

National Trends of School Pushout

Summary of Discipline Data for Girls in U.S. Public Schools, 2011-2018



Across the United States, schools use various punitive discipline practices that result in students being removed from class, such as suspensions, expulsions, transfers to an alternative education setting, or referrals to law enforcement. These practices weaken students' connection with school by depriving students of valuable learning time and creating an environment that erodes students' well-being and sense of safety at school. These students often end up pushed out of school altogether, as research shows that punitive discipline practices are associated with poor student achievement and a failure to complete school.¹

This kind of disconnection from school creates pathways to contact with the juvenile and criminal legal systems. These school-to-confinement pathways disproportionately affect students of color, especially Black girls. To disrupt school-to-confinement pathways, schools must address the disciplinary practices that drive school pushout.

This factsheet provides a snapshot of national disciplinary trends among girls² in public schools broken down by race and ethnicity across four school years between 2011 and 2018.

Each chart focuses on a single racial/ethnic group.³ Each chart compares

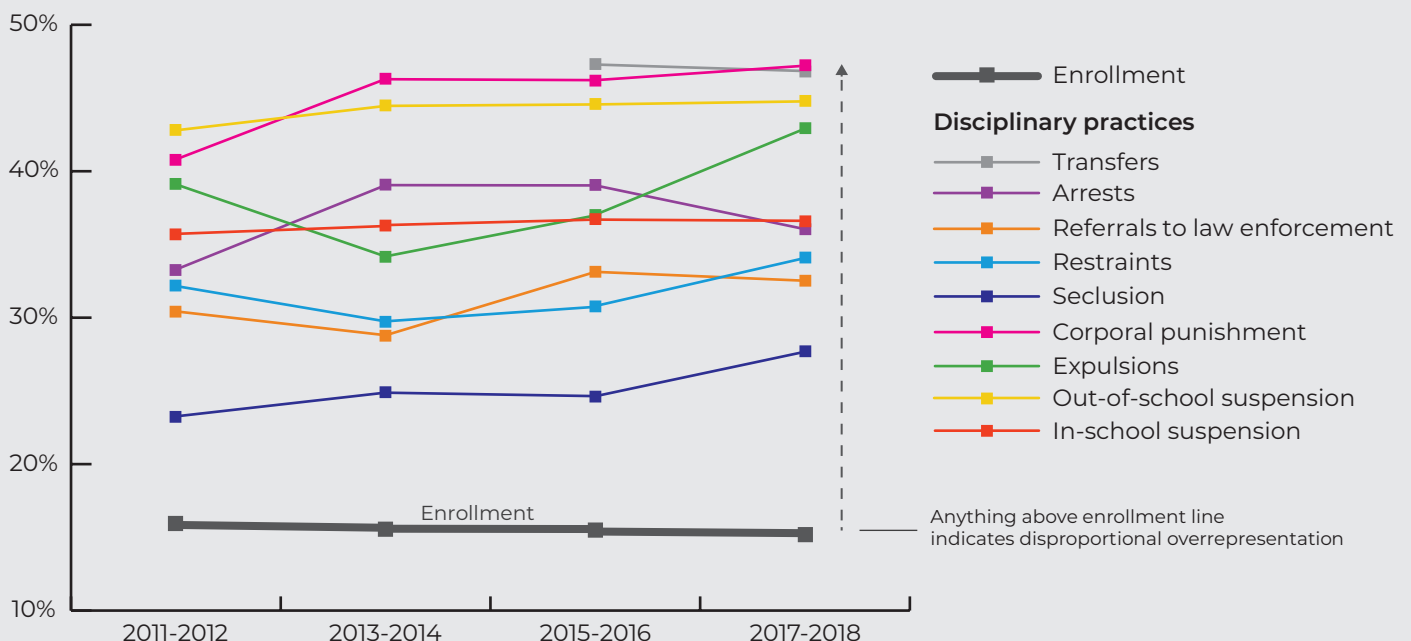
1. that group's percentage of the total enrollment of girls and
2. the percentage of girls who are disciplined within that group.

If there were no difference in treatment, we would expect to see that for each racial/ethnic group, the percentage of each disciplinary sanction would closely match the percentage of girls enrolled. If we do *not* see this, it indicates that the group is experiencing a disproportionate amount of that disciplinary sanction. For example, if Black girls represent 15% of the total enrollment of girls, we would expect Black girls to only account for about 15% of girls receiving any given disciplinary action. **However, this is generally not the case.**

Overall, Black, American Indian/Alaska Native, and multiracial girls tended to be overrepresented in discipline sanctions, while white and Hispanic girls tended to be underrepresented. Black and white girls tended to make up the greatest proportion of girls who experienced discipline sanctions, despite white and Hispanic girls making up the greatest proportion of female enrollment.

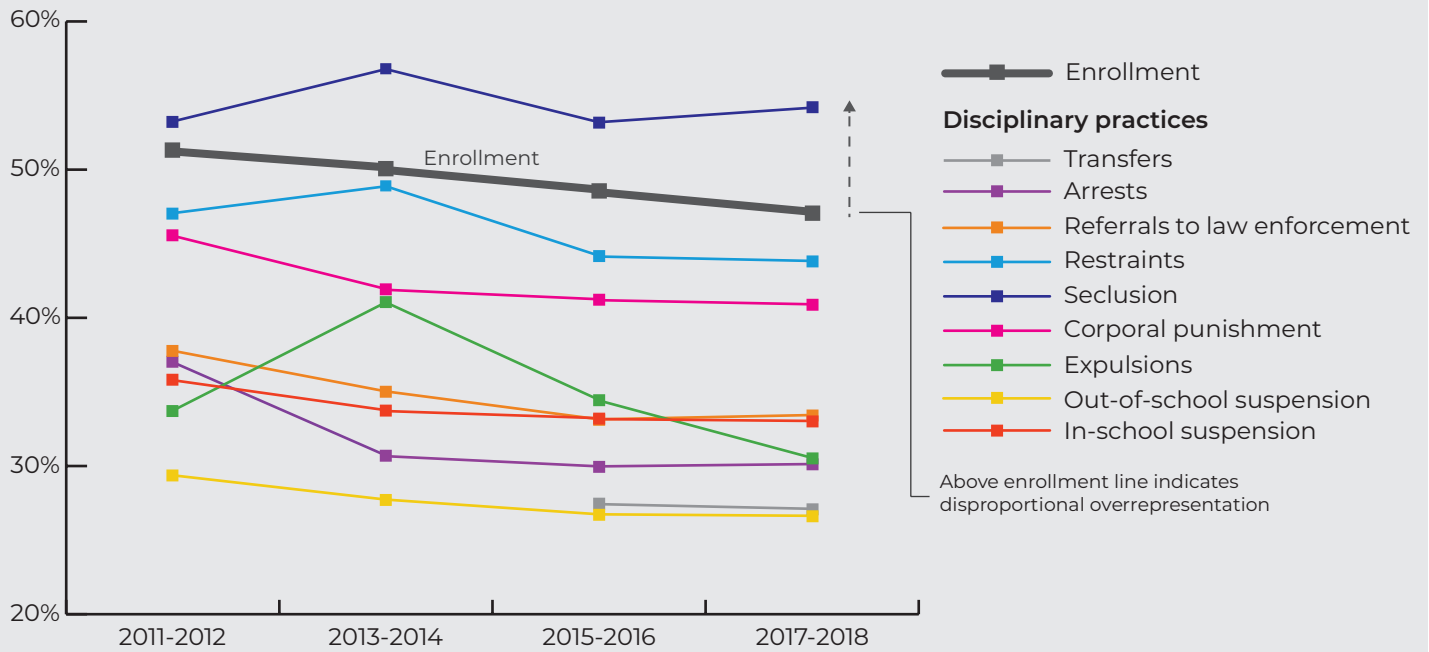
Black girls

Black girls were the only group of girls to be overrepresented in every type of disciplinary action. Despite a relatively stagnant enrollment share among female students of about 15% across all four years of data, Black girls accounted for more than three times their enrollment share in transfers (47%) and corporal punishment (47%) and more than two times their enrollment share in expulsions (43%) in the 2017-18 school year.



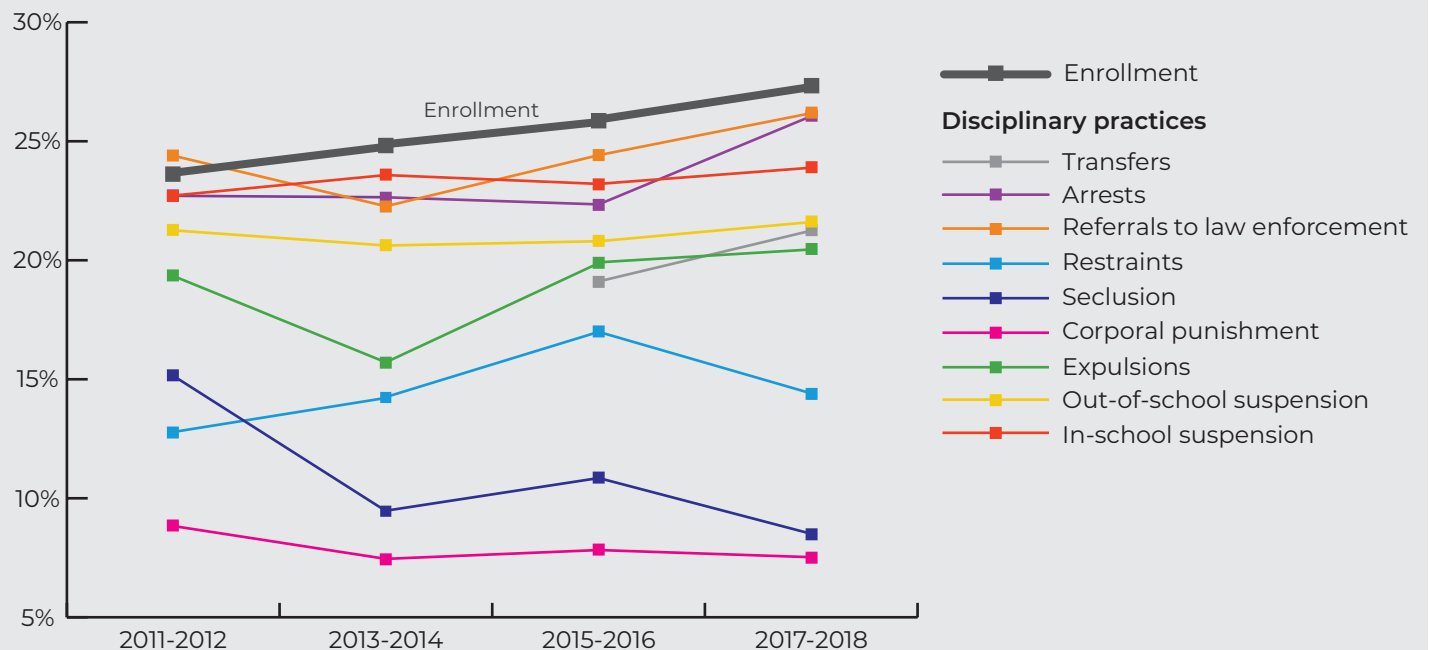
White girls

White girls' total enrollment has gradually decreased over time (from 51% in 2011-12 to 47% in 2017-18). Yet, with the exception of seclusions, white girls have been underrepresented in every category of disciplinary action across all four years of data.



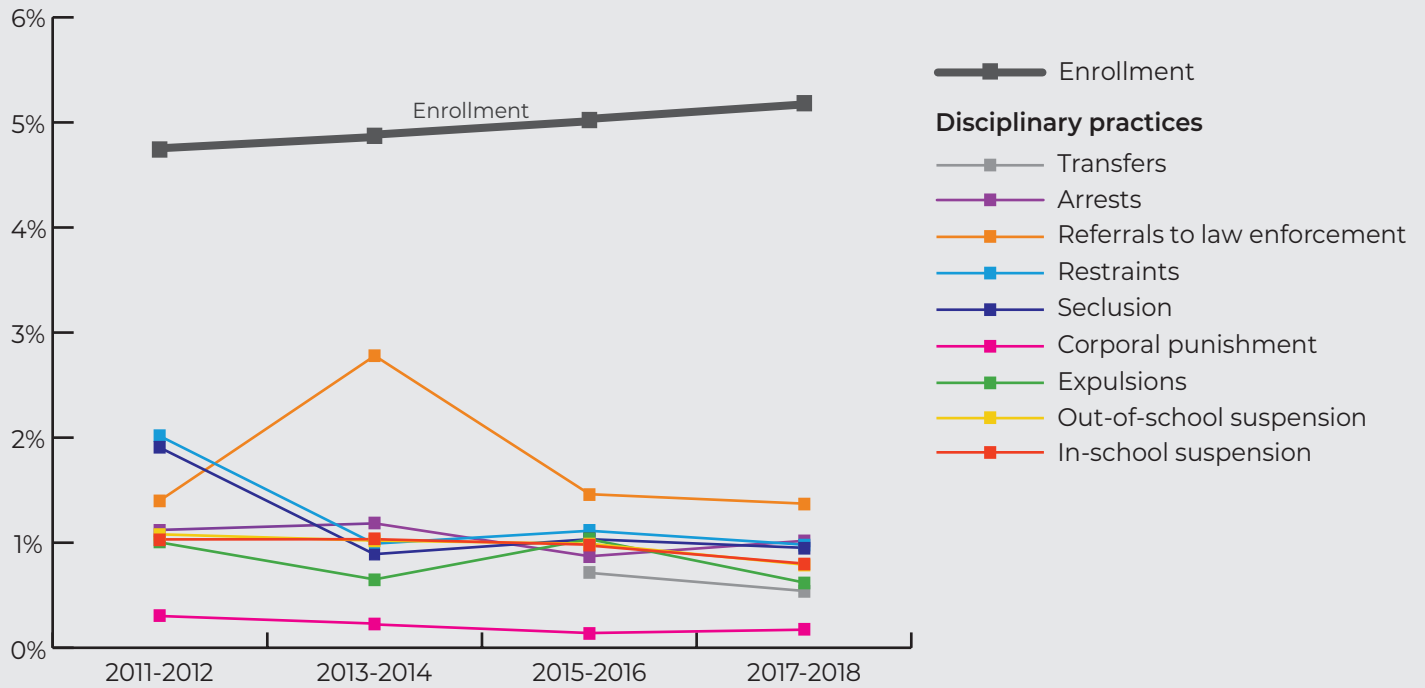
Hispanic girls

Hispanic girls' share of enrollment has increased every year (from 24% in 2011-12 to 27% 2017-18), and they are underrepresented in all disciplinary categories.



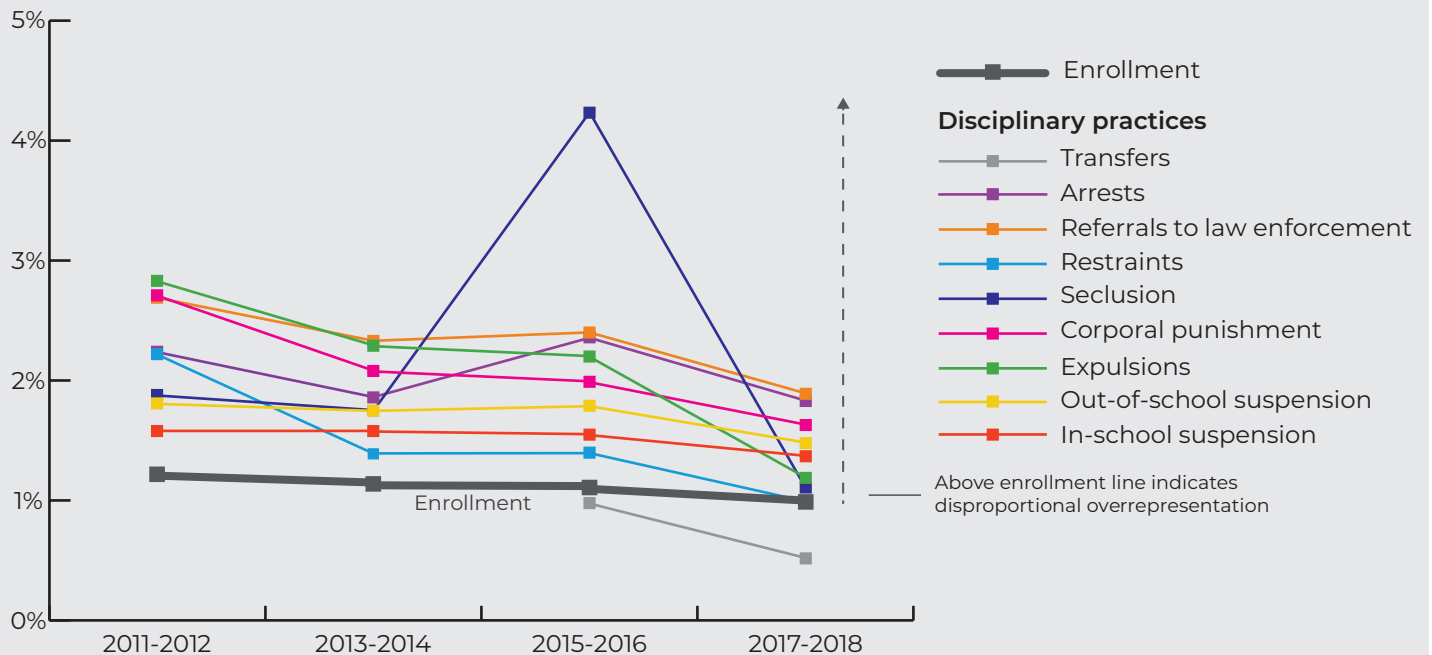
Asian girls

Asian girls made up about 5% of total girls enrolled over time, but 2% or less of all disciplinary actions.



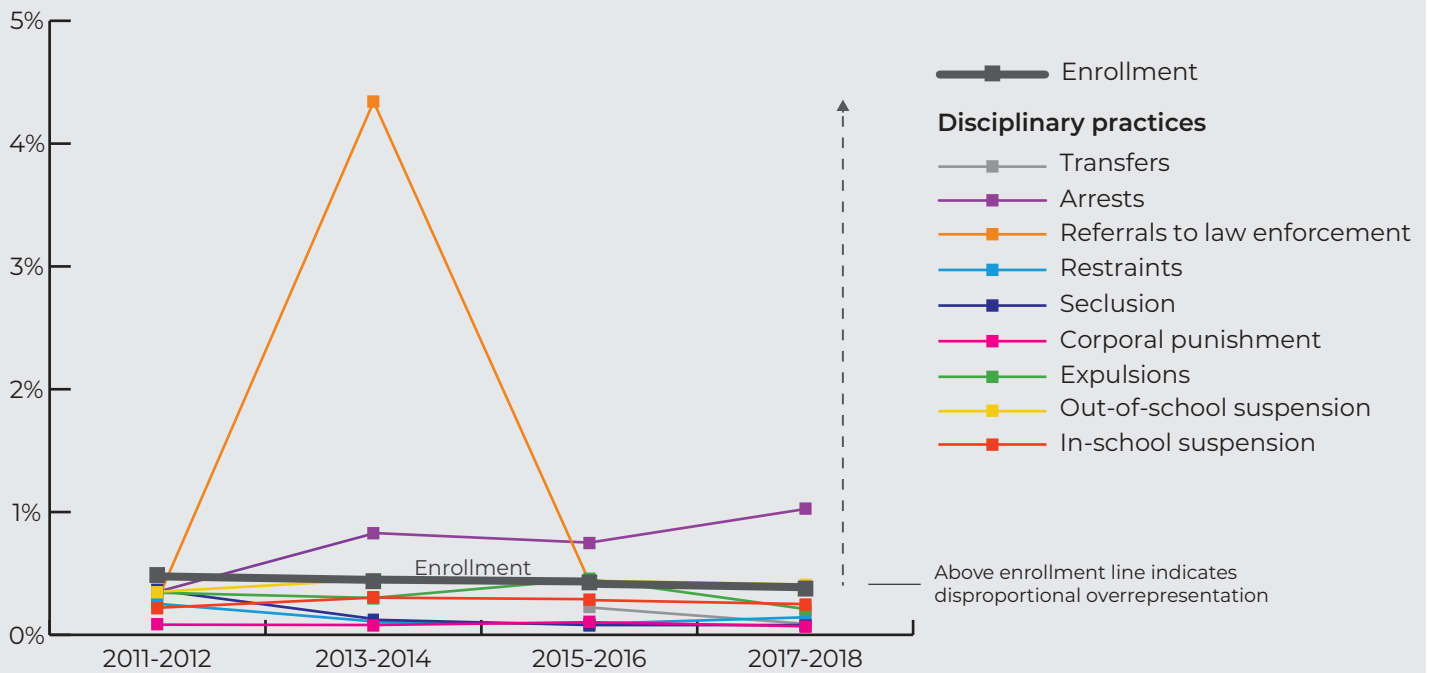
American Indian/Alaska Native girls

American Indian/Alaska Native girls consistently made up about 1.5% of total girls enrolled over time, yet they were overrepresented in most disciplinary actions except transfers.



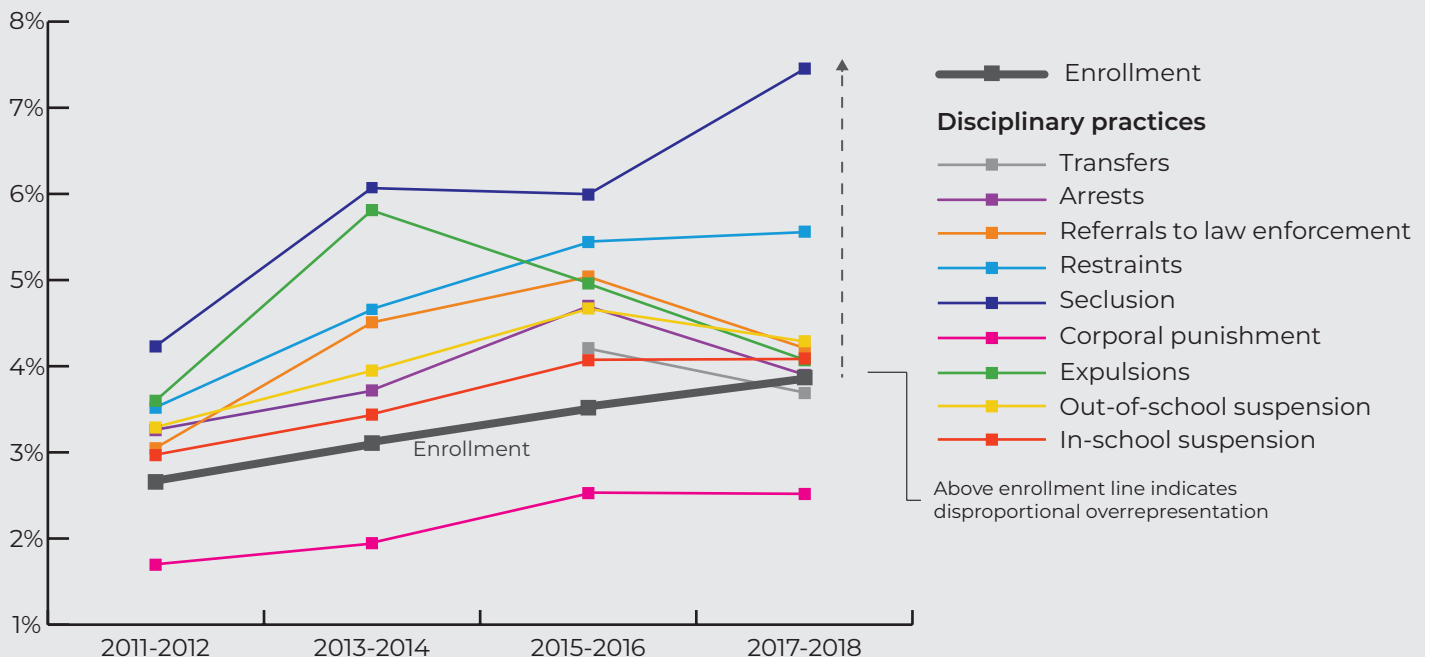
Pacific Islander/Hawaiian girls

Pacific Islander/Hawaiian girls' enrollment and disciplinary trends have been relatively stagnant, (barring a spike in referrals to law enforcement in 2013-14 that was more than 9 times their share of enrollment). Pacific Islander/Hawaiian girls' have been disproportionately arrested at school since 2013-14 on an upward trend.



Multiracial girls

Multiracial girls' share of enrollment has gradually increased from about 3% in 2011-12 to 4% in 2017-18. They were overrepresented in all discipline categories, most notably seclusions, and they were underrepresented among girls subjected to corporal punishment.



About the data

To examine disciplinary trends, we used the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) from 2011-2021 from the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights. The CRDC is collected biennially and reflects self-reported information from every public school and school district in the country, including juvenile justice facilities, charter schools, alternative schools, and schools serving youth with disabilities.

Although 2020-2021 data is available, Education Department officials do not recommend comparing this year of data with previous years due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in many schools reporting virtual or hybrid instruction. Given this, the 2020-2021 data is not included here.

The CRDC has provided the following definitions of the disciplinary actions included in this fact sheet:⁴

- **Corporal punishment** refers to paddling, spanking, or other forms of physical punishment imposed on a child.
- **Expulsion** refers to an action taken by the local educational agency of removing a child from their regular school for disciplinary purposes. Expulsions can occur with educational services (where the child receives school-provided home instruction or is transferred to an alternative school) or without educational services.
- **In-school suspension** is an instance in which a child is temporarily removed from his or her regular classroom(s) for at least half a day for disciplinary purposes, but remains under the direct supervision of school personnel. **Out-of-school suspension** is an instance in which a child is temporarily removed from their regular school for at least half a day (but less than the remainder of the school year) for disciplinary purposes to another setting.
- **Referral to law enforcement** is an action by which a student is reported to any law enforcement agency or official, including a school police unit, for an incident that occurs on school grounds, during school-related events, or while taking school transportation, regardless of whether official action is taken. Citations, tickets, court referrals, and school-related arrests are considered referrals to law enforcement.
- **Restraints** include **mechanical restraint**, which is the use of any device or equipment to restrict a student's freedom of movement, and **physical restraint**, which refers to a personal restriction that immobilizes or reduces the ability of a student to move their torso, arms, legs, or head freely.
- **School-related arrest** refers to an arrest of a student for any activity conducted on school grounds, during off-campus school activities, or due to a referral by any school official. All school-related arrests are considered referrals to law enforcement.
- **Seclusion** refers to the involuntary confinement of a student alone in a room or area from which the student is physically prevented from leaving.
- **Transfer to an alternative school for disciplinary reasons** is a subset of expulsion with educational services.

Endnotes

- 1 F.A. Pearman, F.C. Curran, B. Fisher, & J. Gardella, "Are Achievement Gaps Related to Discipline Gaps? Evidence From National Data," *AERA Open* 5(4), 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2332858419875440>.
- 2 When we use the term "girls," we intend this to be inclusive of cisgender girls, nonbinary, gender non-conforming, genderqueer, and any girl-identified students. However, it is important to note the CRDC data uses binary male/female categories to capture sex, not gender identity.
- 3 This factsheet draws on data from the U.S. Department of Education Civil Rights Data Collection, which uses U.S. Census racial/ethnic categories that are reflected here.
- 4 Department of Education, "Master List of CRDC Definitions: LEA Form Terms," https://civilrightsdata.ed.gov/assets/downloads/2017-18_Master_List_of_CRDC_Definitions.pdf.

Acknowledgments

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APPENDIX

Black girls, percentage of enrollment and discipline sanction

School year	Enrollment	In-School Suspension	Out-of-School Suspension	Expulsions	Corporal Punishment	Seclusion	Restraints	Referrals	Arrests	Transfers
2011-2012	15.97%	35.68%	42.80%	39.12%	40.76%	23.24%	32.19%	30.41%	33.25%	
2013-2014	15.58%	36.28%	44.47%	34.15%	46.29%	24.92%	29.72%	28.77%	39.07%	
2015-2016	15.52%	36.72%	44.57%	37.00%	46.16%	24.62%	30.77%	33.13%	39.05%	47.29%
2017-2018	15.21%	36.57%	44.78%	42.92%	47.21%	27.71%	34.10%	32.52%	36.03%	46.78%

White girls, percentage of enrollment and discipline sanction

School year	Enrollment	In-School Suspension	Out-of-School Suspension	Expulsions	Corporal Punishment	Seclusion	Restraints	Referrals	Arrests	Transfers
2011-2012	51.30%	35.83%	29.38%	33.72%	45.56%	53.20%	47.02%	37.77%	37.04%	
2013-2014	50.05%	33.75%	27.73%	41.06%	41.92%	56.78%	48.89%	35.02%	30.71%	
2015-2016	48.55%	33.21%	26.73%	34.45%	41.22%	53.15%	44.16%	33.13%	29.96%	27.48%
2017-2018	47.05%	33.02%	26.63%	30.53%	40.88%	54.19%	43.80%	33.42%	30.13%	27.10%

Hispanic girls, percentage of enrollment and discipline sanction

School year	Enrollment	In-School Suspension	Out-of-School Suspension	Expulsions	Corporal Punishment	Seclusion	Restraints	Referrals	Arrests	Transfers
2011-2012	23.61%	22.69%	21.27%	19.36%	8.87%	15.17%	12.77%	24.39%	22.72%	
2013-2014	24.81%	23.59%	20.63%	15.70%	7.45%	9.47%	14.24%	22.25%	22.62%	
2015-2016	25.85%	23.18%	20.81%	19.89%	7.86%	10.88%	17.01%	24.41%	22.32%	19.09%
2017-2018	27.32%	23.90%	21.62%	20.47%	7.52%	8.50%	14.39%	26.19%	26.06%	21.26%

Asian girls, percentage of enrollment and discipline sanction

School year	Enrollment	In-School Suspension	Out-of-School Suspension	Expulsions	Corporal Punishment	Seclusion	Restraints	Referrals	Arrests	Transfers
2011-2012	4.74%	1.03%	1.08%	1.01%	0.31%	1.91%	2.02%	1.40%	1.12%	
2013-2014	4.87%	1.04%	1.02%	0.65%	0.23%	0.89%	0.99%	2.78%	1.19%	
2015-2016	5.02%	0.98%	0.99%	1.04%	0.14%	1.04%	1.12%	1.46%	0.87%	0.72%
2017-2018	5.18%	0.80%	0.79%	0.62%	0.18%	0.95%	0.98%	1.37%	1.02%	0.54%

American Indian/Alaskan Native girls, percentage of enrollment and discipline sanction

School year	Enrollment	In-School Suspension	Out-of-School Suspension	Expulsions	Corporal Punishment	Seclusion	Restraints	Referrals	Arrests	Transfers
2011-2012	1.22%	1.58%	1.81%	2.83%	2.71%	1.88%	2.22%	2.69%	2.24%	
2013-2014	1.14%	1.58%	1.75%	2.29%	2.08%	1.75%	1.39%	2.33%	1.86%	
2015-2016	1.11%	1.55%	1.79%	2.20%	1.99%	4.23%	1.40%	2.40%	2.36%	0.98%
2017-2018	0.99%	1.37%	1.48%	1.19%	1.63%	1.11%	0.99%	1.89%	1.83%	0.52%

Pacific Island/Hawaiian girls, percentage of enrollment and discipline sanction

School year	Enrollment	In-School Suspension	Out-of-School Suspension	Expulsions	Corporal Punishment	Seclusion	Restraints	Referrals	Arrests	Transfers
2011-2012	0.49%	0.22%	0.35%	0.35%	0.09%	0.37%	0.26%	0.29%	0.35%	
2013-2014	0.44%	0.31%	0.45%	0.30%	0.08%	0.13%	0.11%	4.34%	0.83%	
2015-2016	0.43%	0.29%	0.44%	0.46%	0.11%	0.08%	0.09%	0.43%	0.75%	0.23%
2017-2018	0.38%	0.25%	0.41%	0.21%	0.07%	0.08%	0.15%	0.39%	1.03%	0.09%

Multiracial girls, percentage of enrollment and discipline sanction

School year	Enrollment	In-School Suspension	Out-of-School Suspension	Expulsions	Corporal Punishment	Seclusion	Restraints	Referrals	Arrests	Transfers
2011-2012	2.66%	2.97%	3.29%	3.60%	1.70%	4.23%	3.52%	3.05%	3.26%	
2013-2014	3.11%	3.44%	3.95%	5.81%	1.95%	6.07%	4.66%	4.51%	3.72%	
2015-2016	3.52%	4.07%	4.67%	4.96%	2.53%	5.99%	5.44%	5.04%	4.70%	4.21%
2017-2018	3.87%	4.09%	4.29%	4.07%	2.52%	7.45%	5.56%	4.21%	3.90%	3.69%