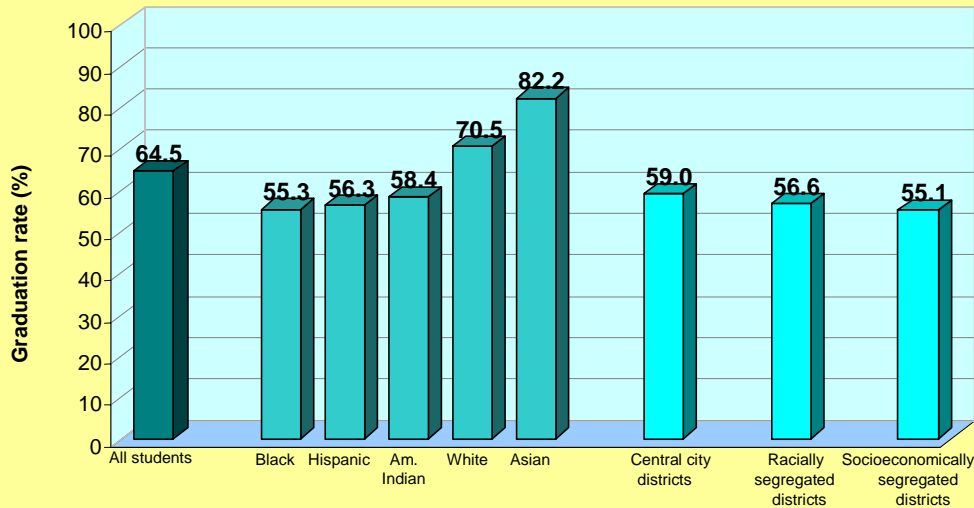


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Minority Students Lag Behind, Effects of Segregation Persist

Graduation Rates in the South, 2001–02



Graduation rates for the high school class of 2002 show that less than 65 percent of all students attending public schools in the South complete high school with a regular diploma. This level falls below the national average of close to 70 percent. Findings also show very large disparities between students from different racial and ethnic groups. A graduation gap of about 27 percentage points separates the highest- and the lowest-performing groups. Historically disadvantaged minority groups in the South have graduation rates that range from 55 to 58 percent.

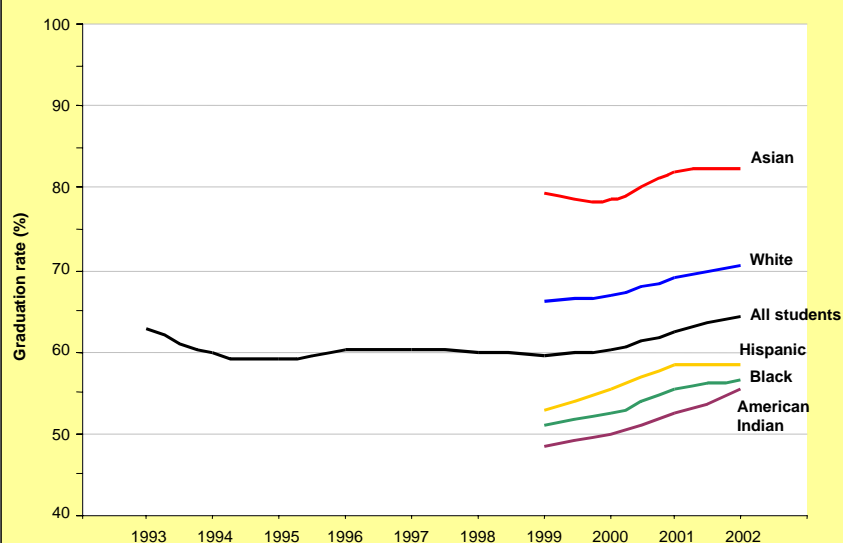
Fewer than 60 percent of *all* students graduate from high school in central city districts and in communities that suffer from high levels of racial and socioeconomic segregation.

Graduation Rates Show Increase over Past Decade

Overall graduation rates in the South dropped from about 63 percent in the early 1990s and remained around 60 percent for the rest of the decade. Since 2000 the proportion of students graduating with a standard high school diploma has risen steadily, reaching 64.5 percent in 2002.

Graduation rates for all major racial and ethnic groups have improved in the past several years. Since gains have generally been stronger for the lowest-performing groups of students, the graduation gap has closed slightly since 1998 (the first year for which disaggregated rates can be calculated). Nevertheless very large disparities still remain among students from different racial and ethnic groups.

Ten-Year Trend for Graduation Rates in the South



A Note about Our Methods: Graduation rates are calculated here using the Cumulative Promotion Index (CPI), a widely cited method for computing graduation rates developed at the Urban Institute. In this analysis, only students receiving standard diplomas (not GEDs or other completion credentials) are counted as graduates. Data on schools and districts were obtained from the U.S. Department of Education's Common Core of Data. The "South" is defined here using the standard Census Bureau region classification (AL, AR, DC, DE, FL, GA, KY, LA, MD, MS, NC, OK, SC, TN, TX, VA, WV). For a more detailed description of our methodology, please see *Who Graduates? Who Doesn't?* (The Urban Institute 2004).

Segregation in the South

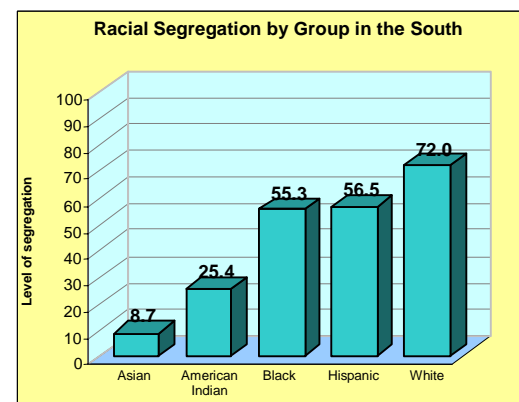
The South has a long and troubled history of segregation and its educational and social consequences. One well-known dimension of this social problem is the isolation of racial and ethnic groups from one another, particularly the segregation of blacks and whites. However, attention has increasingly turned to the effects of concentrated poverty (economic segregation) on educational outcomes. We examine the relationship between both forms of segregation on graduation rates in the South.

What is the most segregated racial group?

Discussions of segregation are often most concerned with detrimental impacts on the lives of minorities. However, whites are actually the most isolated of the major racial or ethnic groups within public education systems in the South. For the average white student in the South, 72 percent of his or her schoolmates are also white. Among minority groups, segregation levels are highest for blacks and Hispanics, with isolation index values of about 55 and 57 percent respectively. It should be recognized that the educational consequences of racial segregation will differ depending on the group. For whites, attending school with predominantly white classmates means being surrounded by relatively affluent peers who tend to perform better on a variety of educational outcomes. By contrast, segregation for blacks and Hispanics means that they will attend schools with disproportionately high concentrations of economically and educationally disadvantaged peers.

Defining "Segregation"

In this bulletin, segregation is defined as the degree to which members of a particular group are socially isolated from members of other groups. The *isolation index* used in this study to measure levels of segregation in the public schools can range from 0 to 100. A value of 100 indicates complete segregation, that is, members of a particular group attend schools only with other members of their own group. Separate segregation indices are calculated for isolation based on racial and ethnic group membership and poverty.



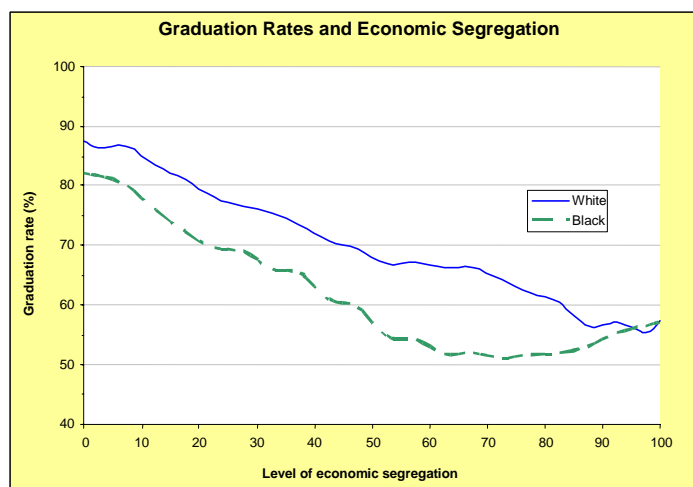
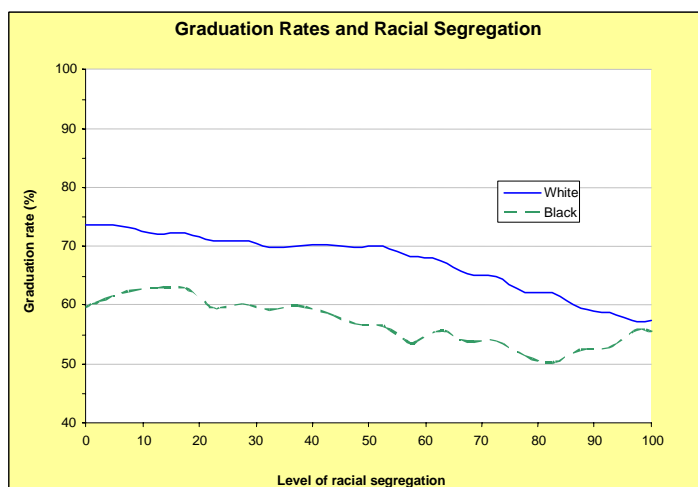
The link between segregation and graduation

The following graphs chart the relationship between levels of segregation and graduation rates in the South. Separate analyses were performed for school segregation on the basis of racial identity (black vs. white) and socioeconomic status (eligibility for national free or reduced-price lunch programs, a proxy for poverty). Graduation rates are calculated separately for black and white students.

Lower graduation rates tend to be found in school districts with higher levels of racial segregation. This relationship holds for both black and white students, although it is stronger and more consistent for the latter. A graduation gap exists at all segregation levels, with whites consistently finishing high school at higher rates than black students. This gap narrows considerably in highly segregated school systems, where roughly 55 percent of each group graduates.

The second graph shows an even more dramatic pattern for economic segregation. In school districts with low levels of segregation by economic status, over 80 percent of blacks and nearly 90 percent of whites graduate from high school. These rates drop precipitously for both groups as economic segregation levels rise. While the racial gap in graduation essentially closes when economic segregation levels are extremely high, fewer than 60 percent of students from either group graduate in such settings.

Segregation affects the lives of all students in detrimental ways. However, compared to whites, black youth in the South are about four times as likely to live and attend school in communities that suffer from high levels of both racial and economic segregation. As a result, today's black students continue to bear the heavy burdens of racial isolation and concentrated poverty.



Facts and Figures—The South Region and Selected States

Graduation Rates 2001—02 (%)		All students	American Indian	Asian	Hispanic	Black	White
South region		64.5	58.4	82.2	56.3	55.3	70.5
	Male	60.6	---	77.8	50.9	47.4	66.6
	Female	70.2	---	83.9	61.0	62.2	73.7
Florida		57.4	54.9	80.7	52.9	45.2	62.3
	Male	52.0	---	73.5	47.0	38.3	57.8
	Female	63.4	---	84.3	58.9	51.7	67.6
Georgia		57.6	32.7	76.6	42.4	47.4	63.7
	Male	52.7	---	73.2	38.4	40.3	60.1
	Female	62.8	---	79.0	43.3	55.1	67.4
Louisiana		66.4	51.9	67.9	62.0	59.2	68.5
	Male	58.3	49.1	62.9	48.6	51.1	63.7
	Female	70.8	59.7	77.1	73.6	66.6	73.3
Mississippi		60.7	50.0	65.1	32.4	55.9	65.4
	Male	54.1	---	---	---	46.6	60.5
	Female	67.8	---	---	---	64.2	70.2
North Carolina		64.6	39.3	68.9	54.0	55.4	70.3
	Male	59.8	31.7	63.8	47.1	47.5	66.6
	Female	68.9	46.7	73.0	58.0	63.4	71.9

District Profiles						Graduation rate (%)					
	Enrollment	Locale	Largest racial/ethnic group	Minority (%)	Free or reduced lunch (%)	Total	Am Ind	Asian	Hisp	Black	White
Florida											
Dade County	375,836	Suburb	Hispanic	89.2	59.7	50.1	92.6	78.4	51.3	43.0	62.3
Broward County	262,055	Suburb	White	60.7	38.1	---	---	---	---	---	56.4
Hillsborough County	169,789	Suburb	White	49.5	48.8	55.8	52.5	89.7	53.4	41.2	62.5
Palm Beach County	160,223	Suburb	White	51.7	41.2	56.0	49.2	86.1	53.7	43.6	63.3
Orange County	157,433	Suburb	White	57.4	43.8	55.9	---	85.1	52.0	42.7	63.8
Georgia											
Gwinnett County	116,339	Suburb	White	39.8	20.9	70.9	41.6	82.1	49.2	66.0	72.0
Cobb County	98,338	Suburb	White	37.0	22.0	73.3	---	85.4	44.7	64.0	77.2
Dekalb County	97,501	Suburb	Black	87.9	55.9	51.3	35.0	58.3	33.5	50.0	66.3
Fulton County	69,841	Suburb	White	52.5	31.9	67.8	85.7	92.2	44.3	52.1	81.6
Atlanta City	56,586	Cent. City	Black	93.2	80.1	51.8	---	57.2	36.6	51.7	61.3
Louisiana											
Orleans Parish	73,185	Cent. City	Black	96.2	77.3	64.9	---	72.7	69.5	64.5	64.3
East Baton Rouge Parish	52,350	Cent. City	Black	74.0	62.7	68.6	---	74.6	---	62.9	76.3
Jefferson Parish	50,766	Suburb	Black	61.6	69.3	60.1	85.6	---	62.3	55.9	60.7
Caddo Parish	44,859	Cent. City	Black	64.2	51.9	61.9	---	65.6	68.6	58.9	65.6
Saint Tammany Parish	32,834	Suburb	White	18.6	29.6	72.2	---	---	---	56.4	74.1
Mississippi											
Jackson City	31,436	Cent. City	Black	95.6	81.7	48.2	---	---	---	48.4	44.2
Desoto County	20,920	Suburb	White	21.1	28.7	62.9	---	---	---	62.6	61.5
Rankin County	15,292	Rural	White	22.4	34.2	66.7	---	---	---	65.6	67.0
Harrison County	12,938	Rural	White	28.8	55.9	60.8	---	66.7	---	61.7	59.1
Madison County	9,039	Suburb	White	39.3	29.2	79.2	---	---	---	83.7	76.8
North Carolina											
Charlotte-Mecklenberg	106,312	Cent. City	White	55.3	36.5	57.1	23.4	57.5	46.9	45.5	69.1
Wake County	101,756	Suburb	White	38.5	18.7	74.5	46.9	89.3	50.1	61.4	82.0
Guilford County	64,546	Cent. City	White	51.8	37.6	66.1	44.1	56.2	53.4	56.6	75.5
Cumberland County	51,434	Cent. City	Black	57.9	48.0	69.9	61.1	---	84.2	72.1	64.3
Forsyth County	45,707	Cent. City	White	47.5	34.4	66.7	---	57.2	61.9	57.4	72.6

--- Results not reported due to insufficient data.



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