

# DATA POINT

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
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## Expulsion From School as a Disciplinary Action

The data in this report are from the 2003–04, 2005–06, 2007–08, 2009–10, 2015–16, and 2017–18 administrations of the School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS). SSOCS is a nationally representative sample survey of public elementary and secondary schools in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. The survey asks principals about the prevalence of crime and violence in their schools, as well as the practices and programs their schools have in place to promote school safety. Specifically, principals are asked whether their school allows certain disciplinary actions, including expulsion from school,<sup>1</sup> and, if so, whether these actions were used during the current school year.

This report examines the percentage of U.S. public elementary and secondary schools that were allowed to expel students from school as a disciplinary action and the percentage of schools that used this action. This analysis examines both expulsion with and without continuing services (such as school-provided tutoring or home instruction).<sup>2</sup> Specifically, this report investigates the trend over time in schools' allowance for and use of these disciplinary actions, and comparisons between schools with varying levels of minority student enrollment. While differences in the percentage of schools allowed to use expulsion as a disciplinary action highlight differences in school, district, or state policies, differences in the use of expulsion highlight differences in schools' actual practices.

### What percentage of public schools were allowed to expel students from school as a disciplinary action in school year 2017–18, and what percentage used this action? How have these percentages changed over time?

In school year 2017–18, about 46 percent of schools were allowed to expel students from school with continuing services, compared with 35 percent that were allowed to expel students without continuing services (figure 1).

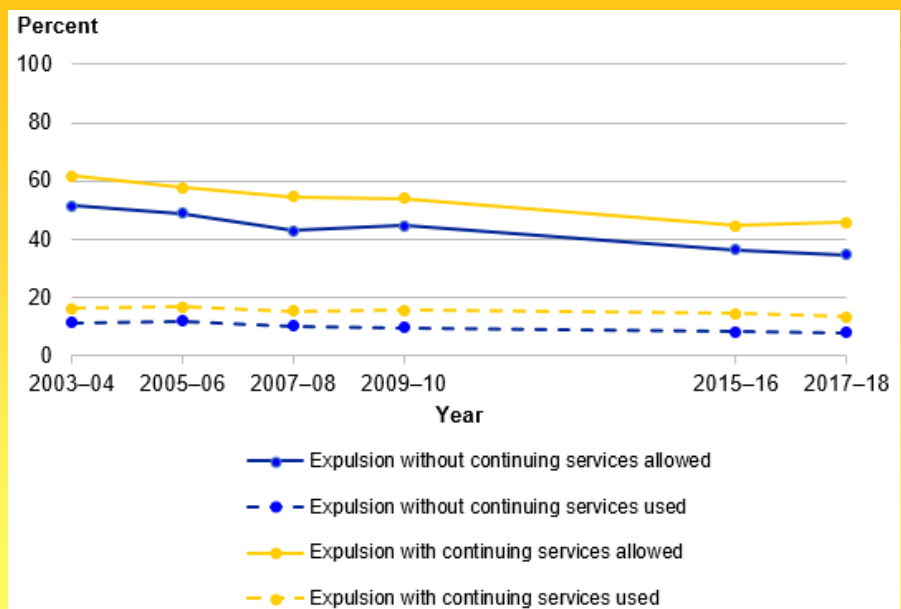
This pattern was consistent over time, with a higher percentage of public schools reporting being allowed to expel students from school with continuing services than without in each survey year.

Both of these percentages decreased between school years 2003–04 and 2017–18. In 2003–04, some 62 percent of public schools reported that they were allowed to expel students

from school with continuing services, and 51 percent of schools reported that they were allowed to expel students without continuing services.

Over the same period, there were also decreases in the percentage of public schools that actually used expulsion with continuing services (from 16 to 13 percent) and without continuing services (from 12 to 8 percent).

**FIGURE 1. Percentage of public schools that reported being allowed to use expulsion from school as a disciplinary action and percentage that used this action, by type of expulsion: School years 2003–04 through 2017–18**



NOTE: Continuing services include school-provided tutoring or home instruction. Responses were provided by the principal or the person most knowledgeable about school crime and policies to provide a safe environment. The School Survey on Crime and Safety was not administered in 2011–12 and 2013–14.  
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS), 2003–04 through 2017–18.

To learn more about the data collection used in this report, visit <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ssocs/>. For questions about content or to view this report online, go to <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2020026>.

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## In school year 2017–18, was there a difference in the percentage of schools that were allowed to use, or actually used, expulsion from school by the percentage of minority enrollment?<sup>3</sup>

During the 2017–18 school year, 70 percent of low minority enrollment schools<sup>4</sup> were allowed to expel students from school with continuing services, compared with 34 percent of

high minority enrollment schools. A similar pattern was observed for expulsion without continuing services (figure 2).

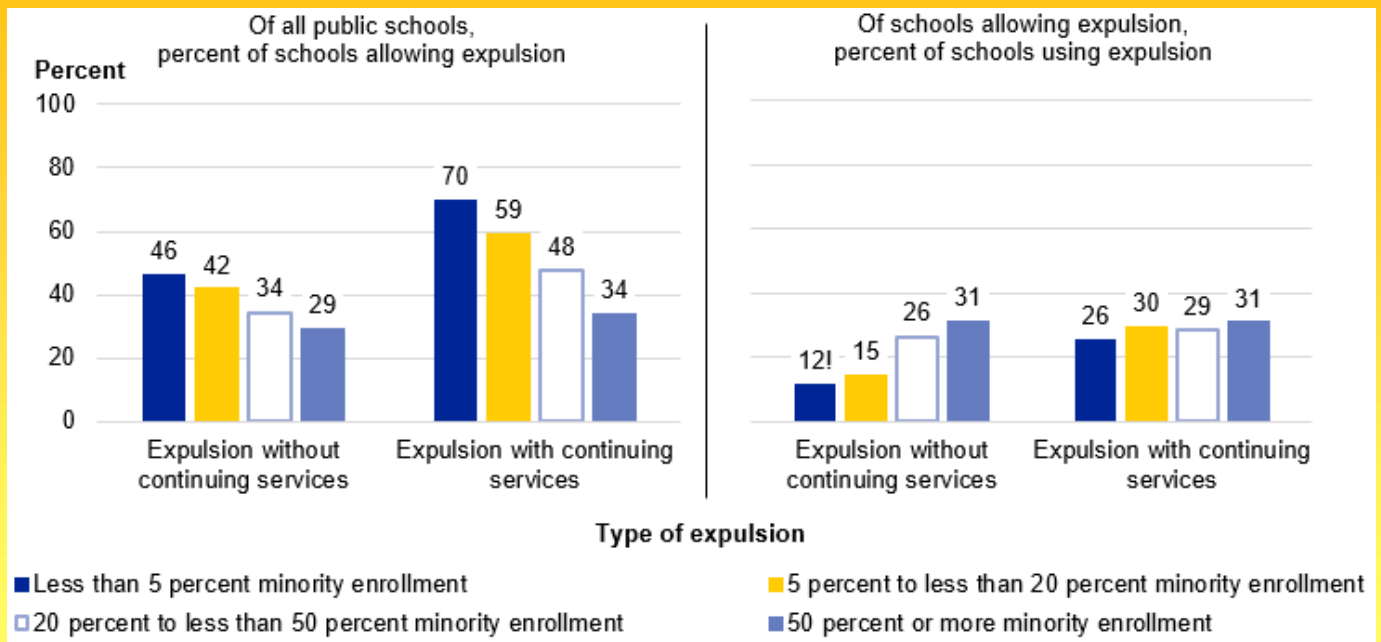
Among only those schools that were allowed to expel students with continuing services, there was no significant difference in the usage of this disciplinary action by the percentage of minority enrollment.

In contrast, among only those schools that were allowed to expel students

without continuing services, a higher percentage of high minority enrollment schools (31 percent) actually used this disciplinary action in school year 2017–18, compared with low minority enrollment schools (12 percent).

In summary, schools with higher percentages of minorities are less likely to be allowed to expel students without services but are more likely to actually use expulsion without services when allowed.

**FIGURE 2. Percentage of public schools that reported being allowed to expel students from school as a disciplinary action and, of these schools, percentage that used this action during the current school year, by type of expulsion and percentage of minority enrollment: School year 2017–18**



! Interpret data with caution. The coefficient of variation (CV) for this estimate is between 30 and 50 percent.

NOTE: Continuing services include school-provided tutoring or home instruction. Responses were provided by the principal or the person most knowledgeable about school crime and policies to provide a safe environment.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 2017–18 School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS), 2018.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> SSOCS asks about removing students from school for “at least the remainder of the school year” and “less than the remainder of the school year.” This report focuses on removal for at least the remainder of the school year, referred to in this report as expulsion.

<sup>2</sup> In the 2017–18 survey, students removed from school with continuing services were defined as

having received “school-provided tutoring or home instruction.” In previous administrations, the survey item used the phrase “at-home instruction.”

<sup>3</sup> Minority enrollment is the percent combined enrollment of Black, Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islander, and American Indian/Alaska Native students, and students of Two or more races.

<sup>4</sup> Low minority enrollment schools are defined as schools with less than 5 percent minority enrollment. High minority enrollment schools are defined as schools with 50 percent or more minority enrollment.

This National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Data Point presents information on education topics of current interest. It was authored by Zoe Padgett and Melissa Diliberti of the American Institutes for Research (AIR). Estimates based on samples are subject to sampling variability, and apparent differences may not be statistically significant. All stated differences

are statistically significant at the .05 level, with no adjustments for multiple comparisons. In the design, conduct, and data processing of NCES surveys, efforts are made to minimize effects of nonsampling errors, such as item nonresponse, measurement error, data processing error, or other systematic error.