

# Referrals to Law Enforcement and School-Related Arrests in U.S. Public Schools

2017-18 Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC)



U.S. Department of Education  
Office for Civil Rights

## About the Civil Rights Data Collection

The Civil Rights Data Collection gathers and publishes key information about student access to educational opportunities and school climate from public schools (pre-K through 12th grade) in all 50 states, D.C., and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico<sup>1</sup>. Since the 2009-10 CRDC, the Office for Civil Rights has published the number of students receiving referrals to law enforcement and school-related arrests data from the nation's public schools.

### 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.

### SCHOOL-RELATED ARREST

Is an arrest of a student for any activity conducted on school grounds, during off-campus school activities (including while taking school transportation), or due to a referral by any school official. All school-related arrests are considered referrals to law enforcement.

1: The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico began submitting data to the CRDC for the 2017-18 school year.

## National Student Data

**50,922,024**

Overall Enrollment

**229,470**

Referrals to Law Enforcement

**54,321**

School-related Arrests

During the 2017-18 school year, 23.7% of referrals to law enforcement resulted in a school-related arrest.

From 2013-14 to 2017-18, there was a 17.5% increase in the number of referrals to law enforcement and a 9.7% decrease in the number of school-related arrests.

FIGURE 1

### Referrals to Law Enforcement and School-Related Arrests for 2013-14, 2015-16, and 2017-18 School Years

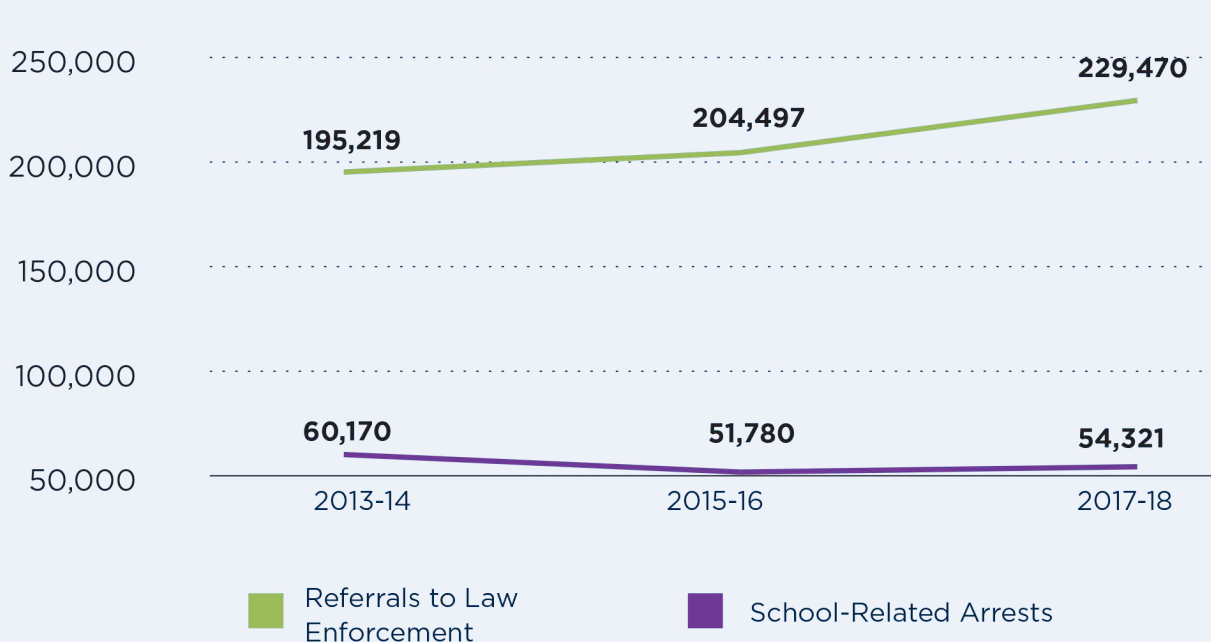
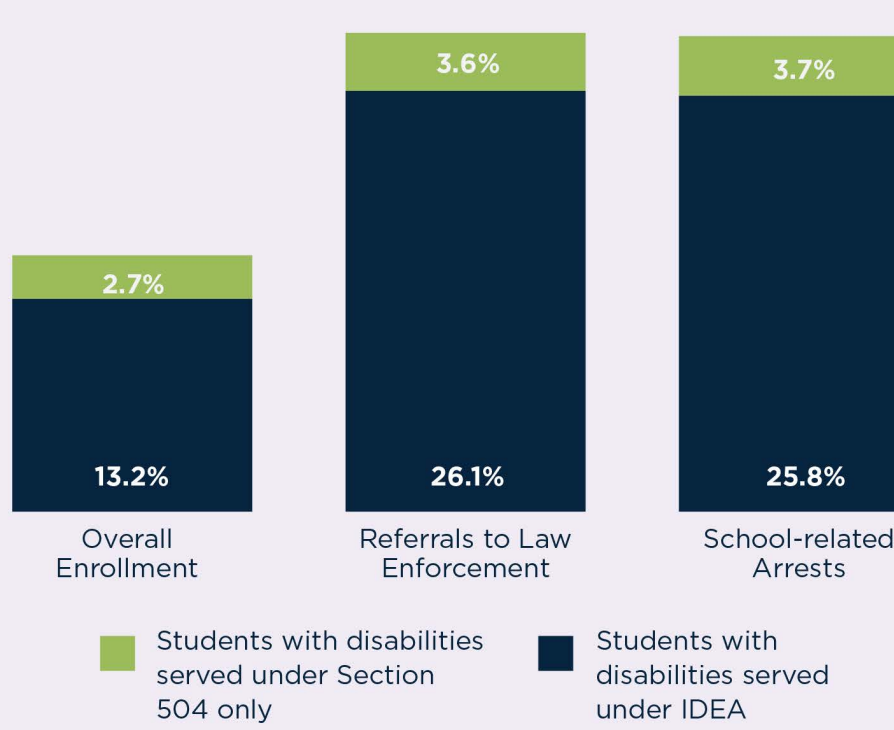


FIGURE 2

### Referrals to Law Enforcement and School-Related Arrests by Disability<sup>2</sup>

Students served under Section 504 only and IDEA, represented larger percentages of students referred to law enforcement or those who received a school-related arrest, than their overall student enrollment.



2: Under Section 504, a person has a disability if they: (1) have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity; (2) have a record of such an impairment; or (3) are regarded as having such an impairment. 29 U.S.C. § 705(9)(B), (20)(B); 34 C.F.R. § 104.3(j). Students with disabilities who are eligible for special education and related services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) are covered by both Section 504 and IDEA. Students with disabilities who are not IDEA-eligible but who are covered by Section 504 are sometimes referred to as "504-only" students.

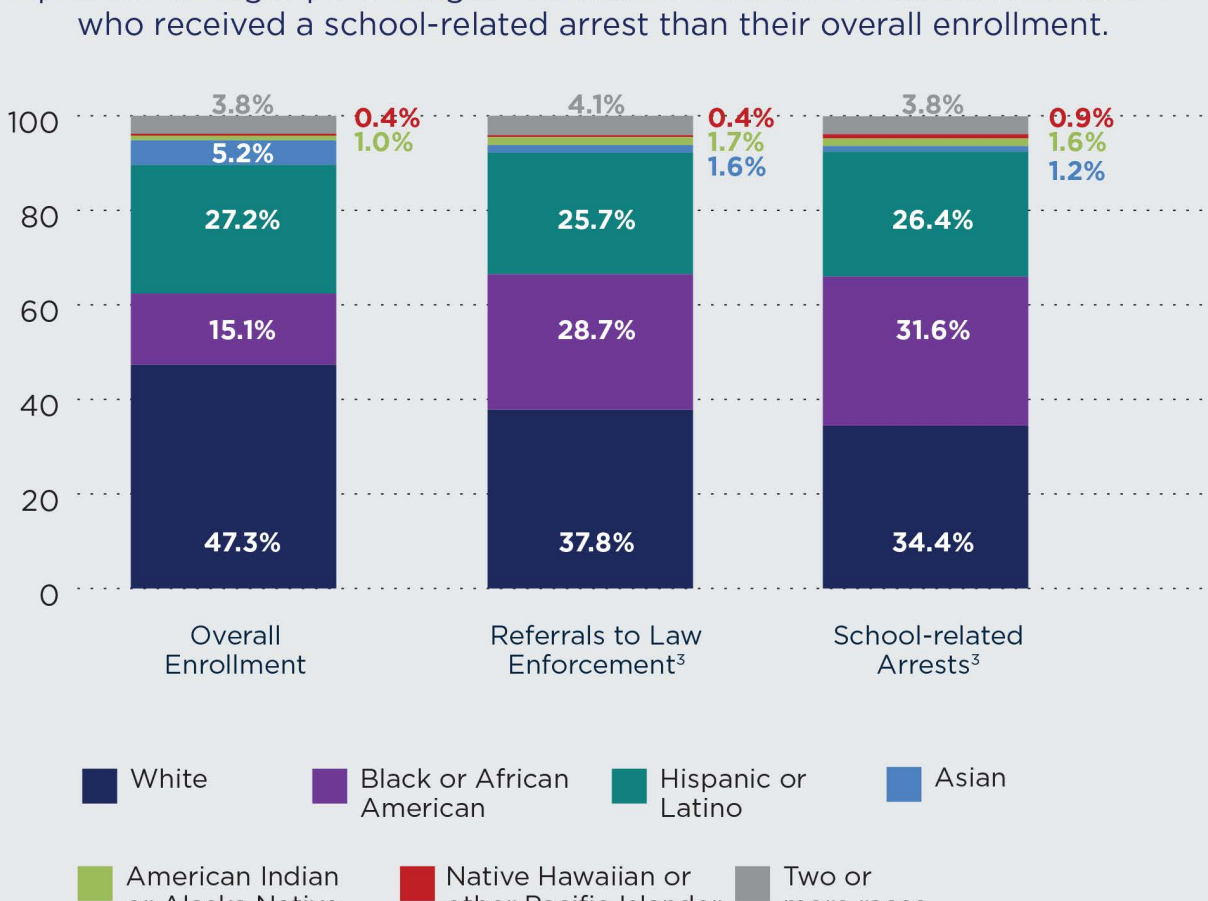
## BOYS

are 51% of the overall student enrollment but accounted for approximately 70% of referrals to law enforcement and student-related arrests.

FIGURE 3

### Referrals and Arrests by Race and Ethnicity

Black and American Indian or Alaska Native students represented larger percentages of students referred to law enforcement or who received a school-related arrest than their overall enrollment.



3: Referrals to law enforcement and school-related arrests data by race/ethnicity include only students served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and not those served solely under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2017-18 Civil Rights Data Collection, released October 2020, updated May 2021, available at <https://ocrdata.ed.gov>.



More information is available in the Civil Rights Data Collection's 2017-18 State and National Estimations, online at <https://ocrdata.ed.gov/estimations/2017-2018>.



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