

Patterns and Trends in Grade Retention Rates in the US, 1995-2010

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QUESTIONS

- 1. How many students repeat grades each year?
- 2. Do retention rates vary across social and demographic groups?
- 3. Do retention rates vary over time or place?

BACKGROUND

Despite extensive research on the predictors and consequences of repeating grades, we currently have no way of routinely monitoring retention rates

- 1. States' reports are not comparable and are only available in some states and for some recent years
- 2. NCEs's longitudinal surveys are too infrequent
- 3. Warren and saliba's (2012) rates only describe state and national rates for the entire population
- 4. "Below modal age for grade" is an imperfect proxy

We improve on Hauser, Frederick, and Andrew's (2007) measure and describe recent trends and patterns in retention rates

Our rates are based on public Current Population Survey (CPS) data and can be produced annually

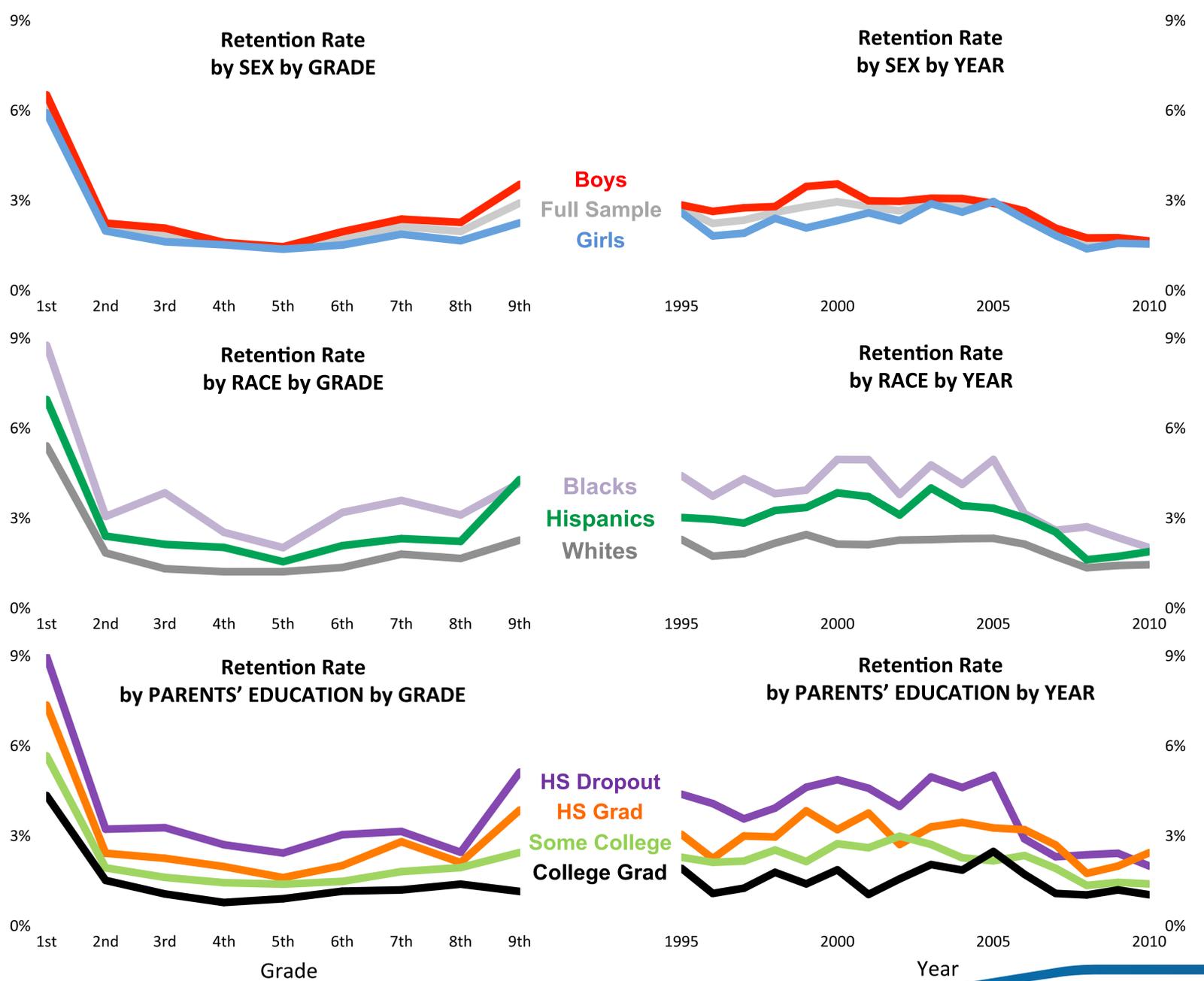
METHODS

Our measure is based on a comparison of grade level in Year X to grade level in Year X-1 for 1995-2010 respondents to the October CPS

We omit cases with imputed or implausible values

We validate our measure against states' reports and Warren and saliba's (2012) estimates

TRENDS IN RETENTION RATES BY GRADE, YEAR, AND STUDENT ATTRIBUTES



CONTRIBUTIONS

Individual-level measure of grade retention that is available annually for a large and diverse sample

Descriptions of rates and patterns of grade retention and how they vary across grades, over time, and across student sub-groups

ANSWERS

- 1. About 2.4% of all students are retained; rates are highest in 1st and 9th grades
- 2. Rates vary in expected ways by sex, race and ethnicity, region, and parental education level
- 3. Rates have declined substantially for all groups and in all regions since about 2005

NEXT STEPS

- Expand rates to 2014
- Model rates as a function of state education policy and state economic conditions to understand temporal, spatial, and socioeconomic patterns

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