

DATA AND METHODS

Data for this study's analysis come from the National Center for Education Statistics' (NCES) Common Core of Data (CCD) for 2000-01⁸³ and previous years, which contains enrollment data submitted annually by virtually all U.S. schools to the Department of Education.⁸⁴ The Public School Universe is a comprehensive, yearly national dataset of all public schools in operation and includes student information that is comparable across states, which allows for computation of descriptive statistics such as the segregation measures described below. This study utilizes the following variables from CCD: the racial/ethnic group elementary and secondary school enrollment figures as well as student poverty information (as measured by free and/or reduced lunch status).

In examining trends in desegregation and, now, resegregation over the last one-third century, this report calls on several widely used measures of racial isolation from the late 1960s through 2000.

In calculating school segregation, we rely on two measures to portray different dimensions of segregation. The exposure index shows the percentage of a particular group present in the school of the average student in another group.⁸⁵ For example, with a Latino-white exposure index of 29%, the average Latino student attended a school comprised of 29 percent whites. It is important to note that the exposure index is not a measure of discrimination or of the feasibility of desegregation in a given district—just of the actual level of interracial exposure.

We also calculate the percentage of black and Latino students in predominantly minority⁸⁶ (defined as 50-100 percent minority) and extremely segregated minority schools (defined as schools with less than 10% white students). This measure demonstrates the number and proportion of students who are attending racially imbalanced and isolated schools.

The report is organized as follows. It begins with an examination of the racial enrollments in the nation's schools looking at who attends the nation's public schools, how that has changed over time, and what the current state of desegregation is across racial/ethnic groups. The paper next examines similar issues at the regional level,

⁸³ Unless otherwise specified, the data in tables and figures in this report were taken from 2000-1 NCES Common Core of Data.

⁸⁴ Due to the fact that enrollment data disaggregated by race was not available for the Tennessee districts in the 2000-01 NCES Common Core of Data, we used the data as reported by the Tennessee Department of Education. <http://www.state.tn.us/education/>

⁸⁵ Massey, D. S. and Denton, N.A. (1988). "The dimensions of racial segregation." *Social Forces* 67:281-315; Orfield, G., Bachmeier, M., James, D., and Eitle, T. (1997). "Deepening segregation in American Public Schools." Cambridge, MA: Harvard Project on School Desegregation.

⁸⁶ It should be noted that the use of minority throughout this report is only used in the sense that African American, Latino, Asian, and Native American students still comprise a numerical minority of the total school population, and white students are still numerically a majority of the student enrollment. Some have critiqued the use of this word as an implicit value statement about non-white people; no such connotation is intended by our usage.

focusing on several measures of racial isolation: minority exposure to white students and proportion of students in schools with varying concentrations of minorities. State trends are reported in the third section. Finally, the last section explores the demographic changes in the country's largest school districts (those greater than 60,000). Differences between central city, countywide metropolitan, and suburban districts are noted. The report concludes with a discussion of the implications of the trends reported and suggestions for possible policy efforts to slow and eventually reverse the segregating trends we report here.