

The Civil Rights Project



Proyecto Derechos Civiles

Opportunities Suspended: The Disparate Impact of Disciplinary Exclusion from School

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Instructions and Descriptions of the National Spreadsheets

Two excel spreadsheets are available for download for the national report. The first spreadsheet entitled “National Report” includes multiple tabs with the total number of students suspended and suspension risk percentages for all racial groups and for students with and without disabilities across all districts in the CRDC data sample. In general, each tab highlights a distinct set of districts, which contain both the raw numbers of students suspended and formulas for the suspension risk percentages, disaggregated by race and disability. The second spreadsheet entitled “One and More Than One Suspensions” includes the same data, but disaggregated by CRDC’s reporting categories of “only one suspension” and “more than one suspension”. The purpose of the data tool is to facilitate access to information on the rates of suspensions and disparities among different groups of students across the country.

The downloadable “National Report” spreadsheet contains 8 separate worksheets or tabs that highlight important characteristics of students or school districts throughout the sample. Each of the tabs, in the order they appear in the spreadsheet from left to right, contain the following data:

- 1) “All Students” tab: suspension risk percentages and raw numbers of students suspended for all students combined, which includes both students with and without disabilities
- 2) “Students with Disabilities” tab: suspension risk percentages and raw numbers of students with disabilities suspended only
- 3) “Students without Disabilities” tab: suspension risk percentages and raw numbers of students without disabilities suspended only
- 4) “100 Largest Districts” tab: the 100 largest districts in the nation by total district enrollment for all students combined, sorted by largest to smallest enrollment
- 5) “47 States” tab: average suspension risk percentages and total raw numbers of students suspended for every state with complete data in the CRDC sample
- 6) “JJ Districts” tab: contains only juvenile justice school districts across the country with suspension risk percentages and raw numbers of students suspended
- 7) “Error Districts” tab: all districts that contain one or more data errors were removed from all the other spreadsheet tabs and placed here in order to provide transparency on the

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number and type of errors included in this report. A key explaining the types of errors found is provided at the bottom of the tab.

- 8) “Florida & HI Fixed” tab: contains all school districts in the states of FL and HI, but with substituted enrollment numbers for students with disabilities. The original CRDC enrollment data for these states was found to be in error, and these corrections allow the user to see how FL and HI’s district data may look with these substituted numbers.

The downloadable “One and More than One Suspensions” spreadsheet contains 3 separate worksheets or tabs. Each of the tabs, in the order as they appear in the spreadsheet from left to right, contain the following data:

- 1) “All Districts” tab: data on out-of-school suspensions broken down by number students who received *only one* suspension and *more than one* suspension. These categories are mutually exclusive so that students appear in either one but not both of them.
- 2) “Error Districts” tab: all districts that contain one or more data errors were removed from all the “All Districts” tab and placed here in order to provide transparency on the number and type of errors included in this report. A key explaining the types of errors is provided at the bottom of the tab.
- 3) “JJ Districts” tab: contains only juvenile justice school districts across the country with suspension risk percentages and raw numbers of students suspended

The following provides a description of the methodology used to calculate the suspension risk percentages as well as a brief explanation of how to use the file.

How to use these spreadsheets:

The downloadable spreadsheets contain multiple tabs or spreadsheets, which separate out three different populations including all students (combined students with and without disabilities), students with disabilities, and students without disabilities. Each tab or spreadsheet includes most districts in the nation with the exception of districts that were eliminated according to our methodology and exclusion criteria.

Each spreadsheet or tab is sorted by the school district’s ID number from lowest to highest, which is an approximate, alphabetical order listing by state and district name. You may search for a district’s name by using the search feature (Ctrl-F [PC] or CMD-F [Mac]) in Excel. Alternatively, you may also sort the sheet by any of the columns. For example, the sheet may be sorted by Hispanic suspension rates, highest to lowest, using the Data Sort feature in Excel.

Data filters have also been applied to each worksheet as indicated by the arrows and pull down menu bars next to each column in the header row. By clicking on the arrow next to the desired column, a drop-down list of all entries in the column appears, and you may choose to “filter in or out” all items that meet any of your desired criteria. For example, in order to select all districts that appear in a single state (e.g., Michigan), click on the down arrow in the “State” column, and check the box next to the desired state, and all other states will be “filtered out” or excluded from

the active sheet. At the very bottom of the spreadsheet, totals will appear for all the districts that meet the selected criteria. You may also choose to filter by district or any other criteria you specify. For example, you can choose to select all districts that have suspension rates over 20% or hide any districts that have less than 5%. Any number of possible numerical criteria can be used across one or more columns.

Methods: *A more detailed description of the methods, omissions and treatment of errors is found in the appendices to the report.*

The data used in this spreadsheet comes from the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC), a survey administered by the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR). This survey represents all school districts in the nation who responded enrolling over 3000 students and a sample of districts with fewer than 3000 students. Ultimately, it gathered data from 6,835 school districts, including anywhere from 59 to 100 percent of all students, depending on the state. Because the CRDC does not require every district in the state to submit data, the reported absolute number of students suspended represents an undercount for the state. After data cleaning, the sample for the downloadable spreadsheet includes data from 6604 districts.

Measure of Suspension Risk: In our analysis, we calculated the number of students suspended at least once as a percentage of their enrollment for students at the state and district level by race and disability status. We describe this percentage throughout this report as the “risk” for suspension. OCR required the sample of districts to report on the unduplicated number of students who were suspended just one time, and in a separate column, those suspended two or more times. We combined these mutually exclusive categories to arrive at the number of students suspended out of school one or more times during the 2009-2010 school year. In the second spreadsheet, we also report on the risk for students suspended only once and more than once separately. In-school suspensions were not included in our analysis. Also excluded were students that were expelled, arrested at school or referred to law enforcement. The OCR data and our measure of suspension risk looks at *the unduplicated count of students* receiving one or more out of school suspensions over the course of the school year.

Suspension Categories: Each workbook has 9 ethnic group categories including American Indian, Asian combined, Asian or Pacific Islander, Asian, Hawaiian, Hispanic, Black, White, and 2 or more races. Because districts had the option of grouping or separating out Pacific Islanders from Asians, the Asian combined category provides a single suspension rate for all Asian groups combined, regardless of how the district reported its data. Additional columns include the district’s overall suspension rate for all students and suspension rates for students classified as Limited English Proficient (LEP).

Exclusion Criteria: When deciding whether to include a district’s data, we took precautionary steps and excluded any district where we had a strong reason to suspect that the data was not accurate. This could occur for several reasons:

- 1) a district reported more suspensions than students for any subgroup (resulting in a suspension rate of over 100%);
- 2) a district reported suspensions for a subgroup, but no enrollment (resulting in a divide by zero error);
- 3) a district reported no suspensions whatsoever district wide resulting in a suspension rate of 0% for all subgroups (In this scenario, we compared OCR reported suspensions with suspension data reported by other data sources from the state or school district of the same school year. If any discrepancy was found that could not be explained by rounding errors, that district was excluded from the spreadsheet);
- 4) a district with 'virtual' or 'on-line' in its name;
- 5) a district had more than one of these errors;
- 6) OCR confirmed problems with the district's data or OCR's reported data conflicted with data reported by a state agency website of the same school year.

Districts that fell into one of these six categories were also highlighted red in the spreadsheet and reported on their own separate error tab. Districts where we suspected data problems, but could not confirm them using the above categories, were left in all tabs on the spreadsheets, but were highlighted in yellow to alert the reader to potential problems or anomalies in that district's data.

Final note: we excluded from our analysis the risk for suspension of students with disabilities who did not have an IEP, but received supports or services exclusively under section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 because the suspension numbers for students in this category were not disaggregated by race or gender and the numbers were typically very low.