



Data Report

2020-21 School Year

Seclusion and Restraint in Wisconsin Public Schools

About the Data:

Pursuant to 2019 Wisconsin Act 118, between October 1, 2021, and December 1, 2021, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) administered a Qualtrics survey to all District Administrators in the state to receive their respective seclusion and restraint data for School Year 2020-21. This is the second year of data collection.

However, it should be noted that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, some Wisconsin schools canceled in-person instruction and shifted to virtual learning. Therefore, the number of in-person days is unknown for each district, making it difficult to compare incident rates across schools and to the previous academic year. It should also be noted that 2019 Wis. Act 118 did not direct DPI to collect data disaggregated by race or documentation of law enforcement involvement. However, the DPI strongly encourages local education agencies (LEAs) to collect, analyze, and review this data to ensure practices, policies, and procedures are equitable, appropriate, and in the best interest of all students.

It is also important to note that incidents in which both seclusion and restraint occurred simultaneously are counted as separate instances. Therefore the total number of individual students involved in seclusion or restraint combined is unattainable due to issues of double counting. Similarly, the data does not confirm whether the same student was repeatedly secluded or restrained. Although this can be inferred by dividing the number of incidents by the number of students involved. Finally, numbers and statistics in this report will differ slightly from what is available in the public data file because numbers reported by schools with an IEP population of less than five are not publicly available to protect students' privacy.

Overview:

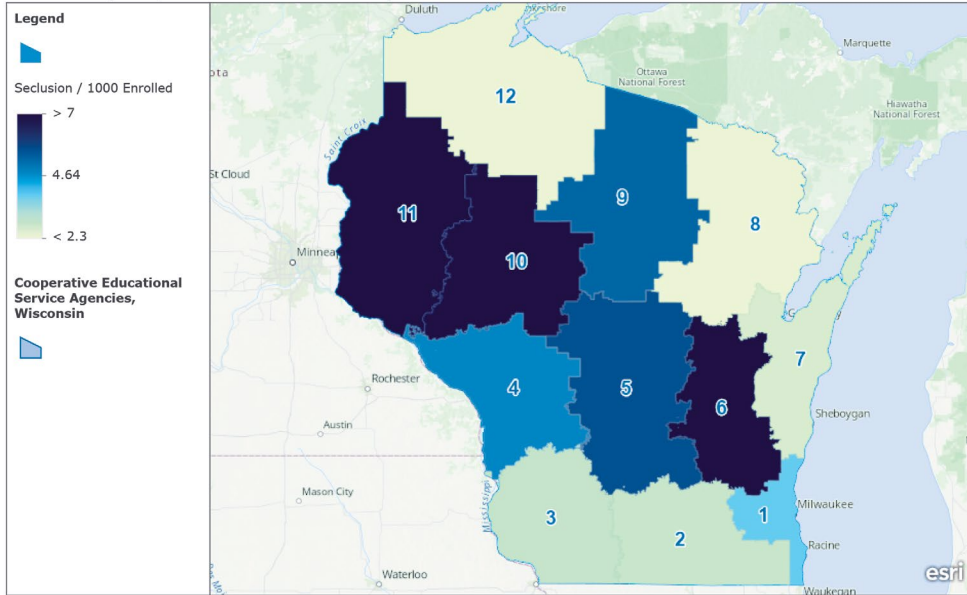
The results from DPI's second data collection on this topic further confirm that seclusion and restraint are widespread practices in schools throughout the state and that students with disabilities are involved in the vast majority of incidents, despite comprising 15% of the statewide student body. The proportion of students with disabilities involved in these incidents has increased since the last annual data collection in 2020.

Incident Type	Number of Schools w/ >1 incident	Number of Incidents	Number of Students Involved	Percent of SWD involved (2021)	Percent of SWD involved (2020)
Seclusion	613	4,314	1,288	85%	82%
Restraint	785	4,949	1,649	84%	77%

Statewide Implications:

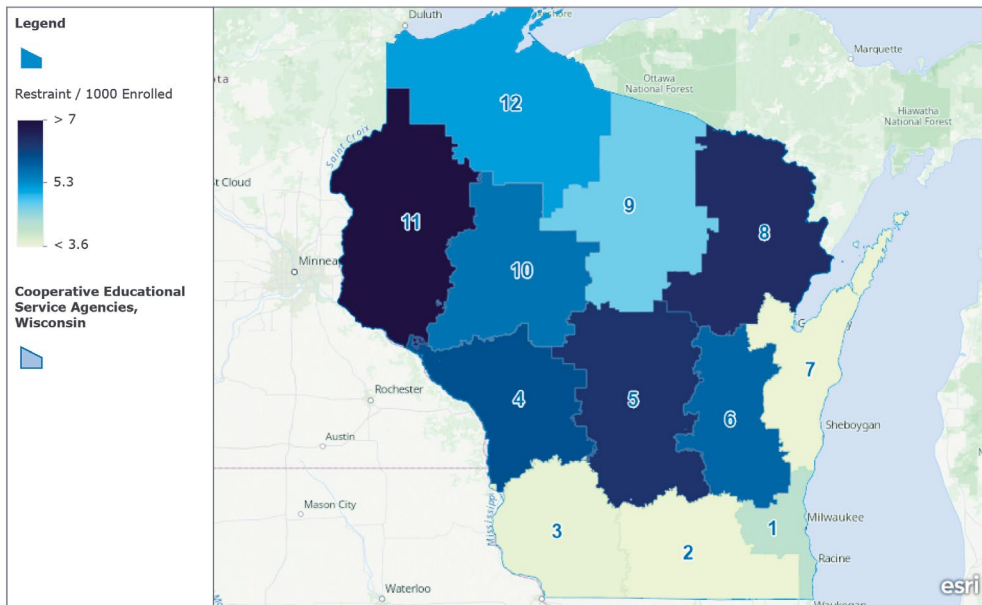
When analyzing this data at the Cooperative Education Service Agency (CESA) level, it becomes apparent that the practice of secluding and restraining students is not limited to any specific region in Wisconsin, with similar rates among urban and rural school districts. After accounting for differences in CESA size by analyzing incident data weighed by enrollment per 1,000 students, these implications become more apparent as the range for weighted seclusion rates varied by eight, whereas the range for weighted restraint rates varied by six incidents.

Seclusions per 1,000 Students Enrolled by CESA



Esri, USGS | MarathonCountyGIS, Esri Canada, Esri, HERE, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, EPA, NPS | Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Restraints per 1,000 Students Enrolled by CESA



Esri, USGS | MarathonCountyGIS, Esri Canada, Esri, HERE, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, EPA, NPS | Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Repeatedly Affected Students:

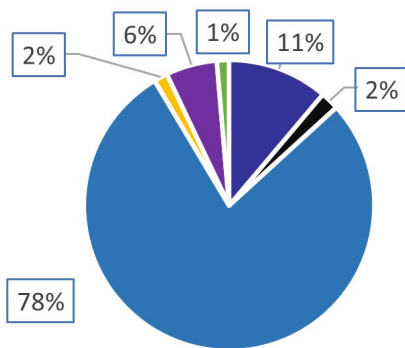
Given that the reported number of incidents is larger than the number of students involved, DPI can accurately infer that the same students are subject to repeated seclusions or restraints.

Average Seclusions Per Student Involved (statewide - 2021)	Average Restraints Per Student Involved (statewide - 2021)	Average Seclusions Per Student Involved (statewide - 2020)	Average Restraints Per Student Involved (statewide - 2020)
3.35	3	3.6	2.8

Analysis by School Type:

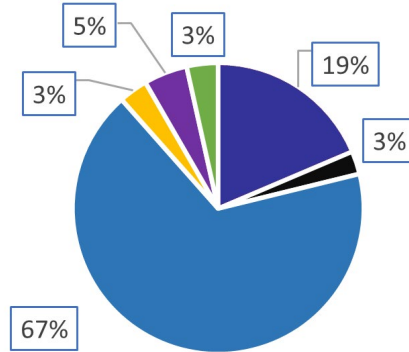
The overwhelming majority of seclusion and restraints occur in elementary schools. This is troubling in that younger students' K-12 experiences may be adversely shaped by these potentially traumatic experiences.

Seclusion - School Type



- Alternative Program
- Elementary School
- Middle School

Restraint - School Type



- Combined Elementary/Secondary School
- High School
- Private SNSP School

Factors That May Contribute to Seclusion & Restraint Rates:

While there are a number of variables that may affect the rate of seclusion or restraint in any given school or district, it is imperative to note some of the current mental health realities that students in Wisconsin face on a daily basis. Specifically, the 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Survey concluded that Wisconsin students are reporting declines in mental health, with students with disabilities and students of color particularly reporting fewer supports and more challenges than their peers. While it is unclear if the latter point on students with disabilities' mental health is related to their disproportionate seclusion and restraint rates, the unfortunate reality remains that these populations continue to face a number of adverse factors throughout their academic careers. Tied in with these concerns is the fact that the 2019 YRBS also identified declines in perceptions of school safety, with increases in students reporting being involved in a physical fight at school, missing school due to safety concerns, and saying that violence and bullying are problems at school. These risk factors are also coupled with declines in the sense of belonging at school, as well as increases in anxiety, depression, and suicide ideation.

Resources for Practices that Support the Reduction of Seclusion and Restraint:

The use of seclusion and restraint should be a last resort. After each instance, the principal or designee must meet with individuals involved in the incident. To increase the knowledge of alternatives and other strategies available and reduce the number of times seclusion and restraint are utilized, the following resources have been compiled and are available through the DPI website:

- [School Based Mental Health Framework](#): Provides guidance and resources for schools to build a comprehensive system for supporting student mental health and wellness. Includes Needs Assessment, Planning Template, and Referral Pathways guidance.
- [Trauma Sensitive Schools](#): By becoming a trauma sensitive school, schools can become a protective factor for students exposed to traumatic events and increase the social and emotional, as well as the academic skills of the entire school body.
- [Culturally Responsive, Evidence-Based Practices](#): School staff and school mental health providers recognize the needs of students from diverse cultural backgrounds and offer programs that reduce disparities in services. These practices are designed to help educators deepen their understanding of the needs of a diverse student body and to use strategies proven to help close achievement gaps.
- [Wisconsin Center for Resilient Schools \(WCRS\)](#): The WCRS provides coaching to school and district teams to strengthen student and adult resilience through equitable, comprehensive school-based mental health and trauma sensitive social emotional learning in order to promote academic success for every student.
- [College and Career Ready Individualized Education Programs \(CCR IEPs\)](#): For students with disabilities, an IEP based on the CCR IEP five beliefs of High Expectations, Culturally Responsive Practices, Student Relationships, Family & Community Engagement and Collective Responsibility is designed to identify and meet student learning needs through appropriate individualized services. CCR IEPs provide a framework for IEP teams to explore beliefs and attitudes regarding students with disabilities, build knowledge and skills to evaluate and plan special education services, and examine systems and practices that support students, families, and educators.
- [Social Emotional Learning \(SEL\)](#): Provides the essentials for implementing a comprehensive approach to SEL. Making SEL skills part of the learning equation helps children succeed in school and life. With social and emotional skills, children can manage their feelings, build healthy relationships, and navigate social environments. Students receiving comprehensive social and emotional learning instruction increased their achievement test scores by 11 percentile points.

Conclusion and Recommendations:

2019 Wisc. Act 118 made significant progress towards further regulating the practice of seclusion and restraint by adding new definitions of appropriate use and by creating a statewide reporting requirement which made this analysis possible. Seclusion and restraint remain practices used throughout Wisconsin schools, with no clear concentration in urban or rural settings. While some trends are evident—such as widespread use in elementary schools and higher rates among students with IEPs—the ultimate reality is that what should be a last resort mitigation strategy continues to be implemented in Wisconsin schools. The numbers included in this report are actual lived experiences that can dramatically impact a child’s educational experiences and outcome and can contribute to ongoing racial achievement disparities. The DPI strongly encourages LEAs to collect, analyze, and review their data to ensure practices, policies, and procedures are equitable, appropriate, and in the best interest of students.



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