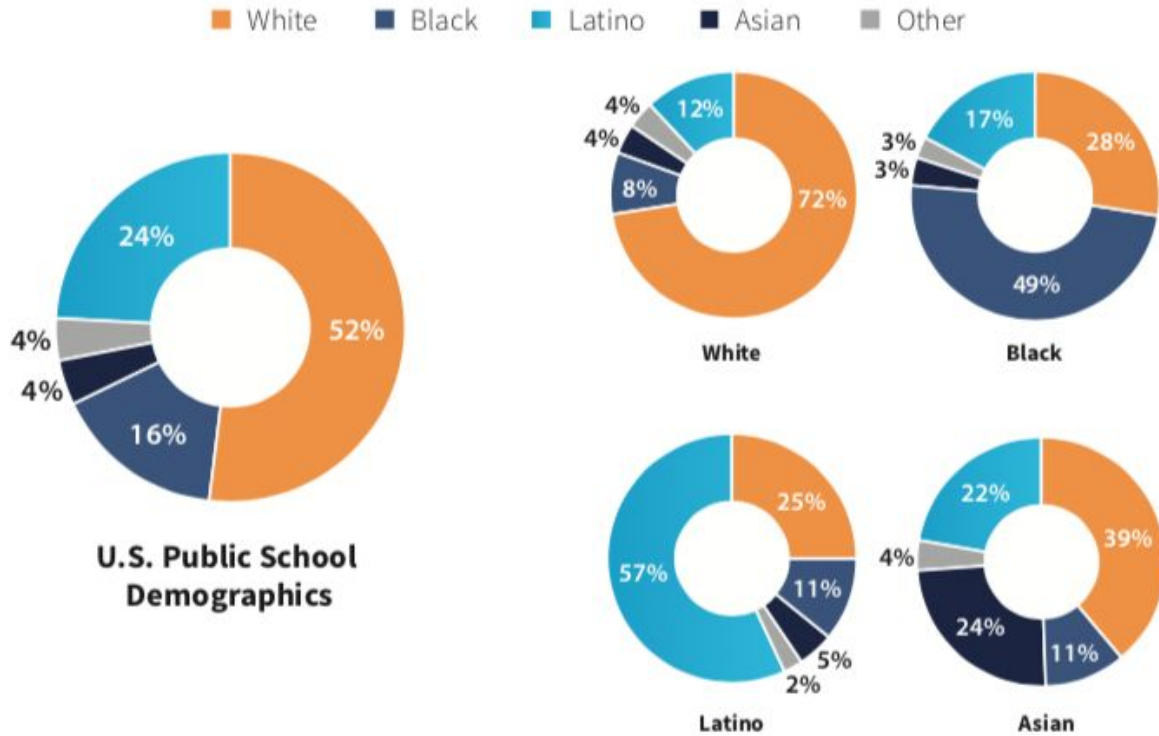


# Modern Day Segregation, Explained.

By Yuna Seong

How to read this chart: The average white student attended a school with a 72% white population.



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey Data, 2011-12, as presented in Orfield, G., Frankenberg, E., Ee, J., & Kucsera, J. (2014). "Brown at 60: Great progress, a long retreat and an uncertain future." Los Angeles, CA: The Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles.

Credit: [Center for Public Education, 2017](#)

Segregation is supposedly a thing of the past. With the ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education*, the United States declared the end of segregation in schools. Studies have shown that integration in schools is beneficial for all students, yet, 66 years after this momentous ruling, segregation continues to persist in our school system.

[Public schools are not as integrated as one might expect.](#) The average white student attends a school with a 72% white population, while the average Black or Latinx student attends a school with a 75-100% minority population. This means that they are not in schools with a mixed white, Black, and Latinx population. In other words, they are segregated into different schools.

**Segregation today? Isn't that illegal?**

Yes. In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled that racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional. Schools were no longer allowed to prevent students from attending their school on the basis of race. Yet, Black and Latinx students are less likely to be in classrooms with white children today [than they were in the 1970s and 1980s](#).

*“Segregation in public K12 schools isn’t getting better; it’s getting worse, and getting worse quickly, with more than 20 million students of color now attending racially and socioeconomically isolated public schools.” - Representative Bobby Scott from Virginia and ranking Democrat on the House education committee.*

### **So... how is it still happening?**

While schools may no longer be explicitly restricting enrollment by race, they are still separating children along racial lines. As mentioned earlier, the average white student attends a majority white school while an average Black/Latinx student is attending a majority non-white school. This is done through school district design, tracking programs, and discipline.

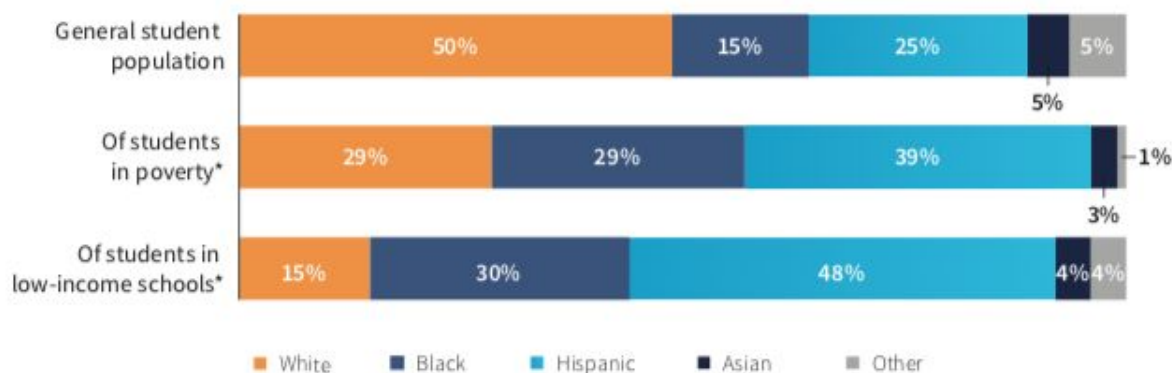
### **School District Design and How it Contributes to Segregation**

Two-thirds of school segregation is due to [demographic differences](#) in states and between school districts. Income determines which neighborhoods families can afford to live in. Since school districts are designed to serve students that live within a similar area, the school a student attends effectively depends on the family’s income. If a family cannot afford to live in a certain neighborhood, they also cannot attend the school that the students from that neighborhood attend. Put simply, housing segregation is reflected in schools.

Though it seems that housing segregation is based solely on income, race and class are deeply connected. Black and Latinx people are [2.5 to 3 times more likely to live in poverty](#) than White and Asian students. Since housing segregation results from income disparities and these income disparities occur along racial lines, housing segregation separates Black and Latinx students from their White and Asian counterparts.

However, this problem is not just caused from the increased likelihood of Black and Latinx people being more likely to live in poverty. Even after accounting for these higher rates of poverty, poor Black or Latinx students were *still* more likely to attend a high-poverty school than poor white students. Attending a high-poverty school means less funding per student, fewer resources to support their academic development, and fewer opportunities for advanced learning such as AP courses.

The chart below illustrates the overrepresentation of Black and Latinx students in low-income schools. Despite white students making up 29% of students in poverty, they only constituted 15% of the student body in low-income schools. Meanwhile, the proportion of Black and Latinx students in low-income schools is higher than the proportion of Black and Latinx students living in poverty.



\*Students in poverty are those whose families earn less than the federal poverty line.

\*Low-income schools are those with 75 percent or more of students who qualify for free or reduced lunch.

Data source: Government Accountability Office. (2016). "K-12 EDUCATION: Better Use of Information Could Help Agencies Identify Disparities and Address Racial Discrimination" (GAO Publication No. 16-345). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.; National Center for Education Statistics. (2016). "Family Characteristics of School Age Children." Accessed October 11, 2016 from [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator\\_cce.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cce.asp); U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD); "Local Education Agency (School District) Universe Survey", 2013-14 v.1a.

Credit: [Center for Public Education, 2017](#)

## Tracking

Tracking is the process of selecting students based on academic performance as “gifted and talented” and placing them in advanced programs that they will continue to be a part of for the majority of their academic career. Students who are placed in these advanced programs are removed from the rest of their class and given additional resources to create an accelerated learning environment.

### ... isn't that okay? Some students are just smarter than others, right?

If tracking was truly only based on academic ability, then it wouldn't be a contributor to segregation. However, tracking pushes [White and Asian students into advanced classrooms](#) and keeps Black and Latinx students out of them.

In New York City, White and Asian students only make up 40% of the overall school population, yet they made up [70% of the gifted and talented education program](#). At the same time, Black students were [54% less likely](#) than white students to be recommended for advanced programs, even after adjusting for factors like standardized test scores.

This difference can partially be accounted for by [teacher perception](#). If the teacher was Black, they were 3x times more likely than White teachers to recommend Black students to these programs, suggesting the presence of bias in recommending students for these programs. When Black and white teachers assessed the same Black student, white teachers were [12% less likely](#) to say the student would finish high school and 30% less likely to say they would graduate from college.

The implications of racial segregation in public schools is exacerbated by tracking programs. Tracking has been found to improve AP scores across the nation, but the opportunity to be tracked into an accelerated program is really [only available](#) to schools in middle/upper class suburban neighborhoods. These schools are predominantly white and Asian. Since most Black/Latinx students are not attending these schools their white and Asian peers are attending, their opportunity to be tracked into an accelerated program is limited.

Tracking perpetuates class inequality. Students are often selected for tracking programs at a very young age and then put on track to be more successful than their peers in the general education classroom. The students who are selected for these programs are the ones who already had the resources to do well in schools. It privileges the already privileged, and leaves behind the ones who need the most support.

## **Discipline**

While White and Asian students are more likely to be pushed into these advanced programs, Black and Latinx students are more likely to be pushed out of school. This is often accomplished through disciplinary action. K-12 Black students are [3.8 times](#) more likely to receive an out of school suspension than their peers.

### **... maybe they're just more misbehaved?**

Nope, even after accounting for the type of rule violation, Black students still receive [harsher punishments](#). In the same way that teachers perceived Black students as less likely to succeed academically, teachers also perceived Black and Latinx students' misbehavior as [more disruptive](#) than their peers. In effect, that Black and Latinx students were more likely to be pushed out from the classroom—which reduces the amount of instruction they receive. So, not only are Black and Latinx students missing out on opportunities to learn in advanced programs,

but they're often missing out on instruction as a whole, making it more difficult to succeed even in their general education classroom.

### **Okay, so segregation still exists ... What does that really mean?**

#### **It means students are not receiving equal opportunities.**

Despite being a country that prides itself on the American Dream of being able to make something out of nothing, America certainly does not provide the same opportunities or support systems to everyone.

Poverty and race have long been correlated with an individual's life outcomes, but concentrating disadvantaged students in schools magnifies these negative consequences. In other words, being poor and/or Black or Latinx in America already lowers the odds of succeeding in life, but going to a school with other poor and/or Black or Latinx students further [worsens those odds](#). Attending a high-minority and high-poverty school limits students' progress more than the individual student's characteristics. In fact, [only 1%](#) of high-poverty, high-minority schools (schools where 75-100% of students are receiving free or reduced lunch) were high performing compared to 24% of low poverty schools.

*Only 1% of high-poverty, high-minority schools were high performing compared to 24% of low poverty schools (Center for Public Education, 2017).*

This is likely due to the lack of resources available to students attending high-poverty, high-minority schools. Schools with more middle-class students receive more funding because most schools are funded through [property taxes](#). The more expensive the homes in the area, the more funding that is generated through property taxes for the local schools. Public schools with 90% or more white students received an average of [\\$733 more per pupil](#). This is 18% more funding per student than schools with 90% or more students of color receive. Additionally, middle-class families are more likely to have parents who can donate their time and resources to the school and its students.

*Public schools with 90% or more white students received an average of \$733 more per pupil (Center for American Progress, 2012).*

Meanwhile, schools with more Black, Latinx, and low-income students had a higher proportion of inexperienced teachers. Schools with high poverty and minority populations had [five times more teachers who did not meet state certification requirements](#) than schools with low poverty and minority populations. Lower income schools had [less funding and offered fewer high-level math and science courses, AP courses, and gifted and talented education programs](#).

**It means it's hurting *all* students—not just students of color.**

Not only is segregation reproducing the class inequalities that already exist in our society, but it is preventing all students from receiving the benefits created by integration. Studies have found that [integrating schools boosted student achievement, improved life outcomes, and increased social cohesion](#). This is due to having more interactions with a diverse population of people and developing the important skill of working with people from different backgrounds. The benefits of desegregation have been found to help future generations as well, as improved academic achievement has been correlated with increased post-secondary education opportunities and higher pay, which increases the resources available for their children to have positive life outcomes.

School segregation is holding *everybody* back. It's preventing equal distribution of resources and opportunities for students to develop the skills they need to succeed in life.