



Data Report

2021-22 School Year

Seclusion and Restraint in Wisconsin Schools

About the Data

Pursuant to 2019 Wisconsin Act 118, between October 3, 2022, and December 1, 2022, 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 2021-22. This is the third year of data collection. However, it should be noted that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, some Wisconsin schools offered virtual learning, and students may have had to quarantine due to possible exposures and positive COVID-19 tests. Therefore, it is unlikely that students were equally likely to be present on a given day, making it difficult to determine if this is an accurate baseline measure of incident rates. As such, the DPI is eager to collect and analyze data for the 2022-23 academic year to analyze how it compares to previous years. It should also be noted that 2019 Wisconsin Act 118 did not direct the 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 their local data to inform practices, policies and procedures, and to ensure seclusion or restraint is used only when there is a clear, present, imminent physical safety risk and it is the least restrictive intervention feasible.

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 a population of less than five students with disabilities are not publicly available to protect students' privacy.

Overview

The results from the DPI's third 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 14 percent of the statewide student body. The proportion of students with disabilities involved in these incidents remains concerningly high and unchanged from previous data collections. On a positive note, more than half of all public schools and private schools participating in the Special Needs Scholarship Program (SNSP) (51.6 percent) did not report any incidents of either seclusion or restraint.

Incident Type	Number of Schools w/ >1 incident	Number of Incidents	Number of Students Involved	Percent of SWD involved
Seclusion	754 (32%)*	5,908	1,920	79%
Restraint	1035 (44%)*	6,916	2,856	76%

*Percentage of public schools and private schools participating in the SNSP with at least one incident.

Trends

For the third year in a row, students with disabilities continue to be subjected to each practice at a much higher rate than students without disabilities. Similarly, this data collection marks the third year that the overwhelming majority of seclusions and restraints occurred in elementary schools. Finally, there was a notable increase in the total number of statewide incidents from the 2020-21 academic year. Given the COVID-19 pandemic and higher incidence of virtual instruction during the 2020-21 academic year, it is unclear if there had been meaningful reduction in the prevalence of seclusion and restraint in the 2020-21 cycle.

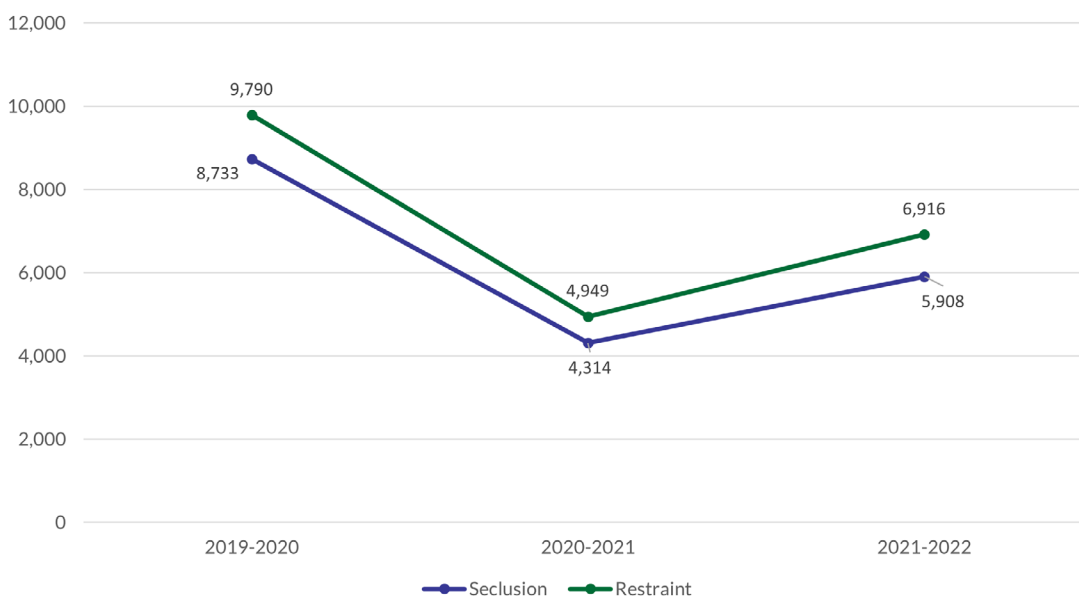
Incident Data Over Time

Incident Type	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Seclusion	8,733	4,314 (↓ 50.6%)	5,908 (↑ 37%)
Restraint	9,790	4,949 (↓ 49.4%)	6,916 (↑ 39.8%)

Percentage of Incidents Involving Students with Disabilities Over Time

Incident Type	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Seclusion	82%	85%	79%
Restraint	77%	84%	76%

Seclusion and Restraint Incidents, 2019-2022



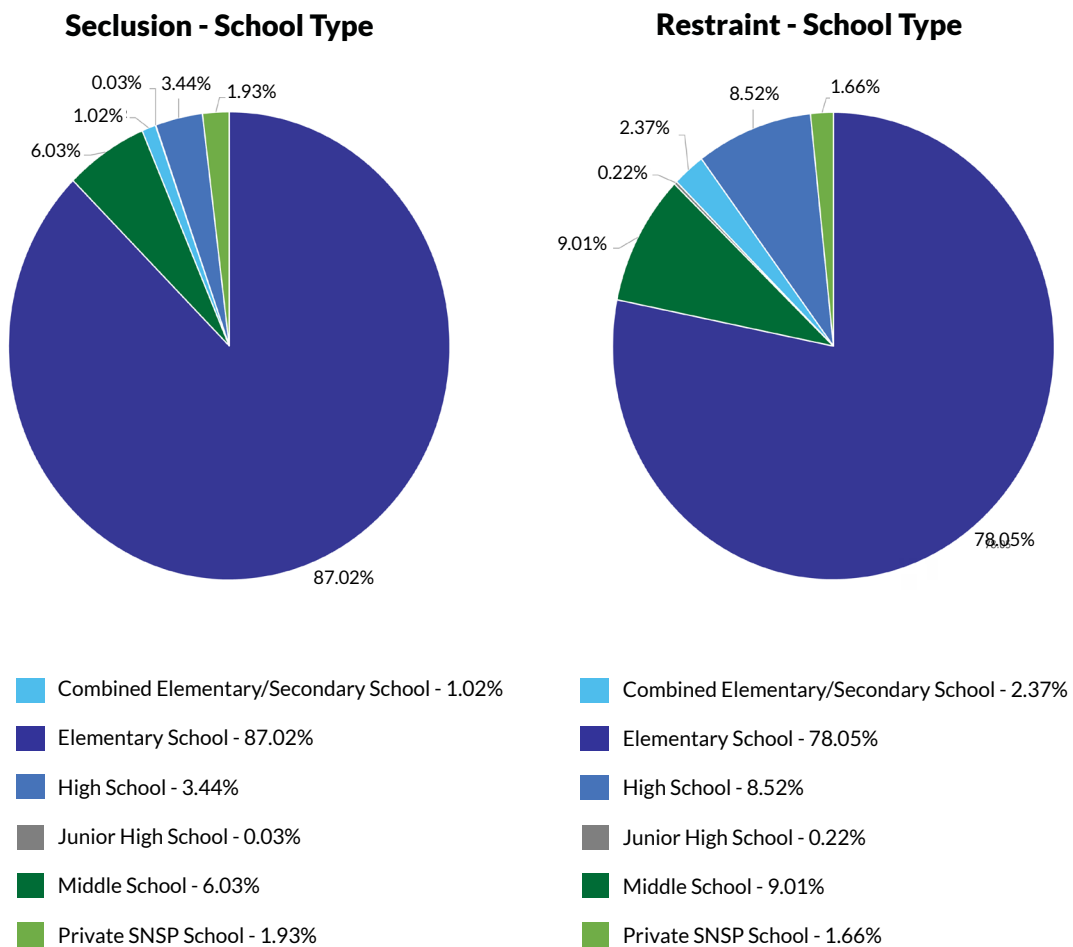
Repeatedly Affected Students

Given that the reported number of incidents is larger than the number of students involved, the DPI can accurately infer that the same students are subject to repeated seclusions or restraints. This pattern is evident across all years of data collection.

Incident Type	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Seclusions per Student	3.6	3.35	3.08
Restraints per Student	2.8	3	2.42

Analysis by School Type

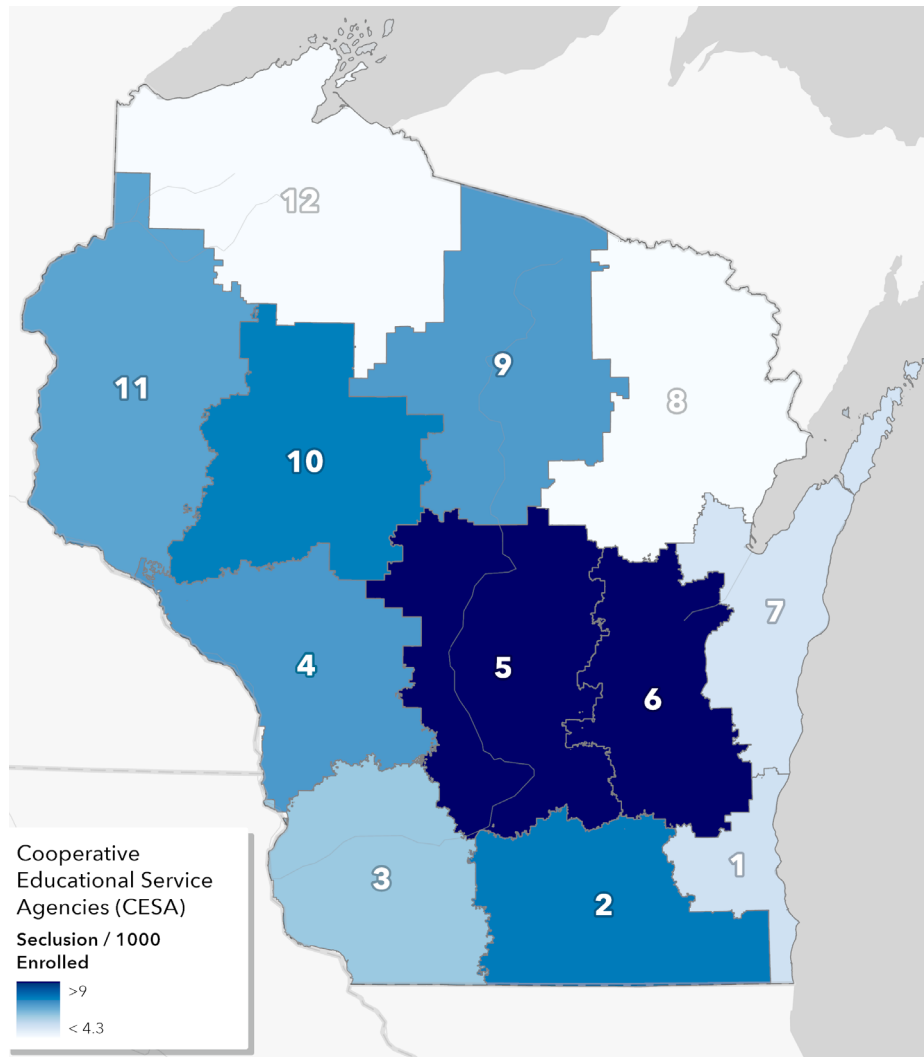
The overwhelming majority of seclusion and restraints occur in elementary schools. This is troubling because younger students' K-12 experiences may be adversely shaped by these potentially traumatic experiences.



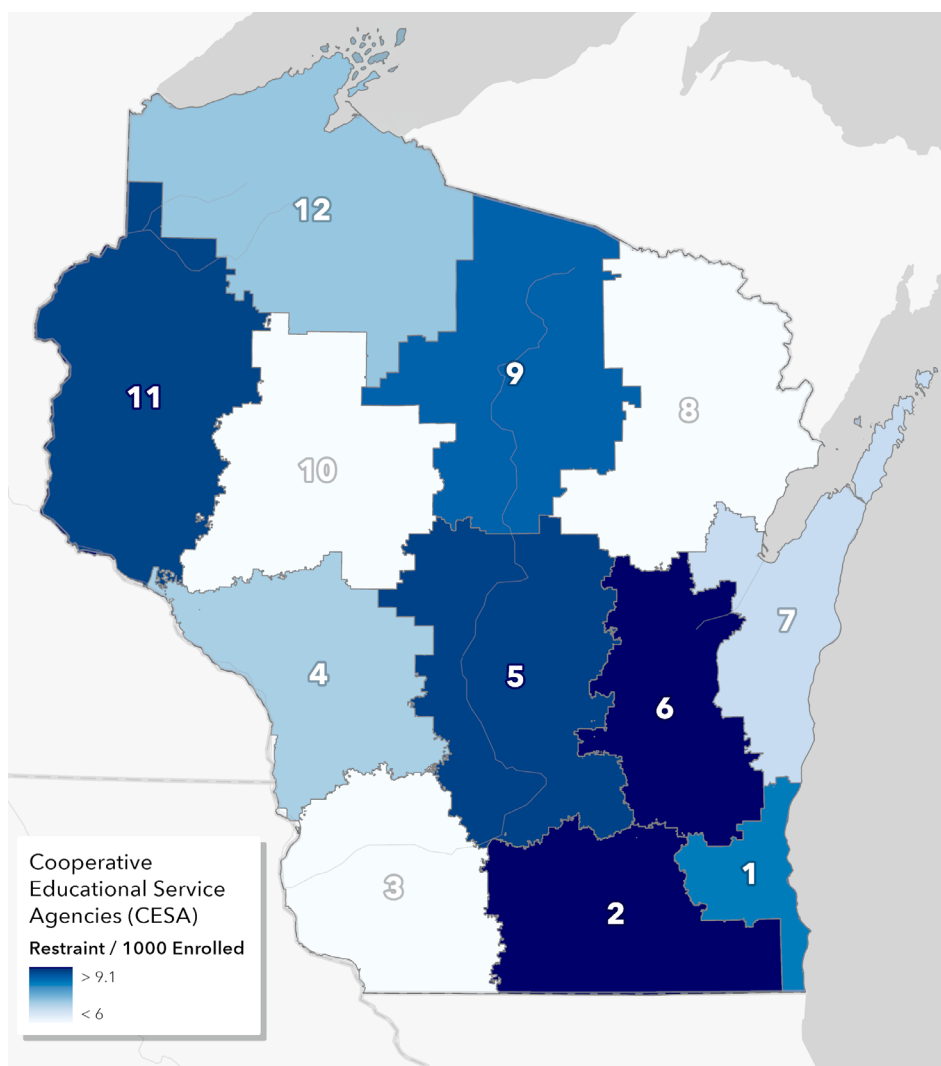
Statewide Implications

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. This is exemplified in the maps below, which show that the range for seclusion rates weighted by enrollment per 1,000 students varied by seven incidents and the range for weighted restraint rates varied by five incidents.

Seclusions per 1,000 Students Enrolled, by CESA



Restraints per 1,000 Students Enrolled, by CESA



Factors That May Contribute to Seclusion & Restraint Rates

While a number of variables 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 daily. Specifically, the 2021 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) 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 student groups continue to face a number of adverse factors throughout their academic careers. Tied in with these concerns is that the 2021 YRBS identified notably low levels of perceptions of school safety and students who say violence and bullying is not a problem at school. Moreover, the YRBS revealed the lowest recorded levels of students saying they feel like they belong at school and students reporting that they have at least one supportive teacher at school. Finally, the 2021 YRBS showed an increase in students who skipped school for safety concerns. 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 must be a last resort, and used only when there is a clear, present, and imminent physical safety risk. 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's website:

- [Wisconsin School Mental Health Framework](#): The framework includes six components of a comprehensive school mental health system (CSMHS) and provides guidance on implementing them from a trauma sensitive lens. A CSMHS includes a continuum of services and supports to promote student and staff mental health by fostering social and emotional well-being and positive school culture and eliminating systemic barriers to well-being and success for all students. A CSMHS increases health equity by ensuring all students and staff have access to the prevention, early intervention, and treatment supports that they need when they need them, free of stigma.
- [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.
- [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 and 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 disabilities — 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 outcomes 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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