion of grade 8
From June 1950	Satisfactory prior schooling record

Source: Maryland State Legislature (1902, 1912, 1929, 1950)

Table 58: Maryland–Work Permit Minimum Ages (1902-2024)

Effective Date	Full-Time	Part-Time	Vacation	Hardship
September 1902 - August 1906	12	.	12	.
September 1906 - November 1912	12	.	.	.
December 1912 - September 1938	14	.	12	.
October 1938 - June 2015	16	.	14	.
From July 2015	16	.	14	14

Source: Maryland State Legislature (1902, 1906, 1912, 2012) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in [Table 59](#).

Table 59: Maryland–Full-time Work Permit Ages by Birth Cohort (1900-2024)

Birth Cohort	Full-Time Permit Age
January 1900 - November 1900	12
December 1900 - September 1924	14
October 1924 - Present	16

Source: Maryland State Legislature ([1902](#), [1906](#), [1912](#)) and U.S. Department of Labor ([2023](#))

Maryland raised its full-time work permit age from 12 to 14 in December 1912, which first impacted students born in December 1900 (Maryland State Legislature, [1912](#), Chapter 731, §1). The next change to the full-time employment age came with the passage of FLSA in October 1938, and affected individuals born in October 1924 (Maryland State Legislature, [1950](#), Chapter 8, §9). Whereas before these individuals could leave school to work at age 14, they now needed to wait to do so until they reached 16 years of age.

18. Massachusetts

School Attendance

Massachusetts began to compel attendance for individuals ages 8 to 14 in 1852. Since 1968, all people ages 6 to 16 have been required to attend school full-time.

Key Dates

First law: 1852

Major changes since 1852: 1873, 1874, 1898, 1905, 1921, 1968

Massachusetts was the first state to pass a compulsory schooling law in 1852. The state legislature required all individuals ages 8 to 14 to attend school for at least 12 weeks, 6 of which needed to be consecutive (General Court of Massachusetts, 1852, Chapter 240, §1, 4). Individuals were exempt from the law if they had received an equivalent education elsewhere. In 1873, the law changed so that only people ages 8 to 12 were required to attend, although they now needed to be in school for a minimum of 20 weeks per year (General Court of Massachusetts, 1873, Chapter 279, §1). One year later, the state legislature amended the law so that people ages 8 to 14 were again required to attend (General Court of Massachusetts, 1874, Chapter 233, §1). In 1890, individuals were required to attend school for at least 30 weeks per year, and by 1898, Massachusetts mandated that people ages 7 to 14 attend for the full academic year (General Court of Massachusetts, 1890, Chapter 384, §1; General Court of Massachusetts, 1898, Chapter 494, §12). In 1905 the state legislature passed an amendment stating that local districts could require individuals ages 14 to 16 to attend school if they could not read and write basic sentences in English, and in 1921 the legislature determined that attendance was mandatory for any child under 16 who had not completed the sixth grade (General Court of Massachusetts, 1905, Chapter 320, §1; General Court of Massachusetts, 1921, Chapter 463, §1; General Court of Massachusetts, 1939, Chapter 461, §3). Since 1965, the Massachusetts Board of Education has had the authority to establish the state's compulsory schooling ages, and in 1968, they determined that the minimum starting age was 6 (Secretary of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 1997, Chapter 572, §36; General Court of Massachusetts, 1997, 603 CMR 8.00).

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in [Table 60](#).

Table 60: Massachusetts–Compulsory Schooling Ages by Birth Cohort (1900–2024)

Birth Cohort	Start Age	Leaving Age	Duration
January 1900 - December 1907	8	14	7
January 1908 - December 1961	8	16	9
January 1962 - Present	7	16	10

Source: General Court of Massachusetts (1898, 1921, 1997)

Note: Starting ages and leaving ages are established in the law. Starting ages are adjusted to reflect the age a person reaches during their first full year of compulsory schooling. Starting ages are therefore 1 year later than the age in law.

The Code of Massachusetts Regulations (CMR), since 1968, has stipulated that “each child must attend school beginning in September of the calendar year in which he or she attains the age of six” (General Court of Massachusetts, 1997, 603 CMR 8.00). We interpret the school enrollment deadline to be December 31, since that is the end of the calendar year, making the [effective school year for enrollment](#) January to December of the following school year (SY). Since earlier compulsory schooling legislation does not specify an enrollment deadline, we operate under the assumption that the January 1 date applies to previous policy when calculating birth cohorts.

For cohorts born starting in the early 1900s, the compulsory schooling ages were defined as 7 to 14 (General Court of Massachusetts, 1898, Chapter 494, §12). We adjust the starting age forward by one year to reflect the age achieved during the first year of compulsory schooling.

The 1921 reform, enacted May 27, 1921, raised the leaving age from 14 to 16, thus increasing duration from 7 to 9 years (General Court of Massachusetts, 1921, Chapter 463, §1). The first cohort affected by this policy would have been born starting in January 1908, and would have reached age 8 during their first year of compulsory schooling in SY 1915–16. These students would have turned 14 years old in SY 1921–22 and then would have been required to stay in school for an additional 2 years, until the end of the 1923–24 SY.

The 1968 policy lowered the starting age by 1 year (General Court of Massachusetts, 1997, 603 CMR 8.00). Individuals born starting in January 1962 would have reached age 7 during the 1968–69 SY, and would have been the first impacted by this change.

Comparison with Existing Analyses

There are limited differences between the compulsory schooling ages in Massachusetts identified through our research and those identified by other authors.

Lleras-Muney (2002) records a starting age of 7 and a leaving age of 16 going back to 1915, suggesting that the first cohort affected by this policy was born in 1901. However, our research indicates that these ages were not in place until the 1921-22 SY. This discrepancy is likely because Lleras-Muney relied on the federal Biennial Survey of Education for their data, whereas we have directly examined the legislation for each year.

Angrist and Krueger (1991) report a school leaving age of 16 in 1960, 1970, and 1980, corresponding to cohorts born in 1944, 1954, and 1964 respectively. Based on our calculations above, the school leaving ages calculated in our data are consistent with those reported by Angrist and Krueger.

Work Permits

Massachusetts first allowed individuals to work full-time at age 13 starting in 1888. Since the passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act in 1938, the full-time work permit age has been 16 and the vacation work permit age has been 14.

Key Dates

First law: 1888

Major changes since 1888: 1913, 1938

In addition to being the first state to adopt compulsory schooling laws, in 1836 Massachusetts also became the first state to restrict child labor. This early law only applied to manufacturing establishments, restricting individuals under age 15 from being employed unless they had attended school for at least three months in the previous year and would continue to attend school for at least three months of every year of their employment (General Court of Massachusetts, 1836, Chapter 245, §1). In 1888, the state legislature determined that people ages 13 to 16 needed a certificate to be employed, and further specified that if a child under 14 could not read and write in English, then they needed to regularly attend an evening school to receive a certificate (General Court of Massachusetts, 1888, Chapter 348, §1, 3–4). This stipulation was expanded in 1898 so that individuals who could not read or write in English needed to enroll in an evening school to be employed (General Court of Massachusetts, 1898, Chapter 494, §7). In 1913, the law changed so that the minimum full-time employment age was 14 (General Court of Massachusetts, 1913, Chapter 779, §15). That same year, Massachusetts established continuation schools for regularly employed individuals ages 14 to 16 who could be required to attend for four hours per week at the discretion of their local school committee (General Court of Massachusetts, 1913, Chapter 805, §1). In 1919, continuation school attendance requirements were modified so that individuals with employment certificates were required to attend for at least 20 hours per week if they were temporarily unemployed (General Court of Massachusetts, 1919, Chapter 292, §1). While Massachusetts has not passed legislation altering the full-time employment age since 1913, in 1938 the state implicitly adopted the provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act which set the full-time employment age at 16 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023). The most recent change to Massachusetts child labor laws occurred in 2006, when the legislature determined that individuals ages 16 to 18 needed to attend evening school if they had not completed sixth grade and were seeking employment (General Court of Massachusetts, 2006, Chapter 426, §15).

See Table 61 and Table 62 for changes to minimum literacy requirements and work permit ages in Massachusetts.

Table 61: Massachusetts–Work Permit Literacy Requirements (1888–2024)

Effective Date	Minimum Literacy
July 1888 - August 1913	Read and write English sentences
September 1913 - September 1921	Read and write English sentences; satisfactory prior schooling record
From August 1921	Completion of grade 6

Source: General Court of Massachusetts (1888, 1913, 1921)

Table 62: Massachusetts–Work Permit Minimum Ages (1888–2024)

Effective Date	Full-Time	Part-Time	Vacation	Hardship
July 1888 - August 1913	13	.	.	.
September 1913 - May 1916	14	.	.	.
June 1916 - September 1938	14	.	14	.
From October 1938	16	.	14	.

Source: General Court of Massachusetts (1888, 1913, 1916) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in [Table 63](#).

Table 63: Massachusetts–Full-time Work Permit Ages by Birth Cohort (1900-2024)

Birth Cohort	Full-Time Permit Age
January 1900 - August 1900	13
September 1900 - September 1924	14
October 1924 - Present	16

Source: General Court of Massachusetts ([1888](#), [1913](#)) and U.S. Department of Labor ([2023](#))

In September 1913, Massachusetts increased its full-time work permit age from 13 to 14 (General Court of Massachusetts, [1913](#), Chapter 779, §15). This change first affected individuals born September 1900, who were now required to stay in school for 1 additional year before they had the option to leave to work full-time. The implementation of the Fair Labor Standards Act in October 1938 raised the full-time employment age to 16. People born in October 1924 were the first impacted by this change.

19. Michigan

School Attendance

In 1871, the state of Michigan mandated that all individuals ages 8 to 14 attend school. Since 1944, the legislature has required attendance for people ages 6 to 16.

Key Dates

First law: 1871

Major changes since 1871: 1895, 1905, 1907, 1944, 2010

Michigan was one of the first states to establish a compulsory schooling policy, with its first legislation in 1871 (Michigan State Compiler, 1871, Act 136, §3737). The state required students between the ages of 8 and 14 to attend school for a minimum of three months, six weeks of which were required to be consecutive. In 1883, the attendance requirement was increased to four months, and completion of the requirement became mandatory for work permits (Michigan State Compiler, 1883, Act 144, §2). The 1883 amendment would be Michigan's first concurrent compulsory schooling and child labor regulation. An 1895 amendment changed the school start and leaving ages to 7 and 16, but this amendment only applied to large cities (Michigan State Compiler, 1895, Act 95, §1). Under this amendment, rural cities and school boards were authorized, but not required, to increase the years of compulsory schooling within their district. The component of the policy affecting rural communities, stipulating compulsory schooling for individuals ages 8 to 14, would remain in place until 1897, when the rural leaving age would increase to 16 (Michigan State Compiler, 1897, Act 67, §1). For both rural and urban students, the school leaving age was lowered to 15 in 1905 (Michigan State Compiler, 1905, Act 200, §1). This amendment also changed the starting age to 7 for rural districts. The school leaving age was 15 until 1907 when it was again increased to 16 (Michigan State Compiler, 1907, Act 74, §1). In 1944, Michigan lowered the compulsory schooling starting age to 6 (Michigan State Compiler, 1944, Act 35, §1). From 1920 to 1977, the state required people between the ages of 16 and 17 to attend part-time school; districts with fewer than 5,000 residents or 50 students were exempt from this mandate (Michigan State Compiler, 1919, Act 421, §1). As of 2010, Michigan requires school attendance for individuals between the ages of 6 and 18 (Michigan State Compiler, 2009, Act 202, §1561). Students who were 11 years of age or had reached the 6th grade by December 1, 2009 are not subject to this amendment, and may stop attending school at the age of 16.

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in Table 64.

Table 64: Michigan–Compulsory Schooling Ages by Birth Cohort (1900–2024)

Birth Cohort	Start Age	Leaving Age	Duration
January 1900 - August 1937	8	16	9
September 1937 - November 1998	7	16	10
December 1998 - Present	7	18	12

Source: Michigan State Compiler (1907, 1944, 2009)

Note: Starting ages and leaving ages are established in the law. Starting ages are adjusted to reflect the age a person reaches during their first full year of compulsory schooling. Starting ages are therefore 1 year later than the age in law.

Prior to 1976, the Michigan legislature did not clearly define an enrollment deadline. An 1895 policy articulated that the period of school attendance began September 1, but did not explicitly state whether September 1 was also the enrollment cutoff (Michigan State Compiler, 1895, Act 95, §1). For the purposes of our analysis, we have elected to use September 1 as the beginning of the [effective school year for enrollment](#) for the earliest compulsory schooling policies in the state.

For cohorts born at the start of the 20th century, the compulsory schooling ages were defined as 7 to 16 (Michigan State Compiler, 1907, Act 74, §1). We adjust the starting age forward by one year to reflect the age achieved during the first year of compulsory schooling.

The 1944 reform, enacted and effective March 3, 1944, established that every child “between the ages of 6 and 16 years” was required to attend school (Michigan State Compiler, 1944, Act 35, §1). The first cohort impacted by this policy would have been born starting in September 1937, and entered school in school year (SY) 1944–45, during which they reached age 7.

Beginning in 1976, the state of Michigan clearly defined an enrollment deadline of December 1 (Michigan State Compiler, 1976, Chapter 451, Article 2, Part 24, §1561). The 2010 reform raised the school leaving age to 18 (Michigan State Compiler, 2009, Act 202, §1561). The

law did not apply to those “who turned age 11 before December 1, 2009 or who entered grade 6 before 2009” (Michigan State Compiler, 2009, §1561). This change would therefore have first affected those born in December 1998.

Comparison with Existing Analyses

There are no differences between the reform dates in Michigan that we identified in our research and those that Lleras-Muney (2002) identified.

Angrist and Krueger (1991) report a school leaving age of 16 in 1960, 1970, and 1980, corresponding to cohorts born in 1944, 1954, and 1964 respectively. Based on our calculations above, the school leaving ages calculated in our data are consistent with those reported by Angrist and Krueger.

Work Permits

Michigan first allowed individuals to work full-time starting at age 8 in 1883. Beginning in 1947, the full-time work permit age in the state became 16, and the part-time, hardship, and vacation work permit ages became 14.

Key Dates

First law: 1883

Major changes since 1883: 1897, 1909, 1911, 1915, 1947

Although the state of Michigan required school attendance prior to work permit eligibility as early as 1883, the state had limited regulations on child labor until the formation of the Michigan Department of Labor in 1909 (Michigan State Compiler, 1883, Act 144, §2, 10; Michigan State Compiler, 1909, Act 285, §1). However, even in the earliest compulsory schooling policies, the state permitted district or school boards to exempt students over the age of 14 from school attendance (Michigan State Compiler, 1871, Act 136, §3737). By 1905, this exemption could only be granted if the school board found that the child's employment was necessary to support their family (Michigan State Compiler, 1905, Act 200, §1(c)). In 1907, the state allowed people with an 8th grade diploma to obtain full-time work permits (Michigan State Compiler, 1907, Act 74, §1). The 1907 amendment also banned the employment of individuals below the age of 14 in any capacity. Shortly after the formation of the Michigan Department of Labor, the state passed legislation requiring people seeking full-time employment to be at least 16 years of age (Michigan State Compiler, 1911, Act 220, §1). At the time, individuals seeking work permits were required to demonstrate proficiency in reading and writing in English, and in basic arithmetic up to fractions. The state's full-time employment age remains 16 as of 2023, but the literacy requirements for work permits have changed substantially.

For changes in work permit literacy requirements and eligibility ages over time, see [Table 65](#) and [Table 66](#) respectively.

Table 65: Michigan–Work Permit Literacy Requirements (1883-2024)

Effective Date	Minimum Literacy
September 1883 - August 1905	Satisfactory prior schooling record
September 1905 - May 1909	Read and write English sentences
June 1909 - April 1911	Read and write English and arithmetic up to fractions
May 1911 - April 1915	Completion of grade 4
From May 1915	Completion of grade 6

Source: Michigan State Compiler (1883, 1905, 1909, 1911, 1915)

Table 66: Michigan–Work Permit Minimum Ages (1897-2024)

Effective Date	Full-Time	Part-Time	Vacation	Hardship
September 1897 - May 1909	14	.	14	14
June 1909 - April 1915	16	.	14	14
May 1915 - May 1947	16	.	14	15
From June 1947	16	14	14	14

Source: Michigan State Compiler (1897, 1909, 1915, 1947)

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in [Table 67](#).

Table 67: Michigan–Full-time Work Permit Ages by Birth Cohort (1900-2024)

Birth Cohort	Full-Time Permit Age
January 1900 - Present	16

Source: Michigan State Compiler (1909)

Michigan has had a full-time work permit age of 16 in place since June 1909, which has affected people born in June 1895 (Michigan State Compiler, 1909, Act 285, §10).

20. Minnesota

School Attendance

Minnesota first passed compulsory schooling legislation in 1885, requiring that individuals ages 8 to 16 attend school. As of 2013, the state has mandated attendance for people ages 7 to 17.

Key Dates

First law: 1885

Major changes since 1885: 1905, 1909, 1911, 1953, 1988, 1997, 2013

Minnesota began requiring school attendance in 1885 for people aged 8 to 16 for a minimum of 12 weeks per year, 6 of which needed to be consecutive (Minnesota State Legislature, 1885, Chapter 197, §1). Exemptions were granted to those students who had completed an equivalent education or who lived over 2 miles from the nearest school. In 1905, the school leaving age was raised to 18, and individuals were now required to attend school for the full academic year (Minnesota State Legislature, 1905, Chapter 265, §1). In 1909, the school leaving age remained 18 for [cities of the first class](#), but returned to 16 for the rest of the state (Minnesota State Legislature, 1909, Chapter 400, §1). Students who had completed the eighth grade, as well as those who did not live within a “reasonable distance” of a public school, were exempt from these requirements. The school leaving age returned to 16 for the entire state in 1911 (Minnesota State Legislature, 1911, Chapter 356, §1). Later, in 1953, Minnesota lowered the school starting age to 7, and specified that individuals were exempt if they had finished the ninth grade (Minnesota State Legislature, 1953, Chapter 372, §1). In 1967, people needed to have completed the tenth grade to be exempt from compulsory schooling requirements, and since 1988, they need to have graduated (Minnesota State Legislature, 1967, Chapter 82, §1; Minnesota State Legislature, 1988, §20 Subd. 9). In 1988, the state legislature also mandated that individuals ages 7 to 18 to attend school (Minnesota State Legislature, 1988, Chapter 718, §19 Subd. 5). The school leaving age was lowered again to 16 in 1997, and since 2013, people ages 7 to 17 have been required to attend school in Minnesota (Minnesota State Legislature, 1997, Chapter 4, Article 6, §1; Minnesota State Legislature, 2013, Chapter 116, Article 3, §1).

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in [Table 68](#).

Table 68: Minnesota–Compulsory Schooling Ages by Birth Cohort (1900–2024)

Birth Cohort	Start Age	Leaving Age	Duration
January 1900 - August 1945	9	16	8
September 1945 - August 1972	8	16	9
September 1972 - August 1979	8	18	11
September 1979 - August 1980	8	17	10
September 1980 - August 1998	8	16	9
September 1998 - Present	8	17	10

Source: Minnesota State Legislature ([1911](#), [1953](#), [1988](#), [1997](#), [2013](#))

Note: Starting ages and leaving ages are established in the law. Starting ages are adjusted to reflect the age a person reaches during their first full year of compulsory schooling. Starting ages are therefore 1 year later than the age in law.

Minnesota did not clearly define the [effective school year for enrollment](#) until 1967, when they established that people needed to reach the starting age by September 1 of the relevant school year (Minnesota State Legislature, 1967, Chapter 173, §1). To calculate which birth cohorts were first affected by changes to Minnesota’s compulsory schooling policies, we applied this September 1 date to earlier reforms as well.

For cohorts born at the start of the 1900s, the compulsory schooling ages were 8 to 16 (Minnesota State Legislature, 1911, Chapter 356, §1). We adjust the starting age forward by one year to reflect the age achieved during the first year of compulsory schooling.

The 1953 policy lowered the starting age so that people were required to begin compulsory schooling in the year in which they turned 8 (Minnesota State Legislature, 1953, Chapter 372, §1). Individuals who were born starting in September 1945 would have been the first impacted by this change.

The 1988 reform raised the starting age from 16 to 18 from school year (SY) 1988–89, increasing duration from 9 to 11 years (Minnesota

State Legislature, [1988](#), Chapter 718, §20 Subd. 9). Students born beginning in September 1972 were the first affected. These individuals would have entered school at age 8 in the 1980-81 SY and turned 16 in SY 1988-89. They would have then needed to remain in school for an additional 2 years, until SY 1990-91.

The 1997 reform lowered the leaving age back to 16 (Minnesota State Legislature, [1997](#), Chapter 4, Article 6, §1). The first cohort affected by this policy would have been born in September 1979, and would have reached age 17 years old in SY 1996-97. Under the previous policy, these students would have needed to remain in school until the end of SY 1997-98, when they would reach age 18, but now were able to leave 1 year early, at age 17. The second cohort affected by this change would have been born in September 1980, and would have been 17 years old in the 1997-98 SY. They would be the first cohort to complete their compulsory schooling requirement at age 16.

The 2013 reform increased the leaving age to 17 and was effective for SY 2014-15 (Minnesota State Legislature, [2013](#), Chapter 116, Article 3 §1). We follow the same logic as the 1988 reform to calculate the first cohort affected by this policy. The first group of individuals influenced by this change was born beginning in September 1998.

Comparison with Existing Analyses

There are no discrepancies between the data identified through our research and the data collected by Lleras-Muney ([2002](#)).

Angrist and Krueger ([1991](#)) report a school leaving age of 16 in 1960, 1970, and 1980, corresponding to cohorts born in 1944, 1954, and 1964 respectively. Based on our calculations above, the school leaving ages calculated in our data are consistent with those reported by Angrist and Krueger.

Work Permits

Minnesota first started to regulate child labor in 1895, although a minimum full-time employment age of 14 was not established until 1907. Since the passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act in 1938, the full-time employment age has been 16 and the vacation age has been 14.

Key Dates

First law: 1895

Major changes since 1895: 1907, 1938

Minnesota began to regulate child labor in 1895. The state's first child labor law had several components, including the creation of a hardship work permit for individuals age 12 and older, the ban on working during the 12-week compulsory attendance period, and the establishment of minimum literacy requirements to receive a permit (Minnesota State Legislature, 1895, Chapter 171, §1, 4–5, 8). The 1895 policy, however, did not specify a minimum employment age. In 1907, the Minnesota state legislature determined that individuals could work during school hours beginning at age 14 as long as they had an employment certificate (Minnesota State Legislature, 1907, Chapter 299, §2). To receive this certificate, people needed to regularly attend school, be able to read and write in English, and to have received instruction in the core subjects of reading, spelling, writing, English grammar, geography, and arithmetic (Minnesota State Legislature, 1907, Chapter 299, §4, 6). Since 1938, Minnesota has implicitly followed the work permit age provisions established by the Fair Labor Standards Act (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023).

To review the changes to Minnesota's work permit literacy requirements and work permit ages, see [Table 69](#) and [Table 70](#).

Table 69: Minnesota–Work Permit Literacy Requirements (1895-2024)

Effective Date	Minimum Literacy
April 1895 - March 1907	Ability to read and write in English; satisfactory attendance record
April 1907 - May 1919	Ability to read and write in English; familiarity with basic arithmetic, including fractions; coursework in geography; satisfactory attendance record
June 1919 - September 1938	Ability to read and write in English; completion of coursework taught in the common schools
From October 1938	.

Source: Minnesota State Legislature (1895, 1907) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

Table 70: Minnesota–Work Permit Minimum Ages (1895-2024)

Effective Date	Full-Time	Part-Time	Vacation	Hardship
April 1895 - February 1897	.	.	.	12
March 1897 - March 1907
April 1907 - September 1938	14	.	14	.
From October 1938	16	.	14	.

Source: Minnesota State Legislature (1895, 1897, 1907) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in [Table 71](#).

Table 71: Minnesota–Full-time Work Permit Ages by Birth Cohort (1900-2024)

Birth Cohort	Full-Time Permit Age
January 1900 - September 1924	14
October 1924 - Present	16

Source: Minnesota State Legislature (1907) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 caused Minnesota's full-time employment age to increase from 14 to 16 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023). This policy change first impacted students born in October 1924. They were 14 years old when FLSA was passed, and now needed to remain in school for an additional 2 years before they could leave to work.

21. Mississippi

School Attendance

Mississippi's first compulsory schooling policy, passed in 1918, mandated attendance for people ages 7 to 14. From 1991 onwards, the state legislature has required that all individuals ages 6 to 17 attend school full-time.

Key Dates

First law: 1918

Major changes since 1918: 1920, 1924, 1930, 1956, 1982, 1987

Mississippi's first compulsory education policy was passed in 1918 and required all individuals between the ages of 7 and 14 to attend school for at least 60 days during the academic year (Mississippi State Legislature, 1918, Chapter 248, §1). Exceptions were granted to people who had completed the common school course, those who resided more than 2.5 miles away from their nearest school, and those whose labor was deemed necessary due to the financial circumstances, emergency, or domestic needs of their family (Mississippi State Legislature, 1918, Chapter 248, §2). By 1920, school attendance was required for a minimum of 80 days, and by 1930, all individuals in large districts (characterized as having 10,000 or more residents) were required to attend school for the full academic year (Mississippi State Legislature, 1920, Chapter 156, §1; Mississippi State Legislature, 1930, Chapter 45, §1). The leaving age was raised to 16, effective for school year (SY) 1925-26 (Mississippi State Legislature, 1924, Chapter 283, Chapter 19, §161).

In 1954, the United States Supreme Court ruled race-based segregation in the school system to be unconstitutional. In response to this ruling, and to resist the desegregation of its public school system, Mississippi passed a pivotal policy in 1956. The 1956 amendment repealed the compulsory school attendance law and created the legal framework for public school districts to cease operations (Mississippi State Legislature, 1956, Chapter 288, §1). Although few schools closed their doors after this amendment, districts halted enforcement of compulsory school attendance laws. An attempt to re-establish the compulsory school attendance law was made in 1977, but this amendment lacked an enforcement mechanism, and therefore was unsuccessful (Mississippi State Legislature, 1977, Chapter 483, §4, 6; Hawkins, 2007). A law passed in 1982, however, successfully re-introduced the compulsory school attendance policy through a gradually effective mandate. Under this law, compulsory school attendance was required for individuals ages 6 to 8 for the academic year beginning in 1983, with an increase in the leaving age by one year for every subsequent school year until the academic year beginning in 1989 (Mississippi State Legislature, 1982, Chapter 17, §21). A 1987 policy amended the 1982 legislation, increasing the leaving age by 2 years, beginning in SY 1987-88 and ending in SY 1989-90 when the leaving age became 17 (Mississippi State Legislature, 1987, Chapter 460, §1). The school starting age was lowered to 5 in 2003 only for those who were voluntarily enrolled in a kindergarten program (Mississippi State Legislature, 2003, Chapter 397, §1).

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in [Table 72](#).

The [effective school year for enrollment](#) in Mississippi begins September 1. This date was first mentioned in the 1982 legislation, and was applied to previous policies to facilitate birth cohort calculations (Mississippi State Legislature, 1982, Chapter 17, §21).

Mississippi's earliest compulsory schooling law impacted the 1918-19 school year (SY). The law established a starting age of 7, which we interpret as requiring individuals to have reached the age of 7 prior to SY 1918-19, implying that all people would reach age 8 during their first year of schooling (Mississippi State Legislature, 1918, Chapter 248, §1). The first individuals in Mississippi affected by this policy were those born in September 1910. Under this law, people were required to attend school until they reached the age of 14.

The 1924 reform was effective for SY 1925-26 and raised the school leaving age to 16 (Mississippi State Legislature, 1924, Chapter 283, Chapter 19, §161). Individuals born in September 1911 would have been 14 years old during this school year and in their 7th year of schooling, and they would be the first to be required to remain in school for an additional 2 years, through the end of SY 1927-28.

The 1956 compulsory schooling policy, which went into effect immediately in February 1956 (Mississippi State Legislature, 1956, Chapter 288, §1-2). This law repealed the compulsory schooling requirements and so would have affected every cohort of schooling age during the 1955-56 school year. This includes the cohorts born as early as September 1939, who would have been finishing their 9th year of schooling in SY 1955-56, to cohorts born as late as August 1948, who would have just entered their first year of school. Cohorts born between September 1948 and August 1976 would not attend school under a compulsory schooling law.

Table 72: Mississippi–Compulsory Schooling Ages by Birth Cohort (1911-2024)

Birth Cohort	Start Age	Leaving Age	Duration
September 1910 - August 1911	8	14	7
September 1911 - August 1940	8	16	9
September 1940 - August 1941	8	15	8
September 1941 - August 1942	8	14	7
September 1942 - August 1943	8	13	6
September 1943 - August 1944	8	12	5
September 1944 - August 1945	8	11	4
September 1945 - August 1946	8	10	3
September 1946 - August 1947	8	9	2
September 1947 - August 1948	8	8	1
September 1948 - August 1975	No Policy	No Policy	No Policy
September 1975 - August 1976	8	17	10
September 1976 - Present	7	17	11

Source: Mississippi State Legislature (1918, 1924, 1982, 1987)

Note: Starting ages and leaving ages are established in the law. Starting ages are adjusted to reflect the age a person reaches during their first full year of compulsory schooling. Starting ages are therefore 1 year later than the age in law.

The 2003 policy is excluded from this table since it only made attendance compulsory for individuals aged 5 who were voluntarily enrolled in kindergarten.

The 1982 law, first affecting SY 1983-84, gradually reinstated Mississippi’s compulsory schooling policy. Individuals who had reached age 6 but not yet attained age 8 on or before September 1, 1983 were first required to attend school. This reform would have initially affected those born September 1975 who reached age 8 during SY 1983-84, and also would have impacted people born September 1976 who reached age 7 during SY 1983-84 (Mississippi State Legislature, 1982, Chapter 17, §21). The reform was gradually implemented, increasing the leaving age by 1 year each year until SY 1989-90.

The 1987 policy amended the 1982 law, stipulating that for every year beginning in SY 1987-88, the leaving age would increase by 2 years until the first cohort reached age 17 in SY 1989-90 (Mississippi State Legislature, 1987, Chapter 460, §1). The first cohorts affected by this reform would have been the same people who were originally impacted by the 1982 law, those who were born in September 1975 and September 1976. These individuals turned 10 and 11 years old, respectively, in SY 1986-87. They had originally expected to stay in school until age 14, which the 1975 cohort reached in SY 1989-90 and the 1976 cohort reached in SY 1990-91. However, as a result of the new law, effective in SY 1987-88, both cohorts needed to stay in school for an additional 3 years after they reached age 14: the 1975 cohort needed to stay until SY 1992-93, and the 1976 cohort needed to stay until SY 1993-94. Therefore, the duration for the 1975 cohort was 10 years (from ages 8 to 17), and the duration for the 1976 cohort was 11 years (from ages 7 to 17).

Comparison with Existing Analyses

There are several differences between the compulsory schooling ages in Mississippi identified through our research and those identified by other authors.

Lleras-Muney (2002) referenced Mississippi’s compulsory schooling data from 1918-1939 in her research. The author reports that the school leaving age increased to 17 in 1929, which would have first affected students born beginning in September 1913; however, we were unable to identify this policy change at this time. This discrepancy is likely because Lleras-Muney relied on the federal Biennial Survey of Education for their data, whereas we have directly examined the legislation for each year.

Angrist and Krueger (1991) report that there were no compulsory schooling policies in place in 1960, 1970, and 1980, and that the leaving age of 14 was reestablished beginning in 1983. We agree that there was not an attendance mandate during this time, but find that Mississippi’s compulsory schooling policy was gradually implemented beginning in 1983 and the leaving age of 14 was not in place until 1989. It is possible that Angrist and Krueger recognized that the law was passed and was starting to be implemented in 1983, but did not record when the change was finalized.

Work Permits

Mississippi's first statewide child labor policy was passed in 1930 and established a minimum full-time employment age of 14. Since the passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act in 1938, the minimum full-time employment age has been 16 and the vacation permit age has been 14.

Key Dates

First law: 1930

Major changes since 1930: 1938

Mississippi first began to regulate child labor in 1924, prohibiting the employment of people under the age of 14 in mills, canneries, workshops, factories, and manufacturing establishments (Mississippi State Legislature, 1924, Chapter 314, §1). In 1930, the child labor law expanded to cover all industries and required that people over the age of 14 complete their compulsory school attendance requirement before obtaining a work permit (Mississippi State Legislature, 1930, Chapter 46, §1). Since the compulsory school attendance law was repealed in 1956, this requirement was nullified. The state of Mississippi currently uses guidelines set by the [Fair Labor Standards Act](#) to establish work permit ages (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023).

For changes to work permit literacy requirements and minimum ages in Mississippi from 1924 to 1956, see [Table 73](#) and [Table 74](#) respectively.

Table 73: Mississippi–Work Permit Literacy Requirements (1930–2024)

Effective Date	Minimum Literacy
March 1930 - February 1956	Satisfactory attendance record in current academic year

Source: Mississippi State Legislature (1930, 1956)

Table 74: Mississippi–Work Permit Minimum Ages (1930–2024)

Effective Date	Full-Time	Part-Time	Vacation	Hardship
March 1930 - September 1938	14	.	14	.
October 1938 - February 1956	16	14	14	.
March 1956 - June 1991	.	.	14	.
From July 1991	16	14	14	.

Source: MSLeg1991; Mississippi State Legislature (1930, 1956) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in [Table 75](#).

Table 75: Mississippi–Full-time Work Permit Ages by Birth Cohort (1916–2024)

Birth Cohort	Full-Time Permit Age
March 1916 - September 1924	14
October 1924 - Present	16

Source: Mississippi State Legislature (1930) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

The 1930 policy stipulated that individuals needed to be age 14 to be able to leave school and work full-time (Mississippi State Legislature, 1930, Chapter 46, §1). This law first impacted people who were born beginning in September 1916.

The implementation of the Fair Labor Standards Act in October 1938 raised the full-time employment age to 16 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023). This change affected individuals who were born beginning in October 1924 and who were 14 when FLSA was passed.

22. Missouri

School Attendance

The state of Missouri's first compulsory schooling law, passed in 1905, required people ages 8 to 14 to attend school. Since 2009, the state requires individuals between the ages of 7 and 17 to attend school.

Key Dates

First law: 1905

Major changes since 1905: 1907, 1911, 1919, 1957, 2007, 2009

Missouri's first compulsory attendance law was passed in 1905, mandating that people between the age of 8 and 14 attend school for at least three months (Missouri General Assembly, 1905, H.B. 70 and 347, §1). Furthermore, people between age 14 and 16 were required to attend school if they were not regularly employed. Exemptions were granted to students who lived over 2.5 miles from the nearest school, to those who had already graduated, and to those who needed to work to support their families (Missouri General Assembly, 1905, H.B. 70 and 347, §2). In 1907, the state legislature amended the law for cities with populations of over 500,000: in these regions, all people between the ages of 8 and 16 were required to attend for the full school year (Missouri General Assembly, 1907, S.B. 364, §1). By 1919, individuals aged 7 to 16, regardless of where they lived, were required to attend school for the full school year (Missouri General Assembly, 1919, S.B. 7, §1). Since 1990, the Missouri state legislature required attendance for individuals between the ages of 5 and 7 who have been voluntarily enrolled in kindergarten (Missouri General Assembly, 1990, S.B. 740, §A). In school year (SY) 2007-08, the school leaving age increased to 17, although local districts were given the authority to keep the leaving age at 16 (Missouri General Assembly, 2004, S.B. 968, §A). As of 2009, the school leaving age for all districts is 17 (Missouri General Assembly, 2009, S.B. 291, §A).

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in [Table 76](#).

Table 76: Missouri-Compulsory Schooling Ages by Birth Cohort (1900-2024)

Birth Cohort	Start Age	Leaving Age	Duration
January 1900 - July 1911	9	16	8
August 1911 - July 1991	8	16	9
August 1991 - Present	8	17	10

Source: Missouri General Assembly (1905, 1919, 2004)

Note: Starting ages and leaving ages are established in the law. Starting ages are adjusted to reflect the age a person reaches during their first full year of compulsory schooling. Starting ages are therefore 1 year later than the age in law.

The 1990 policy is excluded from this table since it only made attendance compulsory for individuals ages 5 to 7 who were voluntarily enrolled in kindergarten.

Since 1996, the school enrollment deadline in Missouri has been August 1 (Missouri General Assembly, 1996, S.B. 572, §A). We operate under the assumption that the August 1 date applies to previous policy when calculating birth cohorts.

Missouri's earliest compulsory schooling law was effective August 1905, impacting the 1905-06 school year (SY). The law established a starting age of 8, which we interpret as a starting age such that students reached age 9 during their first year of schooling (Missouri General Assembly, 1905, H.B. 70 and 347, §1). The first individuals in Missouri affected by this policy were those born in August 1896. Under this law, people were required to attend school until they reached the age of 16.

The 1919 reform, effective August of that year and impacting SY 1919-20, lowered the school starting age to 7 (Missouri General Assembly, 1919, S.B. 7, §1). Individuals born in August 1911 would have been the first cohort to attend one year earlier as this cohort would have reached age 7 before the start of SY 1919-20 and would have turned 8 during this school year.

The most recent compulsory schooling reform in Missouri, effective July 2007 and impacting SY 2007-08, raised the leaving age to 17 (Missouri General Assembly, 2004, S.B. 968, §A). The first cohort affected by this reform was born in August 1991. This cohort would have been turning 16 in SY 2007-08, but would be required to attend 1 more year until the age of 17 in SY 2008-09.

Comparison with Existing Analyses

There are several differences between the compulsory schooling ages in Missouri identified through our research and those identified by other authors.

Lleras-Muney (2002) found that the school starting age decreased to 7 in 1921 and therefore first affected individuals born beginning in August 1913. Meanwhile, we found that this reform occurred in 1919, making the first affected cohort those born in August 1911. Second, the dataset in Lleras-Muney includes an additional reform that we did not locate: Lleras-Muney states that the school leaving age decreased to 14 in 1939, which would have first impacted individuals born beginning in August 1925. We did not find this reform in our research. These discrepancies are likely because Lleras-Muney relied on the federal Biennial Survey of Education for their data, whereas we have directly examined the legislation for each year.

Angrist and Krueger (1991) report a school leaving age of 16 in 1960, 1970, and 1980, corresponding to cohorts born in 1944, 1954, and 1964 respectively. Based on our calculations above, the school leaving ages calculated in our data are consistent with those reported by Angrist and Krueger.

Work Permits

Missouri's earliest child labor law in 1908 set a full-time employment age of 8. Since the Fair Labor Standards Act was implemented in October 1938, Missouri's full-time work permit age has been 16 and its vacation work permit age has been 14.

Key Dates

First law: 1905

Major changes since 1905: 1907, 1938

Missouri's first child labor law established a hardship employment age of 8, but did not specify a full-time employment age. To work full-time, people needed to have attended school for at least half of the time that school was in session (Missouri General Assembly, 1905, H.B. 70 and 347, §7). In 1911, the full-time work permit age changed to 14, and in addition to satisfactory attendance, individuals also needed to be able to read and write simple sentences in English (Missouri General Assembly, 1911, S.B. 7, §1). Since 1919, employed individuals under age 18 have been required to attend part-time school if it is offered by their district (Missouri General Assembly, 1919, S.B. 7, §1; Missouri General Assembly, 2004, S.B. 968). Missouri adopted the regulations of the [Fair Labor Standards Act](#) in 1938, and currently has a full-time work permit age of 16 and a vacation permit age of 14 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023). As of 1957, individuals must have a satisfactory schooling record to be employed (Missouri General Assembly, 1957, S.B. 17, §9).

See [Table 77](#) and [Table 78](#) for changes to minimum work permit literacy requirements and eligibility ages, respectively.

Table 77: Missouri–Work Permit Literacy Requirements (1911-2024)

Effective Date	Minimum Literacy
August 1905 - July 1911	Sufficient school attendance in the prior academic year
August 1911 - July 1957	Sufficient school attendance and ability to read and write in English
From August 1957	Satisfactory schooling record

Source: Missouri General Assembly (1911, 1957)

Table 78: Missouri–Work Permit Minimum Ages (1905-2024)

Effective Date	Full-Time	Part-Time	Vacation	Hardship
August 1905 - July 1911	.	.	.	8
August 1911 - September 1938	14	.	.	.
From October 1938	16	.	14	.

Source: Missouri General Assembly (1905, 1911) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in [Table 79](#).

Table 79: Missouri–Full-time Work Permit Ages by Birth Cohort (1900-2024)

Birth Cohort	Full-Time Permit Age
January 1900 - July 1903	8
August 1903 - September 1924	14
October 1924 - Present	16

Source: Missouri General Assembly (1905, 1911) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

The full-time employment age was 8 in the early 1900s (Missouri General Assembly, 1905, H.B. 70 and 347, §7). The 1911 law raised the full-time work permit age to 14 (Missouri General Assembly, 1911, S.B. 7, §1). This change first impacted individuals who were born beginning in August 1903, as they would have been 8 years old when the law became effective, and now needed to wait an additional 6 years to start work full-time during school hours.

The implementation of FLSA in 1938 caused the full-time work permit age in Missouri to increase again, this time to 16 (U.S. Department of Labor, [2023](#)). Students born starting in October 1924, who were 14 years old at the time of FLSA's implementation, were the first affected cohort.

23. Montana

School Attendance

Montana began to regulate compulsory schooling in 1883, mandating attendance for all individuals aged 8 to 14. After a number of revisions to the compulsory schooling ages, the 1959 law established compulsory schooling for people ages 7 to 16, which remains in place today.

Key Dates

First law: 1883

Major changes since 1883: 1903, 1959

Montana's first compulsory schooling law was passed in 1883 and required that people aged 8 to 14 attend school for a minimum of 12 weeks per year, 6 of which needed to be consecutive (Montana State Legislature, 1883, Act to amend the Montana school law, §10). Individuals were exempt if there was not a school within 1 mile of their residence or if they had already acquired the branches of learning required by law (Montana State Legislature, 1883, Act to amend the Montana school law, §10). In 1903, the leaving age increased to 16; in addition, people now needed to attend for the full school year, and were now only exempt if they lived over 2.5 miles from the nearest school (Montana State Legislature, 1903, Chapter 45, §1). Beginning in 1921, local superintendents had the power to excuse individuals from compulsory attendance if they determined that the distance between the school and their residence made attendance too difficult (Montana State Legislature, 1921, Chapter 75, §1). Also in 1921, people were exempt from further compulsory schooling requirements if they had completed the 8th grade; this measure remains in place in the present (Montana State Legislature, 1921, Chapter 75, §1). From 1959 until the present, individuals have had to attend school in Montana between the ages of 7 and 16 years (Montana State Legislature, 1959, Chapter 39, §1). In 1971, the Montana state legislature adopted a new provision whereby a district judge could exempt a person from compulsory schooling if they deemed it to not be in their best interest, and in 1979, district boards of trustees gained a similar power (Montana State Legislature, 1971, Chapter 389, §1; Montana State Legislature, 1979, Chapter 504).

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the birth cohorts and dates reported in Table 80.

Table 80: Montana–Compulsory Schooling Ages by Birth Cohort (1900–2024)

Birth Cohort	Start Age	Leaving Age	Duration
January 1900 ^a - August 1951	9	16	8
September 1951 - Present (December 2024)	8	16	9

Source: Montana State Legislature (1903, 1959)

Notes: Starting ages and leaving ages are established in the law. The starting ages shown in the table are adjusted to reflect the age an individual reaches by the end of their first school year. Starting ages are therefore 1 year later than the age in the law. Compulsory schooling duration is imputed based on start age and leaving age.

^a Not a cohort birth year associated with a reform. The starting date for birth cohorts is January 1900 to reflect the population represented in the Health and Retirement Study.

Montana first specified that individuals must reach the school starting age by the beginning of the fall school term in 1959 (Montana State Legislature, 1959, Chapter 39, §1). We treat this enrollment age deadline as September 1.

For cohorts born in 1900, schooling in Montana was compulsory from age 8 to 16 Montana State Legislature (1903, Chapter 45, §1). We adjust the starting age forward by one year to reflect the age achieved during their first year of compulsory schooling.

The 1959 policy was approved October of that year, which we interpret as first affecting school year (SY) 1960–61. The reform lowered the starting age from 8 to 7 Montana State Legislature (1959, Chapter 39, §1(b)). This law first affected individuals born September 1951, who would have reached age 8 in 1960 and would have been required to start school in SY 1960–61.

Comparison with Existing Analyses

There are no differences between the compulsory schooling ages in Montana identified through our research and those identified by other authors.

Lleras-Muney (2002) names a school starting age of 8 and a school leaving age of 16 for 1915 to 1939. Based on our calculations above, our reported school starting and leaving ages for Montana are consistent with those reported by Lleras-Muney.

Angrist and Krueger (1991) report a school leaving age of 16 in 1960, 1970, and 1980, corresponding to cohorts born in 1944, 1954, and 1964 respectively. Based on our calculations above, the school leaving ages calculated in our data are consistent with those reported by Angrist and Krueger.

Work Permits

Montana began to regulate child labor for all industries in 1903; however, a full-time work permit age of 14 was not established until 1919. Since the passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act in 1938, the full-time work permit age in Montana has been 16 and the vacation work permit age has been 14.

Key Dates

First law: 1919

Major changes since 1919: 1938, 1955, 1971

The Montana state legislature began to regulate child labor in all industries in 1903. However, this early law did not establish a minimum full-time employment age; instead, it stated that individuals under the age of 14 were not allowed to work during school hours unless they had a schooling certificate showing that they had completed the necessary coursework (Montana State Legislature, 1903, Chapter 45, §2). It was not until 1919 that a minimum employment age of 14 was established for both full-time and hardship work permits (Montana State Legislature, 1919, Chapter 43, §1). To receive a full-time work permit under the 1919 law, people needed to have completed the 8th grade. The passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act in 1938 created a national minimum full-time work permit age of 16 and a vacation work permit age of 14 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023). Montana's hardship work permit age became 16 in 1955, and this permit was eventually abolished alongside the minimum literacy requirements for employment in 1971 (Montana State Legislature, 1955, Chapter 53, §1; Montana State Legislature, 1971, Chapter 389, §1).

For a complete list of amendments to Montana's work permit minimum literacy requirements and child labor laws over time, see [Table 81](#) and [Table 82](#), respectively.

Table 81: Montana–Work Permit Literacy Requirements (1903-2024)

Effective Date	Minimum Literacy
March 1903 - January 1919	Completion of coursework in reading, spelling, writing, English grammar, geography, physiology and hygiene, and arithmetic
February 1919 - September 1971	Completion of the 8th grade
October 1971 - Present (December 2024)	None

Source: Montana State Legislature (1903, 1919, 1971)

Table 82: Montana–Work Permit Minimum Ages (1919-2024)

Effective Date	Full-Time	Part-Time	Vacation	Hardship
February 1919 - September 1938	14	.	.	14
October 1938 - September 1955	16	.	14	14
October 1955 - September 1971	16	.	14	16
October 1971 - Present (December 2024)	16	.	14	.

Source: Montana State Legislature (1919, 1955, 1971) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the birth cohorts and dates reported in [Table 83](#).

Table 83: Montana–Full-time Work Permit Ages by Birth Cohort (1905-2024)

Birth Cohort	Full-Time Permit Age
January 1900 ^a - January 1905	No Policy
February 1905 - September 1924	14
October 1924 - Present (December 2024) (potentially as early as October 1922) ^b	16

Source: Montana State Legislature ([1919](#)) and U.S. Department of Labor ([2023](#))

Notes:

^a Not a cohort birth year associated with a reform. The starting date for birth cohorts is January 1900 to reflect the population represented in the Health and Retirement Study.

^b The first cohort fully affected by this reform was born in October 1924 and needed to wait 2 additional years to work. Cohorts born as early as October 1922 may also have been partially affected.

In 1919, the Montana state legislature set a full-time work permit age of 14 (Montana State Legislature, [1919](#), Chapter 43, §1). Individuals born February 1905 would have reached age 14 when the law became effective and would have been able to leave school to work full-time.

The raising of the full-time work permit age to 16 in October 1938 first impacted students who reached age 14 that year, and who now needed to stay in school for an additional 2 years before being able to work (U.S. Department of Labor, [2023](#)). These students were born starting in October 1924.

24. Nebraska

School Attendance

Nebraska adopted its first compulsory schooling policy in 1887, requiring attendance for people aged 8 to 14. Since 2005, the state's compulsory schooling ages are 6 to 18.

Key Dates

First law: 1887

Major changes since 1887: 1903, 1929, 1967, 2004

Nebraska began to mandate school attendance in 1887, requiring that people aged 8 to 14 attend school for at least 12 weeks per academic year (Nebraska State Legislature, 1887, Chapter 78, §1). The state legislature lowered the school starting age to 7 in 1901 and granted exemptions to individuals who lived more than two miles from the nearest school, who needed to work to support themselves or their families, or who had completed the eighth grade (Nebraska State Legislature, 1901, Chapter 70, §1). Shortly thereafter, in 1903, the school leaving age increased to 15 (Nebraska State Legislature, 1903, Chapter 75, §1). Beginning in 1907, the state legislature adopted different policies for districts in metropolitan areas and districts in the rest of the state (Nebraska State Legislature, 1907, Chapter 131, §1). Whereas the earlier compulsory schooling policies remained in place in rural districts, in metropolitan districts individuals were required to attend school from ages 7 to 16 for the full school year. By 1929, school attendance was mandatory for all people aged 7 to 16, regardless of their district (Nebraska State Legislature, 1929, Chapter 87, §1). In 2004, Nebraska raised the school leaving age to 18 for people who were born after July 1988 and lowered the starting age to 6 starting with SY 2005-06 for people born after July 1999 (Nebraska State Legislature, 2004, Legislative Bill 868, §1(a)). From 2012 onwards, people aged 16 and older have been exempt from compulsory schooling requirements if they have completed an exit interview, a meeting in which they discuss their reasons for leaving school with the district's superintendent, the principal, and their parent/guardian (Nebraska State Legislature, 2012, Legislative Bill 996, §§1-2).

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in [Table 84](#).

Table 84: Nebraska–Compulsory Schooling Ages by Birth Cohort (1900–2024)

Birth Cohort	Start Age	Leaving Age	Duration
January 1900 - July 16, 1988	8	16	9
July 17, 1988 - December 1998	8	18	11
January 1999 - Present	7	18	12

Source: Nebraska State Legislature (1901, 2004)

Note: Starting ages and leaving ages are established in the law. Starting ages are adjusted to reflect the age a person reaches during their first full year of compulsory schooling. Starting ages are therefore 1 year later than the age in law.

For cohorts born beginning in the early 1900s, the compulsory schooling law affected individuals aged 7 to 16 (Nebraska State Legislature, 1907, Legislative Bill 868, §1). We adjust the starting age forward by one year to reflect the age achieved during their first year of compulsory schooling.

The 2004 reform increased the leaving age from 16 to 18 (Nebraska State Legislature, 2004, Legislative Bill 868, § 1(b)). The transitional provisions of the law indicate that it affects individuals who have not reached the age of 16 by the effective date of the law, which was July 16, 2004. This means that the first birth cohort affected is born on July 17, 1988. They would have reached age 8 during their first year of compulsory schooling in SY 1996-97, and remained in school until school year (SY) 2006-07, when they would reach the age of 18.

The 2004 reform also lowered the starting age to 6, and was enforced from July 2005 (SY 2005-06) (Nebraska State Legislature, 2004, Legislative Bill 868, §1(b)). That law states attendance is compulsory for people who reach age 6 before January of the current SY. This means that the [effective school year for enrollment](#) is from January to December of the calendar year a SY begins. For example, individuals born in 1999 reach age 6 in 2004 and would be required to start school in SY 2005-06. Individuals born between January and June would reach age 7 during their first SY, whereas individuals born July to December would reach age 6 during their first SY. In our reported start and leaving ages, we assume people are born before January to June. Therefore, our reported starting ages are generally

1 year after the compulsory starting age. An alternative representation for those born between July and December would be to maintain the same schooling duration, but shift the starting and leaving age 1 year earlier.

Comparison with Existing Analyses

There is one difference between the compulsory schooling ages in Nebraska identified through our research and those identified by other authors.

Lleras-Muney (2002) reports compulsory schooling ages of 7 years to 15 years from 1915-1917 with an increase in the leaving age to 16 in 1918. Our review of the legislation indicates that the law increasing the leaving age to 16 for all school districts in Nebraska occurred in 1919 (Nebraska State Legislature, 1919, Chapter 155, §2). However, Legislative Bill 868 of 1907 established the school leaving age of 16 for cities and metropolitan areas in 1907 (Nebraska State Legislature, 1907, Legislative Bill 868, §1). Based on the rules established in the introduction of this document, we apply the 1907 legislative dates that affected cities and metropolitan areas.

Angrist and Krueger (1991) report a school leaving age of 16 in 1960, 1970, and 1980, corresponding to cohorts born in 1944, 1954, and 1964 respectively. Based on our calculations above, the school leaving ages calculated in our data are consistent with those reported by Angrist and Krueger.

Work Permits

In 1899, Nebraska began to regulate child labor in the state, establishing a full-time work permit age of 10. Since the passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act in 1938, the full-time employment age in the state has been 16 and the vacation employment age has been 14.

Key Dates

First law: 1899

Major changes since 1899: 1907, 1938

Nebraska's first child labor law was passed in 1899 and established that people could begin working at age 10 if they had satisfactory school attendance (Nebraska State Legislature, 1899, Chapter 108, §254(bb)). The full-time employment age increased to 14 in 1907 (Nebraska State Legislature, 1907, Chapter 66, §§1-4). That year, the state legislature also specified that an employment certificate was conditional upon satisfactory attendance in the year prior to the child's employment, the ability to read and write in English, and either completion of the eight grade or night school attendance. From 1919 until 1967, individuals under age 18 needed to attend a part-time continuation school for at least eight hours per week to work full-time. Minors with hardship work permits are still subject to these requirements (Nebraska State Legislature, 1919, Chapter 267, §7; Nebraska State Legislature, 1967, Chapter 296, §§1-3). Since 1938 after adopting the regulations of the Fair Labor Standards Act, young people in Nebraska can work full-time at age 16 and can work outside of school hours beginning at age 14 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023).

For a complete list of amendments to Nebraska's minimum literacy requirements and work permit ages over time, see Table 85 and Table 86, respectively.

Table 85: Nebraska–Work Permit Literacy Requirements (1899–2024)

Effective Date	Minimum Literacy
August 1889 - February 1907	Satisfactory attendance record
March 1907 - September 1967	Satisfactory attendance record; ability to read and write in English; completion of the 8th grade or attendance at night school
From October 1967	Satisfactory attendance record; ability to read and write in English; completion of the 6th grade or attendance at night school

Source: NELeg1889; Nebraska State Legislature (1907, 1967)

Table 86: Nebraska–Work Permit Minimum Ages (1899–2024)

Effective Date	Full-Time	Part-Time	Vacation	Hardship
August 1889 - July 1901	10	.	10	.
August 1901 - July 1903	10	.	10	12
August 1903 - February 1907	10	.	10	14
March 1907 - September 1938	14	.	14	14
From October 1938	16	.	14	14

Source: NELeg1889; Nebraska State Legislature (1901, 1903, 1907) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in [Table 87](#).

Table 87: Nebraska–Full-time Work Permit Ages by Birth Cohort (1900-2024)

Birth Cohort	Full-Time Permit Age
January 1900 - September 1924	14
October 1924 - Present	16

Source: Nebraska State Legislature ([1899](#), [1901](#), [1903](#), [1907](#)) and U.S. Department of Labor ([2023](#))

In the early 1900s, the full-time work permit age in Nebraska was 14 (Nebraska State Legislature, [1907](#), Chapter 66, §1).

The raising of the full-time work permit age to 16 in October 1938 first impacted students who reached age 14 that year, and who now needed to stay in school for an additional 2 years before being able to work (U.S. Department of Labor, [2023](#)). These students were born starting in October 1924.

25. New Jersey

School Attendance

The state of New Jersey passed its first compulsory schooling law in 1875, requiring individuals ages 8 to 14 to attend school. In 1965, the state changed the compulsory schooling age to 6 to 16.

Key Dates

First law: 1875

Major changes since 1875: 1885, 1903, 1908, 1913, 1965

New Jersey's first compulsory schooling policy was passed in 1875. This legislation required people between the ages of 8 and 14 to attend school for a minimum of 12 weeks per school year (New Jersey State Legislature, 1875, Chapter 443, §1). An amendment in 1885 increased the schooling requirement to 20 weeks, and expanded compulsory schooling to cover ages 7 to 15 (New Jersey State Legislature, 1885, Chapter 217, §1). In 1903, New Jersey began to require school attendance for the entire school year, and lowered the school leaving age to 14 (New Jersey State Legislature, 1903, Article 15, §153 P59). The school leaving age was increased to 17 in 1908 and lowered to 16 in 1913 (New Jersey State Legislature, 1908, Chapter 231, §1; New Jersey State Legislature, 1913, Chapter 221, Article 15, §1). Although part-time schools were established as early as 1902, the state of New Jersey did not require enrollment in them until 1940 (New Jersey State Legislature, 1940, Chapter 153, §8(4)). In 1965, the compulsory school starting age was lowered to 6, thus requiring school attendance for people between the ages of 6 and 16 (New Jersey State Legislature, 1965, Chapter 151, §1).

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in Table 88.

Table 88: New Jersey–Compulsory Schooling Ages by Birth Cohort (1900–2024)

Birth Cohort	Start Age	Leaving Age	Duration
January 1900 - September 1958	8	16	9
October 1958 - Present	7	16	10

Source: New Jersey State Legislature (1908, 1913)

For cohorts born starting in January 1900, the compulsory schooling law required attendance for people aged 7 to 16 (New Jersey State Legislature, 1908, Chapter 231, §1). To establish a consistent cross-country/state definition, we set the compulsory school starting age as the age reached during a person's first school year (SY). Applying this definition to New Jersey, we adjust the school starting age forward by one year to reflect the age an individual would achieve during their first year of compulsory schooling.

The 1965 reform lowered the school starting age to 6 (New Jersey State Legislature, 1965, Chapter 151, §1). Chapter 151 of 1965 states that the law became effective in July 1965. We assume that the law was first enforced in SY 1965–66 (New Jersey State Legislature, 1965, Chapter 151, §5). In 1967, New Jersey formally specified an enrollment cutoff date of October 1 of the school year (New Jersey State Legislature, 1967, Chapter 249, §§1–2). We apply this cutoff to the 1965 school year, assuming an [effective school year for enrollment](#) from October to September of the following year. The first cohort affected by the reform was born between October 1958 and September 1959, who reached age 6 before the start of SY 1965–66. This cohort reached age 7, our reported starting age, during their first year of compulsory schooling.

Comparison with Existing Analyses

There are no differences between the compulsory schooling ages in New Jersey identified through our research and those identified by other authors.

Lleras-Muney (2002) reports compulsory schooling ages of 7 years to 16 years for 1915 to 1939. This is consistent with our findings.

Angrist and Krueger (1991) report a school leaving age of 16 in 1960, 1970, and 1980, corresponding to cohorts born in 1944, 1954, and 1964 respectively. This is consistent with our findings.

Work Permits

New Jersey first regulated child labor for all industries in 1908, when it established a full-time work permit age of 15. Since 1938, New Jersey has followed FLSA, and has a full-time work permit age of 16 and a vacation work permit age of 14.

Key Dates

First law: 1908

Major changes since 1908: 1913, 1914, 1938, 1940

New Jersey's first child labor policy that affected all professions was passed in 1908; it enabled individuals aged 15 and older to receive full-time work permits if they had completed grammar school (New Jersey State Legislature, 1908, Chapter 231, §1). The minimum age for full-time work permits was lowered to 14 in an amendment passed in 1913 (New Jersey State Legislature, 1913, Chapter 221, Article 15, §1). The state also established a financial hardship work permit for people over the age of 10 in 1914 (New Jersey State Legislature, 1914, Chapter 223, §13). In 1938, New Jersey began to follow the regulations established by the [Fair Labor Standards Act](#), with full-time work permits available at age 16 and vacation work permits available at age 14 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023). Legislation in 1940 changed the minimum literacy requirement, granting school districts the authority to evaluate students' work permit eligibility based on their own literacy criteria (New Jersey State Legislature, 1940, Chapter 153, §8(4)). The new child labor law did not provide an explicit minimum age for financial hardship work permits.

For changes to New Jersey's minimum literacy requirements over time, see [Table 89](#). See [Table 90](#) for changes to minimum work permit ages in New Jersey.

Table 89: New Jersey–Work Permit Literacy Requirements (1908-2024)

Effective Date	Minimum Literacy
April 1908 - August 1940	Completion of grammar school
From September 1940	Satisfactory schooling record

Source: New Jersey State Legislature (1883, 1903, 1908, 1940)

Table 90: New Jersey–Work Permit Minimum Ages (1908-2024)

Effective Date	Full-Time	Part-Time	Vacation	Hardship
April 1908 - March 1913	15	.	.	.
April 1913 - September 1938	14	.	14	10
October 1938 - August 1940	16	.	14	10
From September 1940	16	.	14	.

Source: New Jersey State Legislature (1883, 1908, 1913, 1940) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in [Table 91](#).

Table 91: New Jersey–Full-time Work Permit Ages by Birth Cohort (1908-2024)

Birth Cohort	Full-Time Permit Age
January 1900 - September 1924	14
October 1924 - Present	16

Source: New Jersey State Legislature (1913) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

The state of New Jersey increased their full-time work permit age to 14 in 1913 (New Jersey State Legislature, 1913, Chapter 221, Article 15, §1). The first cohort affected was born prior to 1900.

The raising of the full-time work permit age to 16 in October 1938 first impacted students who reached age 14 that year, and who now needed to stay in school for an additional 2 years before being able to start work (U.S. Department of Labor, [2023](#)). These students were born starting in October 1924.

26. New York

School Attendance

New York's first compulsory school attendance law, passed in 1894, required individuals ages 8 to 16 to attend school. Since 1968, the state has required people ages 6 to 16 to attend school.

Key Dates

First law: 1894

Major changes since 1894: 1903, 1909, 1940, 1960, 1968, 1969

New York's first compulsory schooling policy was established in 1894 and mandated school attendance for the full academic year for people between the ages of 8 and 16 (New York State Legislative Bill Drafting Commission, 1894, Chapter 671, §3). However, individuals were exempt from compulsory schooling requirements beginning at age 12 if they were lawfully employed. New York's compulsory schooling start age was lowered from 8 to 7 in 1909, and to 6 in 1968 (New York State Legislative Bill Drafting Commission, 1909, Chapter 409, §2; New York State Legislative Bill Drafting Commission, 1968, Chapter 100, §1). Currently, individuals between the ages of 6 and 16 years of age are required to attend full-time school.

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in Table 92.

Table 92: New York–Compulsory Schooling Ages by Birth Cohort (1900–2024)

Birth Cohort	Start Age	Leaving Age	Duration
January 1900 - November 1901	9	16	8
December 1901 - November 1961	8	16	9
December 1961 - Present	7	16	10

Source: New York State Legislative Bill Drafting Commission (1894, 1897, 1928, 1940)

Note: Starting ages and leaving ages are established in the law. Starting ages are adjusted to reflect the age a person reaches during their first full year of compulsory schooling. Starting ages are therefore 1 year later than the age in law.

The school year (SY) in New York lasts from September to July, and the [effective school year for enrollment](#) in New York begins December 1 (New York State Legislative Bill Drafting Commission, 1894, Chapter 671, §5; New York State Legislative Bill Drafting Commission, 2019, Chapter 703, §1). Since earlier compulsory schooling legislation does not specify an enrollment deadline, we operate under the assumption that the December 1 date applies to previous policy when calculating birth cohorts.

The 1909 reform, effective May of that year and impacting SY 1909–10, lowered the school starting age to 7 (New York State Legislative Bill Drafting Commission, 1909, Chapter 409, §2). Individuals born in December 1901 were the first cohort to attend school one year earlier as this cohort would have reached age 7 before the start of SY 1909–10 and would have turned 8 during this school year.

The most recent compulsory schooling reform in New York, effective July 1968 and impacting SY 1968–69, lowered the starting age to 6 (New York State Legislative Bill Drafting Commission, 1968, Chapter 100, §1). Individuals born in December 1961 were the first cohort to attend school one year earlier as this cohort would have reached age 6 before the start of SY 1968–69 and would have turned 7 during this school year.

Comparison with Existing Analyses

There are several differences between the compulsory schooling ages in New York identified through our research and those identified by other authors.

Lleras-Muney (2002) reports that the decrease in the school leaving age from 8 to 7 occurred in 1921; however, our review of New York's legislation revealed that this change occurred in 1909. As a result, the first affected cohorts also differ. The first cohort impacted by a 1921 reform would have been born in September 1913. Meanwhile, we calculated that the first cohort affected was born starting in September 1901. This discrepancy is likely because Lleras-Muney relied on the federal Biennial Survey of Education for their data, whereas we have directly examined the legislation for each year.

Angrist and Krueger (1991) report a school leaving age of 16 in 1960, 1970, and 1980, corresponding to cohorts born in 1944, 1954, and 1964 respectively. Based on our calculations above, the school leaving ages calculated in our data are consistent with those reported by Angrist and Krueger.

Work Permits

New York's first child labor policy was passed in 1894 and established a full-time employment age of 12. Since 1936, the full-time employment age in New York has been 16, and the vacation age has been 14.

Key Dates

First law: 1894

Major changes since 1894: 1897, 1914, 1936

The state of New York incorporated work permit eligibility criteria into its very first compulsory schooling law. In 1894, minors over the age of 12 could lawfully work instead of attending school provided they met certain criteria (New York State Legislative Bill Drafting Commission, 1894, Chapter 671, §3). For minors from the ages of 14-16, a basic literacy test was required, and for minors from the ages of 12-14, attendance for 80 consecutive school days was required for work permit eligibility. Unlike many other states, New York utilizes literacy tests rather than schooling records to determine whether a minor is eligible for a work permit. In 1897, the state increased the minimum age for full-time work permits to 14 (New York State Legislative Bill Drafting Commission, 1897, Chapter 415, Article VI, §70). In 1928, New York placed further restrictions on work permits for minors under the age of 16. Minors seeking a work permit at the age of 14 were required to complete up to the 8th grade of the standard curriculum, and minors over the age of 15 but under the age of 16 were required to complete up to the 6th grade (New York State Legislative Bill Drafting Commission, 1928, Chapter 646, §1). By 1936, the state increased the full-time work permit age to 16, established a district-level literacy test, and began to require a schooling record with full-time school attendance until the age of 16 for work permit eligibility (New York State Legislative Bill Drafting Commission, 1935, Chapter 438, §4, 7, 10).

For changes in work permit literacy requirements and eligibility ages over time, see [Table 93](#) and [Table 94](#) respectively.

Table 93: New York–Work Permit Literacy Requirements (1894-2024)

Effective Date	Minimum Literacy
June 1894 - May 1897	80 days of school attendance in the current academic year
June 1897 - April 1903	Read and write English sentences
May 1903 - April 1909	130 days of school in the preceding year, basic arithmetic, and ability to read and write
May 1909 - February 1928	Read, spell, write, knowledge of grammar, arithmetic, geography
March 1928 - August 1936	Age 14: 8th grade Age 15: 6th grade
From September 1936	District level literacy test

Source: New York State Legislative Bill Drafting Commission (1894, 1897, 1903, 1909, 1928, 1940)

Table 94: New York–Work Permit Minimum Ages (1894-2024)

Effective Date	Full-Time	Part-Time	Vacation	Hardship
June 1894 - April 1903	12	.	.	.
May 1903 - February 1928	14	.	12	.
March 1928 - August 1936	14	.	14	.
From September 1936	16	.	14	.

Source: New York State Legislative Bill Drafting Commission (1894, 1897, 1928, 1940)

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in [Table 95](#).

Table 95: New York–Full-time Work Permit Ages by Birth Cohort (1900-2024)

Birth Cohort	Full-Time Permit Age
January 1900 - August 1922	14
September 1922 - Present	16

Source: New York State Legislative Bill Drafting Commission ([1897](#), [1935](#))

At the beginning of the 20th century, New York adopted part-time schooling provisions for individuals who were employed full-time. Continuation school programs were first required in 1903 for boys who were lawfully employed and not attending full-time day school, although these part-time schooling requirements were only enforced in [first and second class cities](#) (New York State Legislative Bill Drafting Commission, [1903](#), Chapter 459, §3). Gender differences in part-time schooling requirements remained in effect from 1903 until 1928, when people under age 16 were required to attend part-time school if they were employed full-time (New York State Legislative Bill Drafting Commission, [1928](#), Chapter 646, §1). The 1928 amendment also required unemployed people between the ages of 16 and 17 to enroll in part-time school, although this requirement could be waived by local school boards of cities with less than 20,000 residents. This policy of local authority continues to exist in New York’s education code; however, it is no longer dependent on city population. A 1940 amendment increased the part-time schooling age for unemployed individuals to 18, but this provision only remained in effect until 1960 (New York State Legislative Bill Drafting Commission, [1940](#), Chapter 740, §1; New York State Legislative Bill Drafting Commission, [1960](#), Chapter 886, §1).

27. North Carolina

School Attendance

North Carolina first began to regulate child labor in 1907, although the first statewide policy was adopted in 1913, requiring people ages 8 to 12 to attend school. In 1991, the state began to require school attendance for individuals ages 7 to 16.

Key Dates

First law: 1907

Major changes since 1907: 1913, 1919, 1923, 1945, 1991

North Carolina began to adopt compulsory schooling policies in 1907. Initially, counties could vote to require people ages 8 to 14 to attend school for 4 months during the year (North Carolina State Legislature, 1907, Chapter 894, §1-2). The first statewide compulsory schooling policy in North Carolina was passed in 1913, requiring people ages 8 to 12 to attend school for at least four months during the academic year (North Carolina State Legislature, 1913, Chapter 173, §1). Exemptions were granted to individuals of any age if they needed to work to support their families or if they lived more than 2.5 miles from the nearest school (North Carolina State Legislature, 1913, Chapter 173, §2). In 1915, the state legislature granted authority to local education authorities to extend the latest compulsory schooling age to 13 or 14 at their discretion (North Carolina State Legislature, 1915, Chapter 236, §3). Shortly thereafter, in 1917, the compulsory schooling age was changed to 8-14 for the entire state, and by 1919, individuals were required to attend school for the full academic year (North Carolina State Legislature, 1917, Chapter 208, §1; North Carolina State Legislature, 1919, Chapter 100, §1). A 1923 amendment mandating that people ages 7 to 14 attend school (North Carolina State Legislature, 1923, Chapter 136, §347). In 1945 the state legislature stipulated that the compulsory schooling requirement would change to ages 7-15 for the period of one year during World War II, and then to ages 7-16 for the school year beginning in 1946 in July 1946 (North Carolina State Legislature, 1945, Chapter 826, §1). In 1954, after the Supreme Court Ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*, North Carolina passed a law stating that students who were opposed to integration and unable to attend a segregated school were exempt from compulsory schooling requirements; this measure remained in place until 1975 (North Carolina State Legislature, 1956, Chapter 5, §1; North Carolina State Legislature, 1975, Chapter 678, §2). As of 1991, the compulsory schooling age remains 7-16 for most students but is 5-16 for students whose parents voluntarily enroll them in kindergarten (North Carolina State Legislature, 1991, Chapter 769, §2).

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in Table 96.

Table 96: North Carolina–Compulsory Schooling Ages by Birth Cohort (1905-2024)

Birth Cohort	Start Age	Leaving Age	Duration
Potentially as early as January 1900 – February 1905	9	14	6
March 1905 - February 1906	9	12	4
March 1906 - February 1916	9	14	6
March 1916 - February 1932	8	14	7
March 1932 - Present	8	16	9

Source: North Carolina State Legislature (1913, 1917, 1923, 1945, 1991)

Note: Starting ages and leaving ages are established in the law. Starting ages are adjusted to reflect the age a person reaches during their first full year of compulsory schooling. Starting ages are therefore 1 year later than the age in law.

People born from Oct. 1939 to Oct. 1967 could have been exempted from school due to race-based legal exemptions.

Since 1991, individuals between the ages of 5 and 7 years old have been required to attend school only if they are voluntarily enrolled in kindergarten. Compulsory attendance begins in the year in which people reach 8 years of age. For this reason, we record the starting age as 8 starting with the September 1931 cohort.

For cohorts born starting in the early 1900s, counties could vote to institute compulsory school attendance policies for children ages 8 to 14 (North Carolina State Legislature, 1907, Chapter 894, §1-2).

North Carolina's earliest statewide compulsory schooling law, effective for SY 1913-14, established that the "period of compulsory attendance shall commence at the beginning of the compulsory period of the school term nearest to the eight birthday of such child or children, and shall cover the compulsory period of four consecutive school years thereafter" (North Carolina State Legislature, 1913, Chapter 173, §1). The law's wording suggests that the enrollment deadline during this period was March 1, because it is six months from

the beginning of the school year. We interpret the starting age as 9, since people would reach that age during their first year of school in SY 1913-14. The first people affected by this policy statewide were those born in March 1905. Under this law, individuals were required to attend school until they reached the age of 12.

The 1917 reform raised the leaving age to 14 years (North Carolina State Legislature, 1917, Chapter 208, §1). This policy change first affected people born in September 1905, who would have been 12 years old at the time that the law went into effect. As a result of these new provisions, these students now needed to remain in school an additional 2 years, until SY 1919-20.

The starting age was lowered to 7 for SY 1923-24 (North Carolina State Legislature, 1923, Chapter 136, Part XI, Article 34, §347). We adjust the starting age to 8, since individuals would reach age 8 during their first year of schooling. Those students who were born beginning in September 1915 were the first affected.

Under the 1945 reform, the leaving age became 15 for SY 1945-46, and then 16 for SY 1946-47 (North Carolina State Legislature, 1945, Chapter 826, §1). These changes impacted the same birth cohort: those individuals born beginning in September 1931. At the time of the law's implementation, they were 14 years old, and therefore needed to stay in school an additional 2 years, until they reached age 16 in SY 1947-48.

In 1955, the enrollment deadline became October 1 (North Carolina State Legislature, 1955, Chapter 1372, Article 19, §2). A 1956 reform permitted parents to opt their children out of compulsory education if the parent was opposed to racially integrated education and a segregated alternative was not available (North Carolina State Legislature, 1956, Chapter 5, §1). This policy was revoked by a 1975 reform (North Carolina State Legislature, 1975, Chapter 678, §2). We expect this policy to have potentially affected children who were still in school during SY 1955-56 and continued to potentially affect the school attendance of individuals who, except for these policies being required, would have been required to start schooling before SY 1975-76. The first cohort possibly affected by the 1956 reform would have been 15 years old in SY 1955-56, who were born starting in October 1939. The 1975 reform could have first impacted people who turned 8 years old in SY 1975-76, who were born beginning in October 1967.

Comparison with Existing Analyses

The differences between our compulsory schooling data and the data from Lleras-Muney (2002) are limited.

We identified 1917 as the year in which the leaving age increased to 14, making the first affected cohort those born beginning in September 1905, whereas Lleras-Muney (2002) had 1919, making the first affected cohort those born beginning in September 1906. Similarly, we named 1923 as the year in which the school starting age was lowered to 7, so individuals born in September 1915 would have been the first impacted; meanwhile, Lleras-Muney records 1924 as the reform year, making students born in September 1916 the first affected by the policy change. These discrepancies are likely because Lleras-Muney relied on the federal Biennial Survey of Education for their data, whereas we have directly examined the legislation for each year.

Angrist and Krueger (1991) report a school leaving age of 16 in 1960, 1970, and 1980, corresponding to cohorts born in 1944, 1954, and 1964 respectively. These school leaving ages are consistent with our interpretation of the law.

Work Permits

North Carolina's first statewide child labor law in 1919 established a full-time work permit age of 14. Since 1927, the full-time employment age in North Carolina has been 16, and the vacation age has been 14.

Key Dates

First law: 1919

Major changes since 1919: 1927

In 1913, North Carolina initially banned individuals under the age of 12 from working in a factory or manufacturing establishment (North Carolina State Legislature, 1913, Chapter 173, §1). Shortly thereafter, in 1919, the state determined that the minimum age for employment in most professions was 14 years (North Carolina State Legislature, 1919, Chapter 100, §5). The full-time work permit age was later changed to 16 in 1927, and a vacation permit age of 14 was established in 1937 (North Carolina State Legislature, 1927, Chapter 251, §1; North Carolina State Legislature, 1937, Chapter 317, §1). The 1937 law also stipulated that receipt of a full-time or vacation work permit was contingent upon a satisfactory schooling record, as determined by the school's principal (North Carolina State Legislature, 1937, Chapter 251, §13). These requirements remain in place in 2023.

See [Table 97](#) and [Table 98](#) for a complete list of changes to literacy requirements and work permit ages in North Carolina.

Table 97: North Carolina–Work Permit Literacy Requirements (1937-2024)

Effective Date	Minimum Literacy
From July 1937	Satisfactory school record

Source: North Carolina State Legislature (1937)

Table 98: North Carolina–Work Permit Minimum Ages (1913-2024)

Effective Date	Full-Time	Part-Time	Vacation	Hardship
July 1919 - February 1927	14	.	.	.
March 1927 - June 1937	16	.	.	.
From July 1937	16	.	14	.

Source: North Carolina State Legislature (1919, 1927, 1937)

Effective Work Permit Policy by Cohort

Effective Work Permit Policy by Cohort Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in [Table 99](#).

Table 99: North Carolina–Full-time Work Permit Ages by Birth Cohort (1905-2024)

Birth Cohort	Full-Time Permit Age
July 1905 - February 1913	14
March 1913 - Present	16

Source: North Carolina State Legislature (1919, 1927)

North Carolina's 1919 child labor policy went into effect in July 1919 and established a full-time employment age of 14 (North Carolina State Legislature, 1919, Chapter 100, §1). This law first affected individuals born beginning in July 1905.

The full-time employment age increased to 16 in March 1927 (North Carolina State Legislature, 1927, Chapter 251, §1). This reform first affected people born starting in March 1913. These individuals would have been 14 years old in 1927, and would have now needed to wait an additional 2 years before they could leave school to work.

28. North Dakota

School Attendance

North Dakota's first compulsory schooling policy in 1883 required that individuals ages 10 to 14 attend school. After several changes to the mandatory schooling age, the 1959 law set the compulsory schooling age range from 7 to 16.

Key Dates

First law: 1883

Major changes since 1883: 1890, 1911, 1917, 1957, 1959, 2001

The territory of Dakota first adopted a compulsory schooling policy in 1883, requiring individuals ages 10 to 14 to attend school for a minimum of 12 weeks per year, 6 weeks of which had to be consecutive (North Dakota State Legislature, 1883, Chapter 44, §119). People were exempted from these requirements if they lived over 2 miles from the nearest school. In 1890, after North Dakota became a state, the school starting age was reduced to 8 and the distance exemption changed to 2.5 miles (North Dakota State Legislature, 1890, Chapter 62, §140). The school leaving age increased to 15 and individuals needed to attend school full-time beginning in 1911 (North Dakota State Legislature, 1911, Chapter 266, §232). People were not subject to these requirements if they needed to work to support their families or if they had already acquired the knowledge taught in public schools. The distance exemption was also amended in 1911 to state that if schools did not provide transportation, then students did not have to attend school if they lived more than 2.5 miles away; however, if schools did provide transportation, then students did not have to attend school if they lived more than 5 miles away. In 1917, the North Dakota state legislature changed the compulsory schooling ages to 7 to 15, and individuals were able to test out if they had completed 8th grade; if they had not completed the 8th grade by the time that they reached age 15, then they may have needed to attend until they reached age 17 (North Dakota State Legislature, 1917, Chapter 206, §1). In 1957, the leaving age returned to age 14, and in 1959, the compulsory schooling ages became 7 to 16 (North Dakota State Legislature, 1957, Chapter 120, §1; North Dakota State Legislature, 1959, Chapter 159, §1). In 2001, a reform was adopted that made 2 significant changes to North Dakota's compulsory schooling policy: it mandated that individuals aged 6 who had voluntarily enrolled in school must attend, and it excused individuals who completed high school from compulsory schooling requirements (North Dakota State Legislature, 2001, Chapter 189, §2) (North Dakota State Legislature, 2001, Chapter 181, §7). The earliest date that we were able to identify this change was 2001, although it is possible that it occurred earlier.

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the birth cohorts and dates reported in [Table 100](#).

Table 100: North Dakota–Compulsory Schooling Ages by Birth Cohort (1900–2024)

Birth Cohort	Start Age	Leaving Age	Duration
January 1900 ^a - August 1909	9	15	7
September 1909 - August 1943	8	15	8
September 1943 - August 1945	8	14	7
September 1945 - Present (December 2024)	8	16	9

Source: North Dakota State Legislature (1911, 1917, 1957, 1959)

Note: Starting ages and leaving ages are established in the law. The starting ages shown in the table are adjusted to reflect the age an individual reaches by the end of their first school year. Starting ages are therefore 1 year later than the age in the law. Compulsory schooling duration is imputed based on start age and leaving age.

^a Not a cohort birth year associated with a reform. The starting date for birth cohorts is January 1900 to reflect the population represented in the Health and Retirement Study.

In 1999, the North Dakota state legislature specified a September 1 enrollment age deadline for school entry (North Dakota State Legislature, 1999, Chapter 196, §6). We apply this date to previous policies as well to facilitate cohort calculations. The enrollment deadline changed to August 1 in 2009 (North Dakota State Legislature, 2009, Chapter 171, §1).

For cohorts born in 1900, schooling in North Dakota was compulsory from age 8 to 15 (North Dakota State Legislature, 1911, Chapter 266, §232). We adjust the starting age forward by 1 year to reflect the age achieved during the first year of compulsory schooling.

The 1917 policy lowered the starting age to 7, effective for school year (SY) 1917-18 (North Dakota State Legislature, 1917, Chapter 206,

§1). The first cohort affected by this reform was born in September 1909. They would have been age 7 at the beginning of SY 1917-18 and reached 8 years of age during the SY.

The 1957 reform, effective for SY 1957-58, lowered the school leaving age to 14 (North Dakota State Legislature, 1957, Chapter 120, §1). This change first impacted people born in September 1943. Under the previous policy, these individuals would have been required to stay in school until age 15, but now were able to leave 1 year earlier.

North Dakota's 1959 compulsory schooling policy was approved in March of that year, which we interpret as first affecting students in SY 1959-60. The reform raised the leaving age to 16 (North Dakota State Legislature, 1959, Chapter 159, §1). Individuals born in September 1945 were the first cohort affected, since they would have turned 14 years old in 1959. This cohort would have been required to attend school for an additional 2 years.

Comparison with Existing Analyses

There are limited differences between the compulsory schooling ages in North Dakota identified through our research and those identified by other authors.

We identified 1917 as the year in which the starting age decreased to 7, making the first affected cohort those individuals born in September 1909. Lleras-Muney (2002), meanwhile, found that this change occurred in 1918, making the first affected cohort those born in September 1910. This discrepancy is likely because Lleras-Muney (2002) relied on the federal Biennial Survey of Education for their data, whereas we have directly examined the legislation for each year. In addition, Lleras-Muney identified 1921 as the year in which the school leaving age increased to age 17, which would have first affected people born in September 1906; however, we were unable to locate this change in the original legislation.

Angrist and Krueger (1991) report a school leaving age of 17 in 1960, and a school leaving age of 16 in 1970 and 1980, corresponding to cohorts born in 1944, 1954, and 1964 respectively. We also identify a leaving age of 16 in 1970 and 1980, however, in 1960 we find a leaving age of 14. This difference is likely because Angrist Krueger worked with Census data while we reviewed each year's legislation.

Work Permits

Beginning in 1890, people in North Dakota were exempt from school as early as age 8 to work full-time. Since the passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act in 1938, North Dakota's full-time work permit age has been 16, and its vacation work permit age has been 14.

Key Dates

First law: 1890

Major changes since 1890: 1909, 1938, 1975, 1993

North Dakota's first child labor law was passed in 1890 and stated that no child aged 8 to 14 could work during school hours unless they had a certificate indicating that they had attended school for the time required in the previous year (North Dakota State Legislature, 1890, Chapter 62, Article XV, §143). In 1909, the minimum employment age was raised to 14 (North Dakota State Legislature, 1909, Chapter 153, §2). To be employed full-time, individuals needed to have attended school for at least 120 days in the previous year, be able to read and write in English, to be familiar with basic arithmetic up to and including fractions, and to have completed coursework in spelling, reading, writing, grammar, and geography in the past year (North Dakota State Legislature, 1909, Chapter 153, §4). The full-time employment age increased to 16 in 1938 with the passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023). Eventually, North Dakota's literacy requirements were slowly repealed: in 1975, satisfactory school attendance was no longer necessary to receive a certificate, and in 1993, the remaining literacy requirements were repealed (North Dakota State Legislature, 1975, Chapter 299, §2; North Dakota State Legislature, 1993, Chapter 351, §16).

See [Table 101](#) and [Table 102](#) for a complete list of changes to North Dakota's work permit minimum literacy requirements and work permit ages.

Table 101: North Dakota–Work Permit Literacy Requirements (1890–2024)

Effective Date	Minimum Literacy
July 1890 - July 1909	Satisfactory school record attendance
August 1909 - July 1975	Satisfactory school attendance; ability to read and write in English; familiarity with basic arithmetic up to and including fractions; coursework in geography
August 1975 - July 1993	Ability to read and write in English; familiarity with basic arithmetic up to and including fractions; coursework in geography
August 1993 - Present (December 2024)	.

Source: North Dakota State Legislature (1890, 1909, 1975, 1993)

Table 102: North Dakota–Work Permit Minimum Ages (1890–2024)

Effective Date	Full-Time	Part-Time	Vacation	Hardship
July 1890 - July 1909	8	.	.	.
August 1909 - September 1938	14	.	14	.
October 1938 - Present (December 2024)	16	.	14	.

Source: North Dakota State Legislature (1890, 1909) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the birth cohorts and dates reported in [Table 103](#).

In the early 1900s, North Dakota's minimum employment age was 8 (North Dakota State Legislature, 1890, Chapter 1890, Article XIV, §143).

The full-time work permit age became 14 in August 1909 (North Dakota State Legislature, 1909, Chapter 153, §2). This change first impacted people born in August 1901. Previously, these individuals would have been able to work beginning at age 8; however, when they turned 8 years old in August 1909, they now needed to wait an additional 6 years before they could be employed full-time.

Table 103: North Dakota–Full-time Work Permit Ages by Birth Cohort (1900-2024)

Birth Cohort	Full-Time Permit Age
January 1900 ^a - July 1901	8
August 1901 - September 1924	14
October 1924 - Present (December 2024) (potentially as early as October 1922) ^b	16

Source: North Dakota State Legislature (1890, 1909) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

Notes:

^a Not a cohort birth year associated with a reform. The starting date for birth cohorts is January 1900 to reflect the population represented in the Health and Retirement Study.

^b The first cohort fully impacted by this reform was born in October 1924, requiring them to wait an additional 2 years before they could begin working. Those born as early as October 1922 may have been partially affected.

The passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act in October 1938 raised North Dakota's full-time work permit age to 16 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023). People who were born in October 1924 would have been the first affected by this policy, since they turned 14 years old at the time of FLSA's passage and now needed to wait 2 more years before they could work full-time.

29. Ohio

School Attendance

The state of Ohio passed its first compulsory schooling law in 1877, requiring people ages 8 to 14 to attend school. Since 1921, the state has required individuals ages 6 to 18 to attend school.

Key Dates

First law: 1877

Major changes since 1877: 1890, 1900, 1913, 1921, 1943

Under Ohio's initial compulsory school attendance policy, people aged 8 to 14 were required to attend school for a minimum of 12 weeks, 6 of these weeks being consecutive (Ohio 62nd General Assembly, 1877, §1). In 1889, this requirement was raised to 20 weeks for cities and 16 weeks for villages and townships, with 10 and 8 weeks of consecutive attendance required, respectively (Ohio 68th General Assembly, 1889, House Bill No. 831, §1). By 1890, the law extended to cover all individuals up to the age of 16, making attendance mandatory for the entire academic year (Ohio 69th General Assembly, 1890, House Bill No. 310, §1). In 1913, significant gender-specific changes were made to the compulsory schooling policy, including a reduction in the school leaving age for males to age 15, and the establishment of different literacy requirements between males and females to obtain work permits (Ohio 80th General Assembly, 1913, Senate Bill No. 18, Chapter 3, §7763). A 1921 amendment ended the gender differences in compulsory schooling requirements and mandated school attendance for all individuals between the ages of 6 and 18 (Ohio 84th General Assembly, 1921, House Bill No. 111, §1). Under this amendment, villages and rural townships were authorized to increase their school start age to 7. The 1921 amendment also required part-time school attendance for all employed individuals within the compulsory schooling ages. Although it was previously implied, an amendment to Ohio's compulsory school attendance policy in 1943 explicitly exempts people who have completed the 12th grade from compulsory school attendance (Ohio General Assembly, 1943, House Bill No. 350, §1).

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in [Table 104](#).

Table 104: Ohio–Compulsory Schooling Ages by Birth Cohort (1900–2024)

Birth Cohort	Start Age	Leaving Age	Duration
January 1900 - September 1905 (for girls)	9	16	8
January 1900 - September 1906 (for boys)	9	15	7
October 1905 - September 1915 (for girls)	9	18	10
October 1906 - September 1915 (for boys)	9	18	10
October 1915 - Present	7	18	12

Source: Ohio 80th General Assembly (1913) and Ohio 84th General Assembly (1921)

Note: Starting ages and leaving ages are established in the law. Starting ages are adjusted to reflect the age a person reaches during their first full year of compulsory schooling. Starting ages are therefore 1 year later than the age in law.

The current [effective school year for enrollment](#) in Ohio begins October 1 (although since 2001, local education authorities may establish an earlier deadline of August 1) (Ohio General Assembly, 2001, House Bill No. 94, §1). We impute this change as having been in place since approximately 1913, since that is the year in which the previous enrollment deadline, September 1, is no longer mentioned in the legislation (Ohio 80th General Assembly, 1913, Senate Bill No. 18, Chapter 3, §7763).

For cohorts born beginning in the early 20th century, the compulsory schooling ages were 9 to 15 for boys, and 7 to 16 for girls (Ohio 80th General Assembly, 1913, Senate Bill No. 18, Chapter 3, §7763). We adjust the starting age forward by one year to reflect the age achieved during the first year of compulsory schooling.

The 1921 law, effective for school year (SY) 1921–1922, established a starting age of 6, which we interpret as a starting age such that students reached age 7 during their first year of schooling (Ohio 84th General Assembly, 1921, House Bill No. 111, §1). The reform also raised the leaving age to 18. The people first affected by this policy would have been girls born in October 1905. At the time of the

1921 law's passage, these girls were in their eighth year of schooling, and now needed to continue in school for 2 more years, until 1923. For boys, those born in October 1906 would have been the first impacted by the new policy. In 1921, they were in their seventh year of schooling, and now were required to stay in school for 3 additional years, until 1923. The next cohort affected by this policy would have been everyone born in October 1915. These individuals would have been the first group to reach age 7 during SY 1921-22 and be required to attend school until age 18.

Comparison with Existing Analyses

There are limited differences between the compulsory schooling ages in Ohio identified through our research and those identified by other authors. Lleras-Muney (2002) records 1924 as the year in which the leaving age increased to 18, which means that the first affected birth cohort according to this data would have been born in 1908 and turned 16 in 1924. Lleras-Muney (2002) also does not account for the gender difference in compulsory schooling ages that was adopted in 1913. These discrepancies are likely because Lleras-Muney (2002) relied on the federal Biennial Survey of Education for their data, whereas we have directly examined the legislation for each year.

Angrist and Krueger (1991) report a school leaving age of 18 in 1960, 1970, and 1980, corresponding to cohorts born in 1944, 1954, and 1964 respectively. These school leaving ages are consistent with our interpretation of Ohio law.

Work Permits

Ohio's first child labor policy, passed in 1890, set a full-time employment age of 14. Since 1921, Ohio has had a full-time work permit age of 16, and a vacation and hardship permit age of 14.

Key Dates

First law: 1890

Major changes since 1890: 1902, 1904, 1914, 1921

Ohio's first compulsory schooling policy in 1877 enabled individuals to work upon completion of their 12 weeks of compulsory school attendance (Ohio 62nd General Assembly, 1877, §1). Under this policy, a satisfactory schooling record was required for work permit eligibility. However, early iterations of this policy did not specify a minimum age for lawful employment. In 1890, shortly after the school leaving age was raised to 16, the minimum age for lawful employment during school hours was set at 14 (Ohio 69th General Assembly, 1890, House Bill No. 310, §1). An amendment passed in 1900 (effective January 1, 1902), banned the employment of people under 13 in any capacity, and increased the full-time work permit age to 15 for boys and 16 for girls (Ohio General Assembly, 1900, Title III, Chapter 9, §6986-7). These employment permits still required a satisfactory schooling record and included a minimum attendance requirement of 24 weeks. The literacy requirement was amended in 1910, and stipulated that an individual must satisfactorily complete the 5th grade of the standard curriculum before obtaining a work permit (Ohio 78th General Assembly, 1910, House Bill No. 452, §1). In 1913, when compulsory attendance requirements were differentiated based on gender, the minimum literacy requirement became 6th grade for boys and 7th grade for girls under the age of 21 (Ohio 80th General Assembly, 1913, Senate Bill No. 18, Chapter 3, §7766). This amendment also banned the employment of girls under the age of 18 (Ohio 80th General Assembly, 1913, Senate Bill No. 18, Chapter 3, §7765). A ruling by the attorney general identified this as a typographical error; however, it was not corrected until the publication of the Compiled Statutes of Ohio in 1915. Gender differences in work permit eligibility criteria and ages were ended in 1921, when the minimum full-time employment age became 16, with a 7th grade literacy requirement (Ohio 84th General Assembly, 1921, House Bill No. 111, §1). Ohio currently allows people over the age of 14 to work part-time when school is in session and during school vacations.

For changes in work permit eligibility ages and literacy requirements over time, see [Table 105](#) and [Table 106](#) respectively.

Table 105: Ohio–Work Permit Literacy Requirements (1877-2024)

Effective Date	Minimum Literacy
September 1877 - December 1889	12 weeks of school attendance in the current academic year
January 1890 - December 1903	20 weeks of school attendance in the current academic year
January 1904 - April 1910	24 weeks of school attendance in the current academic year
May 1910 - July 1913	Grade 5 literacy test
August 1913 - June 1921	Grade 6 literacy test for boys Grade 7 literacy test for girls
From July 1921	Grade 7 literacy test

Source: Ohio 62nd General Assembly (1877), Ohio 69th General Assembly (1890), Ohio 76th General Assembly (1904), Ohio 78th General Assembly (1910), Ohio 80th General Assembly (1913), and Ohio 84th General Assembly (1921)

Table 106: Ohio–Work Permit Minimum Ages (1890-2024)

Effective Date	Full-Time	Part-Time	Vacation	Hardship
September 1890 - December 1901	14	.	.	.
January 1902 - March 1904	15 for boys 16 for girls	.	13	13
April 1904 - June 1921	15 for boys 16 for girls	.	14	14
From July 1921	16	.	14	14

Source: Ohio 69th General Assembly (1890), Ohio 76th General Assembly (1904), Ohio 84th General Assembly (1921), and Ohio General Assembly (1900)

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in [Table 107](#).

Table 107: Ohio–Full-time Work Permit Ages by Birth Cohort (1900-2024)

Birth Cohort	Full-Time Permit Age
January 1900 - June 1906	15 for boys 16 for girls
July 1906 - Present	16

Source: Ohio 76th General Assembly ([1904](#)), Ohio 84th General Assembly ([1921](#)), and Ohio General Assembly ([1900](#))

In the early 1900s, the full-time employment age was 15 for boys and 16 for girls (Ohio General Assembly, [1900](#), Title III, Chapter 9, §6986-7).

The 1921 child labor policy went into effect in July of that year and established a full-time permit age of 16, which remains in the present (Ohio 84th General Assembly, [1921](#), House Bill No. 111, §1). Boys who were 15 years old in July 1921 would have been the first impacted by this change; previously, they would have been able to work at age 15, but as a result of this reform, they needed to remain in school for 1 additional year before they could work full-time. Girls were unaffected by this reform.

30. Oklahoma

School Attendance

Oklahoma began mandating school attendance for individuals ages 8 to 16 in 1908. Since 1994, people ages 5 to 18 have been required to attend school.

Key Dates

First law: 1908

Major changes since 1908: 1919, 1936, 1961, 1991

Oklahoma's first compulsory schooling policy, passed in 1908, required that people between the ages of 8 and 16 attend school for the full academic year, the length of which varied depending on location (Oklahoma State Legislature, 1907, Chapter 34, §1). Individuals were exempt if they had received a level of instruction equivalent to what they would have received at the public school for three to six months. In 1919, the school leaving age was raised to 18, and students needed to attend for at least 66.67% of the school term (Oklahoma State Legislature, 1919, Chapter 59, §1). By 1936, the school starting age had lowered to 7, and students again needed to be in school for the full academic year (Oklahoma State Legislature, 1936, Chapter 34, Article 11, §1). It was not until school year (SY) 1991-92 that Oklahoma's compulsory schooling ages changed again, with the starting age being lowered to 5 (Oklahoma State Legislature, 1989, Chapter 2, §14). Several years later, in 1994, the Oklahoma state legislature determined that while people ages 5 to 18 were required to attend school, individuals aged 5 could be excused from beginning kindergarten until age 6, and these measures remain in place today (Oklahoma State Legislature, 1994, Chapter 220, §2).

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in Table 108.

Table 108: Oklahoma–Compulsory Schooling Ages by Birth Cohort (1900–2024)

Birth Cohort	Start Age	Leaving Age	Duration
January 1900 - August 1903	9	16	8
September 1903 - August 1928	9	18	10
September 1928 - August 1985	8	18	11
September 1985 - Present	6	18	13

Source: Oklahoma State Legislature (1907, 1919, 1936, 1991)

Note: Starting ages and leaving ages are established in the law. Starting ages are adjusted to reflect the age a person reaches during their first full year of compulsory schooling. Starting ages are therefore 1 year later than the age in law.

The [effective school year for enrollment](#) in Oklahoma was not formalized until 1989, when the state legislature specified that the enrollment deadline was September 1 (Oklahoma State Legislature, 1989, Chapter 2, §2). Since earlier compulsory schooling legislation does not specify an enrollment deadline, we operate under the assumption that the September 1 date applies to previous policy when calculating birth cohorts.

For cohorts born starting in the early 1900s, the compulsory schooling ages were defined as 8 to 16 (Oklahoma State Legislature, 1907, Chapter 34, §1). We adjust the starting age forward by one year to reflect the age achieved during the first year of compulsory schooling.

The 1919 reform raised the leaving age from 16 to 18 for the 1919–20 SY (Oklahoma State Legislature, 1919, Chapter 59, §1). Individuals born in September 1903 were the first cohort impacted, since they would have turned 16 years old in 1919, and would therefore have been required to attend for an additional 2 years.

The 1936 reform, effective from SY 1936–37, lowered the school starting age to 7 (Oklahoma State Legislature, 1936, Chapter 34, §1). We interpret this policy as first affecting people born from September 1928, who would have been age 7 at the start of SY 1936–37 and reached 8 years of age during the SY.

The 1989 reform, effective for SY 1991–92, lowered the school starting age to 5 (Oklahoma State Legislature, 1989, Chapter 2, §14). We interpret this policy as first affecting people born from September 1985, who would have been age 5 at the start of SY 1991–92 and reached 6 years of age during the SY.

Comparison with Existing Analyses

There are limited differences between the compulsory schooling ages in Oklahoma identified through our research and those identified by other authors.

Lleras-Muney (2002) documented that Oklahoma's school leaving age became 18 in 1921. The first affected birth cohort for this reform would have been born in September 1905. We find this reform was implemented in 1919, affecting people born from September 1903. Additionally, Lleras-Muney identifies 1937 rather than 1936 as the year that the starting age became 7 years, and therefore, her first affected birth cohort would have been born in September 1929, while we calculated September 1928. The first difference in calculations is likely attributable to the use of the Biennial Surveys of Education by Lleras-Muney, while we looked directly at the relevant legislation.

Angrist and Krueger (1991) report a school leaving age of 18 in 1960, 1970, and 1980, corresponding to cohorts born in 1944, 1954, and 1964 respectively. Based on our calculations above, the school leaving ages calculated in our data are consistent with those reported by Angrist and Krueger.

Work Permits

Oklahoma began regulating child labor in 1909 when the state legislature established a minimum employment age of 14. Since 1919, the full-time work permit age in the state has been 16, and the vacation work permit age has been 14.

Key Dates

First law: 1909

Major changes since 1909: 1919

One year after Oklahoma began to mandate school attendance the state legislature started to regulate child labor. In 1909, Oklahoma established a full-time work permit age of 14 and stipulated that individuals needed to be able to either read and write in English or to have satisfactory attendance in the previous school year to be employed (Oklahoma State Legislature, 1909, Chapter 39, Article I, §1, 5). In 1919, the full-time employment age was increased to 16, and the minimum literacy requirements were changed to require the completion of the eighth grade to work during school hours (Oklahoma State Legislature, 1919, Chapter 59, §1). Beginning in 1961, individuals aged 16 and older are only allowed to be employed if they have completed the equivalent of four years of high school education (Oklahoma State Legislature, 1961, Title 70, Chapter Ah, §1).

See [Table 109](#) and [Table 110](#) for a record of the changes to Oklahoma's minimum literacy requirements and work permit ages since 1909.

Table 109: Oklahoma–Work Permit Literacy Requirements (1909–2024)

Effective Date	Minimum Literacy
June 1909 - July 1919	Ability to read and write in English or satisfactory attendance in the previous school year
August 1919 - June 1961	Completion of grade 8
From July 1961	Completion of grade 12

Source: Oklahoma State Legislature (1909, 1919, 1961)

Table 110: Oklahoma–Work Permit Minimum Ages (1909–2024)

Effective Date	Full-Time	Part-Time	Vacation	Hardship
June 1909 - July 1919	14	.	14	.
From August 1919	16	.	14	.

Source: Oklahoma State Legislature (1909, 1919)

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in [Table 111](#).

Table 111: Oklahoma–Full-time Work Permit Ages by Birth Cohort (1900–2024)

Birth Cohort	Full-Time Permit Age
January 1900 - July 1905	14
August 1905 - Present	16

Source: Oklahoma State Legislature (1909, 1919)

Oklahoma's first child labor policy went into effect June 1909 and established a full-time employment age of 14 (Oklahoma State Legislature, 1909, Chapter 39, Article I, §1, 5). This policy first impacted those born June 1895.

The 1919 child labor policy became effective in August of that year and established a full-time permit age of 16 (Oklahoma State Legislature, 1919, Chapter 59, §1). Individuals born beginning in August 1905 were the first impacted by this reform. These individuals would have reached age 14 in 1919, and would have now needed to wait an additional 2 years before they could leave school to start work.

31. Oregon

School Attendance

Oregon's first compulsory schooling policy went into effect in 1890, and required all individuals ages 8 to 14 to attend school. Since 2016, the compulsory schooling ages in Oregon have been 6 to 18.

Key Dates

First law: 1889

Major changes since 1889: 1903, 1905, 1907, 1911, 1922, 1945, 2012, 2015

Oregon's first compulsory schooling law was passed in 1889. It went into effect in 1890 and required that individuals ages 8 to 14 be in attendance for at least 12 weeks per school year, at least 8 of which needed to be consecutive (Oregon State Legislature, 1889, Acts 111, §1). People were exempt if they had completed an equivalent level of education elsewhere or if they lived more than two miles from the nearest school. In 1903, the Oregon state legislature clarified that school attendance was also compulsory for people aged 15 who were not employed, effectively making the leaving age 15 (Oregon State Legislature, 1903, S.B. 166, §3). In 1905, the compulsory schooling ages expanded so that individuals aged 14 to 16 who were unemployed were also required to be in attendance. Individuals in this age range were required to attend school for the full year (Oregon State Legislature, 1905, Chapter 208, §4). In 1908, the school starting age increased to 9 and the exemptions to the compulsory schooling mandate were also modified (Oregon State Legislature, 1907, Chapter 79, §1). Since then, individuals needed to have completed the eighth grade to no longer be subject to compulsory schooling requirements. If transportation was not provided, those aged 9 to 10 were exempt from the compulsory schooling mandate if they lived over 1.5 miles from the nearest school, and those ages 11 and older were exempt if they resided over 3 miles from the nearest school. In 1912, the school leaving age was lowered from 16 to 15 (Oregon State Legislature, 1911, Chapter 243, §1). Effective in 1926, Oregon's compulsory schooling ages returned to 8 to 16 (Oregon State Legislature, 1922, Chapter 1, §1). The starting age decreased to 7 in 1946, and the leaving age was raised to 18 (Oregon State Legislature, 1945, Chapter 157, §1-2). In addition, individuals now needed to have graduated to be exempt from Oregon's compulsory schooling requirements (Oregon State Legislature, 1945, Chapter 1, §4). A 2012 amendment stipulated that individuals ages 5 and 6 who have been voluntarily enrolled are required to attend school (Oregon State Legislature, 2012, Chapter 91, §13). Most recently, in 2016, the compulsory schooling ages changed to 6 to 18 (Oregon State Legislature, 2015, Chapter 234, §1).

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the birth cohorts and dates reported in Table 112.

Table 112: Oregon–Compulsory Schooling Ages by Birth Cohort (1900–2024)

Birth Cohort	Start Age	Leaving Age	Duration
January 1900 ^a - August 1911	10	15	6
September 1911 - August 1917	10	16	7
September 1917 - August 1930	9	16	8
September 1930 - August 1938	9	18	10
September 1938 - August 2008	8	18	11
September 2008 - Present (December 2024)	7	18	12

Source: Oregon State Legislature (1911, 1922, 1945, 2015)

Notes: Starting ages and leaving ages are established in the law. The starting ages shown in the table are adjusted to reflect the age an individual reaches by the end of their first school year. Starting ages are therefore 1 year later than the age in the law. Compulsory schooling duration is imputed based on start age and leaving age.

^a Not a cohort birth year associated with a reform. The starting date for birth cohorts is January 1900 to reflect the population represented in the Health and Retirement Study.

Effective 2016, Oregon's state legislature established a September 1 enrollment age deadline for school entry (Oregon State Legislature, 2015, Chapter 234, §1). Since earlier compulsory schooling legislation does not specify an enrollment deadline, we operate under the assumption that the September 1 date applies to previous policy when calculating birth cohorts.

For cohorts born in 1900, schooling in Oregon was compulsory from age 9 to 15 (Oregon State Legislature, 1911, S.B. 234, §1). We adjust the starting age forward by one year to reflect the age achieved during the first year of compulsory schooling.

In 1922, the school starting age decreased to 8 and the school leaving age increased to 16. These changes were effective for SY 1926–27

and impacted two separate birth cohorts (Oregon State Legislature, [1922](#), Chapter 1, §1). The first cohort affected were those born in September 1911, who turned 15 years old during SY 1926-27. Under the new policy, these individuals now needed to remain in school for 1 additional year, so that they were in school for 7 years, from the year in which they turned 10 to the year in which they turned 16. The next cohort affected was born in September 1917. In SY 1926-27, they reached age 9, and were the first group of Oregon students to be in school for a duration of 8 years.

The 1945 reform was effective for SY 1946-47. It both reduced the starting age to 7 (which we report as age 8 to reflect the age at the end of the school year, per our convention) and increased the leaving age to 18 (Oregon State Legislature, [1945](#), Chapter 157, §1-2). Like the 1922 reform, this policy affected two birth cohorts. People born in September 1930 were the first impacted. They turned 16 years old in SY 1946-47, and now needed to remain in school for an additional 2 years; however, they were not subject to the lowered starting age. The first cohort affected by the new starting age was born in September 1938, since they reached age 8 during SY 1946-47.

The 2015 reform, effective for SY 2015-16, lowered the school starting age to 6 (Oregon State Legislature, [2015](#), Chapter 234, §1). We interpret this policy as first affecting people born from September 2008, who would have been age 6 at the start of SY 2015-16 and reached age 7 during the SY.

Comparison with Existing Analyses

There are a number of differences between the compulsory schooling ages in Oregon identified through our research and those identified by other authors.

Lleras-Muney ([2002](#)) reports that Oregon's compulsory schooling ages became 9 to 16 in 1921, 9 to 15 in 1928, 9 to 18 in 1929, and 7 to 16 in 1930. However, we could not locate these changes upon our review of the legislation. Instead, we find that the compulsory schooling leaving ages became 8 to 16 in SY 1926-27, and that these ages remained in place until 1946, when they became 7 to 18.

Angrist and Krueger ([1991](#)) report a school leaving age of 18 in 1960, 1970, and 1980, corresponding to cohorts born in 1944, 1954, and 1964 respectively. Based on our calculations above, the school leaving ages calculated in our data are consistent with those reported by Angrist and Krueger.

Work Permits

Oregon's first child labor law was passed in 1903 and went into effect in 1904. It set a minimum employment age of 14. Since the passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act in 1938, Oregon's full-time work permit age has been 16, and its vacation work permit age has been 14.

Key Dates

First law: 1903

Major changes since 1903: 1905, 1938, 1945, 2015

Oregon's first child labor policy was passed in 1903 and went into effect in 1904. The law established a minimum employment age of 14 and stated that individuals under age 16 needed to be able to read and write in English to be employed (Oregon State Legislature, 1903, S.B. 166, §1-3, §7). In 1906, the minimum literacy requirements changed so that individuals needed to have a satisfactory schooling certificate to be able to work. This was evidenced by a form signed by the employer and the individual's parent, granting permission for employment, and was approved by the school superintendent. In addition, the vacation work permit age decreased from 14 to 12 that year (Oregon State Legislature, 1905, Chapter 208, §6, 13). The passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act in 1938 raised Oregon's full-time work permit age to 16 and the vacation work permit age to 14 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023). In 1946, hardship work permits became available to individuals at age 14 at their school district's discretion. Individuals needed to have completed the 8th grade to be eligible (Oregon State Legislature, 1945, Chapter 157, §1). Since 2016, the hardship work permit provision has no longer been mentioned in Oregon law (Oregon State Legislature, 2015, Chapter 234, §1).

See [Table 113](#) and [Table 114](#) for a record of the changes to Oregon's work permit minimum literacy requirements and work permit ages since 1903.

Table 113: Oregon–Work Permit Literacy Requirements (1903-2024)

Effective Date	Minimum Literacy
January 1904 - December 1905	Ability to read and write in English
January 1906 - December 1945	Satisfactory schooling certificate(signed document by employer and parent)
January 1946 - Present (December 2024)	.

Source: Oregon State Legislature (1903, 1905, 1945)

Table 114: Oregon–Work Permit Minimum Ages (1903-2024)

Effective Date	Full-Time	Part-Time	Vacation	Hardship
January 1904 - December 1905	14	.	14	.
January 1906 - September 1938	14	.	12	.
October 1938 - December 1945	16	.	14	.
January 1946 - June 2016	16	.	14	14
July 2016 - Present (December 2024)	16	.	14	.

Source: Oregon State Legislature (1903, 1905, 1945) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the birth cohorts and dates reported in [Table 115](#).

Oregon's full-time work-permit age was 14 in 1900 (Oregon State Legislature, 1903, S.B. 166, §1-3, §7). The full-time employment age increased to 16 in October 1938 with the passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023). People who were 14 years old in October 1938, who were born in October 1924, would have been the first cohort affected by this policy change. Unlike older cohorts who were able to leave school at age 14 to begin full-time work, the 1924 birth cohort needed to wait 2 additional years to do so.

Table 115: Oregon–Full-time Work Permit Ages by Birth Cohort (1900-2024)

Birth Cohort	Full-Time Permit Age
January 1900 ^a - September 1924	14
October 1924 - Present (December 2024) (potentially as early as October 1922) ^b	16

Source: Oregon State Legislature (1903) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

Notes:

^a Not a cohort birth year associated with a reform. The starting date for birth cohorts is January 1900 to reflect the population represented in the Health and Retirement Study.

^b The first cohort fully impacted by this reform was born in October 1924, requiring them to wait an additional 2 years before they could begin working. Those born as early as October 1922 may have been partially affected.

32. Pennsylvania

School Attendance

The state of Pennsylvania's first compulsory schooling law required people between the ages of 8 and 13 to attend school in 1895. Since 2019, Pennsylvania has required that individuals between the ages of 6 and 18 attend school.

Key Dates

First law: 1895

Major changes since 1895: 1905, 1915, 1927, 1937, 1943, 2019

Under Pennsylvania's first compulsory school attendance policy, individuals between the ages of 8 and 13 were required to attend school for at least 16 weeks (Pennsylvania State General Assembly, 1895, Act 53, §1). By 1897, the law covered all people up to the age of 16 and by 1901 attendance was required for the entire academic year (Pennsylvania State General Assembly, 1897, Act 199, §1). Although early policies included an exemption for people residing more than 2 miles from the nearest school, a 1925 amendment required that these students be provided transportation by the district or that they be relocated to a different district (Pennsylvania State General Assembly, 1925, Act 340, §1). A 1937 amendment to the compulsory schooling age legislation increased the school leaving age to 17 for school year (SY) 1938-39 and to 18 for SY 1939-40 (Pennsylvania State General Assembly, 1937, Article 14, §1414). From SY 2020-21, students who are 6 years of age by September 1 must attend school full-time until they reach age 18 or obtain a high school diploma or equivalent (Pennsylvania State General Assembly, 2019, Act 16, §20).

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in [Table 116](#).

Table 116: Pennsylvania–Compulsory Schooling Ages by Birth Cohort (1900-2024)

Birth Cohort	Start Age	Leaving Age	Duration
January 1900 - August 1921	9	16	8
September 1921 - August 2013	9	18	10
September 2013 - Present	7	18	12

Source: Pennsylvania State General Assembly (1895, 1897, 1937, 2019)

Note: Starting ages and leaving ages are established in the law. Starting ages are adjusted to reflect the age a person reaches during their first full year of compulsory schooling. Starting ages are therefore 1 year later than the age in law.

According to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, the state's current [effective school year for enrollment](#) begins September 1 (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2020). Since earlier compulsory schooling legislation does not specify an enrollment deadline, we operate under the assumption that the September 1 date applies to previous policy when calculating birth cohorts.

For cohorts born beginning in the early 20th century, the compulsory schooling ages were defined as 8 to 16 (Pennsylvania State General Assembly, 1897, Act 199, §1). We adjust the starting age forward by one year to reflect the age reached during the first year of compulsory schooling.

The 1937 policy first increased the leaving age to 17 for SY 1938-39, and then raised the leaving age to 18 for SY1939-40 (Pennsylvania State General Assembly, 1937, Article 14, §1414). Students who were born in September 1921 were the first to be impacted by both of these changes.

In 2019, Pennsylvania lowered its starting age to 6, which we interpret as age 7, since individuals would turn 7 during their first year of schooling (Pennsylvania State General Assembly, 2019, Act 16, §20). This change went into effect for SY 2020-21, and therefore first impacted people born in September 2013.

Comparison with Existing Analyses

There are no differences between the reform dates in Pennsylvania that we identified in our research and those that Lleras-Muney (2002) identified.

Angrist and Krueger (1991) report a school leaving age of 17 in 1960, 1970, and 1980, corresponding to cohorts born in 1944, 1954, and

1964 respectively. We identify a school leaving age of 18 in 1960, 1970, and 1980.

Work Permits

Pennsylvania's earliest child labor law in 1897 set a full-time employment age of 13. Since 1961, the full-time work permit age has been 16 and the part-time and vacation work permit ages have been 14.

Key Dates

First law: 1897

Major changes since 1897: 1905, 1938, 1961

The compulsory schooling law was amended in 1897 to allow individuals with work permits to be exempt from school attendance beginning at age 13 (Pennsylvania State General Assembly, 1897, Act 26, §2, 3). A 1905 amendment to the child labor law prevented the employment of individuals under the age of 14 and also included a literacy test requirement for work permit eligibility (Pennsylvania State General Assembly, 1905, Act 226, §2, 6). By 1915, work permits were only granted to individuals who had completed at least the 6th grade (Pennsylvania State General Assembly, 1915, Act 177, §13). Shortly thereafter, the ability to work full-time in Pennsylvania also became contingent upon attendance at continuation schools (Pennsylvania State General Assembly, 1927, Act 286, §3). Effective for SY 1938-39, the full-time work permit age increased to 16 (Pennsylvania State General Assembly, 1937, Article 14, §1416).

See [Table 117](#) and [Table 118](#) for a complete list of work permit literacy requirements and eligibility ages over time.

Table 117: Pennsylvania–Work Permit Literacy Requirements (1898-2024)

Effective Date	Minimum Literacy
January 1898 - April 1905	School attendance for 16 weeks in preceding year; ability to read and write in English
May 1905 - December 1915	Ability to read and write in English
From January 1916	Completion of grade 6

Source: Pennsylvania State General Assembly (1897, 1905, 1915)

Table 118: Pennsylvania–Work Permit Minimum Ages (1897-2024)

Effective Date	Full-Time	Part-Time	Vacation	Hardship
April 1897 - April 1905	13	.	13	.
May 1905 - August 1938	14	.	14	.
September 1938 - June 1961	16	.	14	.
From July 1961	16	14	14	.

Source: Pennsylvania State General Assembly (1897, 1905, 1937, 1961)

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in [Table 119](#).

Table 119: Pennsylvania–Full-time Work Permit Ages by Birth Cohort (1900-2024)

Birth Cohort	Full-Time Permit Age
January 1900 - August 1924	14
September 1924 - Present	16

Source: Pennsylvania State General Assembly (1905, 1937)

The full-time employment age in Pennsylvania was 14 at the beginning of the 20th century (Pennsylvania State General Assembly, 1905, Act 226, §2).

The 1937 policy went into effect in September of SY 1938-39 and raised the full-time work permit age from 14 to 16 (Pennsylvania State General Assembly, 1937, §1414). Individuals born in September 1924 would have been the first impacted by this policy, who needed to wait an additional 2 years to be able to start work full-time.

33. South Carolina

School Attendance

In 1915, South Carolina began requiring school attendance for people between the ages of 8 and 16. As of 1984, all students ages 5 to 16 have been required to attend school.

Key Dates

First law: 1915

Major changes since 1915: 1937, 1955, 1974, 1979, 1984

The South Carolina state legislature began requiring school attendance in 1915 for people ages 8 to 14 for the full school year in most cases, and for 4 months for agricultural districts (Legislature of South Carolina, 1915, No. 98, §1). Individuals who were ages 14 to 16 and either not regularly employed or who could not read or write in English were also required to attend (Legislature of South Carolina, 1915, No. 98, §4). People were exempt from compulsory schooling requirements if the nearest school was over 2.5 miles from their home, or if they needed to work to support their family (Legislature of South Carolina, 1915, No. 98, §2). Shortly thereafter, in 1919, the leaving age was decreased to 14, and the time required to be in school was lowered to 4 consecutive months for all districts (Legislature of South Carolina, 1919, No. 135, §1). Also in 1919, individuals were exempt from compulsory schooling requirements at age 12 if they needed to work to support their families (Legislature of South Carolina, 1919, No. 135, §12). Beginning in 1937, individuals were required to be in school from the ages of 7 to 16 for the full school year (Legislature of South Carolina, 1937, No. 344, §5).

In response to *Brown v. Board of Education*, from 1955 until 1974 there were no compulsory attendance policies in place in South Carolina (Legislature of South Carolina, 1955, No. 52, §6; Legislature of South Carolina, 1967, No. 131, §9). Visiting teachers could only attempt to persuade students to regularly attend school, but could not require them to do so. In 1974, the statewide compulsory schooling ages of 7 to 16 were reinstated, and individuals were able to leave school to support their families beginning at age 14 (Legislature of South Carolina, 1967, No. 131, §3, 9). Several years later, in 1979, the state legislature lowered the school starting age to 6, and in 1984 it became 5 (Legislature of South Carolina, 1979, No. 199, Part II, §25). Since SY 1996-97, South Carolina residents have been required to attend school from ages 5 to 17 (Legislature of South Carolina, 1993, No. 164, §29(C)).

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in Table 120.

Table 120: South Carolina–Compulsory Schooling Ages by Birth Cohort (1907-2024)

Birth Cohort	Start Age	Leaving Age	Duration
March 1907 - September 1929	9	14	6
October 1929 - February 1940	8	16	9
March 1940 - February 1941	8	15	8
March 1941 - February 1942	8	14	7
March 1942 - February 1943	8	13	6
March 1943 - February 1944	8	12	5
March 1944 - February 1945	8	11	4
March 1945 - February 1946	8	10	3
March 1946 - February 1947	8	9	2
March 1947 - August 1966	No Policy	No Policy	No Policy
September 1966 - August 1972 (potentially as early as September 1959)	8	16	9
September 1972 - August 1978	7	16	10
September 1978 - August 1980	6	16	11
September 1980 - Present	6	17	12

Source: Legislature of South Carolina (1915, 1937, 1955, 1967, 1979, 1984)

Note: Starting ages and leaving ages are established in the law. Starting ages are adjusted to reflect the age a person reaches during their first full year of compulsory schooling. Starting ages are therefore 1 year later than the age in law.

The 1915 law established that the “period of compulsory attendance shall commence at the beginning of the school term nearest to the eighth birthday of such child, and shall cover the compulsory period of six consecutive school years thereafter” in South Carolina (Legislature of South Carolina, 1915, No. 98, §1). This language suggests that the enrollment deadline during this period was March 1, since this date is six months from the beginning of the school year. We interpret the starting age as 9, since individuals would reach that age during their first year in school. Individuals ages 14 to 16 who were not employed were also required to attend school, effectively making the leaving age 16 (Legislature of South Carolina, 1915, No. 98, §4). The law was effective for school year (SY) 1915-16, and would have first affected people born in March 1907. The 1919 law removed the requirement for unemployed individuals aged 14 to 16 to also attend school, thereby making the leaving age 14 (Legislature of South Carolina, 1919, §1). The oldest cohort affected by the 1919 policy is also from March 1907. These individuals would have been the first in South Carolina required to begin school in the year that they turned 9 and to finish school when they turned 14 years old. They would not have been required to attend school until age 16, as the 1915 law originally specified.

The 1937 reform stipulated that the school enrollment period ended 30 days after the start of the school year. We assume that the school year begins September 1, and that the [effective school year for enrollment](#) therefore began October 1 during this period. The 1937 policy introduced a lower starting age of 7, which means students would reach age 8 during their first year of school (Legislature of South Carolina, 1937, No. 344, §5). The oldest cohort affected by the policy would have been people born in October 1929, who would have started in SY 1937-38, the year that they reached age 8.

The suspension of South Carolina’s compulsory schooling laws was effective immediately upon the law’s passage in March 1955 (Legislature of South Carolina, 1955, No. 52, §2, 6). The law had a staggered effect on compulsory schooling ages. The first cohort affected was born starting in March 1940. They were 15 years old when the law was passed, and therefore were able to be done with school 1 year earlier than they would have under the 1937 policy. For each birth year afterwards, the leaving age and duration decreased by one year; for example, students born in March 1941 only needed to attend school until they reached age 14 in the spring of 1955, while students born in March 1942 only needed to attend until they reached age 13. The earliest leaving age resulting from the suspension of compulsory schooling laws would have been age 10 for those students born in March 1946. Individuals born between March 1947 and August 1966 would not have been required to attend school at all.

The 1967 law reintroduced compulsory schooling requirements in South Carolina, with a starting age of 7 (which we interpret as 8) and a leaving age of 16 (Legislature of South Carolina, 1967, No. 131, §9). The act required compulsory schooling to be implemented in each school district no later than July 1, 1974, and noted that districts were able to choose a different effective date for the act’s provisions if necessary. The ability for districts to choose when to adopt this policy means that changes may have been observed beginning in SY 1967-1968, and therefore the reform could have affected people born as early as September 1959. The last cohort affected by the law’s gradual implementation reached age 8 in SY 1974-1975. This cohort was born as early as September 1966.

The 1979 reform set an effective enrollment date of September 1, which remains in place today. The policy also lowered the starting age to 6, thereby increasing duration from 9 to 10 years (Legislature of South Carolina, 1979, No. 199, Part II, Division II, Subdivision A, Subpart 3, §2(C)). The law would have first impacted students turning 7 years old in 1979, which were those individuals who were born beginning in September 1972.

South Carolina’s 1984 compulsory schooling policy changed the starting age to 5 (Legislature of South Carolina, 1979, No. 199, Part II, §25). Those first affected were born in September 1978, since they would have reached age 6 during SY 1984-1985.

The 1993 reform raised the leaving age to 17, increasing duration from 11 to 12 years (Legislature of South Carolina, 1967, No. 131, §29(C)). The changes were effective starting in SY 1996-97. Individuals who were born between September 1980 and August 1981 and who turned 16 years old in SY 1996-97 were the first affected. This cohort would need to stay in school for 1 additional year.

Comparison with Existing Analyses

There are several differences between the compulsory schooling ages in South Carolina identified through our research and those identified by other authors.

First, Lleras-Muney (2002) identifies 1916 rather than 1915 as the year of South Carolina’s first compulsory schooling policy. Second, the author reports 1921 as the year in which the leaving age decreased from 16 to 14 in South Carolina, while we find this reform occurred in 1919. This discrepancy leads to a difference in birth cohort calculations. Our dating of reforms leads us to conclude that individuals born from September 1906 were impacted by both the introduction of compulsory education and the reduction in school leaving age from 16 to 14. The alternative reform date leads Lleras-Muney to identify different cohorts: cohorts born September 1906 - August 1907 would

have been able to leave school at age 15, while cohorts born from September 1907 were able to leave school at age 14. Additionally, Lleras-Muney identifies 1939 as the year in which the starting age becomes 7, while we find the reform was enacted in 1937 and effective from SY 1937-38. Under this definition, the first affected cohort would be two years later (September 1931 rather than September 1929). These differences may be attributable to different references: Lleras-Muney used the Biennial Survey of Education, and we use state legislation.

Angrist and Krueger (1991) report that there was no compulsory schooling policy in place in 1960, and noted that the school leaving age was 16 in 1970 and 1980. We find that there was no policy in place in 1960 and 1970, and agree that the leaving age was 16 in 1980.

Work Permits

South Carolina first established a full-time work permit age of 14 in 1915. Since 1974, the full-time employment age has been 16, and the vacation and hardship employment ages have been 14.

Key Dates

First law: 1915

Major changes since 1915: 1919, 1974

South Carolina's first child labor law in 1903 only applied to factories, mines, and textile manufacturing, and established a minimum employment age of 10 in these industries (Legislature of South Carolina, 1903, No. 74, §1). Later, in 1915, a full-time employment age of 14 was enacted for all industries, and the state legislature specified that people needed to be able to read and write in English to work (Legislature of South Carolina, 1915, No. 98, §4). These provisions remained in place until the federal [Fair Labor Standards Act](#) required that all states adopt, at minimum, a full-time employment age of 16 and a vacation employment age of 14 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023).

[Table 121](#) and [Table 122](#) note South Carolina's changes to minimum literacy requirements and work permit ages since 1915.

Table 121: South Carolina–Work Permit Literacy Requirements (1915-2024)

Effective Date	Minimum Literacy
July 1915 - September 1938	Ability to read and write in English
From October 1938	.

Source: Legislature of South Carolina (1915) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

Table 122: South Carolina–Work Permit Minimum Ages (1915-2024)

Effective Date	Full-Time	Part-Time	Vacation	Hardship
July 1915 - February 1919	14	.	14	.
March 1919 - June 1937	14	.	14	12
July 1937 - September 1938	14	.	14	.
October 1938 - June 1974	16	.	14	.
From July 1974	16	.	14	14

Source: Legislature of South Carolina (1915, 1919, 1937, 1967) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in [Table 123](#).

Table 123: South Carolina–Full-time Work Permit Ages by Birth Cohort (1901-2024)

Birth Cohort	Full-Time Permit Age
July 1901 - September 1924	14
October 1924 - Present	16

Source: Legislature of South Carolina (1915) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

The work permit age increased from 14 to 16 starting in October 1938 with the passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023). People who were 14 years old in October 1938, who were born in October 1924, would have been the first cohort affected by this policy change. Unlike older cohorts who were able to leave school at age 14 to start work full-time, the 1924 birth cohort needed to wait 2 additional years to do so.

34. South Dakota

School Attendance

South Dakota's first compulsory schooling policy in 1883 required that individuals ages 10 to 14 attend school. Throughout the twentieth century, a number of revisions to the compulsory schooling ages took place in South Dakota. The 2007 law established compulsory schooling for individuals ages 6 to 18, which remains in place today.

Key Dates

First law: 1883

Major changes since 1883: 1891, 1907, 1915, 1921, 1941, 1985, 1990, 2007

South Dakota first adopted a compulsory attendance policy in 1883, when the state legislature required that individuals aged 10 to 14 years attend school for a minimum of 12 weeks per year, 6 of which had to be consecutive (Territory of Dakota Legislature, 1883, Chapter 44, §119). People were exempted if they resided more than 2 miles from the closest school. In 1891, the state legislature amended this policy so that individuals aged 8 to 14 were required to attend school (South Dakota State Legislature, 1891, Chapter 56.VII, §1). The time period that people needed to remain in school soon increased, so that 8 weeks of consecutive attendance were required by 1901 and the full school year was required by 1907 (South Dakota State Legislature, 1901, Chapter 113.VII, §1; South Dakota State Legislature, 1907, Chapter 135.VII, §148). Some flexibility was introduced in 1907, however, with the state legislature granting local school district boards the authority to decrease the required attendance term to 16 weeks. The school leaving age increased to 16 in 1915, and students were able to test out after the 8th grade (South Dakota State Legislature, 1915, Chapter 170, §148). The local authority of school boards also changed that year: while attendance was mandated for the full school year through the 6th grade, districts could decrease the required term of attendance to 16 continuous weeks for either the 7th and 8th grades or until the individual reached 16 years of age. In 1921, the school leaving age increased to 17 (South Dakota State Legislature, 1921, Chapter 199, §1). Later, in 1941, South Dakota's compulsory schooling ages changed to 7 to 16 (South Dakota State Legislature, 1941, Chapter 65, §1). In 1985, the starting age became 6, and a provision was added stating that if individuals were enrolled in school prior to age 6, then they were subject to compulsory schooling requirements as well (South Dakota State Legislature, 1985, Chapter 129, §7). Beginning in 1990, individuals who had completed the 8th grade were only able to be exempt from compulsory schooling requirements if they were a member of a religious denomination that objected to public schooling and provided an alternative educational program (South Dakota State Legislature, 1990, Chapter 126, §2). Since 2007, students in South Dakota have been required to attend school from ages 6 to 18. They are able to leave earlier if they have graduated or, since 2009, if they have received their GED (South Dakota State Legislature, 2007, Chapter 98, §1; South Dakota State Legislature, 2009, Chapter 83, §§1, 3).

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the birth cohorts and dates reported in Table 124.

Table 124: South Dakota–Compulsory Schooling Ages by Birth Cohort (1907–2024)

Birth Cohort	Start Age	Leaving Age	Duration
January 1900 ^a - August 1901	9	14	6
September 1901 - August 1905	9	16	8
September 1905 - August 1925	9	17	9
September 1925 - August 1933	9	16	8
September 1933 - September 1978	8	16	9
October 1978 - August 1991	7	16	10
September 1991 - Present (December 2024)	7	18	12

Source: South Dakota State Legislature (1891, 1915, 1921, 1941, 1985, 2007)

Notes: Starting ages and leaving ages are established in the law. The starting ages shown in the table are adjusted to reflect the age an individual reaches by the end of their first school year. Starting ages are therefore 1 year later than the age in the law. Compulsory schooling duration is imputed based on start age and leaving age.

^a Not a cohort birth year associated with a reform. The starting date for birth cohorts is January 1900 to reflect the population represented in the Health and Retirement Study.

In 1939, the enrollment age deadline for school entry in South Dakota was September 1 (South Dakota State Legislature, 1939, Chapter

40, §1). We apply this deadline to previous policies to facilitate cohort calculations. In 1978, the enrollment deadline changed to October 1, and returned to September 1 beginning in school year (SY) 1979-80 (South Dakota State Legislature, 1978, Chapter 112, §1).

For cohorts born in 1900, schooling in South Dakota was compulsory from age 8 to 14 (Territory of Dakota Legislature, 1883, Chapter 44, §119). We adjust the starting age forward by one year to reflect the age achieved during the first year of compulsory schooling.

The 1915 policy, effective for SY 1915-16 increased the school leaving age to 16 (South Dakota State Legislature, 1915, Chapter 170, §148). The first cohort affected by this change was born in September 1901. These individuals turned 14 years old when the reform was passed in 1914, and now needed to remain in school an additional 2 years.

In 1921, the school leaving age increased to 17, effective for SY 1921-22 (South Dakota State Legislature, 1921, Chapter 199, §1). This reform first impacted people born September 1905. At the time of the law's passage, they turned 16 years old, and now needed to stay in school for 1 additional year.

The 1941 reform was approved February of that year, which we interpret as first affecting students in SY 1941-42. The reform both lowered the school starting age to 7 (which we report as 8 in our tables per our convention of using the age at the end of the school year) and lowered the school leaving age to 16 (South Dakota State Legislature, 1941, Chapter 65, §1). This change affected two separate birth cohorts. The first group impacted was born in September 1925. When the 1941 policy was passed, these individuals were 16 years old. Whereas previously, they would have needed to remain in school until age 17, now they were no longer subject to compulsory schooling requirements. The duration this cohort needed to attend school dropped to 8 years. The second cohort affected by this reform were those born in September 1933, who turned age 8 in SY 1941-1942. The duration this cohort needed to attend school was 9 years.

The 1985 reform was approved March of that year, which we interpret as first affecting students in SY 1985-86. The policy lowered the starting age to 6 (which we report as 7) (South Dakota State Legislature, 1985, Chapter 129, §7). This reform first affected those born October 1978, who turned 8 years old in SY 1985-86.

South Dakota's 2007 compulsory schooling policy increased the school leaving age to 18 for SY 2007-08 (South Dakota State Legislature, 2007, Chapter 98, §1). The first cohort affected was born in September 1991. They were 16 years old in SY 2007-08, and now needed to remain in school for 2 additional years.

Comparison with Existing Analyses

There are limited differences between the compulsory schooling ages in South Dakota identified through our research and those identified by other authors.

Lleras-Muney (2002) notes that the school leaving age increased from 16 to 17 in 1924, suggesting that the first cohort affected by this policy change was born in 1908. However, our research indicates that this change occurred in 1921, and that the first impacted cohort was born in 1905. This discrepancy is likely because Lleras-Muney relied on the federal Biennial Survey of Education for their data, whereas our cohort calculations are based on the specific years stated in the legislation.

Angrist and Krueger (1991) report school leaving ages by state in 1960, 1970, and 1980. According to Angrist and Krueger's data, the school leaving age in South Dakota was 16 in all three of their reported years. This is consistent with our understanding of the law.

Work Permits

Starting in 1891, individuals in South Dakota as young as age 8 were able to work rather than attend school. Since 1991, South Dakota's full-time work permit age has been 16, and its part-time and vacation work permit ages have been 14.

Key Dates

First law: 1891

Major changes since 1891: 1907, 1921, 1923, 1938, 1991

South Dakota's first child labor law was passed in 1891. It stipulated that no individual between the ages of 8 and 14 could work during school hours unless they had a certificate demonstrating that they had attended school for the time required in the previous year (South Dakota State Legislature, 1891, Chapter 56.VII, §3). In 1907, a full-time employment age of 15 was formally established, and there were no longer any minimum literacy requirements in place (South Dakota State Legislature, 1907, Chapter 135.VII, §150). In 1921, the South Dakota state legislature determined that if there was the need for students to be absent from school to support their families, then the child could work; however, no age for this hardship permit was specified (South Dakota State Legislature, 1921, Chapter 199, §1). The full-time work permit age decreased to 14 in 1923 (South Dakota State Legislature, 1923, Chapter 308, §2). With the passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act in 1938, the full-time work permit age became 16 and a vacation work permit age of 14 was established (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023). From 1973 until 1991 South Dakota again had minimum literacy requirements in place for child labor: individuals could not be employed unless they could read and write in English or had attended school for the time required in the previous year (South Dakota State Legislature, 1973, Chapter 303, §2; South Dakota State Legislature, 1991, Chapter 411, §3). The most recent change to South Dakota's child labor laws was in 1991, when a part-time work permit age of 14 was established (South Dakota State Legislature, 1991, Chapter 411, §1).

Table 125 and Table 126 report South Dakota's changes to work permit minimum literacy requirements and work permit ages since 1915.

Table 125: South Dakota–Work Permit Literacy Requirements (1891-2024)

Effective Date	Minimum Literacy
March 1891 - May 1907	Satisfactory school attendance
June 1907 - June 1973	.
July 1973 - March 1991	Ability to read and write in English or satisfactory school attendance
April 1991 - Present (December 2024)	.

Source: South Dakota State Legislature (1891, 1907, 1973, 1991)

Table 126: South Dakota–Work Permit Minimum Ages (1891-2024)

Effective Date	Full-Time	Part-Time	Vacation	Hardship
March 1891 - May 1907	8	.	.	.
June 1907 - April 1923	15	.	.	.
May 1923 - September 1938	14	.	.	.
October 1938 - March 1991	16	.	14	.
April 1991 - Present (December 2024)	16	14	14	.

Source: South Dakota State Legislature (1891, 1907, 1923, 1991) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the birth cohorts and dates reported in Table 127.

Table 127: South Dakota–Full-time Work Permit Ages by Birth Cohort (1900-2024)

Birth Cohort	Full-Time Permit Age
January 1900 ^a - April 1909	15
May 1909 - September 1924	14
October 1924 - Present (December 2024) (potentially as early as October 1922) ^b	16

Source: South Dakota State Legislature (1907, 1923) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

Notes:

^a Not a cohort birth year associated with a reform. The starting date for birth cohorts is January 1900 to reflect the population represented in the Health and Retirement Study.

^b The first cohort fully affected by this reform was born in October 1924 and needed to wait 2 additional years to work. Cohorts born as early as October 1922 may also have been partially affected.

In 1900, South Dakota's minimum work permit age was 15 (South Dakota State Legislature, 1907, Chapter 135.VII, §150).

The full-time work permit age became 14 in May 1923 (South Dakota State Legislature, 1923, Chapter 308, §2). This change first impacted people who were born in May 1909. Previously, these individuals would have been able to work beginning at age 15; now, they were able to work 1 year earlier.

The passage of FLSA in October 1938 raised the full-time work permit age to 16 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023). This change first fully impacted those who were 14 years old when FLSA became effective. These individuals now needed to wait 2 additional years before they could leave school to work. While this cohort, born starting in October 1924, was the first fully affected by the reform, cohorts born as early as October 1922 may also have been partially affected.

35. Tennessee

School Attendance

Tennessee's first statewide compulsory schooling law in 1913 required individuals ages 8 to 14 to attend school. Since 1997, Tennessee's compulsory schooling law requires school attendance for people between the ages of 6 and 17.

Key Dates

First law: 1905

Major changes since 1905: 1913, 1919, 1947, 1949, 1976, 1992, 1997

Tennessee's first compulsory attendance law was passed in 1905, but it only mandated attendance for individuals aged 8 to 14 in Union and Claiborne Counties (Tennessee State Legislature, 1905, Chapter 483, §1). By 1913, the legislature required school attendance for individuals ages 8 to 14 across the state, and required that they be in school for 80 consecutive days (Tennessee State Legislature, 1913, Chapter 9, §1). The law further specified that if people ages 14 to 16 were not regularly employed, then they were still required to attend school, effectively making the leaving age 16 (Tennessee State Legislature, 1913, §Chapter 9, §1). Exemptions were granted if the child lived over 2 miles away from the nearest school or if they had completed the eighth grade (Tennessee State Legislature, 1913, Chapter 9, §2). In 1919, the law changed to require attendance for people ages 7 to 16, and mandated that they attend school for the full academic year (Tennessee State Legislature, 1919, Chapter 143, §1). A 1947 amendment granted exemptions to individuals who lived 3 miles away from the nearest school or who had graduated (Tennessee State Legislature, 1947, Chapter 87, §3). In response to *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Tennessee state legislature passed a bill modifying compulsory attendance laws in 1957, allowing parents to withdraw their children from school if they felt that their wellbeing was at risk; however, then-Governor Frank Clement vetoed the measure (Southern Education Reporting Service, 1957). More recently, a 1992 law increased the leaving age to 17, and a 1997 policy lowered the school starting age to 6 (Tennessee State Legislature, 1992, Chapter 535, §78; Tennessee State Legislature, 1997, Chapter 392, §2).

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in Table 128.

Table 128: Tennessee–Compulsory Schooling Ages by Birth Cohort (1905-2024)

Birth Cohort	Start Age	Leaving Age	Duration
January 1905 - December 1911	9	16	8
January 1912 - September 1976	8	16	9
October 1976 - September 1990	8	17	10
October 1990 - Present	7	17	11

Source: Tennessee State Legislature (1913, 1919, 1992, 1997)

Note: Starting ages and leaving ages are established in the law. Starting ages are adjusted to reflect the age a person reaches during their first full year of compulsory schooling. Starting ages are therefore 1 year later than the age in law.

In 1947, the state legislature specified that students needed to be enrolled “on or before December 31st” (Tennessee State Legislature, 1947, Chapter 87, §1). Since earlier compulsory schooling legislation does not specify an enrollment deadline, we operate under the assumption that the December 31 date applies to previous policy when calculating birth cohorts.

The 1913 reform established a starting age of 8 and an effective leaving age of 16 (Tennessee State Legislature, 1913, Chapter 9, §1). This reform was first applicable for SY 1914-15. Since students would turn 9 years old during their first year in school, we set the starting age as 9. The first group of individuals impacted by this policy would have been born during 1905.

The 1919 policy lowered the starting age by one year (Tennessee State Legislature, 1919, Chapter 143, §1). Individuals who turned 8 years old during SY 1919-1920, who were born in January 1912, would have been the first affected by this change.

Starting in 1968, the [effective school year for enrollment](#) began on September 30 (Tennessee State Legislature, 1965, Chapter 303, §1). In 1992, the Tennessee state legislature raised the leaving age to 17, thereby increasing the duration from 9 to 10 years (Tennessee State Legislature, 1992, Chapter 535, §78). This reform first affected people who were born starting in October 1976 and who turned 16 years old during SY 1992-93. This cohort was now required to complete an additional year of schooling.

The 1997 reform again lowered the starting age by one year – if an individual reached age 6 by September 30, they needed to enroll in the current SY (Tennessee State Legislature, 1997, Chapter 392, §2). This policy would have first affected individuals born in October 1990, who were at least age 6 on September 30, 1997, and who turned 7 during SY 1997-98.

Comparison with Existing Analyses

There are several differences between the compulsory schooling ages in Tennessee identified through our research and those identified by other authors.

Comparing our data to that collected by Lleras-Muney (2002), several differences emerge. First, whereas we identified 1919 as the year in which the starting age lowered to 7, Lleras-Muney identified 1921 as the year in which this change occurred. According to Lleras-Muney, the first cohort impacted by this policy would have been born in September 1913 rather than September 1911. In addition, the dataset from Lleras-Muney records the starting age as increasing to 8 in 1939, so the first cohort affected by this reform would have been born in September 1931. In our review of Tennessee’s compulsory schooling laws, we did not find any evidence that this change took place. The first discrepancy is likely because Lleras-Muney relied on the federal Biennial Survey of Education for their data, whereas we have directly examined the legislation for each year.

Angrist and Krueger (1991) report a school leaving age of 17 in 1960 and 1970, and 16 in 1980, corresponding to cohorts born in 1944, 1954, and 1964 respectively. They also note that the school leaving age increased to 17 in 1983. We identify a leaving age of 16 during these periods. These differences are likely because Angrist and Krueger relied on Census records for their data, while we reviewed each year’s legislation.

Work Permits

The first legislation on child labor in Tennessee was enacted in 1911, establishing a full-time work permit age of 14. Since the passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act in 1938, the full-time employment age has been 16 and the vacation employment age has been 14.

Key Dates

First law: 1911

Major changes since 1911: 1938, 1961, 1976

Tennessee began to regulate child labor in 1911, banning employment for people under the age of 14 during school hours (Tennessee State Legislature, 1911, Chapter 57, §1, 2). In 1938, following the adoption of the [Fair Labor Standards Act](#), the full-time work permit age was raised to 16 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023). In 1949, the state started to require a satisfactory schooling record to receive a work permit (Tennessee State Legislature, 1949, Chapter 201, §9(c)). A part-time work permit age of 14 was introduced in 1961, but the state legislature stopped granting part-time work permits in 1976 (Tennessee State Legislature, 1961, Chapter 161, §1; Tennessee State Legislature, 1976, Chapter 480, §4).

See [Table 129](#) and [Table 130](#) for changes to minimum literacy requirements and work permit ages over time.

Table 129: Tennessee–Work Permit Literacy Requirements (1949–2024)

Effective Date	Minimum Literacy
From April 1949	Satisfactory school record

Source: Tennessee State Legislature (1949)

Table 130: Tennessee–Work Permit Minimum Ages (1911–2024)

Effective Date	Full-Time	Part-Time	Vacation	Hardship
July 1911 - September 1938	14	.	14	.
October 1938 - February 1961	16	.	14	.
March 1961 - February 1976	16	14	14	.
From March 1976	16	.	14	.

Source: Tennessee State Legislature (1911, 1961, 1976) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in [Table 131](#).

Table 131: Tennessee–Full-time Work Permit Ages by Birth Cohort (1900–2024)

Birth Cohort	Full-Time Permit Age
January 1900 - September 1924	14
October 1924 - Present	16

Source: Tennessee State Legislature (1911) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

The original full-time employment age in Tennessee was 14 in 1911 (Tennessee State Legislature, 1911, Chapter 57, §1, 2).

When the Fair Labor Standards Act became effective in October 1938, the full-time work permit age changed to 16 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023). People who were born in October 1924 and were 14 years old at the time would have been the first cohort who needed to wait until age 16 to work.

36. Texas

School Attendance

Texas' first compulsory schooling law in 1916 required that individuals ages 8 to 14 attend school. Since 2015, Texas requires attendance for people between the ages of 6 and 19.

Key Dates

First law: 1915

Major changes since 1915: 1931, 1935, 1965, 1995, 1997, 2015

Texas passed its first compulsory school attendance law in 1915, specifying that there was to be a gradual increase in the length of the compulsory schooling for 3 consecutive years (1916, 1917, and 1918) (Texas Secretary of State, 1915, H.B. 402, §1). The policy required individuals between the ages of 8 and 14 to attend full-time school for 60 days, 80 days, and 100 days, respectively, in each of the 3 consecutive years beginning with the 1916 school year. In 1935, the compulsory schooling requirement increased the duration of compulsory schooling from 6 to 9 years starting from age 7 until age 16, and a 1965 amendment further increased the school leaving age to 17 (Gammel, 1935, S.B. 49, §1, 2; Texas Secretary of State, 1965, H.B. 51, §1). The school leaving age was decreased to 16 in 1984 and again increased to 17 in 1995 (Texas Secretary of State, 1985, H.B. 72, Article IV, Section E, §1; Texas Secretary of State, 1995, S.B. 1, Subchapter C, §25.085). The 1995 amendment also decreased the starting age by one year, making school attendance compulsory for all individuals between the ages of 6 and 17. The school leaving age in Texas gradually increased to 18 and 19 in 1997 and 2015 respectively (Texas Secretary of State, 1997, S.B. 247, §2; Legislature of the State of Texas, 2015, H.B. 2398, §7). Students who have completed the 12th grade or equivalent are not required to remain in school until the age of 19 (Legislature of the State of Texas, 2015, H.B. 2398, §7).

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in Table 132.

Table 132: Texas–Compulsory Schooling Ages by Birth Cohort (1906–2024)

Birth Cohort	Start Age	Leaving Age	Duration
September 1907 - August 1921	9	14	6
September 1921 - August 1927	9	16	8
September 1927 - August 1949	8	16	9
September 1949 - August 1967	8	17	10
September 1967 - August 1979	8	16	9
September 1979 - August 1980	7	17	11
September 1980 - Present	7	18	12

Source: Legislature of the State of Texas (2015) and Texas Secretary of State (1915, 1965, 1985, 1995, 1997)

Note: Starting ages and leaving ages are established in the law. Starting ages are adjusted to reflect the age a person reaches during their first full year of compulsory schooling. Starting ages are therefore 1 year later than the age in law.

The **effective school year for enrollment** in Texas lasts from September to August of the next year (Texas Secretary of State, 1915, H.B. 402, §1).

Texas's first compulsory schooling policy was passed in 1915 and was effective for school year (SY) 1916–17 (Texas Secretary of State, 1915, H.B. 402, §1). It sets a starting age of 8 (i.e., students reach age 9 during their first SY), and a leaving age of 14. This law would have first affected students who were born in September 1907.

The 1935 reform increased duration from 6 to 9 years, with a new starting age of 8 (i.e., students reach age 9 during their first SY) and a new leaving age of 16 (Gammel, 1935, S.B. 49, §1, 2). Individuals born starting in September 1921 who turned 14 during SY 1935–1936 would have been the first cohort that needed to stay in school until age 16. The next cohort affected by the 1935 policy would have been those born starting in September 1927, who would have been the first group to reach age 8 during SY 1935–36. The 1935 law required this cohort to attend school until age 16.

The 1965 policy change introduced a new leaving age of 17 (Texas Secretary of State, 1965, H.B. 51, §1). Individuals who were born starting in September 1949, who turned 16 years old in 1965, would have been the first group of students required to stay in school for an additional year.

The 1984 reform lowered the leaving age to 16, thereby reducing duration from 10 to 9 years (Texas Secretary of State, 1985, H.B. 72, Article IV, Section E, §1). Students born in September 1967 would have reached their 9th year of compulsory schooling in SY 1983-84, and would not be required to attend a tenth year.

The 1995 policy stipulated that people in Texas were now required to attend school beginning in the year that they reached age 7 until age 17 (Texas Secretary of State, 1995, S.B. 1, Subchapter C, §25.085). Individuals who were born in September 1979 and reached age 16 in SY 1995-96 would have been the first impacted by this change.

The leaving age was raised to 18 with the enactment of the 1997 reform (Texas Secretary of State, 1997, S.B. 247, §2). Individuals who were born starting September 1980 and who reached age 17 in 1997 would have been the first cohort required to stay in school for 12 years rather than 11 years.

Comparison with Existing Analyses

There are limited differences between the compulsory schooling ages in Texas identified through our research and those identified by other authors.

Lleras-Muney (2002) identifies the change in start and leaving age from ages 8 to 14 to ages 7 to 16 as occurring in 1939. We found that this policy was enacted in 1935. Consequently, the first cohort affected in Lleras-Muney would have been September 1925, four years later than the cohort we identify as first affected by this reform. This discrepancy is likely because Lleras-Muney relied on the federal Biennial Survey of Education for their data, whereas we have directly examined the legislation for each year.

Angrist and Krueger (1991) report a school leaving age of 16 in 1960 and a leaving age of 17 in 1970 and 1980, corresponding to cohorts born in 1944, 1954, and 1964 respectively. This is consistent with our findings.

Work Permits

Texas's first child labor law established a hardship permit age of 12 in 1916. Since 1984, the state has only had a full-time work permit age of 16 and a vacation work permit age of 14.

Key Dates

First law: 1916

Major changes since 1916: 1938, 1963, 1984

The state of Texas does not explicitly provide exemptions from compulsory school attendance for employed students. However, the state's education policy includes an exemption for people who need to work due to financial hardships. These financial hardship work permits have included a minimum schooling requirement since the first iteration of the Compulsory Schooling Act in 1916. The 1916 policy allowed for financial hardship permits for individuals over the age of 12 with at least a 4th grade education (Texas Secretary of State, 1915, H.B. 402, §2). By 1923, a 7th grade education was required, and by 1945, a 9th grade education (Texas Secretary of State, 1923, S.B. 257, §2; Gammel, 1945, H.B. 630, §2). In addition to hardship work permits, the state established a vocational training program in 1973, which allows people over the age of 15 to be employed during school hours (Texas Secretary of State, 1973, H.B. 365, §1). Beginning in 1984, Texas no longer provides hardship work permits (Texas Secretary of State, 1985, H.B. 72, Part E, §2). The Texas Department of Education currently does not define work permit ages, but does allow individuals over the age of 14 to be employed in compliance with federal labor regulations. The Texas Department of Labor uses guidelines established by the Federal government's [Fair Labor Standards Act](#) for regulations on minimum employment ages for full-time and vacation work permits (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023).

For changes to financial hardship work permit literacy requirements and eligibility ages, see [Table 133](#) and [Table 134](#).

Table 133: Texas–Work Permit Literacy Requirements (1916–2024)

Effective Date	Minimum Literacy
September 1916 - May 1923	Completion of grade 4
June 1923 - April 1945	Completion of grade 7
May 1945 - August 1982	Completion of grade 9
From September 1982	Satisfactory schooling record

Source: Gammel (1945) and Texas Secretary of State (1915, 1923, 1981)

Table 134: Texas–Work Permit Minimum Ages (1916–2024)

Effective Date	Full-Time	Part-Time	Vacation	Hardship
September 1916 - September 1938	.	.	.	12
October 1938 - July 1963	16	.	14	12
August 1963 - August 1984	16	.	14	14
From September 1984	16	.	14	.

Source: Texas Secretary of State (1915, 1963, 1973, 1985) and U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in [Table 135](#).

Table 135: Texas–Full-time Work Permit Ages by Birth Cohort (1922–2024)

Birth Cohort	Full-Time Permit Age
October 1922 - Present	16

Source: U.S. Department of Labor (2023)

The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 first established a full-time employment age of 16 in Texas (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023). This policy change first impacted individuals born beginning in October 1922, who turned 16 years old at the time of the law's implementation.

37. Vermont

School Attendance

Vermont passed its first compulsory schooling policy in 1867 and required people ages 8 to 14 to attend. After a number of revisions to the compulsory schooling ages through the twentieth century, the 2000 law established compulsory schooling for individuals ages 6 to 16, which remains in place today.

Key Dates

First law: 1867

Major changes since 1867: 1894, 1910, 1945, 2000

Vermont's earliest compulsory attendance law was passed in 1867 which required individuals ages 8 to 14 to attend school for 12 weeks per year (Vermont State Legislature, 1867, Act 35, §1). Exemptions were granted to individuals who had already learned the material required in the compulsory schooling curriculum. The Vermont state legislature gradually increased the length of the academic year over time. It became 20 weeks in 1889, 26 weeks in 1894, and eventually the full academic year in 1915 (Vermont State Legislature, 1888, Chapter 8, §153; Vermont State Legislature, 1894, Act 26, §1; Vermont State Legislature, 1915, Act 64, §50). The leaving age increased to 15 in 1894, and to 16 in 1910 (Vermont State Legislature, 1894, Act 26, §1; Vermont State Legislature, 1910, Act 69, §2). In 1935, individuals became exempt from compulsory schooling if they had completed 8th grade (Vermont State Legislature, 1935, Act 89, §4). The Vermont state legislature lowered the starting age to 7 in 1945 (Vermont State Legislature, 1945, Act 69, §1). The 1965 reform established that individuals are exempt from compulsory schooling requirements if they complete 10th grade (Vermont State Legislature, 1965, Act 46, §1). In 2000, the starting age lowered to 6 (Vermont State Legislature, 2000, Act 113, §3).

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the birth cohorts and dates reported in Table 136.

Table 136: Vermont–Compulsory Schooling Ages by Birth Cohort (1867–2024)

Birth Cohort	Start Age	Leaving Age	Duration
January 1900 ^a - December 1938	9 ^b	16	8
January 1939- December 1994	8 ^b	16	9
January 1995- Present (December 2024)	7 ^b	16	10

Source: Vermont State Legislature (1867, 1894, 1910, 1945, 2000)

Notes: Starting ages and leaving ages are established in the law. The starting ages shown in the table are adjusted to reflect the age an individual reaches by the end of their first school year. Starting ages are therefore 1 year later than the age in the law. Compulsory schooling duration is imputed based on start age and leaving age.

^a Not a cohort birth year associated with a reform. The starting date for birth cohorts is January 1900 to reflect the population represented in the Health and Retirement Study.

^b For school cohorts grouped based on a calendar year enrollment deadline, students with birthdays after the start of the school year (i.e., September–December) will be 1 year younger at the end of their first school year.

Vermont first specified an enrollment age deadline for school entry in 1915, determining that individuals needed to reach the school starting age by January 1st (Vermont State Legislature, 1915, Act 64, Chapter 3, §47). We apply this cutoff date to the previous school years to facilitate cohort calculations.

For cohorts born in 1900, schooling in Vermont was compulsory from age 8 to 16 (Vermont State Legislature, 1910, Act 69, §2). We adjust the starting age forward by one year to reflect the age achieved during the first year of compulsory schooling.

The 1945 reform was effective July of that year, which we interpret as first affecting students in school year (SY) 1946–47. The reform lowered the starting age to 7, thereby increasing the compulsory schooling duration from 8 years to 9 years (Vermont State Legislature, 1945, Act 69, §1). The oldest affected individuals are those born from January 1939 who would have reached age 8 during SY 1946–47 (individuals born from September to December 1939 would only have reached age 7).

The 2000 reform was effective July of that year, which we interpret as first affecting students in school year (SY) 1946–47. The reform lowered the starting age to 6 years, increasing the compulsory schooling duration from 9 to 10 years (Vermont State Legislature,

2000, Act 113, §3). The oldest affected individuals are those born from January 1995 who would have reached age 7 during SY 2001-02 (individuals born from September to December 1995 would only have reached age 6).

Comparison with Existing Analyses

There are no differences between the compulsory schooling ages in Vermont identified through our research and those identified by other authors.

From 1915 to 1939, Lleras-Muney (2002) reports a school starting age of 8 and a school leaving age of 16. These ages are consistent with our findings.

Angrist and Krueger (1991) report a school leaving age of 16 in 1960, 1970, and 1980, corresponding to cohorts born in 1944, 1954, and 1964 respectively. The school leaving ages calculated in our data are consistent with those reported by Angrist and Krueger.

Work Permits

Vermont's first child labor law in 1889 set a full-time employment age of 14. Since the passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act in 1938, the full-time work permit age has been 16 and the vacation work permit age has been 14.

Key Dates

First law: 1889

Major changes since 1889: 1915, 1937, 1938, 2001

Vermont began to regulate child labor in 1889 when the state legislature established that individuals age 14 could work if they were able to read or write in English (Vermont State Legislature, 1888, Act 9, §156). In 1915, a hardship work permit age of 15 was established but by 1935 it was no longer in place (Vermont State Legislature, 1915, Act 64, §52; Vermont State Legislature, 1935, Act 89, §4). By 1937, to be able to work full-time, the commissioner of industries needed to review and approve an individual's schooling record and his attendance during the last school year (Vermont State Legislature, 1937, Act 176, §§1, 2). In 1938, Vermont began to follow child labor requirements established by the Fair Labor Standards Act which created a national minimum full-time work permit age of 16 and a vacation work permit age of 14 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023) in 1938. As of 2001, individuals under 16 must complete eighth grade to obtain a full-time work permit (Vermont State Legislature, 2001, Act 68, §432(3)).

For a complete list of changes to work permit minimum literacy requirements and work permit ages over time, see [Table 137](#) and [Table 138](#).

Table 137: Vermont–Work Permit Literacy Requirements (1889–2024)

Effective Date	Minimum Literacy
July 1889– March 1937	Ability to read or write in English
April 1937– June 2001	Satisfactory school record and satisfactory attendance
July 2001 – Present (December 2024)	Completion of eighth grade

Source: Vermont State Legislature (1888, 1937, 2001)

Table 138: Vermont–Work Permit Minimum Ages (1911–2024)

Effective Date	Full-Time	Part-Time	Vacation	Hardship
July 1889 – June 1915	14	.	.	.
July 1915– June 1935	14	.	.	15
July 1935– September 1937	14	.	.	.
October 1938 – Present (December 2024)	16	.	14	.

Source: U.S. Department of Labor (2023) and Vermont State Legislature (1888, 1915, 1935)

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the birth cohorts and dates reported in [Table 139](#).

Table 139: Vermont–Full-time Work Permit Ages by Birth Cohort (1889–2024)

Birth Cohort	Full-Time Permit Age
January 1900 ^a – September 1924	14
October 1924 – Present (December 2024) (potentially as early as October 1922) ^b	16

Source: U.S. Department of Labor (2023) and Vermont State Legislature (1888)

Notes:

^a Not a cohort birth year associated with a reform. The starting date for birth cohorts is January 1900 to reflect the population represented in the Health and Retirement Study.

^b The first cohort fully affected by this reform was born in October 1924 and needed to wait 2 additional years to work. Cohorts born as early as October 1922 may also have been partially affected.

In the early 20th century, the full-time work permit age in Vermont was 14 (Vermont State Legislature, [1888](#), Act 9, §156).

The passage of FLSA in October 1938 raised the full-time work permit age to 16 (U.S. Department of Labor, [2023](#)). This change first fully impacted those who were 14 years old when FLSA became effective. These individuals now needed to wait 2 additional years before they could leave school to work. While this cohort, born starting in October 1924, was the first fully affected by the reform, cohorts born as early as October 1922 may also have been partially affected.

38. Virginia

School Attendance

Virginia's first compulsory schooling law, passed in 1908, required school attendance for people ages 8 to 12. The state's current compulsory schooling law requires school attendance for individuals ages 5 to 18.

Key Dates

First law: 1908

Major changes since 1908: 1918, 1920, 1922, 1928, 1948, 1952, 1976, 1989

The state of Virginia established guidelines for compulsory school attendance in 1908, recommending that counties mandate school attendance for 12 weeks of the academic year for people between the ages of 8 and 12 (Virginia State Legislature, 1908, Chapter 364, §1). The legislation exempted individuals who were able to read and write and those residing more than 2 miles from the nearest school. This policy was only enforced in counties, cities, and towns that voted to implement the act. The first statewide compulsory schooling mandate, also applying to individuals ages 8 to 12, was not passed until 1918 (Virginia State Legislature, 1918, Chapter 412, §1). The mandate was repealed in 1920, and subsequently re-enacted in 1922, adjusting the school leaving age such that attendance was mandatory for all people between the ages of 8 and 14 (Virginia State Legislature, 1920a, Chapter 87, §1; Virginia State Legislature, 1920b, Chapter 381, §1). The compulsory schooling age was changed to 7 to 15 in 1928, and rural school districts were authorized, but not required, to change the schooling age to 8 to 15 (Virginia State Legislature, 1928, Chapter 471, §1). An act passed in 1934 enabled, but did not mandate, all cities and districts to change the compulsory schooling age to 8 to 16 (Virginia State Legislature, 1934, Chapter 159, §1). The school leaving age was increased to 16 statewide in 1952 and to 17 in 1968 (Virginia State Legislature, 1952, Chapter 279, §1; Virginia State Legislature, 1968, Chapter 178, §1). Also in 1968, the starting age was lowered to 6 (Virginia State Legislature, 1968, Chapter 178, §1). In 1976, Virginia began to require school attendance for people between the ages of 5 and 17. Parents had the option to delay their child's enrollment for 1 year, until age 6, but in all other cases compulsory schooling began at age 5 (Virginia State Legislature, 1976, Chapter 681, §1). Since 1989, the school leaving age in Virginia has been 18 (Virginia State Legislature, 1989, Chapter 515, §1).

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in Table 140.

Table 140: Virginia–Compulsory Schooling Ages by Birth Cohort (1913–2024)

Birth Cohort	Start Age	Leaving Age	Duration
October 1913 - September 1920	9	15	7 ^{1,2}
October 1920 - September 1937	8	15	8 ²
October 1937 - September 1952 (potentially as early as October 1919)	8	16	9
October 1952 - September 1961	8	17	10
October 1961 - September 1970	7	17	11
October 1970 - September 1972	6	17	12
October 1972 - Present	6	18	13

Source: Virginia State Legislature (1918, 1920a, 1922, 1928, 1952, 1968, 1976, 1989)

Note: Starting ages and leaving ages are established in the law. Starting ages are adjusted to reflect the age a person reaches during their first full year of compulsory schooling. Starting ages are therefore 1 year later than the age in law.

¹ The introduction of compulsory schooling for individuals ages 8 to 12 in SY 1918–19 followed by its repeal shortly after in SY 1920–21 meant that there was no consistent statewide compulsory schooling age for people born before October 1913.

² A 1934 reform provided cities and districts with the option to increase their compulsory school leaving age from 15 to 16.

The [effective school year for enrollment](#) in Virginia begins September 30. This date was first formally specified in the 1968 compulsory schooling legislation (Virginia State Legislature, 1968, Chapter 178, §1). Since earlier compulsory schooling legislation does not specify an enrollment deadline, we operate under the assumption that the September 30 date applies to previous policy when calculating birth cohorts.

The 1918 reform required the entire state to adopt a starting age of 8 and a leaving age of 12 (Virginia State Legislature, 1918, Chapter 412, §1). This policy would have impacted individuals statewide who were born starting October 1909, who turned 9 years old during their first year of schooling in school year (SY) 1918–19. However, these same starting and leaving ages could be adopted voluntarily by

counties, cities, and towns in Virginia as early as SY 1908-1909. In areas that willingly made this change prior to the state mandate, individuals born October 1899 would have been the first affected.

The repeal of Virginia's compulsory schooling laws in 1920 influenced several cohorts born between October 1908 and September 1913 who otherwise would have been compulsorily enrolled for SY 1920-21 and SY 1921-22 (Virginia State Legislature, [1920a](#), Chapter 87, §1). Individuals born from October 1908 to September 1909 would have been the first group impacted by the reform. They turned 12 years old in what would have been their fourth year of schooling during SY 1920-21, but now were no longer required to attend school. Therefore, their duration in school would have been 4 years. People born from October 1912 to September 1913 would have been the last cohort impacted by the 1920 law. These individuals turned 9 years old during SY 1921-22 and would have been in their first year of schooling, but were not required to attend during this time. They would have finally started school in SY 1922-23, when they reached age 10, and would have attended for a duration of 5 years. Because the 1920 repeal of Virginia's compulsory schooling laws first affected individuals born as early as 1908, in practice there was never a statewide cohort whose leaving age was 12.

The reinstatement of Virginia's compulsory schooling laws in 1922 set a starting age of 8 and a leaving age of 14 (Virginia State Legislature, [1920b](#), Chapter 381, §1). We interpret this policy as effective for SY 1922-23. Individuals born from October 1913 would have been the first to start school at age 8.

The 1928 policy both lowered the starting age by 1 year to age 7 and raised the leaving age by 1 year to age 15, thereby increasing duration to 8 years after full implementation (Virginia State Legislature, [1928](#), Chapter 471, §1). This policy increased the duration of schooling from 6 to 7 years for people born between October 1914 and September 1920. They would have started school after reaching age 8 under the earlier policy but would not have completed 6 years by SY 1928-29 and so would have to remain in school for an additional year. Individuals born from October 1920 would have started school after reaching age 7 (reaching age 8 during their first SY) and been required to attend school for at least 8 years until age 15.

A 1934 reform provided cities and school districts with the option to raise the leaving age to 16, but they were not required to do so (Virginia State Legislature, [1934](#), Chapter 159, §1). This change would have first affected individuals born October 1919, who reached age 15 in SY 1934-35 and who would have needed to stay in school for 1 additional year.

The next statewide compulsory schooling reform in 1952 raised the leaving age to 16 (Virginia State Legislature, [1952](#), Chapter 279, §1). This change would have first affected individuals who were 15 years old during SY 1952-53, who were born starting October 1937 and who were required to stay in school for 1 additional year.

The 1968 reform lowered the starting age to 6 (i.e., reached age 7 during first compulsory SY) and increased the leaving age to 17 (Virginia State Legislature, [1968](#), Chapter 178, §1). The law would have first impacted students turning 16 in 1968, who needed to attend school for 1 more year. The policy would have then impacted people born from October 1961, requiring them to start in SY 1968-69. These individuals would have reached age 6 by the October 1968 enrollment cutoff and thus would have turned age 7 during their first year of compulsory schooling.

In 1976, the starting age was lowered to 5, increasing duration from 11 to 12 years (Virginia State Legislature, [1976](#), Chapter 681, §1). This change would have first affected students who were born in October 1970 and turned 6 years old in 1976.

The 1989 law raised the leaving age by 1 year, to 18 (Virginia State Legislature, [1989](#), Chapter 515, §1). The individuals first affected would have been born in October 1972 and would have been 17 years old in 1989.

Comparison with Existing Analyses

There are limited differences between the compulsory schooling ages in Virginia identified through our research and those identified by other authors.

Lleras-Muney ([2002](#)) identifies the change in the leaving age from 12 to 14 in 1923. We found this policy was enacted in 1922. This discrepancy is likely because Lleras-Muney relied on the federal Biennial Survey of Education for their data, whereas we have directly examined the legislation for each year.

Angrist and Krueger ([1991](#)) report a school leaving age of 16 in 1960 and 17 in 1970 and 1980, corresponding to cohorts born in 1944, 1954, and 1964 respectively. This is consistent with our findings.

Work Permits

Virginia first established a full-time, part-time, and vacation permit age of 14, as well as a vacation age of 12, in 1918. Since 1956, the state has had a full-time work permit age of 16, and a part-time and vacation work permit age of 14.

Key Dates

First law: 1914

Major changes since 1914: 1920, 1922, 1938, 1956

In 1914, the state of Virginia legislated child labor laws banning the employment of individuals under 14 during school hours, and restricting their employment outside of school hours to work outside of factories, workshops, mines, mercantile establishments, laundry, bakeries, and lumber yards (Virginia State Legislature, 1914, Chapter 339, §1). This law also required the use of employment certificates for people between the ages of 14 and 16, although no literacy requirements were placed on these certificates (Virginia State Legislature, 1914, Chapter 339, §3). In 1920, the state's child labor laws were repealed along with its compulsory schooling laws; both were implemented again in 1922 (Virginia State Legislature, 1920a, Chapter 87, §1; Virginia State Legislature, 1922, Chapter 381, §1). Also in 1922, the state's compulsory education mandate exempted individuals from school attendance if they were lawfully employed and had completed a standard elementary school curriculum (Virginia State Legislature, 1922, Chapter 381, §1). The state adopted the provisions of the [Fair Labor Standards Act](#) in 1938, which established a full-time work permit age of 16 and a vacation work permit age of 14 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023; Virginia State Legislature, 1942, Chapter 50, §1). In 1948, the state introduced two additional types of employment certificates: a work training certificate granted to people over 14 and a provisional certificate granted to people between the ages of 14 and 16 (Virginia State Legislature, 1948, Chapter 302, §1). From 1956, the state allows individuals to work part time during school hours if they are granted a provisional certificate by their district superintendent (Virginia State Legislature, 1956, Chapter 566, §1).

For a list of changes to work permit literacy requirements and ages in Virginia over time, see [Table 141](#) and [Table 142](#) respectively.

Table 141: Virginia–Work Permit Literacy Requirements (1922–2024)

Effective Date	Minimum Literacy
July 1922 - June 1948	Completion of elementary school curriculum
From July 1948	Satisfactory schooling record

Source: Virginia State Legislature (1922, 1948)

Table 142: Virginia–Work Permit Minimum Ages (1914–2024)

Effective Date	Full-Time	Part-Time	Vacation	Hardship
July 1914 - June 1920	14	14	14	12
July 1920 - June 1922	.	.	14	.
July 1922 - September 1938	14	.	14	.
October 1938 - June 1956	16	.	14	.
From July 1956	16	14	14	.

Source: U.S. Department of Labor (2023) and Virginia State Legislature (1918, 1920a, 1922, 1956)

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in [Table 143](#).

Table 143: Virginia–Full-time Work Permit Ages by Birth Cohort (1900-2024)

Birth Cohort	Full-Time Permit Age
July 1900 - June 1906	14
July 1906 - June 1908	.
July 1908 - September 1924	14
October 1924 - Present	16

Source: U.S. Department of Labor ([2023](#)) and Virginia State Legislature ([1914](#), [1920a](#), [1922](#))

Virginia's earliest child labor policy, effective in 1914, first affected individuals born in July 1900 (Virginia State Legislature, [1914](#), Chapter 339, §1).

Both Virginia's child labor laws and compulsory schooling laws were repealed in July 1920, meaning that there was no minimum age for full-time employment (Virginia State Legislature, [1920a](#), Chapter 87, §1). This change would have first influenced people who were born in July 1906. These individuals turned 14 years old and would have been the first cohort to not require a permit to work full-time.

The reestablishment of Virginia's child labor laws occurred in July 1922, and first impacted individuals born from July 1908, who could start work no earlier than age 14 (Virginia State Legislature, [1920b](#), Chapter 489, §1).

The raising of the full-time work permit age to 16 in October 1938 first impacted students who reached age 14 that year, and who now needed to stay in school for an additional 2 years before being able to start work (U.S. Department of Labor, [2023](#)). These students were born starting in October 1924.

39. Washington

School Attendance

Washington passed its first compulsory schooling policy in 1871 and required people ages 8 to 16 to attend. From 1969 to the present, individuals have been mandated to attend school from ages 8 to 18.

Key Dates

First law: 1872

Major changes since 1872: 1883, 1897, 1899, 1901, 1909, 1969

Washington state's earliest policy regulating compulsory schooling, passed in 1871 and effective in 1872, required people ages 8 to 16 to attend school for at least 3 months per year (Washington State Legislature, 1871, Chapter 6, §1). Shortly thereafter, the state legislature began to develop separate attendance policies for larger cities and the rest of Washington. Beginning in 1877 in cities with a population of over 400, the attendance period was 6 months (Washington State Legislature, 1877, Chapter 5, Title XII, §69). In 1899, attendance was required for individuals ages 7 to 15 for the full academic year in cities with a population greater than 10,000 (Washington State Legislature, 1899, Chapter 140, §1). Meanwhile, in the rest of the state, attendance was mandatory for individuals ages 8 to 18 for 3 months beginning in 1883, and for people ages 8 to 15 for the same period of time beginning in 1897 (Washington State Legislature, 1883, Title XVII, §89; Washington State Legislature, 1897, Chapter 118, §70, 71). Washington's compulsory attendance policy became uniform across the state in 1905, when all students ages 8 to 15 were required to attend school for the full academic year (Washington State Legislature, 1905, Chapter 162, §1). The school leaving age was raised to 16 in 1909, and since 1969, it has been 18 (Washington State Legislature, 1909, Chapter 97, Title III, Subchapter 16, §1; Washington State Legislature, 1969, Extraordinary Session, Chapter 223, §1). Starting in 1999, the state legislature determined that if a parent voluntarily enrolls a child aged 6 or 7 in kindergarten, then that child is also required to attend (Washington State Legislature, 1999, Chapter 319, §6).

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in [Table 144](#).

Table 144: Washington–Compulsory Schooling Ages by Birth Cohort (1900–2024)

Birth Cohort	Start Age	Leaving Age	Duration
January 1900 - August 1953	9	16	9
September 1953 - Present	9	18	10

Source: Washington State Legislature (1909, 1969)

Note: Starting ages and leaving ages are established in the law. Starting ages are adjusted to reflect the age a person reaches during their first full year of compulsory schooling. Starting ages are therefore 1 year later than the age in law. The 1999 policy is excluded from this table since it only made attendance compulsory for individuals aged 6 or 7 who were voluntarily enrolled in kindergarten.

The school enrollment deadline in Washington state is August 31, making the [effective school year for enrollment](#) September to August of the following year (Washington State Legislature, n.d. WAC 392-335-010). This date is applied to all compulsory schooling policies in the state to aid in the calculation of birth cohorts.

The compulsory schooling ages were defined as 8 to 16 for cohorts born at the start of the 20th century (Washington State Legislature, 1909, Chapter 97, Title III, Subchapter 16, §1). We adjust the starting age forward by one year to reflect the age achieved during the first year of compulsory schooling.

Washington's compulsory schooling reform in 1969 raised the leaving age to 18, thereby increasing duration from 9 years to 10 years (Washington State Legislature, 1969, Extraordinary Session, Chapter 223, §1). People who were born starting August 31, 1953 would have reached age 17 in school year (SY) 1970–71, and would have been the first cohort required to stay until they turned 18 in SY 1971–72.

Comparison with Existing Analyses

There are no differences between the reform dates that we identified for Washington and the reform dates that Lleras-Muney (2002) identified.

Angrist and Krueger (1991) report a school leaving age of 16 in 1960 and 1970, and 18 in 1980, corresponding to cohorts born in 1944,

1954, and 1964 respectively. We identify a leaving age of 16 in 1960 and 18 in 1970 and 1980. This difference is likely because Angrist and Krueger relied on Census records for their data, while we reviewed each year's legislation.

Work Permits

Washington began regulating child labor in 1899, when the state legislature established a full-time work permit age of 15. Since 1976, Washington has had a full-time and part-time work permit age of 16, and a vacation work permit age of 14.

Key Dates

First law: 1905

Major changes since 1905: 1913, 1919, 1921, 1967, 1971, 1987

Washington's first child labor law was passed in 1899 and established a minimum full-time employment age of 15 (Washington State Legislature, 1899, Chapter 140, §5). To work, individuals needed to have satisfactory school attendance or to have completed the eighth grade (Washington State Legislature, 1899, Chapter 140, §1, 10). In 1903, Washington briefly lowered its full-time employment age to 14, before returning it to 15 in 1905 (Washington State Legislature, 1903, Chapter 136, §1; Washington State Legislature, 1905, Chapter 162, §2). Shortly thereafter, in 1909, the state legislature incorporated gender distinctions in its child labor laws, and stipulated that while the general full-time employment age was 15, boys could begin working at age 14 outside of school hours, while girls needed to be 16 years old to be employed (Washington State Legislature, 1909, Chapter 249, §195). In 1938, the passage of the [Fair Labor Standards Act](#) established a full-time employment age of 16 in Washington (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023). A law in 1973 eliminated the remaining gender distinction for vacation permits and established a vacation permit age of 14 (Washington State Legislature, 1973, Extraordinary Session, Chapter 154, §39). From 1969 until 1973, individuals who were employed full-time were also required to attend part-time school if one was offered in their district; in addition, hardship permits were available during this time for students beginning at age 14 (Washington State Legislature, 1969, Extraordinary Session, Chapter 223, §1; Washington State Legislature, 1973, Chapter 51, §1). In 1976, both a full-time and part-time employment age of 16 was established, and as of 1996, individuals are able to begin working at age 16 only if they have completed high school or have received a certificate of educational competence (Washington Department of Labor and Industries, 1976, Order 76-15, §296-125-027; Washington State Legislature, 1996, Chapter 134, §1).

See [Table 145](#) and [Table 146](#) for a detailed record of changes to Washington's work permit minimum literacy and age requirements since 1899.

Table 145: Washington–Work Permit Literacy Requirements (1899–2024)

Effective Date	Minimum Literacy
June 1899 - May 1903	Ability to read and write in English; satisfactory school attendance or completion of the 8th grade
June 1903 - May 1996	.
From June 1996	High school graduation or receipt of a certificate of educational competence

Source: Washington State Legislature (1899, 1903, 1996)

Table 146: Washington–Work Permit Minimum Ages (1899–2024)

Effective Date	Full-Time	Part-Time	Vacation	Hardship
June 1899 - May 1903	15	.	.	.
June 1903 - May 1905	14	.	.	12
June 1905 - May 1909	15	.	.	.
June 1909 - September 1938	15 for boys 16 for girls	.	14	.
October 1938 - July 1969	16	.	14 for boys 16 for girls	.
August 1969 - June 1973	16	.	14 for boys 16 for girls	14
July 1973 - April 1976	16	.	14	.
From May 1976	16	16	14	.

Source: Washington Department of Labor and Industries (1976) and Washington State Legislature (1899, 1903, 1905, 1909, 1969, 1973)

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in [Table 147](#).

Table 147: Washington–Full-time Work Permit Ages by Birth Cohort (1900-2024)

Birth Cohort	Full-Time Permit Age
January 1900 - September 1923	15 (16 for girls)
October 1923 - Present	16

Source: U.S. Department of Labor ([2023](#)) and Washington State Legislature ([1909](#))

For people born in January 1900, the full-time work permit age was 15 for boys and 16 for girls (Washington State Legislature, [1909](#), Chapter 249, §195). The Fair Labor Standards Act in October 1938 changed the full-time age to 16 for everyone. This policy did not impact girls, but did affect boys who were born in October 1923. These boys turned 15 years old when FLSA was implemented, and now needed to wait 1 additional year to work full-time.

40. West Virginia

School Attendance

West Virginia's first compulsory schooling law in 1897 mandated that people ages 8 to 14 attend school. Since 2011, the state legislature has required that all individuals ages 6 to 17 attend school.

Key Dates

First law: 1897

Major changes since 1897: 1905, 1908, 1919, 1939, 1990, 2002, 2011

West Virginia's first compulsory attendance law was enacted in 1897 and mandated that people ages 8 to 14 attend school for at least 16 weeks per school year (West Virginia State Legislature, 1897, Chapter 98). Individuals were exempt from this requirement if they lived over 2 miles away from the nearest school or if they had already obtained the knowledge taught in public schools. By 1908, the West Virginia state legislature had expanded the length of time that people needed to be in school: the school leaving age was 15, and students needed to be in attendance for 24 weeks per year (West Virginia State Legislature, 1908, Chapter 27, §72). In 1919, all individuals ages 7 to 14 were required to attend school for the full academic year, and those ages 14 to 16 who were not regularly employed had to attend as well (West Virginia State Legislature, 1919, Chapter 2, §122, 128). During school year (SY) 1943-1944 and SY 1944-1945, individuals were exempt from the state's compulsory schooling requirements if they participated in the war emergency food production program (West Virginia State Legislature, 1943, Chapter 41). The next change to West Virginia's compulsory attendance policy did not come until 1990. This law lowered the starting age from 7 to 6; however, if a person was 5 years old and their parents voluntarily enrolled them in kindergarten, then they were also legally required to be in school (West Virginia State Legislature, 1990, Chapter 2, Article 8). The school leaving age increased from 16 to 17 for SY 2011-2012, although students who had started the 9th grade before the law went into effect were exempt from this new requirement (West Virginia State Legislature, 2010, Chapter 63). Since 2013, Monroe and Cabell County Schools have required that individuals attend school until age 18, and since 2016, Marshall and Wyoming County Schools have the same policy (West Virginia State Legislature, 2013, Chapter 63; West Virginia State Legislature, 2016, Chapter 91). There is no statewide policy in West Virginia with a leaving age of 18.

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in [Table 148](#).

Table 148: West Virginia–Compulsory Schooling Ages by Birth Cohort (1900–2024)

Birth Cohort	Start Age	Leaving Age	Duration
January 1900 - August 1904	9	15	7
September 1904 - August 1911	9	16	8
September 1911 - August 1983	8	16	9
September 1983 - August 1995	7	16	10
September 1995 - Present	7	17	11

Source: West Virginia State Legislature (1908, 1919, 1990, 2010)

Note: Starting ages and leaving ages are established in the law. Starting ages are adjusted to reflect the age a person reaches during their first full year of compulsory schooling. Starting ages are therefore 1 year later than the age in law.

In 1990, the West Virginia state legislature formally established that the [effective school year for enrollment](#) begins September 1 (West Virginia State Legislature, 1990, Chapter 2). Since earlier compulsory schooling legislation does not specify an enrollment deadline, we operate under the assumption that the September 1 date applies to previous policies when calculating birth cohorts.

For cohorts born starting in the early 1900s, the compulsory schooling ages were defined as 8 to 15 (West Virginia State Legislature, 1908, Chapter 27, §72). We adjust the starting age forward by one year to reflect the age achieved during the first year of compulsory schooling.

The 1919 policy set a starting age of 7 (i.e., reaching age 8 during first school year) and a leaving age of 16, thereby increasing the duration from 7 to 9 years (West Virginia State Legislature, 1919, Chapter 2, §122). The first affected cohort would have been individuals who were born starting in September 1904, since they turned 15 years old in school year (SY) 1919-20, and would have been required to stay in school for 1 additional year. The next cohort affected by the 1919 policy would have been people born starting in September 1911, who would have been the first group to reach age 8 during SY 1919-20 and be required to attend school until age 16.

The next compulsory schooling reform in 1990 lowered the starting age by 1 year (West Virginia State Legislature, [1990](#), Chapter 2). People who turned 7 in SY 1990-91 would have been the first cohort impacted by this change. These individuals were born beginning in September 1983.

The 2011 reform increased the leaving age to 17, and thus increased duration from 10 to 11 years (West Virginia State Legislature, [2010](#), Chapter 63). Students born in September 1995 would have turned 16 in SY 2011-2012, and would have needed to stay in school for 1 additional year.

Comparison with Existing Analyses

There are limited differences between the compulsory schooling ages in West Virginia identified through our research and those identified by other authors.

Lleras-Muney ([2002](#)) identifies the change in start and leaving age from ages 8-15 to ages 7-16 as occurring in 1921. We found this policy was enacted in 1919. Consequently, the first cohort affected in Lleras-Muney would have been September 1906, 2 years later than the cohort we identify as first affected by this reform. This discrepancy is likely because Lleras-Muney relied on the federal Biennial Survey of Education for their data, whereas we have directly examined the legislation for each year.

Angrist and Krueger ([1991](#)) report a school leaving age of 16 in 1960, 1970, and 1980, corresponding to cohorts born in 1944, 1954, and 1964 respectively. This is consistent with our findings.

Work Permits

West Virginia's earliest child labor law in 1905 established a full-time employment age of 14. Since 2002, the full-time work permit age has been 16 and the vacation permit age has been 14 for everyone in the state.

Key Dates

First law: 1905

Major changes since 1905: 1938, 1939, 1938, 1943, 1945, 2002

The West Virginia state legislature began to regulate child labor in 1905 when they established a full-time employment age of 14 and a vacation permit age of 12 (West Virginia State Legislature, 1905, Chapter 75, §1). In 1911, the state specified that full-time permits could only be provided to people if they had completed the fourth grade and were able to read and write in English (West Virginia State Legislature, 1911, Chapter 60). Later, in 1927, individuals were required to have completed the sixth grade to receive a permit (West Virginia State Legislature, 1927, Chapter 38). That year, the state legislature also determined that while boys could obtain a vacation work permit beginning at age 12, girls could not begin working outside of school hours until age 14. Shortly thereafter, the [Fair Labor Standards Act](#) (FLSA) of 1938 and the 1939 child labor law brought about significant changes. FLSA established a full-time employment age of 16, while the 1939 law stipulated that vacation permits were available to boys at age 14 and to everyone at age 16; FLSA also stated that receipt of a full-time work permit was contingent upon completion of the eighth grade (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023; West Virginia State Legislature, 1939, Chapter 75). Furthermore, from 1919 until 1939, students who were employed during school hours were required to attend continuation school for at least 5 hours per week, for 20 weeks during the year (West Virginia State Legislature, 1919, Chapter 2; West Virginia State Legislature, 1939, Chapter 75). Since 1975, to receive a full-time work permit individuals need to have a certificate from their principal or teacher showing that they have been attending school, and since 2002, the vacation permit age for everyone is 14 (West Virginia State Legislature, 1975, Chapter 149; West Virginia State Legislature, 2002, Chapter 49).

See [Table 149](#) and [Table 150](#) for changes to work permit literacy requirements and ages in West Virginia over time.

Table 149: West Virginia–Work Permit Literacy Requirements (1911-2024)

Effective Date	Minimum Literacy
May 1911 - June 1927	Completion of the 4th grade; ability to read and write in English
July 1927 - May 1939	Completion of the 6th grade; ability to read and write in English
June 1939 - May 1975	Completion of the 8th grade; ability to read and write in English or satisfactory examination performance
June 1975 - May 2002	Satisfactory attendance during the school year or ability to read and write in English
From June 2002	Satisfactory attendance during the school year

Source: [WVLeg1945](#); West Virginia State Legislature (1911, 1927, 1939, 1975, 2002)

Table 150: West Virginia–Work Permit Minimum Ages (1905-2024)

Effective Date	Full-Time	Part-Time	Vacation	Hardship
May 1905 - June 1927	14	.	12	.
July 1927 - September 1938	14	.	12 for boys 14 for girls	.
October 1938 - May 1939	16	.	14	.
June 1939 - May 2002	16	.	14 for boys 16 for girls	.
From June 2002	16	.	14	.

Source: U.S. Department of Labor (2023) and West Virginia State Legislature (1905, 1919, 1927, 1939, 1943, 2002)

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in [Table 151](#).

Table 151: West Virginia–Full-time Work Permit Ages by Birth Cohort (1900-2024)

Birth Cohort	Full-Time Permit Age
January 1900 - September 1924	14
October 1924 - Present	16

Source: U.S. Department of Labor ([2023](#)) and West Virginia State Legislature ([1905](#))

From 1900 until September 1924, the full-time employment age was 14 (West Virginia State Legislature, [1905](#), Chapter 75, §1).

The full-time work permit age was raised to 16 in October 1938 with the Fair Labor Standards Act (U.S. Department of Labor, [2023](#)). People who turned 14 years old that year would have been the first cohort who needed to wait 2 more years to be able to work full-time.

41. Wisconsin

School Attendance

The state of Wisconsin's first compulsory schooling law in 1879 required individuals between the ages of 7 and 15 to attend school. Wisconsin's current compulsory schooling law requires that people between the ages of 6 and 18 attend school.

Key Dates

First law: 1879

Major changes since 1879: 1889, 1891, 1903, 1937, 1971, 1975, 1979

Wisconsin's first compulsory attendance policy in 1879 mandated that individuals ages 7 to 15 attend school for at least 12 weeks per academic year (Wisconsin State Legislature, 1879, Chapter 121, §1). Exemptions were granted to individuals who had obtained equivalent education elsewhere, who lived over 2 miles from the closest school, and who needed to work to support their families. The state legislature amended the law in 1889, requiring individuals ages 7 to 14 to attend school between 12 and 24 weeks per academic year, as determined by their district (Wisconsin State Legislature, 1889, Chapter 519, §1). In 1891, the school leaving age was lowered to 13 (Wisconsin State Legislature, 1891, Chapter 187, §1). By 1903, the school leaving age was restored to 14, although unemployed individuals ages 14 to 16 were now also required to attend. Furthermore, people needed to attend for the full academic year (Wisconsin State Legislature, 1903, Chapter 189, §1). In 1921, the state mandated that individuals up to the age of 17 attend a part-time or vocational training school if they had not completed four years of secondary school (Wisconsin State Legislature, 1921, Chapter 513, §1). Exemptions were granted to those residing more than 2 miles away from the nearest vocational training, continuation, or part-time school. In 1935, the state legislature determined that all people under the age of 18 would be subject to this additional schooling requirement (Wisconsin State Legislature, 1935, Chapter 161, §1). The state legislature granted a new exemption to the compulsory attendance law in the late 1960s and early 1970s: students in good academic standing were permitted to attend school part-time during their final term from 1967 until 1979 (Wisconsin State Legislature, 1967, Chapter 39, §2; Wisconsin State Legislature, 1979, Chapter 298, §9). In 1975, the compulsory schooling age was amended to 6 to 16 (Wisconsin State Legislature, 1975, Chapter 39, §600). As of 1979, individuals ages 6 to 18 have been required to attend school full-time in Wisconsin; however, students are permitted to withdraw at age 16 if they receive parental consent (Wisconsin State Legislature, 1979, Chapter 298, §8, 9). Since 2009, the state legislature has also stipulated that individuals who are 5 years old and were voluntarily enrolled in kindergarten are also required to attend school full-time (Wisconsin State Legislature, 2009, Act 41, §1).

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in [Table 152](#).

Table 152: Wisconsin–Compulsory Schooling Ages by Birth Cohort (1900–2024)

Birth Cohort	Start Age	Leaving Age	Duration
January 1900 - August 1963	8	16	9
September 1963 - Present	7	18	12

Source: Wisconsin State Legislature (1903, 1975, 1979)

Note: Starting ages and leaving ages are established in the law. Starting ages are adjusted to reflect the age a person reaches during their first full year of compulsory schooling. Starting ages are therefore 1 year later than the age in law. The 2009 policy is excluded from this table since it only made attendance compulsory for individuals aged 5 who were voluntarily enrolled in kindergarten.

Wisconsin's [effective school year for enrollment](#) lasts from September 1 until August 31 of the following year (Wisconsin State Legislature, 1879, Chapter 121, §1).

The compulsory schooling ages were defined as 7 to 16 for cohorts born starting in the early 1900s (Wisconsin State Legislature, 1903, Chapter 189, §1). We adjust the starting age forward by one year to reflect the age achieved during the first year of compulsory schooling.

The 1975 reform required compulsory schooling for any “child who is between the ages of 6 and 16 years” (Wisconsin State Legislature, 1975, Chapter 39, §600). Since students would reach age 7 during their first year of schooling, we adjust the starting age accordingly. Shortly thereafter, the 1979 law raised the leaving age to 18 (Wisconsin State Legislature, 1979, Chapter 298, §8). People who were born beginning in September 1963 would have been the first individuals affected by both the 1976 and 1979 policies. They would have turned 7 years old during school year (SY) 1975–76. Under the 1975 law, they originally would have been required to attend school until age 16 in

SY 1984-85. However, the passage of the 1979 policy meant that these individuals now needed to attend school for an additional 2 years beyond their original leaving age, until SY 1986-87.

Comparison with Existing Analyses

There are limited differences between the compulsory schooling ages in Wisconsin identified through our research and those identified by other authors.

The Wisconsin compulsory schooling reform details identified by Lleras-Muney (2002) are consistent with our findings.

Angrist and Krueger (1991) report a school leaving age of 16 in 1960, 1970, and 1980, corresponding to cohorts born in 1944, 1954, and 1964 respectively. However, we find that the leaving age was 18 in 1980. This difference is likely because Angrist and Krueger relied on Census records for their data, while we reviewed each year's legislation.

Work Permits

Wisconsin's first child labor law in 1899 set a full-time employment age of 13 and a vacation employment age of 10. Since 1971, the full-time employment age in Wisconsin has been 18 and the vacation employment age has been 14.

Key Dates

First law: 1889

Major changes since 1889: 1899, 1903, 1909, 1937, 1971

Wisconsin's earliest child labor law in 1877 only restricted people less than 12 years old from working in a factory or workshop during the school year (Wisconsin State Legislature, 1877, Chapter 289, §1). In 1889, the state established a minimum full-time employment age of 13 for all individuals, and set a hardship work permit age of 10 (Wisconsin State Legislature, 1889, Chapter 519, §9). The full-time work permit age changed to 14 and the hardship work permit age changed to 12 in 1899 (Wisconsin State Legislature, 1899, Chapter 274, §1, §6). In 1903, the hardship permit was eliminated, and a vacation permit age of 12 was established (Wisconsin State Legislature, 1903, Chapter 189, §1). The vacation permit age changed to 14 in 1909 (Wisconsin State Legislature, 1909, Chapter 338, §1). In 1937, the state legislature determined that people under 16 were permitted to work during school hours only if they had completed high school (Wisconsin State Legislature, 1937, Chapter 6, §2). This provision remained in place until 1971, when the law was amended to say that individuals under 18 could work during school hours only if they had graduated (Wisconsin State Legislature, 1971, Chapter 271, §22).

Beginning in 1909, the Wisconsin state legislature also adopted minimum literacy requirements for work permits. The 1909 law specified that people needed to have a satisfactory schooling record and be able to read and write simple sentences either in English or in their native language (Wisconsin State Legislature, 1909, Chapter 338, §1). In 1911, this law was modified so that individuals needed a satisfactory schooling record, to be able to read and write in English, to be familiar with basic arithmetic, and to have completed coursework in spelling, reading, writing, grammar, and geography in the past year; otherwise, they needed to have completed the fifth grade of the state's standard curriculum (Wisconsin State Legislature, 1911, Chapter 479, §2). As of 1937, people have been required to complete high school to receive a full-time work permit (Wisconsin State Legislature, 1937, Chapter 6, §2).

In 1911, Wisconsin also began to require that employed individuals aged 14 to 16 attend part-time school (Wisconsin State Legislature, 1911, Chapter 660, §1). In 1917, the law was modified so that employed people who were 17 were also required to attend (Wisconsin State Legislature, 1917, Chapter 285, §1). An additional amendment in 1921 clarified that attendance was required if any individual, regardless of whether they were employed, had not completed eighth grade (Wisconsin State Legislature, 1921, Chapter 513, §1). Shortly thereafter, in 1935, the state legislature specified that the part-time schooling requirements now applied to people up to the age of 18 if they had not completed high school (Wisconsin State Legislature, 1921, Chapter 513, §1; Wisconsin State Legislature, 1935, Chapter 161, §1). Part-time schooling requirements remained in place until 1971 (Wisconsin State Legislature, 1971, §22).

For a complete list of changes to minimum literacy requirements and work permit ages in Wisconsin, see [Table 153](#) and [Table 154](#).

Table 153: Wisconsin–Work Permit Literacy Requirements (1909–2024)

Effective Date	Minimum Literacy
June 1909 - May 1911	Ability to read and write in English; satisfactory prior schooling record
June 1911 - November 1937	Ability to read and write in English; familiarity with basic arithmetic; coursework in geography; satisfactory prior schooling record; completion of the 5th grade
From December 1937	Completion of high school

Source: Wisconsin State Legislature (1909, 1911, 1937)

Table 154: Wisconsin-Work Permit Minimum Ages (1879-2024)

Effective Date	Full-Time	Part-Time	Vacation	Hardship
April 1889 - March 1899	13	.	.	10
April 1899 - April 1903	14	.	.	12
May 1903 - May 1909	14	.	12	.
June 1909 - November 1937	14	.	14	.
December 1937 - February 1971	16	.	14	.
From March 1971	18	.	14	.

Source: Wisconsin State Legislature ([1889](#), [1899](#), [1903](#), [1909](#), [1937](#), [1971](#))

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the following birth cohorts and dates in [Table 155](#).

Table 155: Wisconsin-Full-time Work Permit Ages by Birth Cohort (1900-2024)

Birth Cohort	Full-Time Permit Age
January 1900 - November 1923	14
December 1923 - February 1955	16
March 1955 - Present	18

Source: Wisconsin State Legislature ([1899](#), [1937](#), [1971](#))

The full-time work permit age in Wisconsin increased to 16 in December 1937 (Wisconsin State Legislature, [1937](#), Chapter 6, §2). People who were born starting in December 1923 would have been the first affected by this policy, since they needed to now wait an additional 2 years to work full-time.

In March 1971, the full-time employment age was raised to 18, meaning that Wisconsin residents of school age were no longer exempt from compulsory schooling requirements to work (Wisconsin State Legislature, [1971](#), Chapter 271, §22). Individuals who were 16 in March 1971 were the first subject to these new requirements. They were born beginning in March 1955.

42. Wyoming

School Attendance

Wyoming’s first compulsory schooling policy was passed in 1873 and required attendance for all individuals between the ages of 7 and 16. After changing to ages 7 to 14 in 1907, Wyoming’s compulsory schooling ages returned to 7 to 16 in 1923 and remain so in 2024.

Key Dates
First law: 1873
Major changes since 1873: 1907, 1923

The Wyoming state legislature first mandated compulsory schooling for all individuals ages 7 to 16 in 1873 (Wyoming State Legislature, 1873, Chapter 58, §37). Unlike the earliest compulsory schooling policies adopted in other states, this law did not specify the portion of the academic year that people had to attend. In 1907, the policy was amended so that people ages 7 to 14 needed to attend school for the first 6 months of the school year (Wyoming State Legislature, 1907, Chapter 93, §1). District school boards also gained the power to excuse individuals from attendance if they deemed that the requirements might create a hardship for them. Shortly thereafter, in 1909, the Wyoming state legislature determined that students of compulsory schooling age needed to attend school full-time (Wyoming State Legislature, 1909, Chapter 31, §1). In 1923, the school leaving age increased to 16, and a provision was added allowing individuals to test out at grade 8 (Wyoming State Legislature, 1923, Chapter 42, §1). Starting in 1997, individuals could test out at grade 10 (Wyoming State Legislature, 1997, Chapter 57, §1).

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the birth cohorts and dates reported in Table 156.

Table 156: Wyoming–Compulsory Schooling Ages by Birth Cohort (1900-2024)

Birth Cohort	Start Age	Leaving Age	Duration
January 1900 ^a - September 14, 1909	8	14	7
September 15, 1909 - Present (December 2024)	8	16	9

Source: Wyoming State Legislature (1907, 1923)
Notes: Starting ages and leaving ages are established in the law. The starting ages shown in the table are adjusted to reflect the age an individual reaches by the end of their first school year. Starting ages are therefore 1 year later than the age in the law. Compulsory schooling duration is imputed based on start age and leaving age.
^a Not a cohort birth year associated with a reform. The starting date for birth cohorts is January 1900 to reflect the population represented in the Health and Retirement Study.

Wyoming first specified an enrollment age deadline for school entry in 1969, determining that individuals needed to reach the school starting age by September 15 (Wyoming State Legislature, 1969, Chapter 111, Chapter 4, Article 1, §48). We apply this cutoff date to previous school years. Since 2020, the enrollment deadline in Wyoming has been August 1 (Wyoming State Legislature, 2020, Chapter 159, §1).

For cohorts born in 1900, schooling in Wyoming was compulsory from age 7 to 14 (Wyoming State Legislature, 1907, Chapter 93, §1). We adjust the starting age forward by one year to reflect the age achieved during the first year of compulsory schooling.

The 1923 reform raised the leaving age to 16, effective for school year (SY) 1923-24 (Wyoming State Legislature, 1923, Chapter 42, §1). Students who were born in September 1909 would have been the first affected by this policy. They would have turned 14 years old in SY 1923-24, and under the previous policy would have been able to leave school. Under the 1923 policy, however, they needed to remain in school for an additional 2 years.

Comparison with Existing Analyses

There are limited differences between the compulsory schooling ages in Wyoming identified through our research and those identified by other authors. These differences arise because the literature suggests that the leaving age in Wyoming changed to 17 during the late 1920s or early 1930s (Deffenbaugh & Keesecker, 1935). However, we were unable to find this change in the original legislation.

Lleras-Muney (2002) report a change in the school leaving age from 16 to 17 in 1929; however, after our review of the legislation we could not locate this change. According to our research, the leaving age of 16 had remained unchanged since 1923 (Wyoming State Legislature, 1923, Chapter 42, §1). The first cohort affected by this policy would have been born in September 1916. These individuals would have turned 16 years old in SY 1929-30, and would have needed to stay in school for 1 additional year. This discrepancy may have occurred because Lleras-Muney relied on the federal Biennial Survey of Education for their data, whereas we have directly examined the legislation for each year.

Angrist and Krueger (1991) report a school leaving age of 17 in 1960 and 1970. However, our review of the legislation indicated that the leaving age was 16 in all of these years (Wyoming State Legislature, 1923, Chapter 42, §1). This difference is likely because Angrist and Krueger relied on Census records for their data, while we reviewed each year's legislation.

Work Permits

Wyoming's first statewide child labor policy in 1923 established a full-time work permit age of 14. Since the passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act in 1938, the full-time work permit age has been 16 and the vacation work permit age has been 14.

Key Dates

First law: 1923

Major changes since 1923: 1938

Wyoming's first child labor law was adopted in 1923 and specified that children age 14 could work full-time if they had completed the 8th grade (Wyoming State Legislature, 1923, Chapter 48, §5). In October 1938, the full-time work permit age was raised to 16 and a vacation work permit age of 14 was established with the adoption of the federal Fair Labor Standards Act (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023). By 1997, minimum literacy requirements were no longer required to work (Wyoming State Legislature, 1997, Chapter 57, §1).

For a complete list of changes to work permit literacy requirements in Wyoming, see Table 157, and for changes to work permit ages, see Table 158.

Table 157: Wyoming–Work Permit Literacy Requirements (1923–2024)

Effective Date	Minimum Literacy
April 1923 - May 1997	Completion of grade 8
June 1997 - Present (December 2024)	.

Source: Wyoming State Legislature (1923, 1997)

Table 158: Wyoming–Work Permit Minimum Ages (1923–2024)

Effective Date	Full-Time	Part-Time	Vacation	Hardship
April 1923 - September 1938	14	.	.	.
October 1938 - Present (December 2024)	16	.	14	.

Source: U.S. Department of Labor (2023) and Wyoming State Legislature (1923)

Effective Policy by Cohort

Based on the rules established in the introduction, we assign the birth cohorts and dates reported in Table 159.

Table 159: Wyoming–Full-time Work Permit Ages by Birth Cohort (1909–2024)

Birth Cohort	Full-Time Permit Age
January 1900 ^a - March 1909	No Policy
April 1909 - September 1924	14
October 1924 - Present (December 2024) (potentially as early as October 1922) ^b	16

Source: U.S. Department of Labor (2023) and Wyoming State Legislature (1923)

Notes:

^a Not a cohort birth year associated with a reform. The starting date for birth cohorts is January 1900 to reflect the population represented in the Health and Retirement Study.

^b The first cohort fully affected by this reform was born in October 1924 and needed to wait 2 additional years to work. Cohorts born as early as October 1922 may also have been partially affected.

The full-time work permit age in Wyoming was established as 14 in April 1923 (Wyoming State Legislature, 1923, Chapter 48, §5). People who were born starting in April 1909 would have been the first affected by this policy.

The passage of FLSA in October 1938 raised the full-time work permit age to 16 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023). This change first fully impacted those who were 14 years old when FLSA became effective. These individuals now needed to wait 2 additional years before they could leave school to work. While this cohort, born starting in October 1924, was the first fully affected by the reform, cohorts born as early as October 1922 may also have been partially affected.

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Glossary of terms

Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka: *Brown v. Board of Education* is a 1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision that determined that segregation in schools by race was unconstitutional. As a result, schools were required to integrate.

Cities of the first/second/third class: Each state classifies its cities based on their size, and each state's definitions have evolved over time. In several instances, compulsory schooling law changes only impacted cities or districts of the first (or second) class, which were the largest cities or districts in

Effective school year for enrollment: The twelve-month period during which an individual must reach the compulsory schooling age for the school year. This typically differs from the calendar year, which spans from January to December. The last day of the effective school year for enrollment is the enrollment cutoff date.

Fair Labor Standards Act: The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) establishes minimum wage, overtime pay, recordkeeping, and youth employment standards affecting employees in the private sector and in Federal, State, and local governments.

Full-time Work Permit: A full-time work permit enables a minor to be lawfully employed to work during school hours for the entire time that day school is in session. Some states or districts might require these minors to attend part-time evening school to remain eligible for this work permit. Vocational training programs and/or apprenticeships are not a part of a full-time work permit.

Hardship Work Permit: A hardship work permit may be issued to a student who does not meet the work permit age or literacy requirements for a full-time or part-time work permit. These permits are provided to students who can demonstrate financial need, and whose income from employment is essential to support themselves or their families. In most states, hardship work permits are also granted to emancipated minors. Hardship work permits are generally granted either by the state's department of education or by the school district.

Part-time Work Permit: A part-time work permit enables a minor to be lawfully employed to work for some portion of the day during school hours on days that school is in session. Restrictions are placed on both the time and the number of the hours of day school that the permit holder may miss due to employment.

Vacation Work Permit: A vacation work permit enables a minor to be lawfully employed to work during weekends and holidays when school is not in session. The possession of a vacation work permit does not exempt a minor from school attendance.

Version information

Current Version: 1.1 (March 2025)

Version history

- 1.0 (October 2024): First version.
- 1.1 (March 2025): Added Kansas, Maine, Montana, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Vermont, and Wyoming; updated figures and underlying data; made minor revisions to birth cohort end dates in Alabama, California, Kentucky, Michigan, New York, and Pennsylvania.