

<http://www.jsonline.com/story/news/education/2016/10/17/wisconsin-posts-largest-white-black-graduation-gap/92306710/>



(Photo: svengine, Getty Images/iStockphoto)

Wisconsin's high school graduation rate of 88.4% in 2015 was 6th highest nationally, according to [new federal data](#) that revealed a record high U.S. graduation rate Monday, but the state retains the unfortunate distinction of being No. 1 for the widest graduation-rate gap between white and black students.

Wisconsin also has the 10th highest gap between white and Hispanic students graduating in four years, an analysis by the Journal Sentinel showed.

President Barack Obama hinted at that duality on Monday in Washington, D.C., as he touted the rise in the nation's graduation rate to 83.2%, noting that "more African-American and Latino students are graduating than ever before." But he also said there are too many high schools where a third of students don't earn their diplomas on time.

[Defining his education legacy, Obama touts climbing graduation rates](#)

In Milwaukee Public Schools, the four-year graduation rate for black students has trended downward over the past five years to 54.7%. For MPS Hispanic students it's currently 58.7%, a four-year rate that hasn't budged much since 2011. The five-year graduation rate is more generous — the most recent rate for MPS black students is 67% — but that figure has fallen by two percentage points since 2011.

State Superintendent Tony Evers announced Monday that as part of the next budget, he'll ask the Legislature to change state law to allow MPS to start the academic term earlier than Labor Day so that Superintendent Darienne Driver can pursue an aggressive slate of credit-recovery programs for high school students.

"It's time to look at doing some things differently for Milwaukee Public Schools," Evers said. "If they can do credit recovery in a robust way, that could raise the graduation rate."

The achievement gap is so stark in Wisconsin because graduation rates are very high for white students and very low for black students. Almost 93% of white students earn diplomas on time in Wisconsin, which ranks just behind white students in New Jersey (94%) and Texas (93.4%). But Wisconsin's graduation rate for black students is 64.1%, which ranks 6th lowest among states. Nevada is the worst, with a 55.5% black graduation rate, and Minnesota ranks fourth-lowest, at 62%.

Nationally, 74.6% of black students graduate

High school diplomas

The U.S. graduation rate rose to a record high 83.2% in 2014-'15.

Highest state graduation rates

Iowa	90.8
New Jersey	89.7
Alabama	89.3
Texas	89.0
Nebraska	88.9
Wisconsin	88.4
New Hampshire	88.1
Kentucky	88.0
Tennessee	87.9
Missouri	87.8

Lowest black graduation rates

Nevada	55.5
Ohio	59.7
New Mexico	61
Minnesota	62.0
Oregon	63
Wisconsin	64.1
New York	66.5
District of Columbia	67.1
Michigan	67.3
Wyoming	68

on time.

Wisconsin's Latino students are close to the national average for their subgroup — 77.8% of Hispanics graduate in four years, compared with 77.5% in Wisconsin — but the achievement gap persists because white students score so high.

Wisconsin is also one of a minority of states, just 12, where white students out-graduate Asian students. The gap between their graduation rates is the eighth widest in the country. In the majority of states, Asians post higher on-time graduation rates than their white peers.

MPS officials did not respond to a request for comment about the new data. But Patricia Hoben, who runs three charter high schools within MPS, said on-time graduation rates may not be the fairest measure of high schools serving poor students. At Carmen High Schools of Science & Technology, Hoben said, students can't advance unless they earn a C or better in their classes, and it takes about 15% of seniors a fifth year to meet that goal.

"The gap data is real and horrendous, but the concern I have when you focus on that is there are all sorts of ways to kick kids along," Hoben said. "We know kids are graduating with a 3.0 GPA and a 14 on their ACT exam. If you wait to graduate kids until they can get an 18 or 20 on the ACT, they're more likely to go to college and into the workplace."

ACT scores will soon take the limelight. The 2015-'16 state assessment results are coming out Tuesday, which will include ACT exam results for all juniors and Forward Exam results for younger grades.

Highest white graduation rates

New Jersey	94.0
Texas	93.4
Wisconsin	92.9
Connecticut	92.7
Nebraska	92.5
Iowa	92.4
Maryland	92.0
Massachusetts	91.6
Tennessee	90.9
North Dakota	90.6

Source: National Center for Education statistics for 2014-'15

Journal Sentinel



Wisconsin has largest white-black graduation gap in nation

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MADISON, Wis. (AP) - Wisconsin has the widest high school graduation rate gap between white and black students in the nation.

New federal data show that almost 93 percent of white students in Wisconsin earn diplomas within four years, compared to just 64 percent of black students.

State Department of Public Instruction spokesman Tom McCarthy tells Wisconsin Public Radio that closing the gap will take community efforts, since he says gaps in different parts of the state have unique circumstances.

Patricia Hoben runs three charter schools in Milwaukee. She tells the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel that on-time graduation rates might not be the fairest measure of high schools that serve poor students.

Report Says

By Denisa R. Superville on February 11, 2015 9:21 AM

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/District_Dossier/2015/02/as_nation_graduation_rate_grew.html

(excerpted content) While the nation's graduation rate, including that of black and Latino males, has continued to grow, the gap between black males and their white peers has widened, according to a new report released Wednesday by the **Schott Foundation for Public Education**.

The report, "**Black Lives Matter: The Schott 50 State Report on Public Education and Black Males**," is the fifth such study the foundation has released on the state of black males in public education. Since the last report in 2012, the gap between the four-year graduation rate for black males and white males widened from 19 points in the 2009-10 school year to 21 points in the 2012-13 year. For Latinos, the gap shrunk to 15 points from 20 during that same period, according to the report.

The national graduation rate for black males was 59 percent, 65 percent for Latinos, and 80 percent for white males for the 2012-13 school year, according to the report. Particularly striking was Detroit where only 20 percent of black males graduated on time in the 2011-12. John H. Jackson, the foundation's president and CEO, said that the data indicate that federal, state, and district policies need to be examined to address the disparities in ways that will make a difference in the lives of black and Latino males.

"This report is about making a declarative statement that [Black lives] matter not only after they die, but they matter also when they are living," said Jackson in a conference call. "And since they matter, there are some things that the federal government, states and districts must...put in place— policies and practices—so that we can clearly make sure they have an opportunity to learn and an opportunity to succeed. And while we say black lives matter, we believe that all lives matter. The two statements are not mutually exclusive. But it is important to highlight particularly the black male population in this instance because, as our data indicate, in 35 of the 48 states as it relates to four-year graduation rates, black males are at the bottom."

Huge gaps of **more than 25 percent** between the graduation rates for Latino and white males were in Connecticut, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Utah and Wisconsin.

It also looked at school climate issues that may affect graduation rates, including out-of-school suspensions rates, which have come under intense scrutiny in the last few years. Fifteen percent of black male students received out-of-school suspensions, while the same was true for 7 percent of their Latino peers and 5 percent of white counterparts. The highest out-of-school suspension rates for black and white males were in Florida. The highest for Latino students was in Rhode Island. The lowest for Latino males was in New York state, with 3 percent.

Pedro A. Noguera, a professor of education and the executive director of the Metropolitan Center at New York University, said the data suggest the need for a deeper look beyond graduation rates and to other "opportunity to learn" factors, including out-of-school suspensions and special education placements.

"These increasingly become very important for understanding whether or not all children have the opportunity to learn and whether or not our schools are capable of meeting the needs of all kinds of students," he said. "This report, I think, serves as a barometer for where our country is at the current moment, and whether or not we are in fact making progress."

It also looked at the 8th grade proficiency levels in math and reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, or NAEP. The gap in proficiency levels underscored the need for better quality for all students— blacks, Latinos and whites, according to the report.

The report also made some suggestions for reducing the disparities, including:

- **Meeting student-centered learning needs:** Focusing on the individual needs of each student, instead of using a one-size-fits-all approach. The Schott Foundation uses the example of creating "personal opportunity plans" that would include academic, social and health supports for every student who is lagging one grade level or more.
- **Improving data reporting and collection:** The foundation is asking for better data from districts and states that are disaggregated by race and gender. It also wants consistent and comparable data across states.
- **Improving school climate,** including, for example, instituting a moratorium on out-of-school suspensions and utilizing restorative justice practices.

- **Philanthropic and community investments:** The organization supports harnessing the resources of philanthropic groups and the private sector as well as the power of community to expand high-quality education. It suggests the expansion of efforts like those by JP Morgan Chase & Company, which provides mentors and learning opportunities to low-income high school graduates through the Fellowship Initiative; the National Opportunity to Learn Campaign, which promotes high-quality early education, highly-prepared effective teachers, and meaningful engagement with parents; and the Campaign for Black Achievement. (J.P. Morgan Chase is one of the funders for the report.)