

# The Impact of Racial Segregation on Student Outcomes

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## Overview

A student's success is in part determined by the quality of their school. However, because of educational segregation, **many students of color and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds do not have access to the same resources as their white, wealthier peers**. This inequity is fundamentally opposed to the American Dream, the idea that anyone can work hard and succeed because all students do not learn the same tools and skills to do that. This brief focuses on how residential and educational segregation persist and harm students as well as how policy measures can begin to remedy this injustice.



## Key Takeaways:

1

Educational and residential segregation persist today

2

Educational desegregation is associated with better outcomes for marginalized students

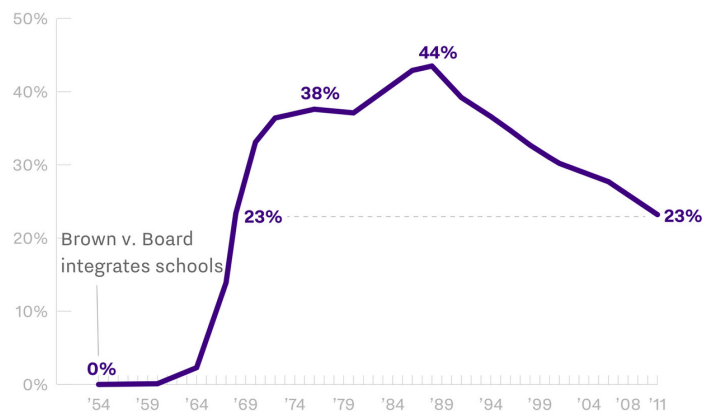
3

Policy measures should address the two forms of segregation simultaneously

1

Educational and Residential Segregation Persist Today

Percentage of Black students in the South who attend schools that are at least 50 percent white

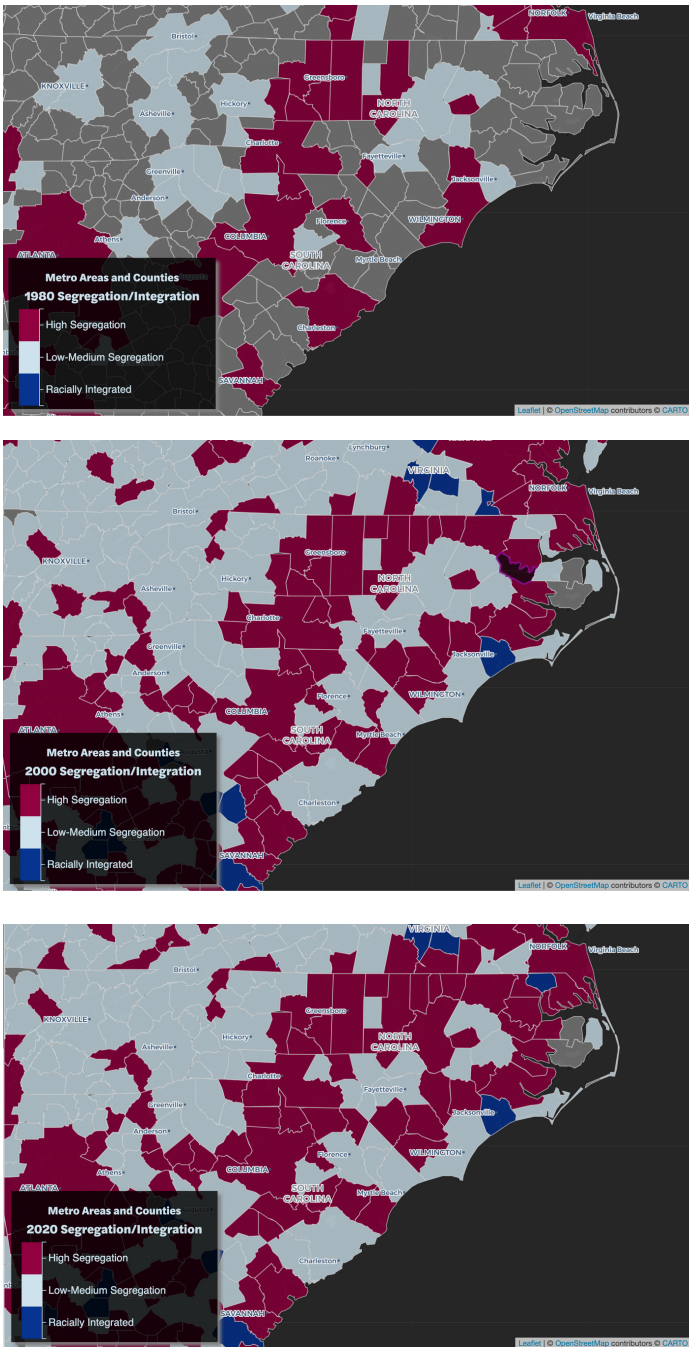


Data from the National Center for Education Statistics, via UCLA's Civil Rights Project

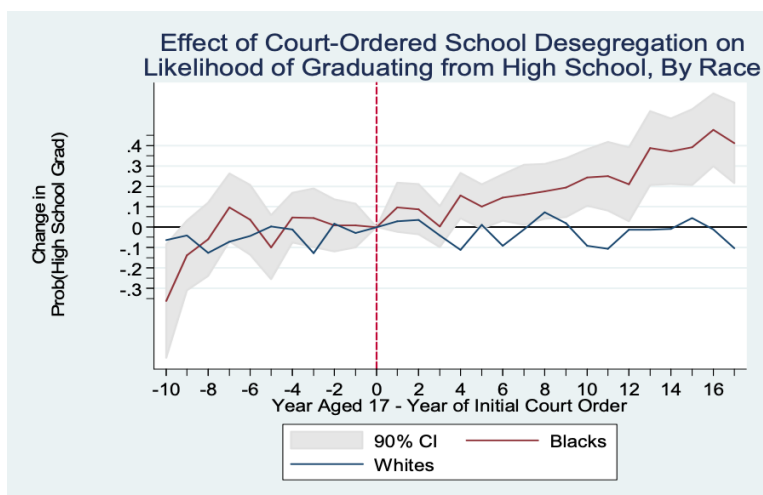
Today's **Black students are facing more racial isolation in their schools than their parents did** despite the integration efforts of the Civil Rights Movement. This is largely due to the increase in popularity of private schools as well a decrease in government support to enforce the tenants of Brown v. Board.

Using North Carolina as an example, it is clear that residential integration has not been reached in the United States. This map indicates that in much of North Carolina, people share the same race as their neighbors. By comparing maps from 1980, 2000, and 2020, it is clear that **racial residential segregation has only become more prevalent in the past few decades**. Historical limitations such as redlining (drawing maps that labeled predominately Black neighborhoods as poor places to live and invest) and housing and bank discrimination have prevented many racial minorities from experiencing diversity in their neighborhoods, **leading to low rates of integration in their schools**. Studies show that students tend to experience the same level of racial segregation in their neighborhoods as they do in their schools, as school assignment is typically based on the location of a student's home. Residential segregation must be addressed because when marginalized students are integrated with their more privileged peers, they tend to have better outcomes in life. This is not an issue unique to North Carolina. Nearly all fifty states have seen the same increase in residential segregation since 1980.

Prevalence of racial residential segregation in North Carolina



## 2 Educational Desegregation is Associated with Better Outcomes for Marginalized Students

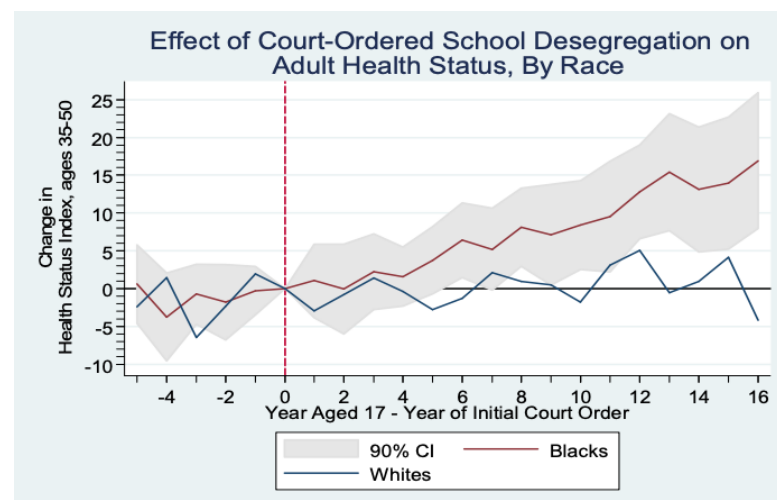
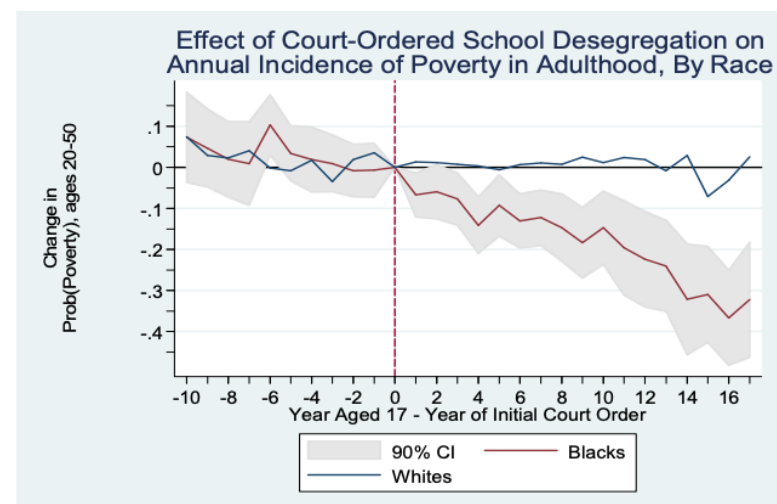


The vertical red line shows the point in time when the court order took effect. Afterward, there is a gradual increase in the change of the likelihood of Black students graduating from high school. Rates for white students did not change significantly.

The data shows that when Black students attend schools that have undergone court-ordered desegregation they are **more likely to both graduate from high school and go to college**. High school and college degrees provide the upward mobility necessary for them to move out of their impoverished areas and have access to better jobs, healthcare, and future housing. This increase in opportunity also comes with no statistically significant decrease in achievement for white students.

Court-ordered desegregation is associated with other positive effects for Black students such as:

- Increased adult wages
- Increased adult earnings
- Lower rates of poverty
- Decrease in the likelihood of incarceration
- Better adult health status



### 3 Policy Measures to Combat Residential and Educational Segregation Must Be Implemented Simultaneously

Because these issues are so fundamentally intertwined and perpetuated by each other, **steps to integrate schools and neighborhoods for the benefit of marginalized students should happen at the same time and be a continued effort.** In integrating one, we can promote the integration of the other, and without addressing one, it is impossible to reduce the other. Policymakers should take this into account when attempting to create policies to integrate schools and neighborhoods.

Policy recommendations include:

#### 1 Promoting educational integration efforts.

Through careful and thoughtful redistricting, policymakers can diversify schools. School districts that wish to implement integration efforts should be supported monetarily for things like extra buses and more qualified teaching staff. Any policies that have been a barrier to voluntary integration should also be overturned.

#### 2 Promoting residential integration and anti-discrimination.

This may include stricter enforcement of the Fair Housing act of 1968 and increasing penalties for discriminatory practices of landlords and land owners.

#### 3 Rinse and repeat.

Because this form of inequity has persisted for decades, the response has to be a continuous effort for policymakers. They must stay vigilant with integration efforts because as we have seen comparing school integration in the 1980s today, reverting to segregation is inevitable when the cause is dropped.

### Conclusion

This topic is incredibly important in the context of the cultural values of the United States as well. As a “pull yourself up by your bootstraps” country, the United States is viewed by many as a country of opportunity. To them, if you work hard, you can achieve upward mobility regardless of who you are. It is clear that the evidence suggests that this is not the case. Circumstance seems to dictate a lot of the outcomes that children can encounter. Legislation that promotes integration in neighborhoods and schools will make this ideal true. Students should not be at a disadvantage because of the neighborhood in which they were born.



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