Look Again: What the 2023-24 Civil Rights Data Collection Shows About Educational Access and Exclusion

By Maithreyi Gopalan, Erica Frankenberg, and Ivy Morgan

Every two years, the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) collects data from nearly every public school in the country — what courses they offer, who gets disciplined, who's teaching, and more. This survey, called the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC), is one of the only tools that shows, school by school, whether students of different backgrounds — race, gender, disability status, and English-learner status — are getting their fair share of educational opportunities.

In August 2026, OCR released the 2023-24 Civil Rights Data Collection, the most recent installment of that data collection. AdvancED Equity described the release itself, and what it gained and lost as a tool to measure and understand students' experiences in a first brief. This brief includes early, national findings related to coursework, discipline, and the educator workforce, compares select data with data from the 2021-22 school year, and contextualizes enrollment data with trends since 2011-12. The initial brief on which this brief is based was written before OCR released its summary publication[1] of the 2023-24 data, but OCR's publication is missing the kinds of meaningful analyses that have been released in the past that would highlight inequities in opportunity for students of color. That omission is part of a pattern from this administration of attacking or hiding data and research — particularly when it highlights the experiences of people of color.

This resource fills that gap. It is intended to make sure the public — including families, educators, and policymakers — have accessible, accurate, and actionable information about what the 2023-24 Civil Rights Data Collection reveals for students of color, English learners, and students with disabilities.

The Big Picture

Four findings from the 2023-24 CRDC stand out:[2]

- **Between 2021-22 and 2023-24, K-12 public school enrollment declined.** In the most recent year, there were 48.2 million students enrolled in kindergarten through grade 12 and 1.5 million children in preschools. This represents a drop in K-12 enrollment of 0.9% (from 48.6 million in 2021-22), and an increase in pre-K enrollment of 12% (from 1.4 million in 2021-22).

This brief, which is based on AdvancED Equity's brief, "A Second Look at the 2023-24 Civil Rights Data Collection: Early Findings on Advanced Coursework, Discipline, and School Staffing," is the result of a collaborative effort between EdTrust and AdvancED Equity.[3]

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- **Students' access to advanced coursework remains uneven.** About half of high schools offered calculus (45%) or computer science (51%). Among high schools where Black and Latino students made up more than three-quarters of the student body, calculus was only offered in 32% of schools, compared with 51% of schools where fewer than a quarter of students were Black or Latino.
- **Racial/ethnic disparities in exclusionary school discipline persist.** Black boys experienced out-of-school suspensions at a rate that was nearly three times their share of enrollment, and Black girls at nearly two times theirs.
- **Teachers in classrooms don't look like the students they teach.** According to the 2023-24 data, white teachers made up 75% of the workforce, while white students made up 44% of enrollment. Black and Latino people made up smaller shares of the teacher population than they did of the student population: 9% of teachers were Black, while 15% of students were; similarly, 11% of teachers were Latino, compared with 30% of students.

APPROACH

This analysis is based on the Harmonized Civil Rights Data Collection (H-CRDC).[3] This brief aims to fill a need that the Office for Civil Rights did not meet when it released its summary publication, the "First Look" report, which largely excluded analyses to help the field understand inequities in public school experiences for students of color. As such, this analysis included several steps to ensure that the findings align with any results from the Department.

Data processing: AdvancED Equity followed OCR conventions where possible. For example, high schools are defined as schools reporting any of grades 9-12.[4] Schools are classified by Black and Latino enrollment using the same thresholds used in prior OCR reports.[5]

Data analysis: The measures AdvancED Equity calculated for the analysis of the 2023-24 data were designed to align with the figures OCR published in its First Look for the 2021-22 collection.

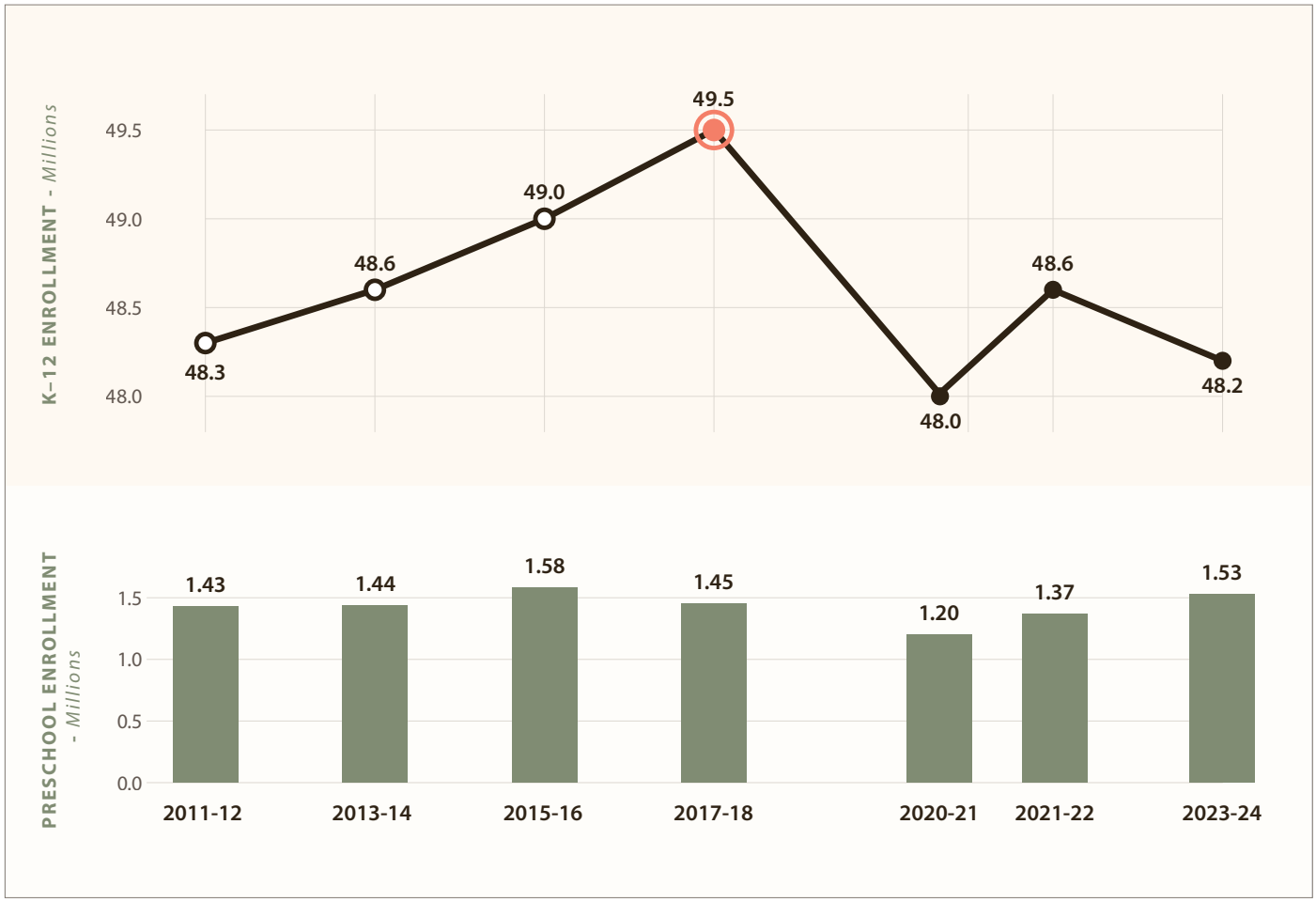
Data verification: AdvancED Equity replicated the figures in OCR's 2021-22 First Look using the code that produced the 2023-24 figures and compared the results. All except five of the figures that OCR published match within a reasonable margin. That overwhelming agreement establishes that the calculations behind the 2021-22 figures closely replicate OCR's so that 2023-24 figures created by the same code will be consistent.

Enrollment

K-12 public school enrollment declined while preschool enrollment increased

According to the 2023-24 CRDC, there are 48.2 million K-12 students across 97,094 schools and 17,591 districts (which includes independent charter school districts) in the United States. That is 1.3 million fewer students than the recent peak in 2017-18. On the other hand, district-operated preschool enrollment rose from a low of 1.2 million in the pandemic year (2020-21) to 1.5 million — above where it stood in 2011-12 and the second-highest count since then. The K-12 enrollment decline is consistent with what analyses of state administrative data have also shown. Because it counts only public schools, the CRDC cannot tell us where students are instead of public schools; however, other analyses suggest declining birth rates, competition with private schools and home-schooling, and enhanced immigration enforcement.

Figure 1. Public school enrollment across seven CRDC collections, 2011-12 to 2023-24



Reading this figure: There were 48.2 million K-12 students and 1.53 million preschool students in public schools in 2023-24.

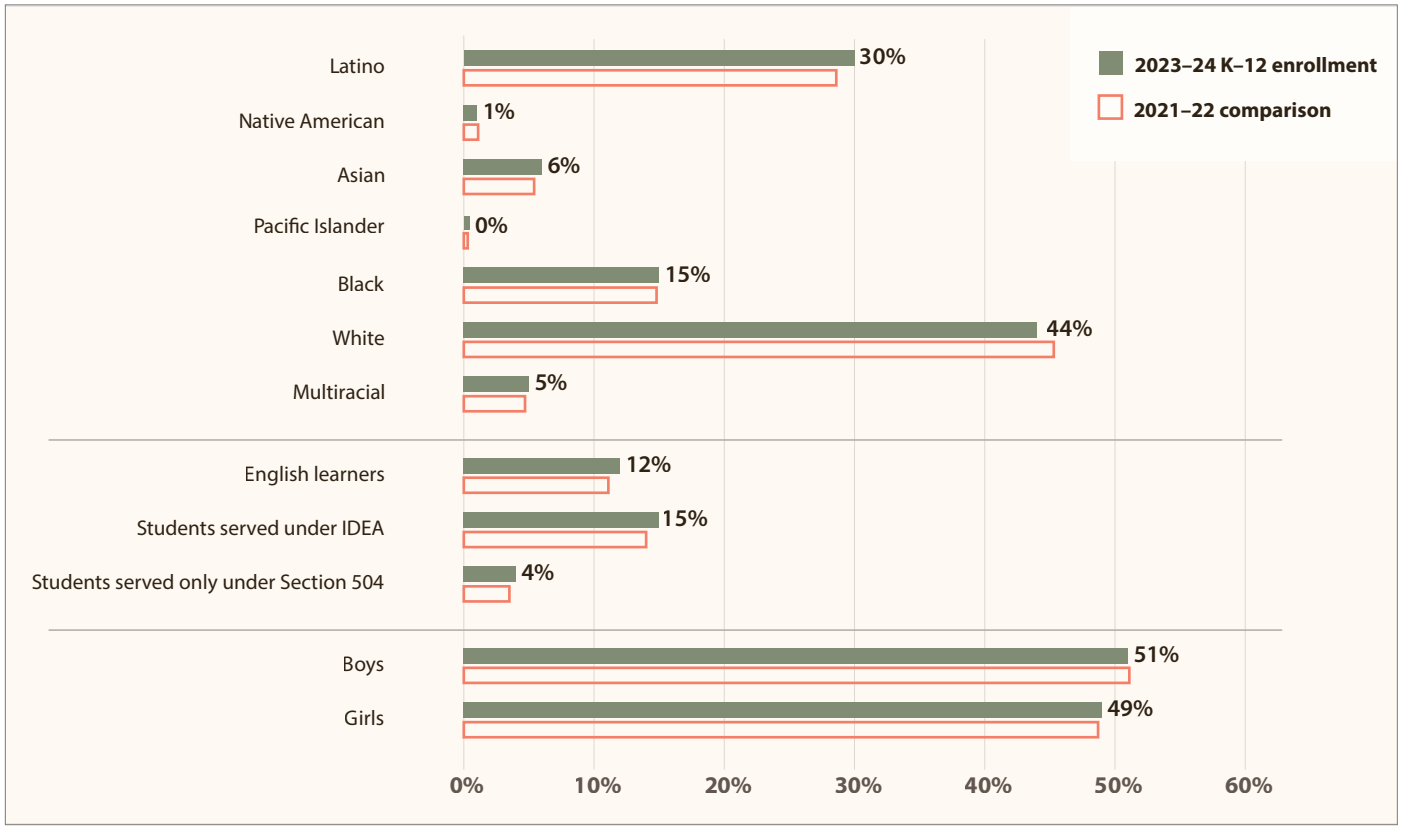
Source: Authors' calculations from H-CRDC v3.0

Note: CRDC enrollment data included preschool and K-12 children through the 2020-21 collection and disaggregated preschool and K-12 enrollment data beginning in 2021-22. K-12 is therefore the published figure for 2021-22 and 2023-24 and is derived by subtracting preschool for the five earlier collections, shown as hollow points. All counts are male plus female. There was no 2019-20 collection.

Public school students are diverse, but gaps in the data leave some students invisible

Nationally, almost one-third of students are Latino, 15% are Black, 12% of students are learning English, 15% are served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and another 4% have accommodations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. One gap in the newest data exists despite districts' reporting efforts: the 2021-22 collection was the first — and so far, only — time OCR published a count of nonbinary students. OCR collected that data again for 2023-24, but the current administration suppressed every school's data on nonbinary students. That's a real loss for understanding these students' experiences.

Figure 2. Who is counted in the 2023-24 CRDC



Reading this figure: Latino students made up 30% of K-12 enrollment in 2023-24; this is slightly higher than their enrollment share in 2021-22.

Source: Authors' calculations from H-CRDC v3.0 and OCR, A First Look (January 2025)

Note: All counts are male plus female.

Which Students Have Access to Advanced Coursework?

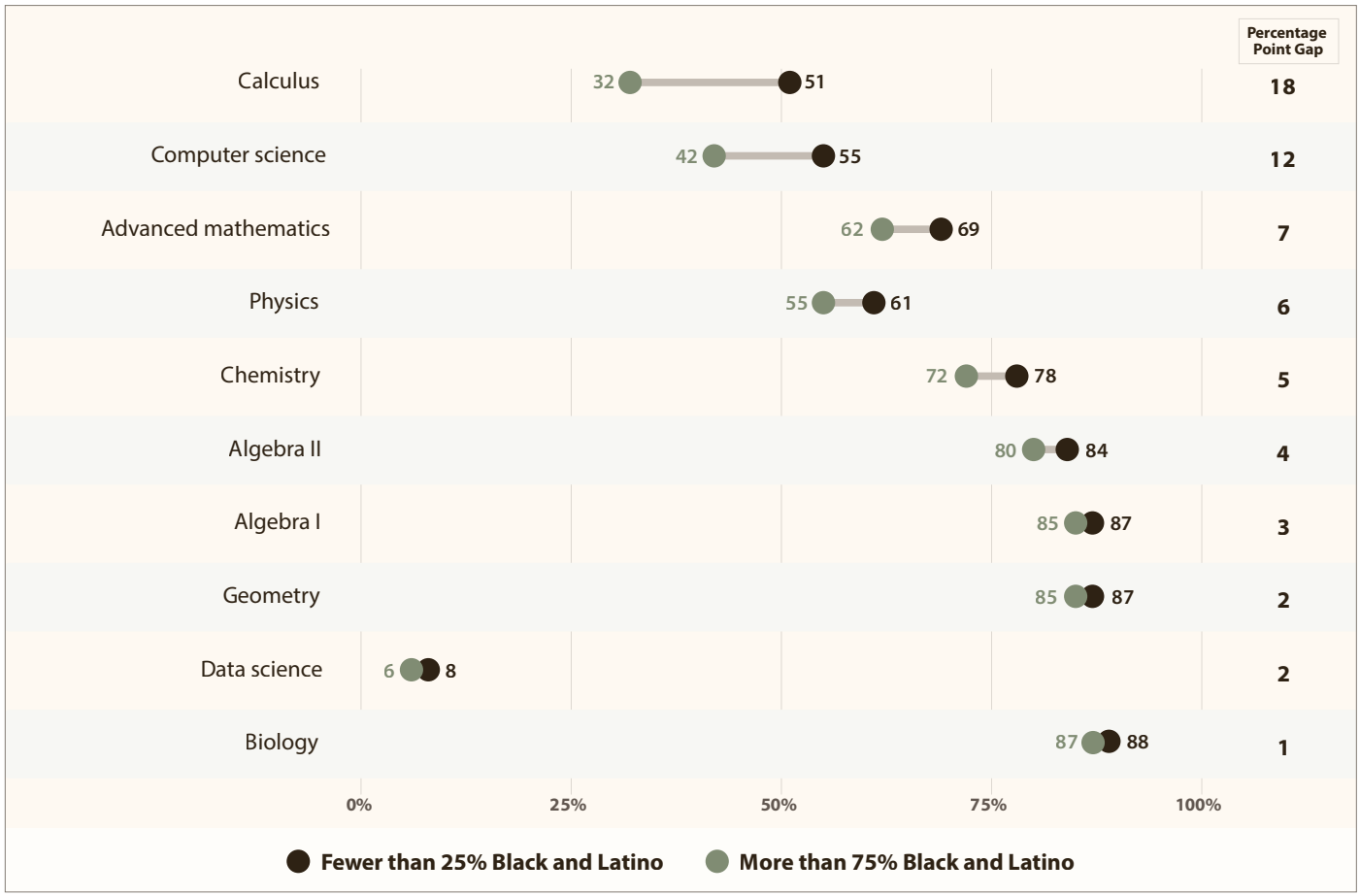
Most public high schools offer basic math and science courses, but access to advanced courses remains limited and unequal

Many high schools — more than 80% — offer Algebra I, geometry and biology, which are the basic courses at the beginning of the math and science sequences. Access to courses that are at the advanced end of the course sequences narrows sharply: 59% of high schools offer physics, 51% offer computer science, and 45% offer calculus; these access

levels are almost identical to levels in 2021-22. Data science, collected for the first time, is offered in just 7% of high schools. Among schools serving grade 7 or 8, only 59% offer Algebra I, compared to 61% in 2021-22. Taking Algebra I in middle school matters because it's the gateway to everything that follows. Students who take it early have time to move through advanced math coursework that's been linked to stronger college readiness and wider access to STEM careers.

More troubling is where those advanced courses are offered. Figure 3 compares high schools with high and low percentages of Black and Latino students (i.e., where more than three-quarters or less than one-quarter of the students are Black or Latino). At the beginning of the course sequence (e.g., biology, algebra, and geometry) the two groups of schools are indistinguishable. The gap opens exactly where the courses begin to carry weight for college admission: schools serving the most students of color are much less likely to offer advanced math and science courses (e.g., 18 percentage points for calculus and 12 percentage points for computer science). These are similar to patterns from two years earlier.

Figure 3. Course offerings in U.S. high schools, by Black and Latino enrollment



Reading this figure: Among schools where more than 75% of students are Black or Latino, just 32% of them offered Calculus, compared with 51% of schools where Black and Latino students made up less than 25% of the student population — this is a gap of 18 percentage points.

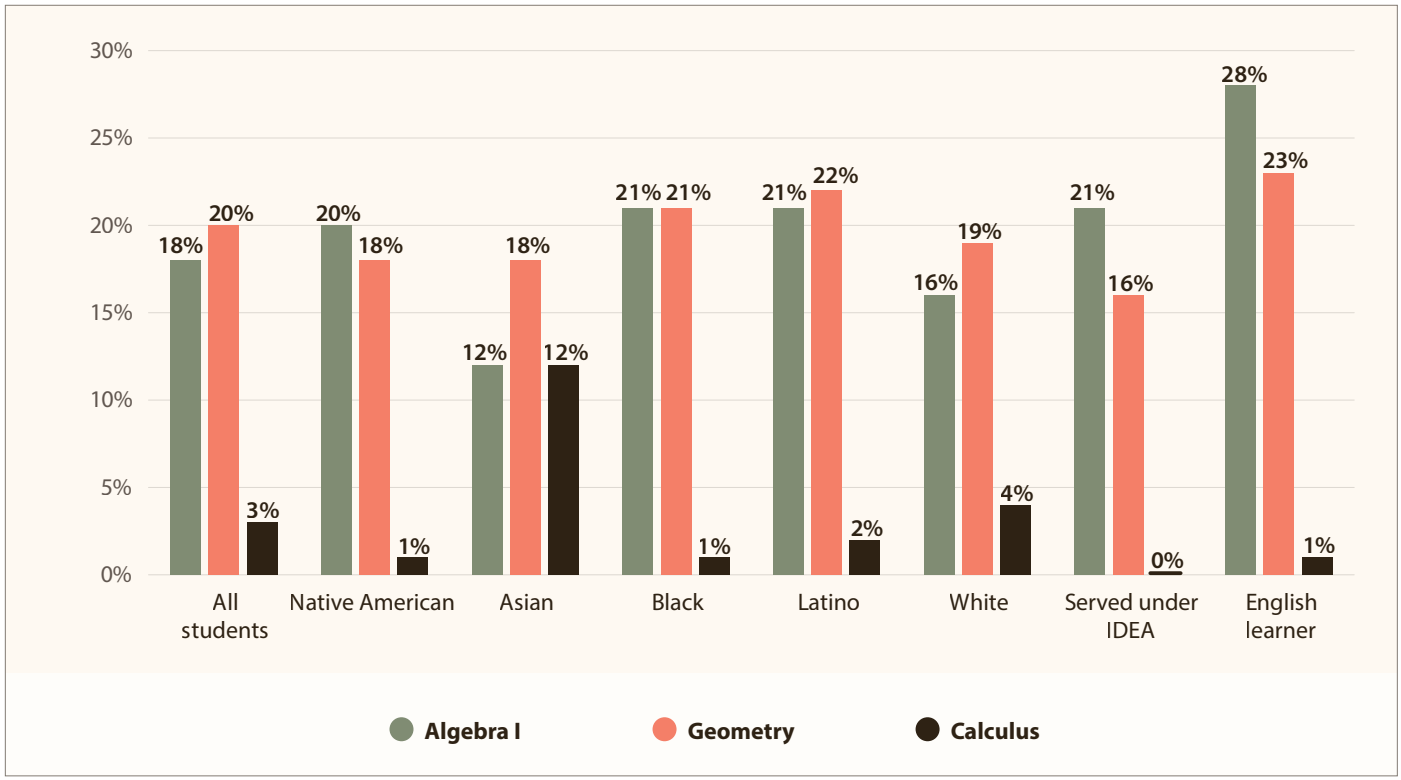
Source: Authors' calculations from the 2023-24 CRDC, H-CRDC v3.0

Note: A school offers a course if it reports one or more classes in it. Courses are ordered by the size of the gap. The gaps are computed from unrounded percentages and therefore may differ from gaps calculated from rounded percentages. High and low Black and Latino enrollment follow the OCR/GAO thresholds described in note 6.

Traditionally underserved student groups are far less supported to enroll in advanced math and science courses

Offering a course is not the same as preparing and enabling students to enroll (and succeed) in it. Therefore, this analysis also examines enrollment patterns in math and science coursework. English learners are enrolled in Algebra I at a substantially higher rate than all students (28% compared with 18%). This suggests that English learners take this important gateway course later in high school, or have to repeat it, limiting the time they have for more rigorous courses.

Figure 4. Math course enrollment rates in public high schools, by student group



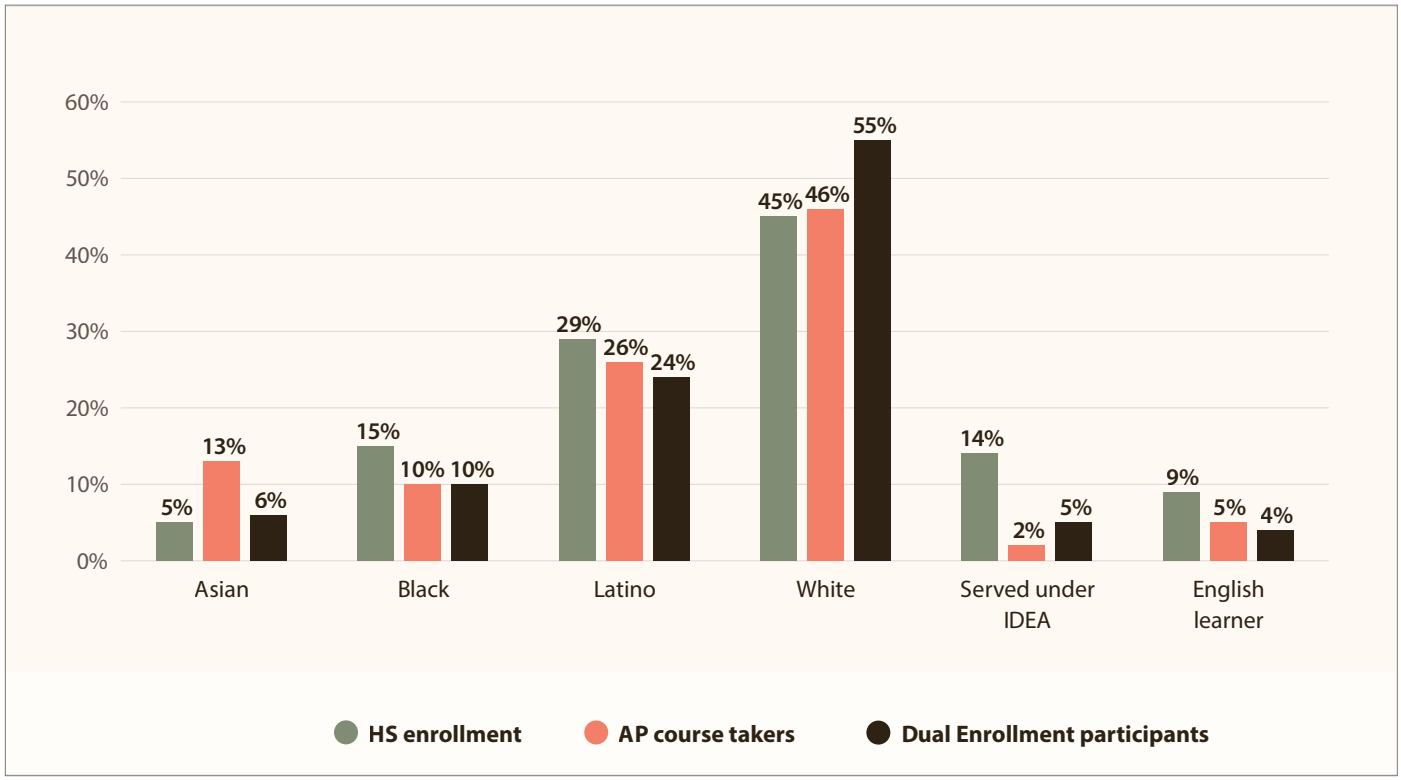
Reading this figure: 18%, 20%, and 3% of students in high schools were enrolled in Algebra I, geometry, and calculus, respectively.

Source: Authors' calculations from the 2023-24 CRDC, H-CRDC v3.0

Note: Percentages are course enrollment for the group divided by the group's enrollment in the same schools. Race and ethnicity, disability, and English learner groups overlap with one another.

Black and Latino students also face barriers to enrollment in the courses and programs that convert coursework into college credit. About 18% of high school students were enrolled in at least one Advanced Placement (AP) course, compared to 16% two years earlier. Black and Latino students are less likely than their peers to take AP courses and participate in dual enrollment courses or programs. Similarly, students served under IDEA and English learners are under-represented among AP course takers and dual enrollment participants. Figure 5 further illustrates the share of students taking AP classes and participating in dual enrollment programs, relative to their share of enrollment in high schools.

Figure 5. High school and AP enrollment and dual enrollment participation, by student group



Reading this figure: Asian students represent 5% of high school students, 13% of AP course takers, and 6% of dual enrollment participants.

Source: Authors' calculations from the 2023-24 CRDC, H-CRDC v3.0

Note: Percentages are enrollment for the group in the school or the course, divided by the total enrollment in the school or the course. Race and ethnicity, disability, and English-learner groups overlap with one another.

Who Teaches Students and Who Supports Them?

Access to certified, experienced teachers and school counselors is among the better-established predictors of whether students finish high school and go on to higher education. Disparities in access to educators and school counselors have long been treated as a civil rights concern, with traditionally underserved student groups being denied fair access to strong educators and adequate support staff. The 2023-24 collection restores several workforce items last published in 2017-18 and adds teacher counts by race and sex,[6] which OCR has not published since its sample surveys of the 1960s and 1970s.

Black and Latino students are less likely to have access to certified teachers and teachers who look like them

In total, about 720,000 students attended a school where fewer than half of teachers met all state certification requirements, and 73% of students in those schools were Black and Latino students — while Black and Latino students only make up 45% of the total student population. These figures are much worse than they were prior to the pandemic. In 2017-18, the figures were 374,500 students and 59%, respectively.

New data on teacher race/ethnicity and sex allow an updated and more granular look at the demographic characteristics of the educator workforce, which can be compared against those of the student body. White teachers are three-quarters of the workforce, while white students make up less than half (44%) of K-12 enrollment. Meanwhile, 9% of teachers are Black but 15% of students are Black; similarly, 11% of teachers are Latino while 30% of students are Latino.

Far too many students — especially Black students — attend schools with security staff, but no support staff

The CRDC is one of the best sources of data on other staff in schools and provides insightful data on how school districts choose to balance supports for college and career navigation, student well-being, and school safety. About three-quarters (78%) of schools have at least one school counselor and 50% have at least one sworn law enforcement officer or security guard. A school-level comparison of the presence (or not) of these two categories is striking: 2.2 million students attend a school with an officer or guard and no school counselor; Black students are 15% of all students, but 18% of students in these schools. Even worse, about 208,000 students attend schools with an officer or guard and none of the four support roles (school counselor, social worker, nurse, or psychologist).

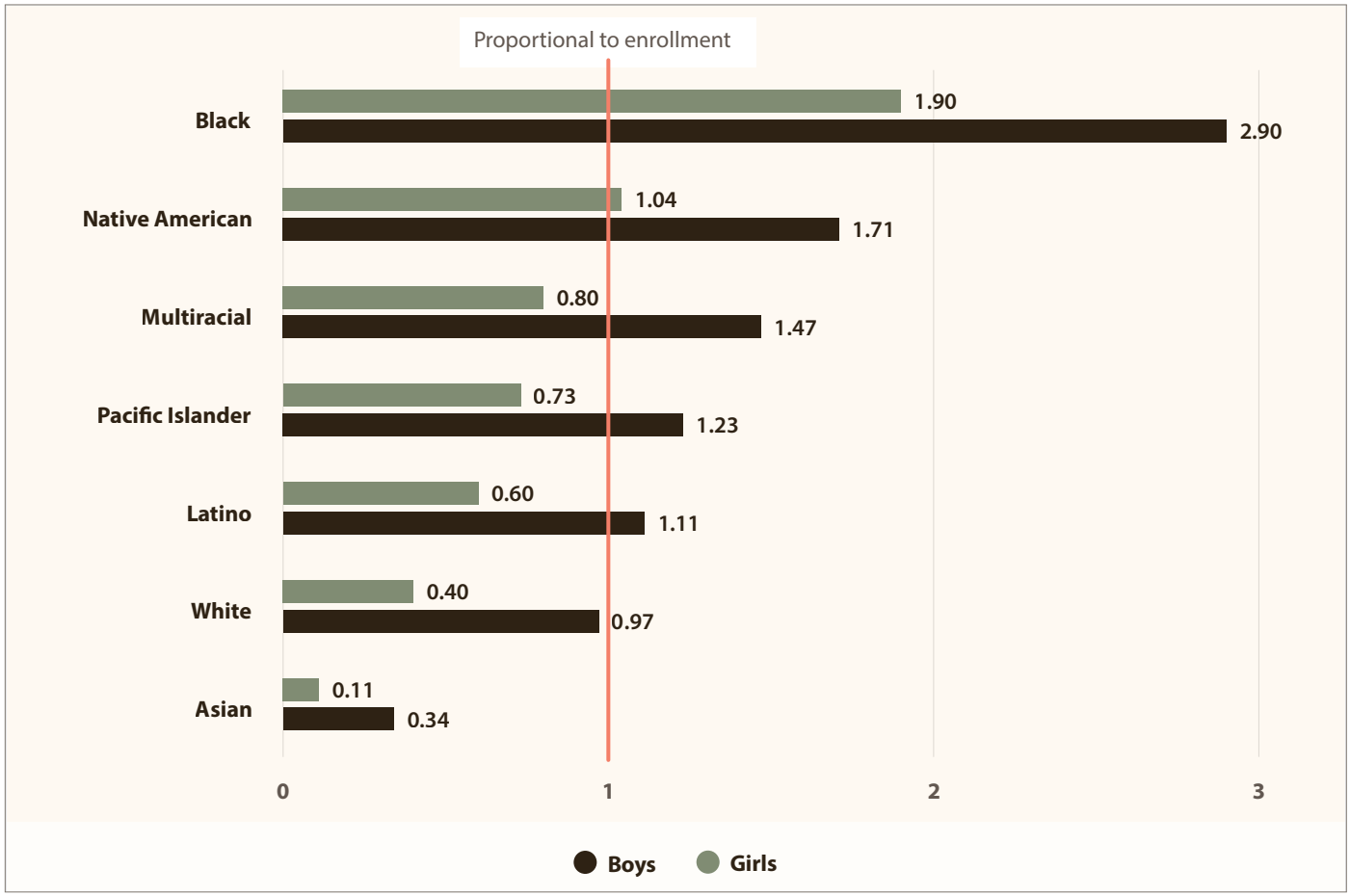
Who Gets Disciplined and Excluded from School?

Exclusionary discipline is on the rise. Some measures of discipline had declined prior to the pandemic, a long-running pattern AdvancED Equity has documented across five decades of the CRDC, and more sharply during the pandemic. But the 2023-24 data shows modest increases and persistent over-representation of Black students and boys among K-12 students who are subjected to exclusionary discipline or corporal punishment. In other words, the pandemic reduced the amount of exclusionary discipline K-12 students experienced, likely because of limited in-person schooling, but as normal schooling resumed, similar levels and patterns of disproportionate discipline reappeared.

Figure 6 reports how each student group's share of suspensions compares to its share of K-12 enrollment. A value of 1.0 means a group is suspended exactly in proportion to its presence in schools; values greater than 1.0 mean that the group of students is suspended more often than is fair, given its presence in schools.

2.2 million students attend a school with an officer or guard and no school counselor

Figure 6. K-12 out-of-school suspension relative to enrollment, by race and sex



Reading this figure: Black girls and boys are over-represented among students who received out-of-school suspensions. Black girls were suspended at 1.9 times their enrollment and Black boys were suspended at 2.9 times their enrollment.

Source: Authors' calculations from the 2023–24 CRDC, H-CRDC v3.0

Note: Each bar is a group's share of students receiving one or more out-of-school suspensions divided by its share of K-12 enrollment. The suspension detail sits behind skip logic; counts are based on the schools that answered it. Ratios are computed from unrounded shares; shares quoted in the text are rounded, so a ratio may differ slightly from the quotient of two quoted figures.

Discipline disparities remain stark, and discipline for preschool students is rising alarmingly fast

Suspensions: Black boys are 22% of all students who received out-of-school suspensions, even though they only make up 7.5% of all students — nearly 3 times (2.9x) their share of enrollment. This is similar to their over-representation in 2021-22. Black girls are also suspended at disproportionate rates — 1.9 times their enrollment share, a slight increase from 1.8 in 2021-22. They are the only group of girls suspended well above their enrollment share; the share of Native American girls who are suspended is close to their share of enrollment, and every other group of girls is suspended below their share. In addition, students with disabilities (served under IDEA or Section 504) are over-represented: they are 19% of all students and 33% of students suspended out of school.

Referrals to law enforcement and arrests: Beyond suspension, districts reported that 195,900 students were referred to law enforcement and 33,900 students were arrested at school; this represents a slight decline from the 2021-22 figures, which were 209,400 and 34,800, respectively. For the first time, the data also includes incidents in addition to students: there were 240,800 referral incidents, meaning, on average each student who was referred to law enforcement was referred 1.2 times. Black students are 26% of those referred and 35% of those arrested (again, higher than their 15% of enrollment). Native American students are 2% of those referred, while being just 1% of enrollment.

Corporal punishment: Corporal punishment is expressly allowed in at least 14 states and about 20,000 students received corporal punishment in 1,752 schools in 2023-24, compared to 24,500 students in 2,483 schools in 2021-22. Where corporal punishment remains, it falls disproportionately on Black boys at 20% of cases (while representing 7.5% of enrollment in all schools). Use of this disciplinary practice is declining, but even one student experiencing state-sanctioned abuse is one too many.

Preschool suspensions: Preschool exclusionary discipline increased substantially over the two years. The number of 3- to 5-year-olds who received out-of-school suspensions climbed from 2,700 in 2021-22 to 4,500 in 2023-24, and the number of children expelled nearly doubled from 370 to 600 over the same time — growth that far outpaces overall growth in preschool enrollment. As with all other discipline measures in the CRDC — and so many other indicators of opportunity — Black children are over-represented: they are 18% of preschool enrollment but 37% of those suspended. Boys are over-represented as well; they are 54% of preschool enrollment and 81% of those suspended.

Restraint and seclusion: The number of students who were subjected to physical or mechanical restraint or seclusion rose more than 20% since the last collection to nearly 130,000 students. Students served under IDEA are vastly over-represented: they are 15% of enrollment but 73% of those physically restrained and 68% of those secluded. New data indicates that 25% of schools used at least one of these three methods of control.

Why This Data Collection Matters

The CRDC is the only dataset that reports, for every public school in the country, both the opportunities a school offers (like advanced courses) and the treatment students receive there (like discipline) — in the same record.

OCR administers the collection under the Department of Education Organization Act of 1979 and the civil rights statutes it enforces: Title VI and Title IX of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. By law, if not in practice amidst the current political climate, OCR should use the data to investigate complaints of discrimination, to open compliance reviews where problems appear widespread, and to issue policy guidance. In addition, the CRDC collects crucial information that states and districts must include in parent-facing report cards according to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

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While the CRDC exists primarily as an enforcement tool, its measures have also been used for six decades by researchers, policymakers, and education and civil rights advocates, to examine where opportunity is distributed unequally. Indeed, AdvancED Equity has used the data to trace who is identified as gifted and how staffing gaps have moved over the past decade. Similarly, EdTrust has used CRDC data to identify opportunity gaps in access to advanced coursework and school counselors, as well as exposure to exclusionary discipline and novice teachers, for students of color and students from low-income backgrounds, and support advocacy for state and federal policy change, including the bipartisan *Advanced Coursework Equity Act*, the *Counseling Not Criminalization in Schools Act*, and the *Ending PUSHOUT Act*.

ENDNOTES

1. AdvancED Equity compares the two analyses in a separate addendum. Where this analysis and OCR count the same thing, the numbers are the same; where the numbers differ, the difference is in how something is defined and applying OCR's definition yields numbers that align within a reasonable margin.
2. All findings are for 2023-24 unless explicitly stated otherwise.
3. Gopalan, M., & Frankenberg, E. (2026). A Second Look at the 2023–24 Civil Rights Data Collection: Early Findings on Advanced Coursework, Discipline, and School Staffing. AdvancED Equity.
4. See here for more details on the harmonization methodology.
5. Following OCR's convention in its first look briefs, a high school is any school or justice facility reporting any of grades 9-12 or ungraded students of high-school age. The CRDC reports enrollment for the school as a whole rather than for grades 9-12 alone, so course-taking rates are computed over the same set of schools for numerator and denominator. They compare groups with one another; they are not grade-specific participation rates.
6. The analysis follows OCR and GAO convention used in AdvancED Equity's earlier staffing work: a high school has high Black and Latino enrollment where those two groups together exceed 75% of students, and low where they fall below 25%. Schools with missing race data are excluded from the classification.
7. Teachers by race and sex are reported as headcounts, not full-time equivalents. The item was optional in 2021-22 and not released in the public files, but was required in 2023-24, and 96,929 schools reported it.