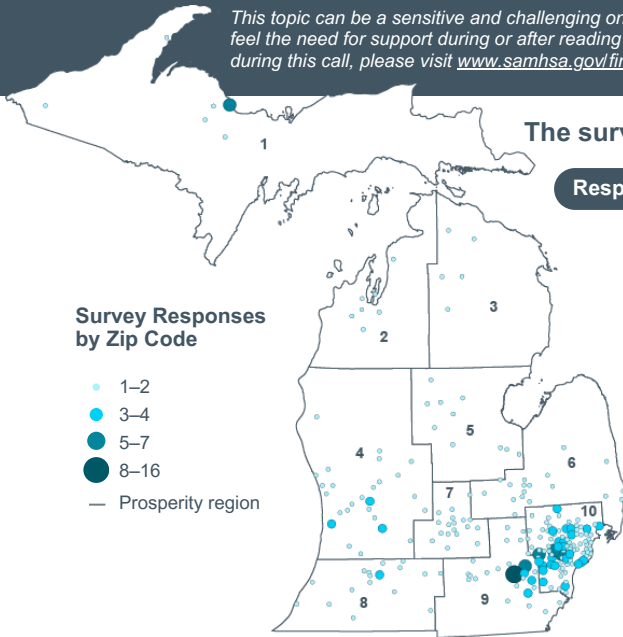


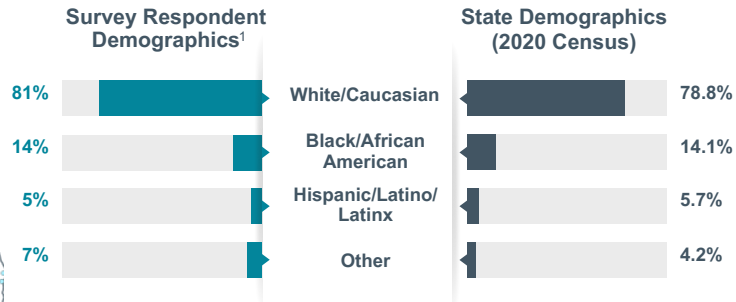
The Autism Alliance of Michigan (AAoM) was founded on the vision that people with autism will lead lives that meet their greatest potential. In 2023, AAoM fielded an unprecedented online survey to inform collective advocacy efforts to improve access and grow opportunities for students with disabilities across the state.

This topic can be a sensitive and challenging one. The 988 crisis line is a free, confidential option for support 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you feel the need for support during or after reading this report, please call or text the crisis line by dialing 988. If you have any concerns about what may take place during this call, please visit www.samhsa.gov/find-help/988/faqs.

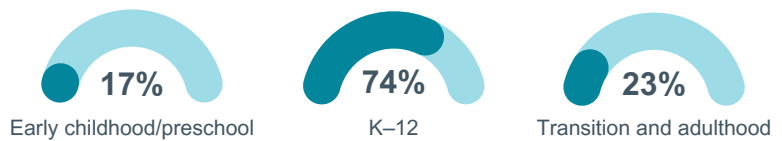


The survey had **890** responses from across Michigan.

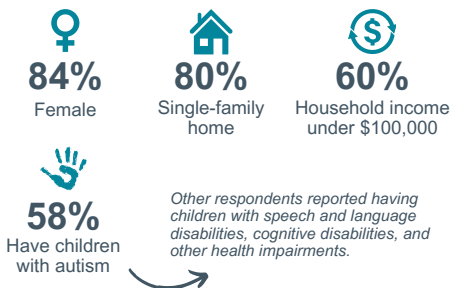
Respondents mirror Michigan's racial demographics:



Respondents included individuals with disabilities and parents of students with disabilities from various educational levels:



Respondent characteristics:



What Is Special Education?

The system we refer to as "special education" is governed by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), enacted in 1975 and last reauthorized by Congress in 2004. Under IDEA, schools are obligated to provide a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment to eligible students through an individualized family service plan (IFSP) or individualized education program (IEP). IEPs and IFSPs are legal documents outlining the services and supports a student needs. With tools like these, IDEA helps prepare eligible children with disabilities for further education, employment, and independent living.

Seclusion and Restraint

Seclusion: The confinement of a student in a room or other space from which the student is physically prevented from leaving.

Restraint: An action that prevents or significantly restricts a student's movement (which may include physical, chemical, or mechanical means).



Students with disabilities in Michigan are **nine times more likely to experience restraint** and **15 times more likely to experience seclusion** than their nondisabled peers.²

Michigan law states that **restraint and seclusion may only be used in emergency situations if the student is a danger to themselves or others and should not be used for discipline or punishment.**³ Michigan law requires that any use of seclusion and restraint be reported to the parents. Additionally, schools must document the procedure used, the time of day, and the duration and location of the event. Schools must also provide a detailed account of the events before, during, and after the use of restraint or seclusion. Historically, these disciplinary measures have been disproportionately practiced on students with disabilities.

“She is repeatedly punished for obvious manifestations of her disabilities, and it is infuriating as parents to spend so much time educating the folks who are meant to be educating and supporting our child. —Michigan parent

¹ Survey demographic questions were optional.

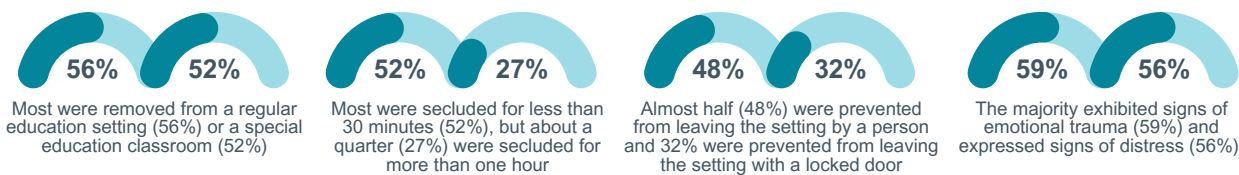
² Center for Educational Performance and Information. "Use of Seclusion and Restraint: Intermediate School District Totals, School Year 2021–2022: Aggregation of Data Submitted by Member Districts." *MI School Data*. Accessed November 22, 2024.

³ Michigan Legislature. March 29, 2017. "380.1307c Emergency Seclusion and Emergency Physical Restraint; State Policy; Provisions." *The Revised School Code, Excerpt. Act 451 of 1976*. Accessed January 30, 2024.

Seclusion

About one-third of respondents reported that their student with disabilities (36%) has experienced seclusion in school (N = 408).

Of those whose students experienced seclusion:



Emergency seclusion should generally last no longer than 15 minutes for an elementary school student or 20 minutes for a middle school or high school student.⁴

The most common reasons families were given for their student being secluded included physical aggression (47%), verbal aggression (35%), elopement (32%), and property destruction (28%).

Communication with Families about Seclusion

One-third of respondents (33%) said that they were never or rarely informed about their student being secluded, one-third said they were usually informed (31%), and one-third said they were always informed (36%). Almost one-half of respondents (47%) said they were never or rarely told how long their student had been secluded.

Most respondents had not:

- Been given a copy of their school district's policy on the use of seclusion (72%) N = 110
- Been asked for their consent for seclusion to be used as an intervention with their student (75%) N = 124
- Been advised on the potential negative effects of seclusion (81%) N = 118
- Included seclusion as an intervention in their student's IEP (82%) N = 113

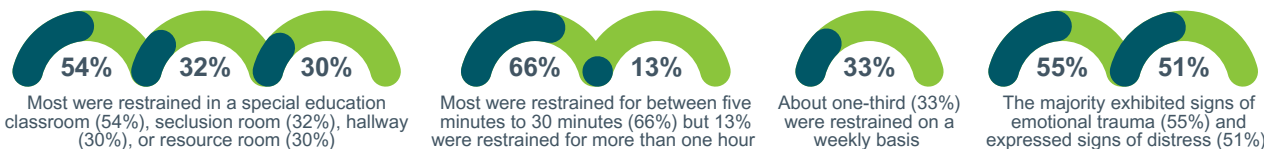
Of those respondents who brought up concerns about seclusion to the school, the majority (61%) were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with how their concerns were addressed (N = 126).

“ My son was kicked out of school, abused, restrained, and secluded ... we went to court, but the judge said he had no authority over the schools. We called the police who said the same thing. This was not a one-time incident. Over his school career, it happened numerous times, resulting in him learning to do the police holds on others.” —Michigan parent

Restraint

One-quarter of respondents (25%) reported that their students with disabilities have been restrained in school (N = 127).

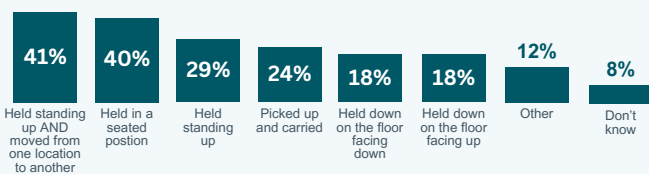
Of those whose students experienced restraint:



Emergency physical restraint should generally last no longer than 10 minutes.⁵

The most common reasons given to families for their student being restrained included physical aggression (49%), elopement (34%), property destruction (34%), and self-injurious behavior (31%).

Physical restraint was the most common method used. Of those who had been physically restrained:



Prone restraint (the restraint of an individual facedown) is not legal in Michigan.

While less common, some students with disabilities have also been mechanically or chemically restrained (administering medication as an intervention). Of those who had been mechanically restrained, the most frequent methods included:

- Seat-belted to chair (17%)
- Held in chair with arm splints (12%)
- Cuffs (15%)
- Straps or belts (10%)

Mechanical and chemical restraint are not legal in Michigan.

The Autism Alliance of Michigan is committed to ending disproportionate seclusion and restraint. If you would like to join the ongoing work to address seclusion and restraint practices in Michigan schools, please consider becoming involved in the Michigan Parent, Advocate, and Attorney Coalition (MIPAAAC) powered by the Autism Alliance of Michigan. Visit www.mipaac.org.

Communication With Families About Restraint

42% of respondents said they had rarely or never been informed that their student had been restrained, 25% said they were usually informed, and 34% said they were always informed. More than half (55%) said they were rarely or never told how long their student had been restrained.

Most respondents had not:

- Been given a copy of their school district's policy on the use of restraint (65%) N = 83
- Been advised on the potential negative effects of restraint (72%) N = 86
- Been asked for their consent to restrain their student (65%) as a behavior intervention N = 82
- Included the use of restraint in their student's IEP (77%) N = 81

To learn more about Autism Alliance of Michigan or to get involved, go to: autismallianceofmichigan.org/education-initiatives/ or >>>

SCAN THIS CODE FOR MORE INFO



Of those respondents who brought up concerns about their school's use of restraint, the majority (52%) were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with how their concerns were addressed (N = 89).