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UCLA Civil Rights Project Report Shows School Segregation in New York Remains Worst in Nation

As NYC mayoral election looms, research shows school segregation remains a vexing issue, with Black and Latino Students largely isolated from White and Asian peers.

In 2014, the Civil Rights Project at UCLA reported that New York State was the most segregated state in the nation for Black students. The problem persists.

In an updated analysis using 2018 data, a [new report](#) from the Civil Rights Project finds that New York retains its place as the most segregated state for black students, and second most segregated for Latino students, trailing only California. In 2018 in New York, 90% of black students attended predominantly nonwhite schools, while Latino student enrollment in predominantly nonwhite schools has remained roughly stable (84%). Almost two out of three black students and over half of Latino students attend intensely segregated schools, where less than 10% of student enrollment is white. Importantly, there has been a steady decline in the concentration of both black and Latino student enrollment in extremely segregated schools where 99% or more of students are students of color. Statewide, those numbers have fallen from a high point 30 years ago of 42%, to 16% for black students in 2018, and from a high of 33% 30 years ago to 11% in 2018 for Latino students. Additionally, despite declines in poverty, the dual segregation of black and Latino Student with low-income status has worsened over the past 10 years.

“Racial segregation denies equal opportunity and creates a false path of inferior educational preparation that perpetuates inequality across generations,” said Gary Orfield, co-director of the Civil Rights Project. “Segregation is a self-sustaining system based on a history of failure and a fear of change. It will not transform without a serious and thoughtful goal and policies to make it happen. This report shows that, in spite of limits, there are surprising possibilities in New York to prepare many students to live and work better across lines of division, in a society where there will be no racial majority.”

The report also makes clear that New York is experiencing an acceleration of demographic changes outlined in the earlier report. White students are no longer the state’s majority group as they were in 2010 (50%). New York is experiencing overall declining enrollment, shrinking shares of white and black students, and rising shares of Latino and Asian students.

“Historically, segregation has been framed as the separation of black and white students, but given the demographic changes we are seeing and the *average* academic advantages by race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, it is extremely important to think explicitly about integration in terms of Asian and white students as a group isolated from Black, Latino, and American Indian students,” said Danielle Cohen, senior research policy analyst at the Civil Rights Project and the lead researcher for the report. “In doing so we can shape policies that could create opportunities for black, Latino, and American Indian

students to access schools with more resource advantages. and for white students to benefit from greater exposure to peers from underrepresented minority groups.”

The challenge of segregation can be starkly seen in New York City schools. The city has experienced large demographic shifts, with the proportion of Asian students increasing sharply to more than 17% in 2018, and Latino students becoming the largest racial/ethnic group, from 35% in 1990 to 41% in 2018. Conversely, there has been a significant decline of black students. Once the largest racial group in the city making up 37% of the population in 1990, the black student population declined to 25% in 2018. And for the first time in 30 years, white student enrollment has increased slightly.

Amid these changes, the city’s schools show slight gains but remain segregated. The share of schools with *intense* segregation (90% or more nonwhite student enrollment) declined slightly from a high of 72% in 2010 to 70% in 2018. The share of extremely segregated or *apartheid schools* (99% nonwhite student enrollment) has been declining since 1990, and over the past 10 years declined from 31% to 17%. Still, 94% of the 934,000 plus students in NYC attend predominantly nonwhite schools and the share of these schools has been increasing for 30 years. Essentially *all* students of color attend predominantly nonwhite schools, whereas two-thirds of white students do the same. Roughly 85% of black students, and three-fourths of Latino students attend intensely segregated schools while only 11% of white and 43% of Asian students do so.

The [new research](#) also examines the expansion of school choice and charter schools and how they may have contributed to the continued segregation of the city’s schools. The research includes analysis of the city’s eight highly selective high schools. Attendance in these schools is highly skewed toward white and Asian student enrollment with very few black, Latino, and American Indian students. In 2018, on average, 82% of enrollment in these schools was white and Asian and just 15% is black, Latino, and American Indian. At the far extreme, Stuyvesant High School and Staten Island Technical High Schools each have 92% enrollment of white and Asian students and only 1% black and 2%-3% Latino students.

Charter schools in NYC are overwhelmingly intensely segregated for black and Latino students, more so than the traditional public schools. Ninety-five percent of black students and 91% of Latino students attend intensely segregated charter schools, compared to 80% of black and 70% of Latino students attending intensely segregated traditional public schools. While 15% of black students attend apartheid traditional public schools, over half (51%) of black students in charter schools are in apartheid charter schools. The shares for Latino students are also astonishingly high, with 13% in apartheid traditional public schools versus 41% in apartheid charter schools.

The research also underscores that many in New York City are engaged in important efforts to integrate schools and there are a significant number of schools showing signs of reduced segregation. In 2016, the NYC Department of Education initiated a Diversity in Admissions pilot program. Started that year with seven schools, by 2019-20, 81 schools, five pre-K programs and three districts had adopted diversity plans and the number has grown to 100 NYC public schools. The data used in the Civil Rights Project report ends with the 2018-19 school year, and it is too soon to see the possible effects of the most recent changes. Those efforts should be evaluated after the next regular school year. The research does show an increase in diverse schooling in three community school districts, with a modest increase in white student enrollment and a greater share of schools that are diverse. Eight years ago, all of NYC community school districts were greater than 60% nonwhite, but have steadily declined to 95% in 2018.

“This research is intended to further our understanding and debate about the state of segregation in NYC schools and the forces in play since 2010,” Cohen said. “Whoever is elected as the new mayor, we hope this report will help them to forge a path forward.

“While the extreme segregation in New York threatens the city’s future, the determination of students and others to fight segregation is inspiring. I believe powerful change is possible through more equitable choice policies and support for educational integration in diverse communities,” concludes Orfield.

The new research report, [NYC School Segregation Report Card: Still Last, Action Needed Now](https://tinyurl.com/54w42tvm), is available on the UCLA Civil Rights Project website at <https://tinyurl.com/54w42tvm>

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About the Civil Rights Project

The Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles is co-directed by UCLA Professors Gary Orfield and Patricia Gándara. Founded in 1996 at Harvard University, CRP's mission is to create a new generation of research in social science and law on the critical issues of civil rights and equal opportunity for racial and ethnic groups in the U.S. CRP has commissioned more than 400 studies, published more than 20 books and issued numerous reports monitoring the success of American schools in equalizing opportunity and providing the authoritative source of segregation statistics. The U.S. Supreme Court, in its 2003 *Grutter v. Bollinger* decision upholding affirmative action, and in Justice Breyer's dissent (joined by three other Justices) to its 2007 *Parents Involved* decision, cited the Civil Rights Project's research.