

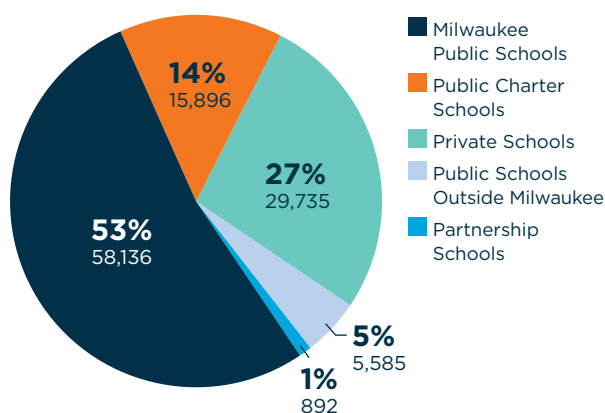
# 2022–23 State of Milwaukee Education: Student Enrollment

## Key findings

- Preliminary Fall 2022 enrollment data shows a continued decline in citywide enrollment, driven by declines at schools operated by Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) (*Figure 1*):
  - ▶ 58,136 (53%) in **MPS**
  - ▶ 15,896 (14%) in **Public Charter Schools**
  - ▶ 29,735 (27%) in **Private Schools**
  - ▶ 892 (1%) in **Partnership Schools**
  - ▶ An additional 5,585 (5%) Milwaukee students were open enrolled in **Public Schools Outside Milwaukee**
- In 2021–2022, Milwaukee had 112,958 publicly funded students:
  - ▶ 60,706 (54%) in **MPS**
  - ▶ 16,210 (14%) in **Public Charter Schools**
  - ▶ 29,432 (26%) in **Private Schools**
  - ▶ 608 (1%) in **Partnership Schools**
  - ▶ 6,002 (5%) open enrolled in **Public Schools Outside Milwaukee**

*Figure 1*  
**Preliminary 2022–2023 Enrollment by Sector**

In 2022–23, MPS served a slight majority of all 110,244 publicly funded students



- Last year, Milwaukee schools served a student population that is:
  - ▶ Black (50%),
  - ▶ Hispanic/Latino (31%),
  - ▶ English learners (13%),
  - ▶ Economically disadvantaged (80%)

Every Wisconsin resident has a stake in the success of Milwaukee's children and youth. To ensure that success, all stakeholders need ready access to key information about the city's K3–12 schools. Over the past three decades, publicly funded school options in Milwaukee have evolved to offer a wide variety of choices for the city's families. Given this complexity, it can be difficult to capture the full picture of enrollment in the city. And yet, it is crucial that stakeholders—parents, educators, community organizations, and policymakers—understand Milwaukee's school landscape, including enrollment trends and student demographics, in order to make informed decisions about its future.

This report provides an overview of enrollment in Milwaukee schools and provides key facts and figures compiled from the latest information available from official sources. It includes a summary of current (2022–2023) school year enrollment and a more detailed summary of audited 2021–2022 enrollment demographics and trends. It is our hope that this publication clearly lays out this ecosystem in an accessible way for all interested stakeholders.

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# Fall 2022 Preliminary Milwaukee Enrollment Data (3rd Friday Counts)

Preliminary enrollment numbers<sup>1</sup> for 2022–2023, which are used to determine school funding, reveal that Milwaukee schools<sup>2,3</sup> are serving 110,244<sup>4</sup> publicly funded students.<sup>5</sup> Since last year, MPS has lost an additional 2,570 students, whereas independent charter schools have lost 314 students and private schools using MPCP vouchers have gained 303 students (*Figure 2*).

MPS enrollment declines are occurring at a much faster rate than other sectors, which have stayed relatively stable the past several years, and preliminary numbers indicate that this decline was even greater this year than in the past. If current trends continue, within the

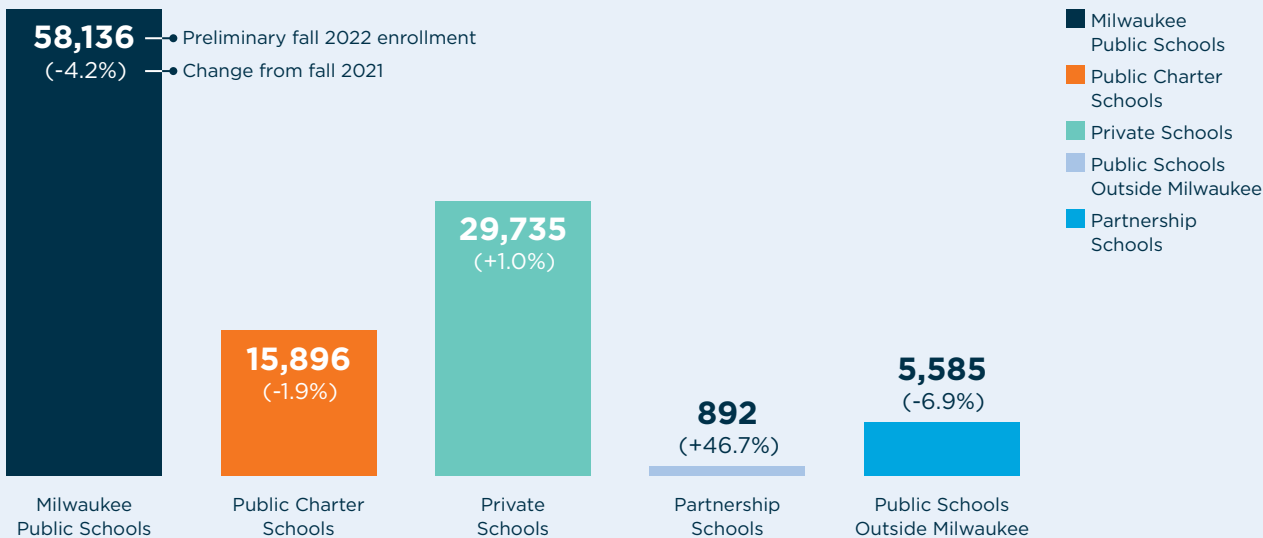
next few years the majority of Milwaukee students will attend a K3–12 school that is not operated by MPS.

Publicly funded enrollment in Milwaukee schools indicates that the majority of our students are Black (50%), Hispanic/Latino (31%), and/or economically disadvantaged (80%), and schools serve 14% students with disabilities.

Figure 2

## Enrollment Change, fall 2021 to fall 2022

Enrollment in Milwaukee Public Schools shrank by over 4% from fall 2021 while enrollment in Public Charter Schools shrank by about 1% and Private Choice School enrollment grew by 1%.



Since the 2022 enrollment numbers represented here are preliminary, they are subject to change. For instance, in 2021, final counts for enrollment in Public Schools Outside Milwaukee were about 500 students higher than preliminary counts. If that happens this year, enrollment for that group would be roughly the same as last year.

<sup>1</sup> Preliminary enrollment numbers are obtained from 3rd Friday of September counts in the fall and are unaudited.  
<sup>2</sup> A “school” as defined by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) may have more than one campus. We also include 5 Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP) schools that serve 75% or more MPCP students but are technically located outside of city limits.  
<sup>3</sup> This number includes Partnership school students. Partnership schools are contracted by the district and operated by community organizations. Because they work with special student populations, we include their enrollment counts as a separate category and don’t consider them part of any one sector. Partnership students are also included in student population analyses.  
<sup>4</sup> This number does not include 480 “mobile” MPS students who did not spend a full academic year at any one school. We opted to exclude these students from aggregate counts because mobile student data are not available prior to 2015, and current data exclude students who move among the other school sectors.  
<sup>5</sup> Throughout the report, we use a headcount of all students, K3–12.

## Final 2021-2022 Milwaukee Enrollment Data (Audited) and Analysis

In 2021-2022, the last year in which complete, audited data is available, 106,956 publicly funded students were enrolled in Milwaukee schools (*Figure 3*), an overall decline of 1.7% since 2020-2021. These students were distributed amongst the three sectors:

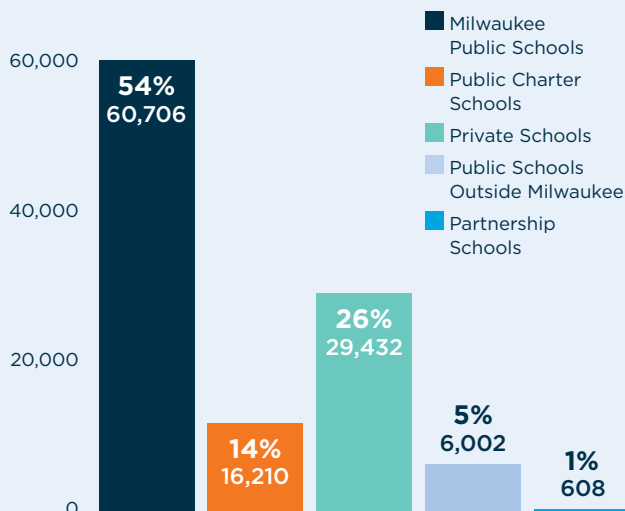
- 60,706 (54%) students were educated in **MPS**, a decline of 1,940 (or 3.1%) students from 2020-2021.
- 16,210 (14%) students were educated in **Public Charter Schools** a decline of 174 (or 1.2%) students from 2020-2021.
- 29,432 (26%) students were educated in **Private Schools** using Milwaukee Parental Choice vouchers, an increase of 272 (or 0.9%) students from 2020-2021.
- 608 (1%) students were educated in partnership schools, an increase of 13 students (or 2.2%) from 2020-2021

An additional 6,002 Milwaukee students received public funding to enroll in suburban districts through the Open Enrollment or Chapter 220 programs<sup>6</sup>, an increase of 171 (or 2.9%) students from 2020-2021.

Figure 3

### 2021-2022 Final Enrollment By Sector

In 2021-2022, MPS served a slight majority of all 112,958 publicly funded students



## Milwaukee Enrollment Demographics and Trends

Overall, each school sector serves a demographically similar student population, enrolling roughly equivalent proportions of students of each race/ethnicity, economic background, and English proficiency status.

In 2021-2022, the racial and ethnic diversity of publicly funded students in Milwaukee (*Figure 4*) closely mirrors the city's population of children under 18. Overall:

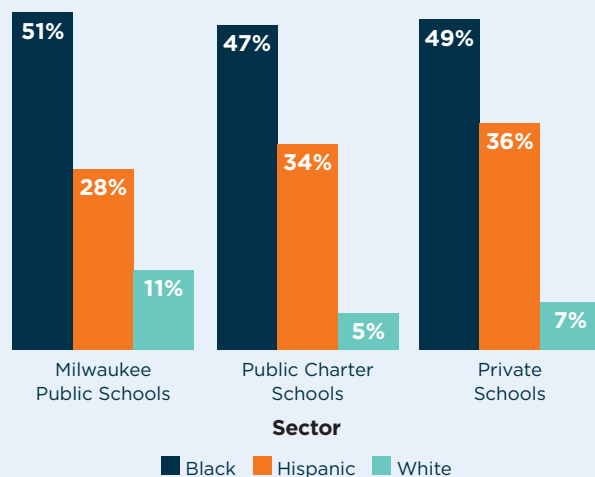
- 31,608<sup>7</sup> (31%) students identified as Hispanic/Latino<sup>8</sup>, a decrease of 588 (or 1.8%) students from 2020-2021.
- 51,355 (50%) students identified as Black, a decrease of 693 (or 1.3%) students from 2020-2021.
- 9,273 (9%) students identified as white, a decrease of 288 (or 3.0%) students from 2020-2021.

Racial and ethnic diversity are relatively similar across MPS, Public Charter Schools, and Private Schools.

Figure 4

### Race/Ethnicity as Percentage of Sector Enrollment (2021-2022) School Year

The three school sectors in Milwaukee generally serve similar student populations. Private schools show the highest share of Hispanic students, while MPS shows the highest share of white and Black students.



<sup>6</sup> Open enrollment also includes the 312 remaining students in the Chapter 220 voluntary desegregation program, which was closed to new enrollees in 2014.

<sup>7</sup> Enrollment reports at the school level sometimes have student subgroup data redacted. Additionally, certain data isn't available for private schools. Because of this, we use data from Wisconsin School Report Cards, reported in percentages, to calculate the population numbers for race/ethnicity, economic disadvantage, English proficiency, and students with disabilities, to estimate these population numbers for Milwaukee's publicly funded students.

<sup>8</sup> The terms Hispanic, Latino, and Hispanic/Latino are used interchangeably throughout this report, reflective of usage by different data sources (e.g. federal sources use "Hispanic or Latino", while the state uses "Hispanic/Latino").

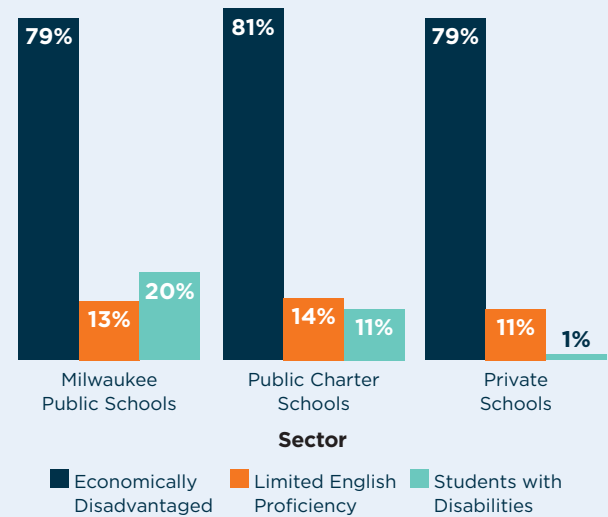
Milwaukee schools continue to serve a higher proportion of economically disadvantaged students, as well as students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency (*Figure 5*), than surrounding areas in Wisconsin. In 2021–2022, Milwaukee schools overall served:

- 82,157 (79.8%) students were economically disadvantaged, a decrease of 6,949 (or 7.8%) students from 2020–2021.
- 14,503 (14.1%) students were identified as having a disability, a decrease of 692 (or 4.6%) students from 2020–2021.
- 13,114 (12.7%) students had limited English proficiency, an increase of 374 (or 2.9%) students from 2020–2021.

Students with disabilities comprise a much larger share of enrollment at Milwaukee Public Schools, while making up a smaller share of students enrolled in public charter schools and an even smaller share of the student population at private schools. Official counts of students with disabilities at private schools could be under reported because private schools are not required to identify students with disabilities in the same manner as public schools.<sup>9</sup>

*Figure 5*  
**Special Populations as Percentage of Sector Enrollment (2021–2022) School Year**

The three school sectors in Milwaukee generally serve similar student populations, with the notable exception of the population of students with disabilities.



<sup>9</sup> Private schools are not legally required to identify and report data on students with disabilities to DPI. For private school students to be formally counted by DPI as one of their school's "Students with Disabilities," students must have been deemed eligible for special education services under federal guidelines established in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA). This requires a school district or Local Education Agency to formally identify and/or provide services to the private school student in question. With no incentive to engage in this process, private schools have sometimes chosen to forego the statutorily defined identification and service-delivery process, and instead address the unique needs of such students on their own. The 2015 creation of the Special Needs Scholarship Program now provides such an incentive, but enrollment in the program remains limited at present, and pre-2015 identification practices continue to impact these numbers.

## Appendix: Glossary of Terms

STUDENT DEFINITIONS (WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION)	
<b>Students with Disabilities</b>	Have a qualifying impairment requiring an individualized education program (IEP) entitling them to additional learning supports and resources. <sup>10</sup>
<b>Economically Disadvantaged</b>	From a household with an income no greater than 185% of Federal Poverty Guidelines or other designation. <sup>11</sup>
<b>Limited English Proficiency</b>	Learning English as a second language, identified through a federally mandated annual assessment. <sup>12</sup>

DATA GROUPS	
<b>Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS)</b>	Refers to schools operated by MPS staff. This includes Traditional Public Schools and Instrumentality Charter Schools. It does not include 2r/2x or Independent charters, Non-Instrumentality Charter Schools, or Partnership schools.
<b>Public Charter Schools</b>	Includes autonomous charter schools (Independent and Non-Instrumentality). Does not include Instrumentality Charter schools, which are operated directly by MPS staff.
<b>Public Schools Outside Milwaukee</b>	Includes only Open Enrollment and Chapter 220 students enrolled in suburban school districts.
<b>Private Schools</b>	Includes students attending private schools using a state-funded tuition voucher through the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP), Special Needs Scholarship Program (SNSP), or Wisconsin Parental Choice Program (WPCP).
<b>Public Schools</b>	Refers to all schools that are free for all children to attend and overseen by a governmental body (Traditional Public and all charter schools, including Independent Charters).

<sup>10</sup> <https://dpi.wi.gov/wise/data-elements/disability>

<sup>11</sup> <https://dpi.wi.gov/wise/data-elements/econ-status>

<sup>12</sup> <https://dpi.wi.gov/wise/data-elements/elp>

<b>SCHOOL TYPES</b>	
<b>2r/2x or Independent Charter Schools</b>	The terms “2r/2x” and “Independent Charter” are used interchangeably to indicate charter schools fully independent from a school district. In Milwaukee, these schools are authorized by either the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee or the City of Milwaukee Common Council.
<b>Instrumentality Charter Schools</b>	A charter school authorized by the Milwaukee Board of School Directors, operated by MPS, and staffed by MPS employees.
<b>Non-Instrumentality Charter Schools</b>	A charter school authorized by the Milwaukee Board of School Directors but operated by an independent 501c3 nonprofit and staffed by employees of that nonprofit.
<b>Partnership Schools</b>	Refers to independent schools contracted by MPS to work with specific student populations, such as those identified by the district as at-risk of dropping out. These schools are operated by community organizations based on parameters of the contract with MPS.
<b>Private Schools</b>	Refers to independent schools that charge tuition, which may be paid by a tuition voucher through the state’s Choice programs.
<b>Traditional Public Schools</b>	Schools operated directly by MPS without a charter contract, e.g. excluding Instrumentality and other types of charter schools.

<b>PROGRAMS</b>	
<b>Chapter 220</b>	State-funded voluntary racial desegregation program that funded transportation for Milwaukee-area students to attend schools in neighboring districts.
<b>Open Enrollment</b>	State program which allows any Wisconsin student to apply to attend a traditional public school in a nonresident school district.
<b>Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP)</b>	State-funded program which allows students in households below a certain economic threshold (300% of the federal poverty limit) to obtain a tuition voucher to attend a participating private school. Students must live within the Milwaukee city limits to qualify for this program.
<b>Special Needs Scholarship Program (SNSP)</b>	Allows a student with an identified disability to obtain a tuition voucher from the state to attend a participating private school.
<b>Wisconsin Parental Choice Program (WPCP)</b>	State-funded program which allows students in households below a certain economic threshold (220% of federal poverty limit) to obtain a tuition voucher to attend a participating private school. Students must live in Wisconsin, but cannot live within the city limits of either Milwaukee or Racine to qualify for this program.