

WHERE ARE WE NOW? STILL SEGREGATED IN NEW JERSEY



Although progress has been made in several areas, an alarming pattern of segregation continues among students receiving special education services in New Jersey. In 1993, 8.9 percent of New Jersey's students classified as eligible for special education were segregated in separate facilities. Ten years later, this percentage remains constant at 8.8 percent as compared with a national average of 2.9 percent.²⁸ In fact, as evidenced by the graph in Figure 1 (page 12), no state had a greater percentage of its students in segregated facilities. Moreover, 36 of the 50 states had less than 3 percent of their students in segregated placements.²⁹

The 8.8 percent of New Jersey students who are placed in segregated facilities represents 19,596 students.³⁰ Only one state, New York, had more students in segregated placements (but still had a smaller percentage of its special education population in segregated placements than New Jersey); while California, the most populous state with more than four times New Jersey's population, has almost 6,000 fewer students in segregated facilities.³¹

Although New Jersey accounts for less than 3 percent of the U.S. population, more than 11 percent of segregated placements nationally are New Jersey students (see Figure 2, page 13). In fact, in order for New Jersey to fall around the national average in terms of number of segregated placements, more than 13,000 students would have to be moved from segregated facilities (see Figure 3, page 13).

FIGURE 1. PERCENT OF CLASSIFIED STUDENTS IN SEPARATE FACILITIES 2003

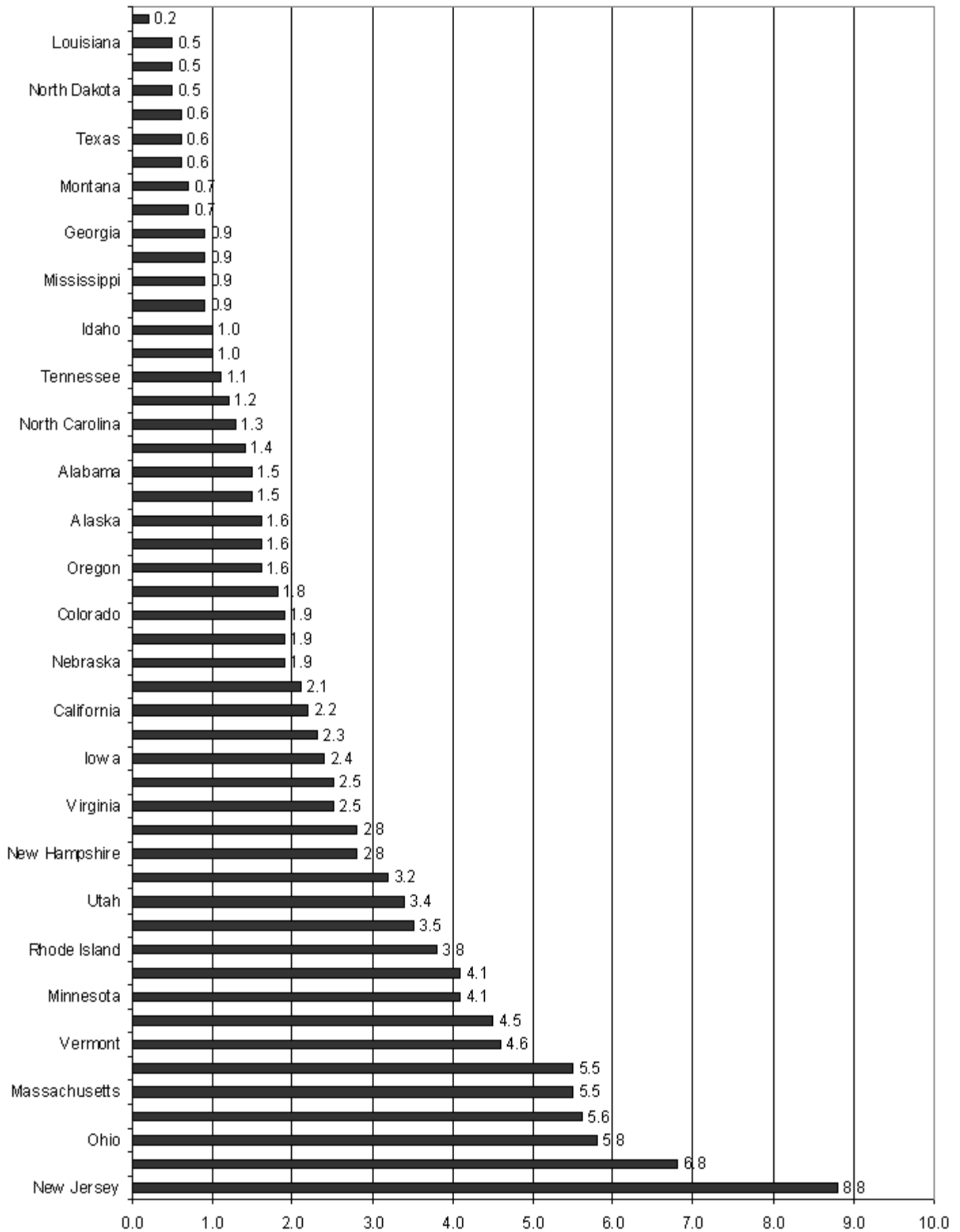


FIGURE 2. TOTAL NEW JERSEY POPULATION AND POPULATION OF NEW JERSEY STUDENTS IN SEGREGATED FACILITIES SHOWN AS PERCENTAGES OF THE NATIONAL POPULATION

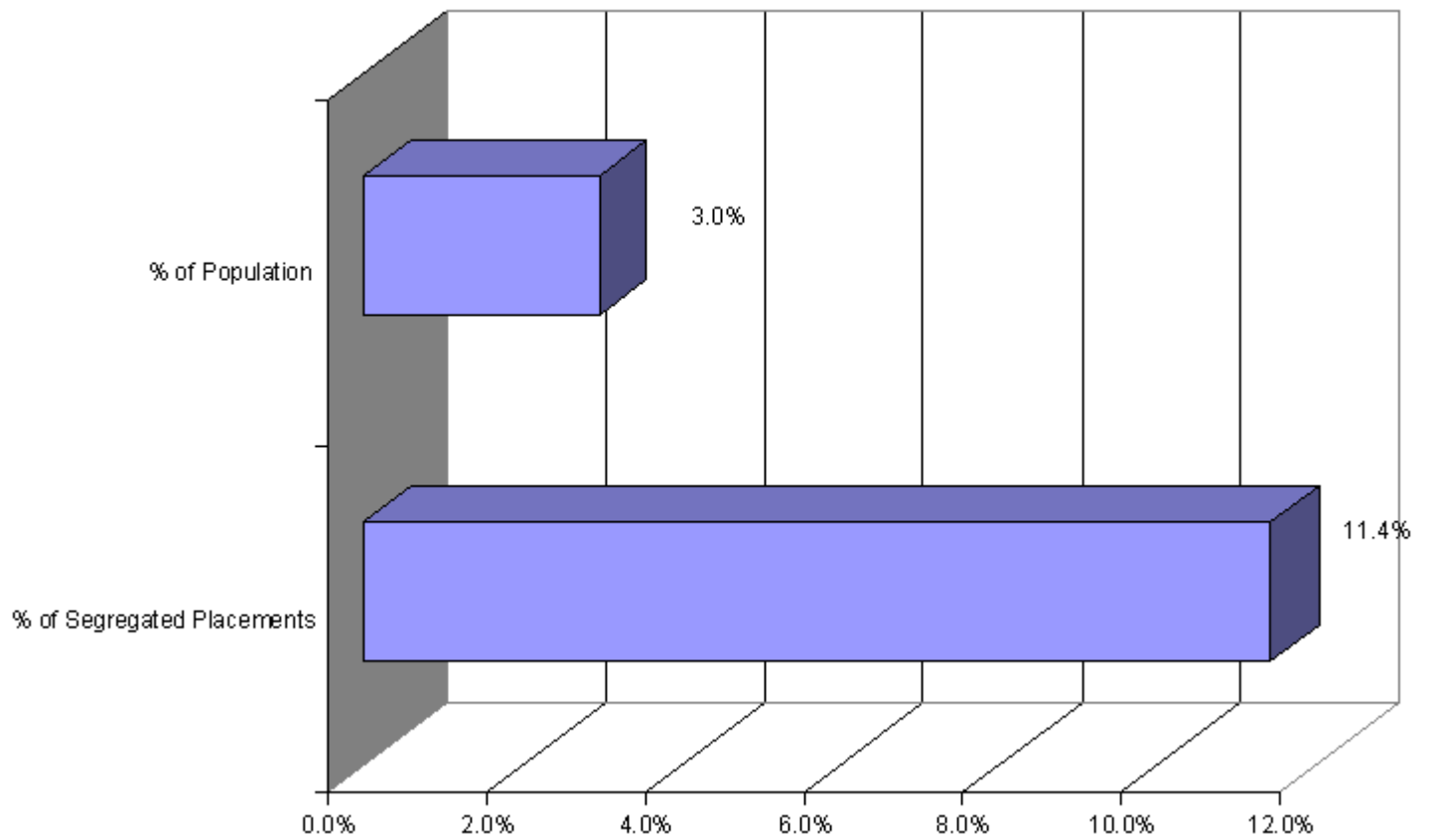
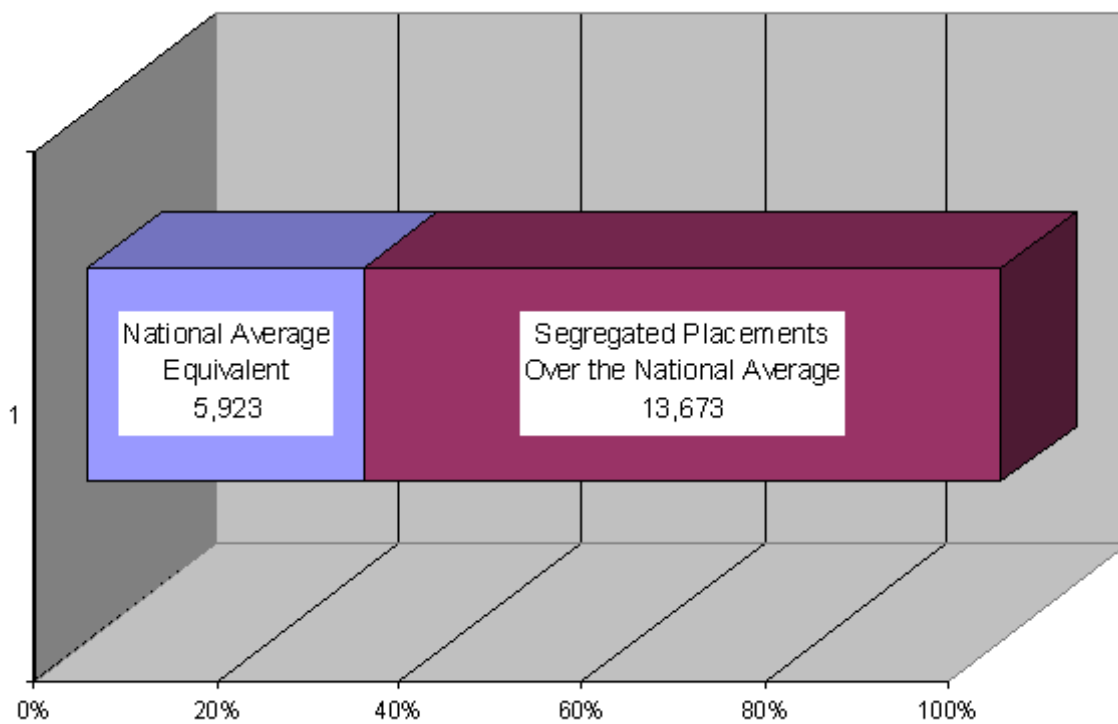
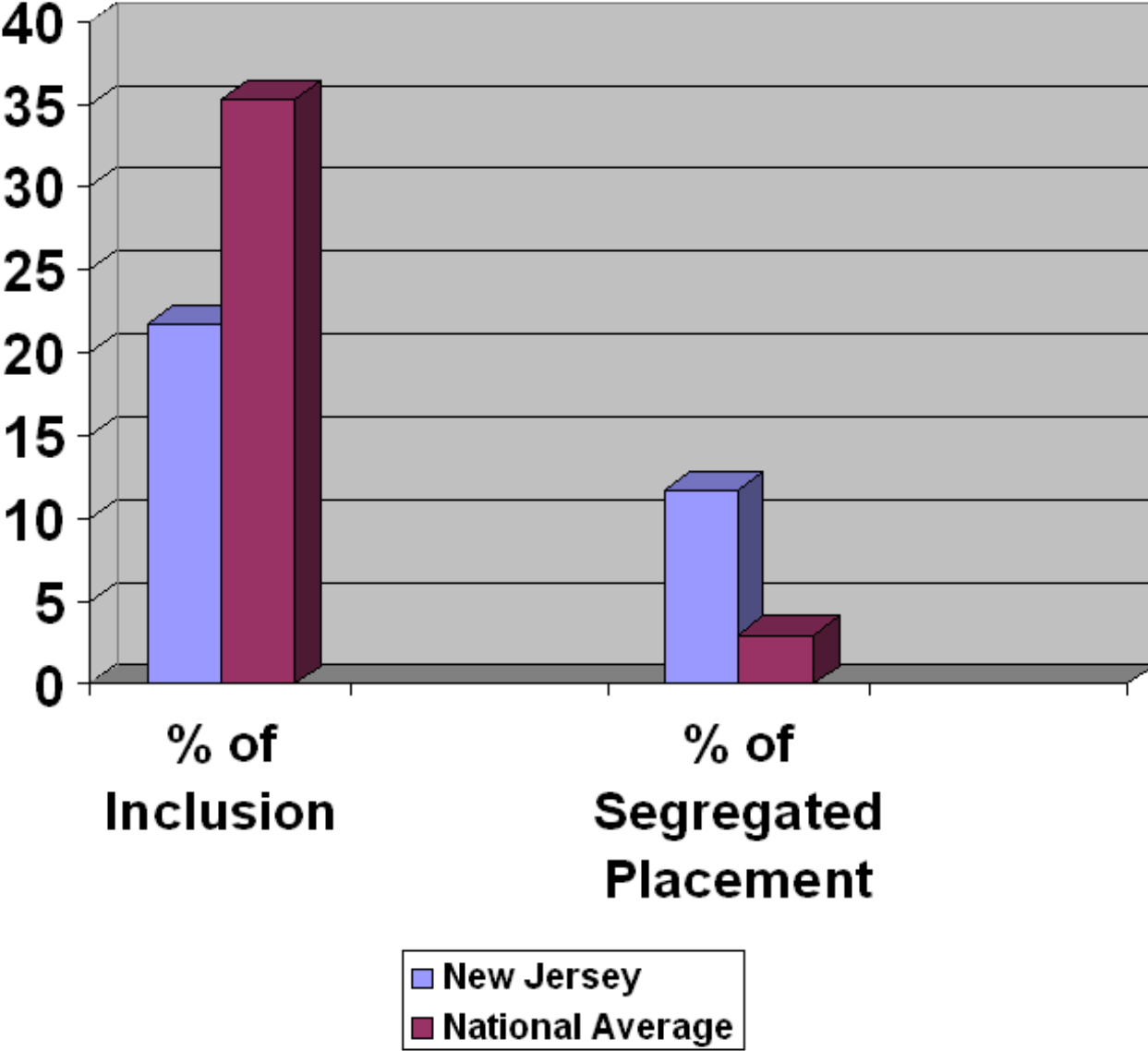


FIGURE 3. NEW JERSEY STUDENTS IN SEGREGATED FACILITIES



New Jersey does fare slightly better than the national average with regard to children who are included in general education settings for part of the school day.³³ However, New Jersey still maintains a pattern of segregation, with approximately 60 percent of New Jersey’s students spending more than 20 percent of their time outside the general classroom as compared to a national average of about 52 percent.³⁴ Similarly, although New Jersey has made a significant and commendable increase in the percentage of preschoolers with disabilities educated in inclusive settings,³⁵ the State still lags behind the national average of inclusive placements for preschoolers.³⁶ In fact, New Jersey places almost four times as many preschoolers in out-of-district segregated placements as the national average (Figure 4).³⁷

FIGURE 4. PRESCHOOL STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

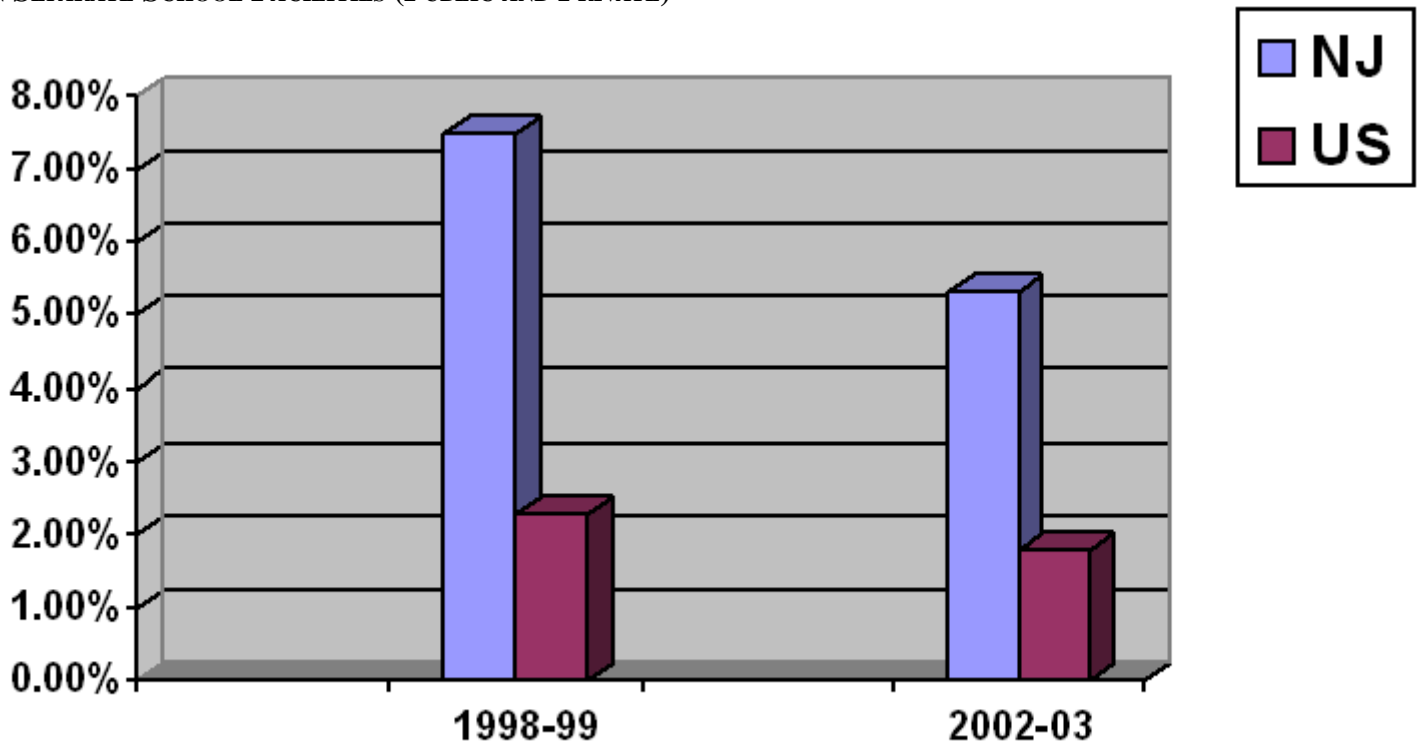


EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIFIC DISABILITIES

STUDENTS WITH ORTHOPEDIC IMPAIRMENTS

During the past ten years, New Jersey saw its greatest increases in inclusive placements for students with orthopedic impairments aged 6 to 21 years. Between 1990-1991 and 2000-2001, the percentage of pupils with orthopedic impairments who were included in regular classes more than doubled.³⁸ In this category of students, New Jersey is doing significantly better than the national average at including in-district students in general education classes, with 69.35% of students with this classification spending more than 80% of their day in general education as compared to the national baseline of only 44.35%. However, as shown in Figure 5, New Jersey continues to send a far greater percentage of these students to out-of-district schools than the national average.³⁹

FIGURE 5. PERCENT OF STUDENTS AGED 6-21 WITH ORTHOPEDIC IMPAIRMENTS IN SEPARATE SCHOOL FACILITIES (PUBLIC AND PRIVATE)

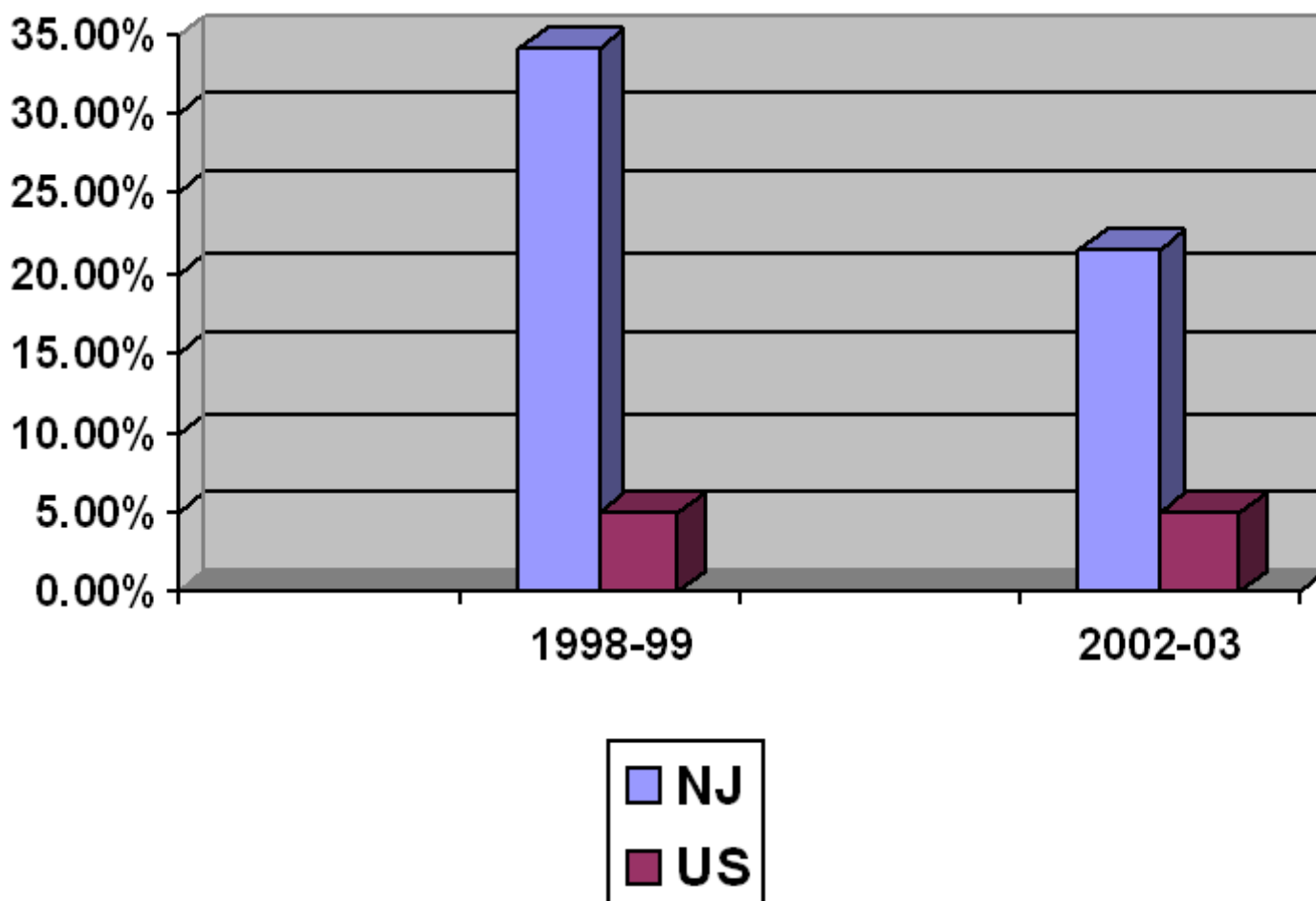


STUDENTS CLASSIFIED AS HAVING MENTAL RETARDATION

New Jersey remains far behind the national average in placing children classified as having mental retardation in integrated settings. In fact, New Jersey sends a higher percentage of students with mental retardation to out-of-district segregated settings than any other state in the country and, as illustrated in Figure 6, does so at a far greater rate than the national average.⁴⁰

In addition, even when students with mental retardation remain in the school district, New Jersey places far less of them in the most inclusive settings than the national average.⁴¹

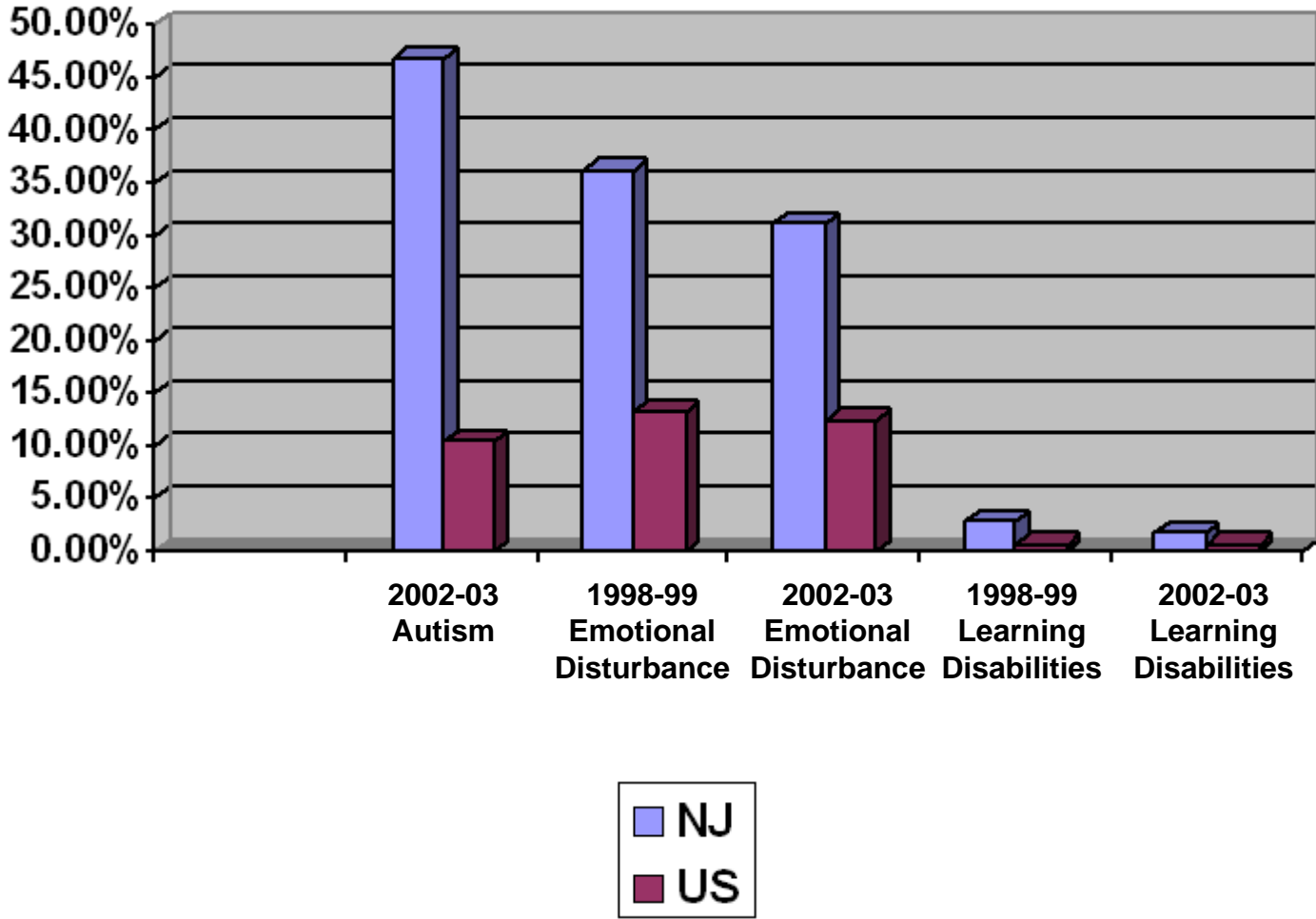
FIGURE 6. PERCENT OF STUDENTS AGED 6-21 CLASSIFIED WITH MENTAL RETARDATION IN SEPARATE SCHOOL FACILITIES (PUBLIC AND PRIVATE)



STUDENTS WITH OTHER DISABILITIES

New Jersey has a high rate of out-of-district placements for children with other disabilities. For example, New Jersey sends approximately four times as many children with autism to out-of-district placements as the national average.⁴² Similarly, students classified as having an emotional disturbance or learning disability attending non-residential programs are educated out-of-district at significantly higher rates than the national average.⁴³

FIGURE 7. PERCENT OF STUDENTS AGED 6-21 IN SEPARATE SCHOOL FACILITIES (PUBLIC AND PRIVATE) BY DISABILITY



OVER-REPRESENTATION OF MINORITY STUDENTS



On this 50th anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education*, it is discouraging to note that African-Americans are as significantly over-represented in special education today as they were in the 1990's. Equally discouraging, when African-American children are classified, they are generally placed in the most segregated settings.

Furthermore, they are actually *underrepresented* in preschool special education, reflecting an overall lack of early intervention and in-class support and services in racially and culturally diverse communities.

When school systems continue to categorically and unnecessarily place students (particularly those from diverse backgrounds) in more restrictive educational settings, students will be stigmatized, will have difficulty learning, and school systems won't maximize the use of the scarce federal education dollars they receive yearly.

—[Remarks of Martin Gould, Senior Research Specialist for the National Council On Disability, before the Congressional Bipartisan Disabilities Caucus, on February 13, 2002.]

CLASSIFICATION RATES

According to the New Jersey Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs, in both 1993 and 2001, African-American students were classified at significantly higher rates than their white counterparts.⁴⁴ Almost one in four male African-American students in New Jersey is identified as having a disability.

African-American students, both males and females, are classified as having mental retardation at three times the rate of white students, and classified as having multiple disabilities and emotional disturbance at approximately twice the rate of white students. Along with autism spectrum disabilities, these disabilities – emotional disability, mental retardation, and multiple disabilities – are the most likely to result in segregated placements.

By way of contrast, in speech-language disabilities, which are most likely to result in inclusive placements, African-American students are *underrepresented*. White males are 1.8 times more likely to be classified with a speech disability as African-American males, and white females are 2.4 times more likely to be so classified as African-American females.

According to the Conference for Exceptional Children, over-representation has been shown to lower educational expectations for African-American students and

to restrict their access to the general education curriculum. Evidence also suggest that misclassification and inappropriate labels keep African-American students from receiving services that meet their needs and that this contributes to a greater incidence of social and emotional problems in affected students.⁴⁵

SEGREGATION RATES

In addition to being over-represented in special education, African-American students are far more likely to be placed in segregated settings than white students.⁴⁶ Moreover, as illustrated by Figure 8 showing rates of inclusion, classified students of color are educated outside the general education classroom at far greater rates than classified white students.⁴⁷

Even among all segregated students, there are racial disparities. For example, African-American students in out-of-district placements are more likely to be in public separate facilities, whereas white students are more likely to be in private separate facilities. As Figure 9 (page 20) illustrates, even though white students in New Jersey are also segregated more than the national average, the divergence from the national baseline is smaller for whites than for other ethnic groups.⁴⁸

FIGURE 8. PERCENT OF CLASSIFIED STUDENTS WHO SPENT MORE THAN 80 PERCENT OF THEIR DAY IN GENERAL EDUCATION CLASSROOMS (1999-2000 SCHOOL YEAR)

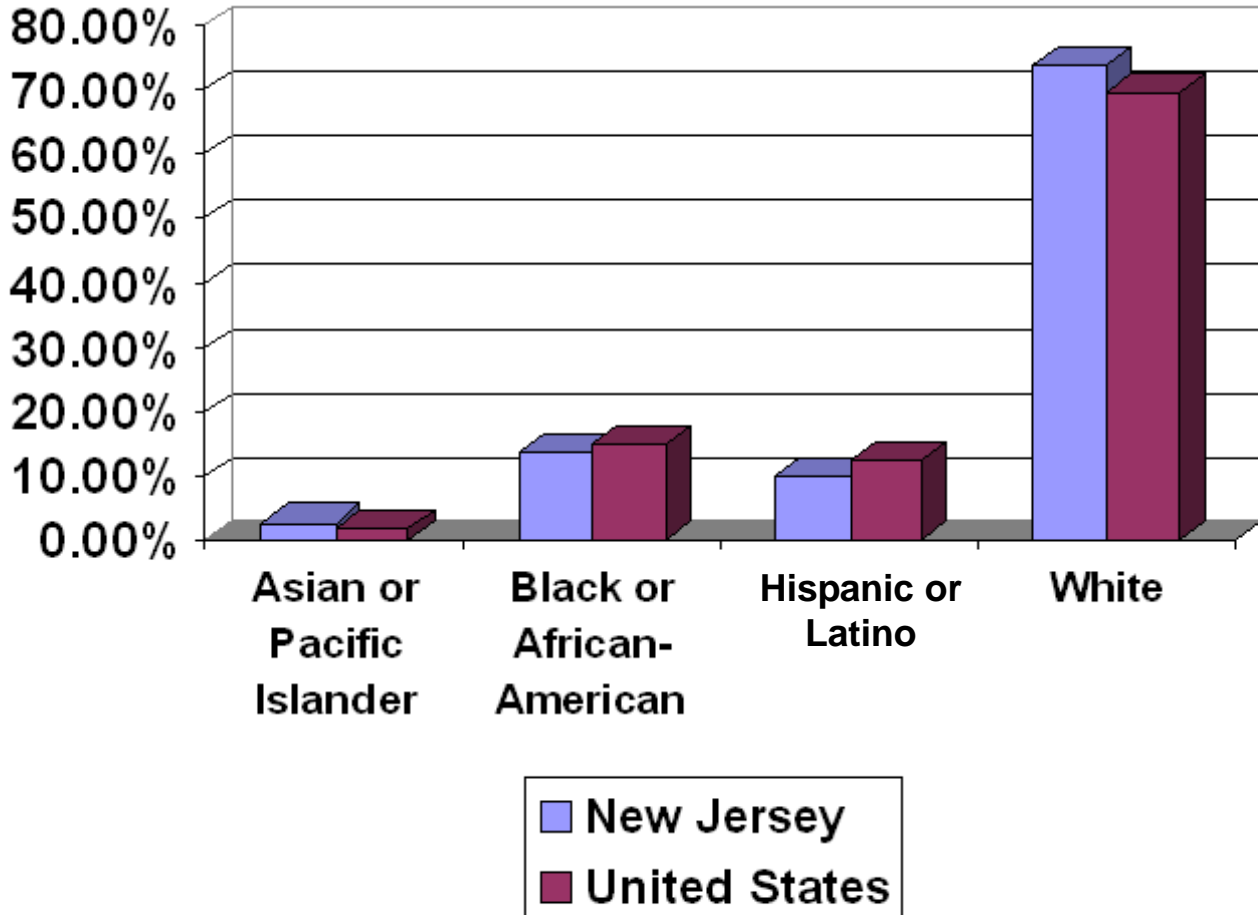
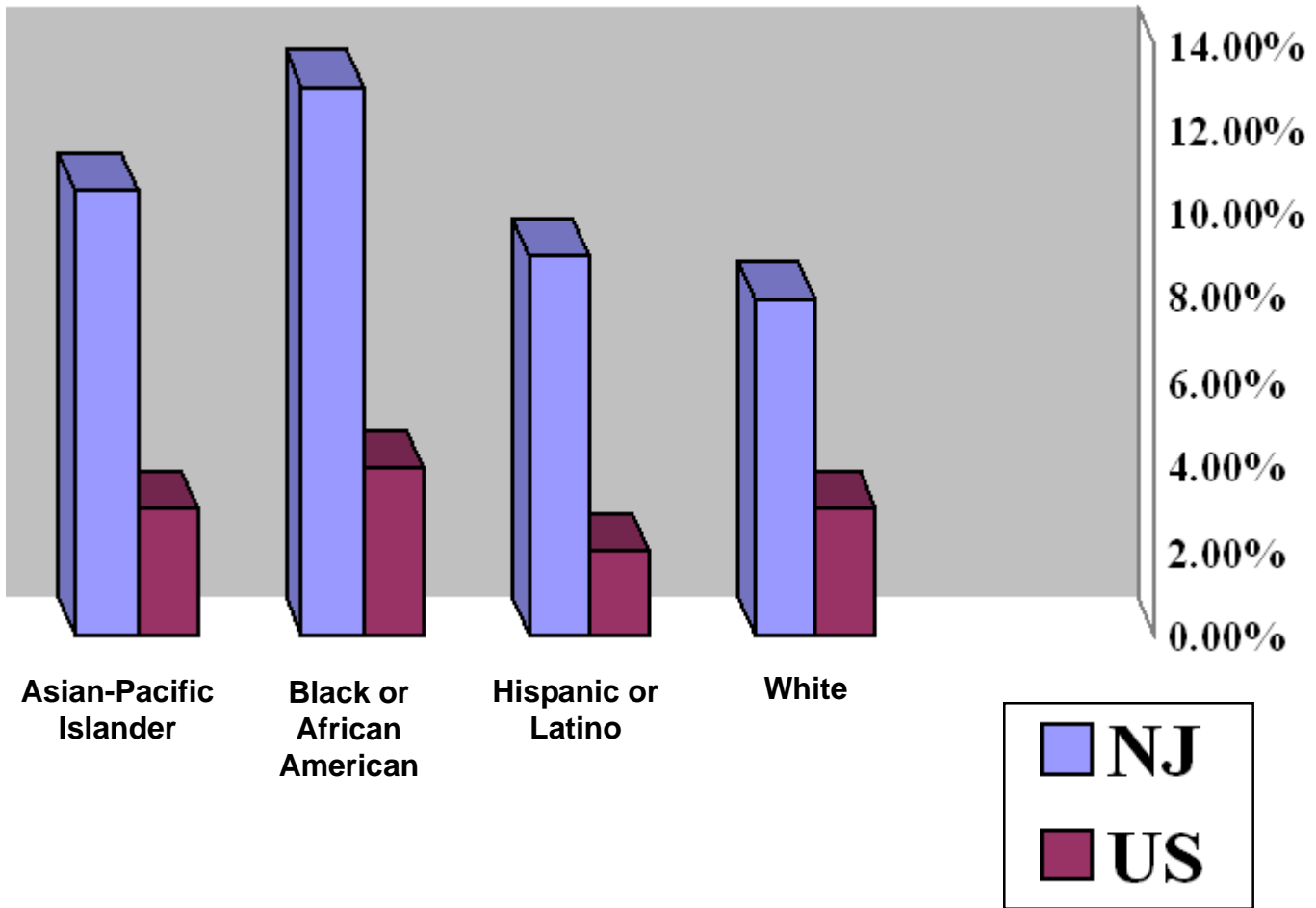


FIGURE 9. PERCENT OF STUDENTS AGED 6-21 IN SEPARATE SCHOOL FACILITIES (PUBLIC & PRIVATE) BY RACIAL OR ETHNIC DESIGNATION (AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL CLASSIFIED STUDENTS IN THE ETHNIC GROUP)



DROP-OUT RATES

Not only are minorities over-represented with respect to classification and segregation, but the overrepresentation also extends to the dropout rates for students with disabilities. Classified students of color are far more likely to drop out of school than their white counterparts, leaving school at a rate almost double that of white special education students. Specifically, 42% of Black or African-American special education students and 40% of Hispanic or Latino special education students drop out of school as compared to 22% of white special education students.⁴⁹

Fifty years after Brown v. Board of Education, these troubling facts highlight complex and chronic social and economic problems and sound a call to action.
