



School Segregation Research Factsheet

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How segregated are schools?

1. The Educational Opportunity Project at Stanford University has created the [Segregation Explore](#), an online tool where you can explore data on school segregation across the US from 1991 to 2022.
2. On average, school segregation based on student race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status has increased in the largest school districts since the early 1990s.¹ White-Black segregation has increased 37% from 1991 to 2019.
3. Despite this increase, school segregation by student race/ethnicity is half the magnitude today as it was following the Brown v. Board of Education decision in 1954.

Why are schools segregated? How is it related to housing/residential decisions?

1. Currently, 57% of White-Black school segregation in metropolitan areas can be attributed to district boundaries which lead to students from different racial backgrounds who live in the same metropolitan area to attend schools in different districts. This between-district school segregation has also increased from 1991 to 2019, by approximately 33%.
2. One of the major reasons school segregation persists and is increasing is due to judicial precedent which challenges within-district school integration efforts explicitly focused on race/ethnicity (i.e., *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1*) and presents obstacles for implementing between-district solutions to segregation (i.e., *Milliken v. Bradley*).
3. [Some studies](#) highlight how school district release from court mandates to desegregate schools and expansion in charter school options account for much of the recent increases in school segregation among large districts. White-Black segregation would have grown 12% less from 1991 to 2019 if not for releases from court mandates, and 40% less if not for the expansion of charter schools.
4. Residential segregation appears to explain a substantial portion of school segregation across the country. But the extent to which the gerrymandering of school assignment boundaries exacerbate school segregation caused by residential segregation varies across schools and districts, as [this tool](#) highlights.

Where is segregation high?

1. As of 2022, White-Black segregation between schools was highest in New York, Michigan, Illinois, and Wisconsin and lowest in Wyoming, Idaho, Montana, Utah, and New Hampshire. Similarly, White-Black segregation between districts was highest in Michigan, Missouri, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Illinois and lowest in Hawaii, Wyoming, Utah, Idaho, and West Virginia.

2. School segregation tends to be higher where there is greater residential segregation, greater racial/ethnic socioeconomic inequality, and a larger student body with more schools. However, residential segregation and racial/ethnic socioeconomic inequality has decreased over time.
3. In places with expanded schooling options, families tend to make enrollment decisions that would **expand segregation**. But other work notes that implementing policies that constrain families' schooling decisions (i.e., changing school assignment boundaries, consolidating schools) can lead to certain families completely opting out of public schools. Efforts might thus focus on changing families' schooling preferences; **one study** finds that providing families with information on students' achievement growth data as opposed to their simple average achievement weakened preferences for Whiter, more affluent school districts.

Why is it important to desegregate schools?

1. Historical school desegregation efforts have **improved the educational and adulthood outcomes** (i.e., educational attainment, employment rates, hourly wages, poverty rates, incarceration rates) of Black youth across the country.
 2. Present day school segregation is strongly related to differences in standardized test performance by race/ethnicity.
 3. **Recent research** highlights that school desegregation can improve racial attitudes in youth and develop preferences for politics and policies that expand equity. This work is supported by a large body of research from psychology identifying potential attitudinal benefits of contact between individuals from different sociodemographic backgrounds.
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This study was conducted on the largest 541 school districts in the U.S. serving at least 2500 Black student. (Back to text)