



REPORT

# Navigating Absenteeism in 2024 Trends & Insights



# Understanding the Absenteeism Crisis

Chronic student absenteeism stands as one of the most pressing issues facing America's K-12 education system today. Defined as missing 10% or more of the school year, high levels of chronic absence correlate with lower academic achievement, higher dropout rates, and diminished long-term economic outcomes. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated this crisis, causing chronic absence rates to spike to alarming new heights.

State-reported attendance data shows that 2017-18 and 2018-19 had a steady chronic absenteeism rate of 15% nationally. In 2021-22, chronic absenteeism almost doubled compared to pre-pandemic levels, with a national average of 28%. While state data is still being reported for 2022-23, the national rate for chronic absenteeism currently sits at 26% across 41 states and approximately 80% of the nation's student population.

These alarmingly high rates prompted the White House to issue a call for urgent action at the beginning of the current school year, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive, nationwide strategy to ensure all students have the opportunity to attend school consistently.

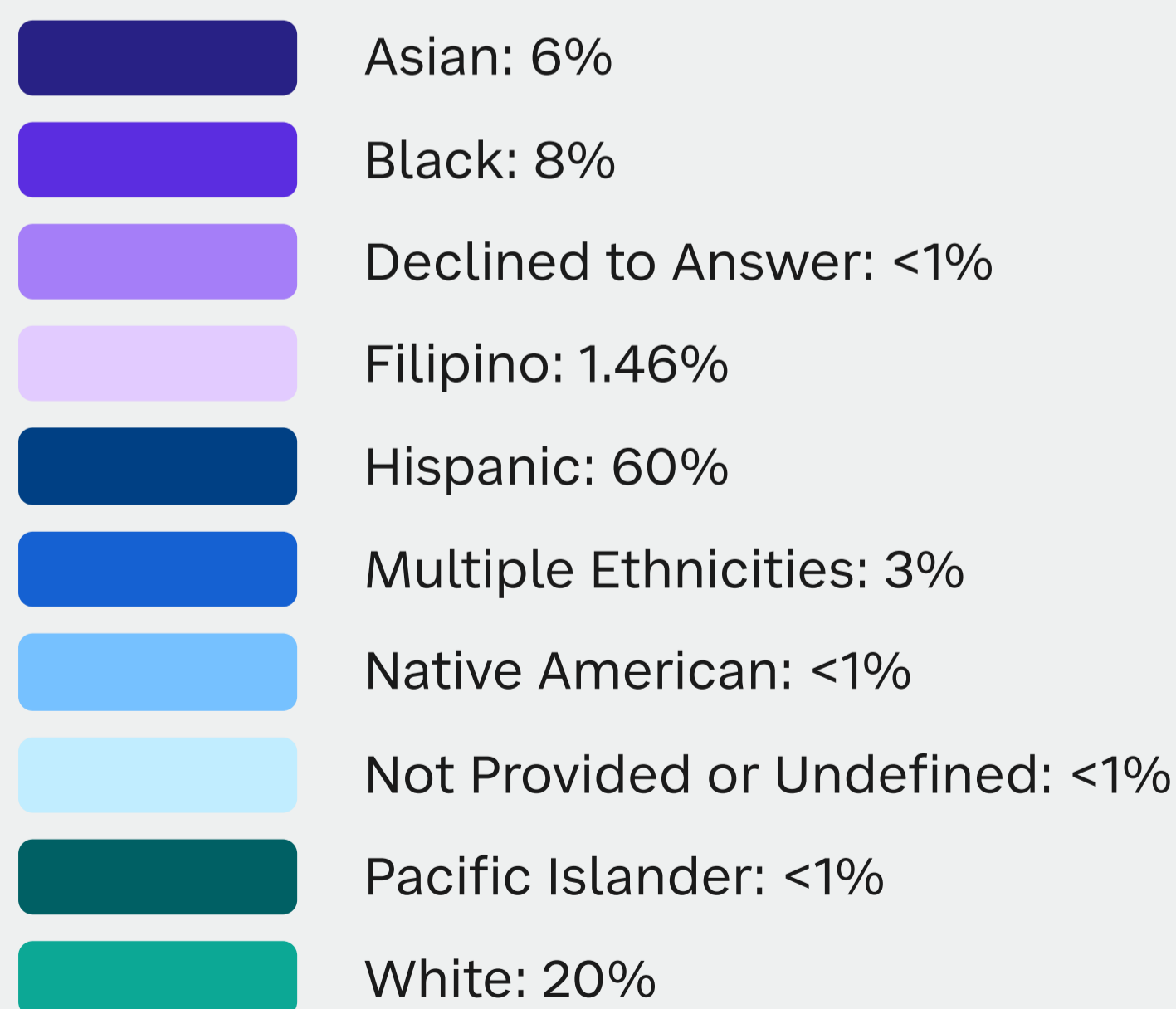
It's clear that attendance can vary drastically between states, districts, and grades. New Jersey reported the lowest chronic absenteeism rate for the 2022-23 school year (16.6%) while Alaska came in at 45%, meaning almost half of the student population in the state missed 10% of the school year.

**Looking at districts and states that are seeing better improvement than the national average begs the question: How are they doing it? And what can other schools and districts do to get more kids back in class?**

In order to understand how different attendance management strategies impact chronic absenteeism and overall attendance rates, this report examines a dataset spanning three years of attendance trends for close to one million students from September 2021 to March 2024. Overall, it's clear that traditional reactive, punitive methods of targeting only the most severely absent students have proven ineffective. Instead, districts that use a comprehensive strategy encompassing preventative measures and positive engagement with all families see significant improvement over the national average—every year.

Analyzing data from 118 U.S. school districts by factors such as grade level, ethnicity/race, and district size sheds light on some of the factors impacting attendance in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Pinpointing student populations and areas with the highest need for engagement support, helps districts understand where to focus resources. These insights can support evidence-based strategies to provide proactive, tailored support where it can have the greatest impact on students.

## Student Demographics

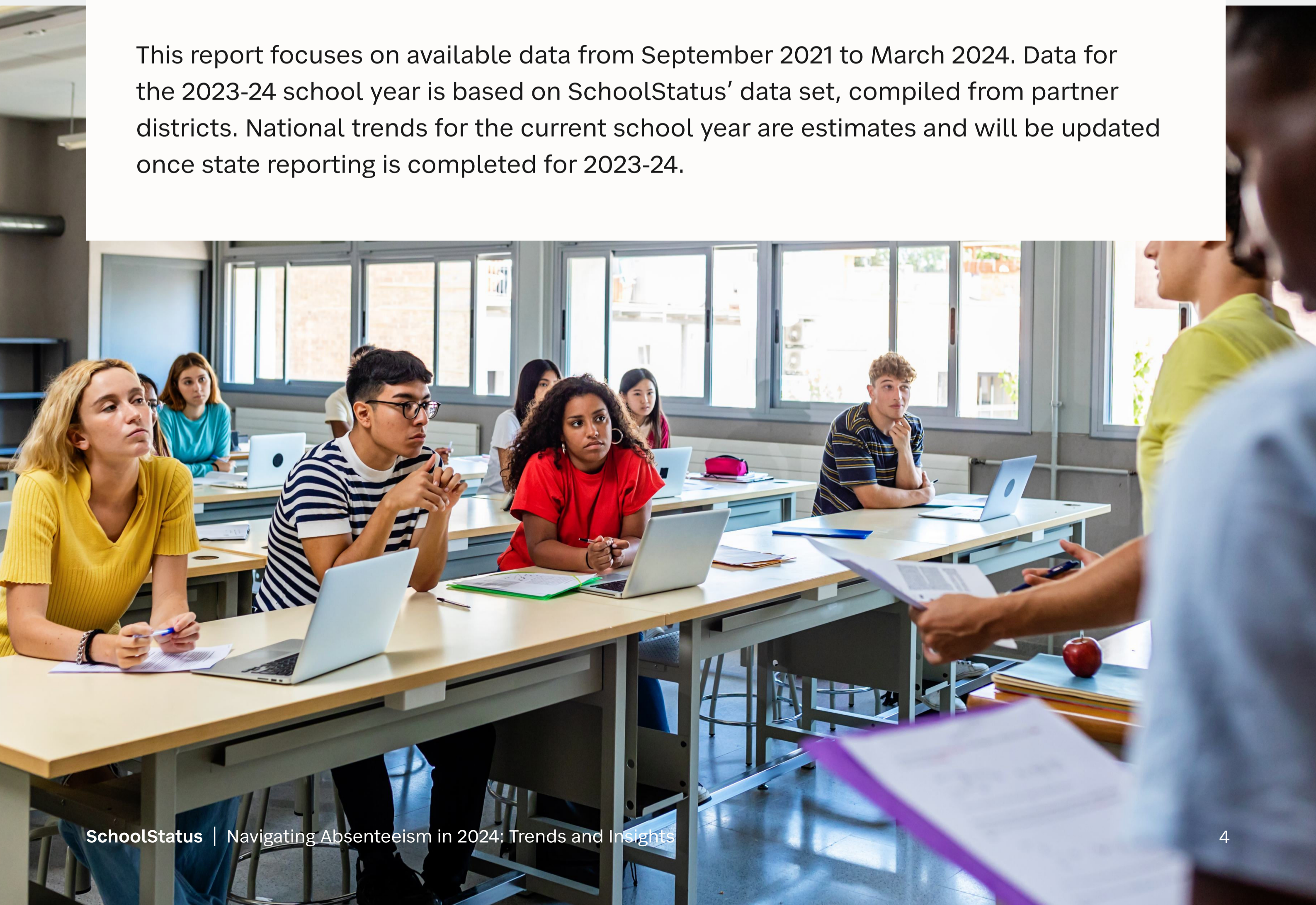


## A Note on Data Sources

In addition to the dataset from SchoolStatus, this report includes national attendance data sourced from [FutureEd](#) and [Return to Learn](#), based on reported numbers from state education departments. This national data is used as a benchmark against which to measure the data set from SchoolStatus, an EdTech company dedicated to tackling chronic absenteeism through a unified approach that leverages data-informed communications, attendance management, and educator development.

When assessing national results, it's important to note that the way absenteeism is measured—and when the results are reported—varies from state to state. For example, national data is publicly available for all 50 states and the District of Columbia for the 2021-2022 school year. For 2022-23, it is available for 40 states and D.C., due to delays in state reporting. Based on the student population of the reporting states, the 2022-23 statistics represent approximately 80% of the nation's student population. Additionally, remote learning made traditional attendance tracking methods challenging, so many states did not share attendance data for the 2019-20 and the 2020-21 school years.

This report focuses on available data from September 2021 to March 2024. Data for the 2023-24 school year is based on SchoolStatus' data set, compiled from partner districts. National trends for the current school year are estimates and will be updated once state reporting is completed for 2023-24.





# Taking a Closer Look at Trends in Attendance & Chronic Absenteeism

Examining the results across 118 districts provides the opportunity to go beyond national or even state averages and look at the specific student groups experiencing the highest disengagement rates. Understanding attendance trends based on race/ethnicity, district size, and grade allows for precision targeting of evidence-based interventions to reignite engagement and accelerate learning recovery where the need is greatest.

This analysis looks at attendance data for the 2021-22, 2022-23, and 2023-24 school years (data for 2023-24 is year-to-date as of March 30th), examining two core metrics:

- 1. Chronic Absenteeism Rate** = Percentage of students missing 10% or more of the school year
- 2. Attendance Rate** = Percentage of students attending versus total instructional days

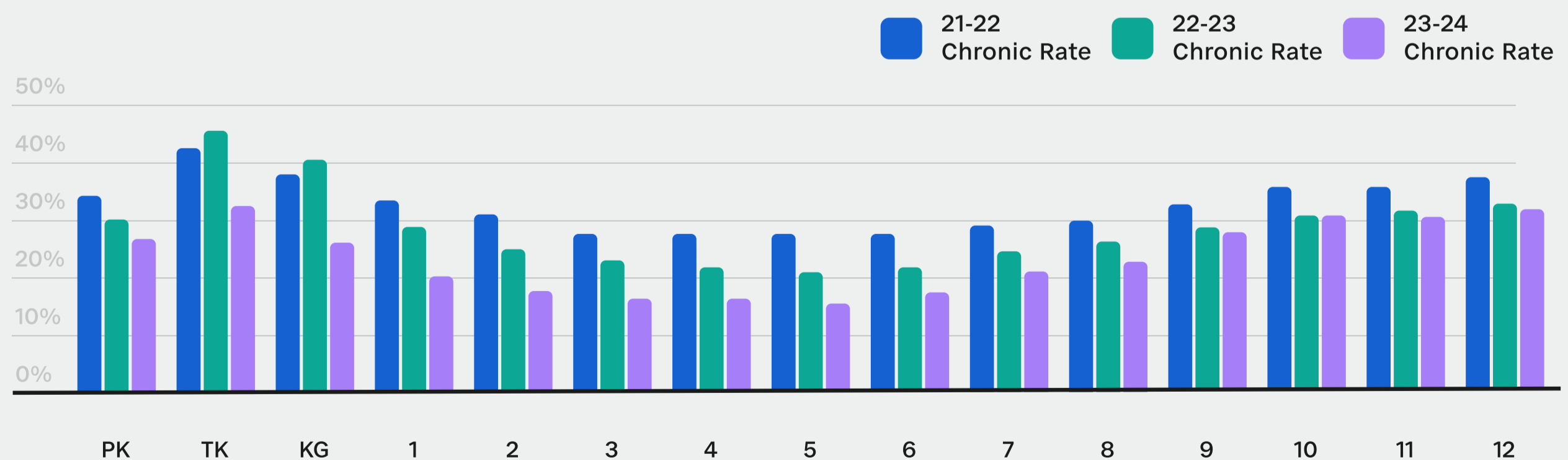
The report shows where chronic absenteeism persists and how much of a difference implementing preventative measures, early interventions, and intensive support systems tailored to the specific needs of students, families, and schools.

# Chronic Absenteeism by Grade Level

Grade	PK	TK	KG	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
2023-24 Enrollment	13,798	15,386	63,005	66,401	69,605	69,437	71,284	71,017	72,179	70,158	70,220	86,975	87,676	85,437	85,429
2023-24 Chronic Rate	26.69%	32.54%	26.04%	20.61%	17.97%	16.51%	16.38%	15.88%	17.54%	21.33%	22.98%	27.74%	30.50%	30.37%	31.84%
2023-24 Attendance Rate	92.41%	91.32%	92.40%	93.39%	93.85%	94.18%	94.20%	94.33%	93.98%	93.12%	92.67%	91.33%	90.62%	90.60%	90.14%

Chronic absenteeism was lowest in the early elementary years, with a rate of 26% in kindergarten that dropped to 16.5% by 3rd grade—a critical year. As research shows, students not reading on grade level by then face higher future dropout risks. Rates increased through the middle school years, with 7th and 8th graders around 22% chronically absent. However, high school presented by far the biggest attendance challenge with 27.74% of 9th graders chronically absent, escalating to 31.84% of 12th graders in the 2023-24 school year.

These widening gaps likely reflect students' progressively waning connectedness and engagement with school as they advance through their academic careers. The high school years present additional hurdles like employment conflicts and general disengagement from the curriculum. It's also fair to assume that by high school, chronically absent students have been struggling academically for years. Families also note having the most trouble accessing teachers in the high school years, making it more difficult for families to support struggling students or to understand the extent and impact of their absenteeism.

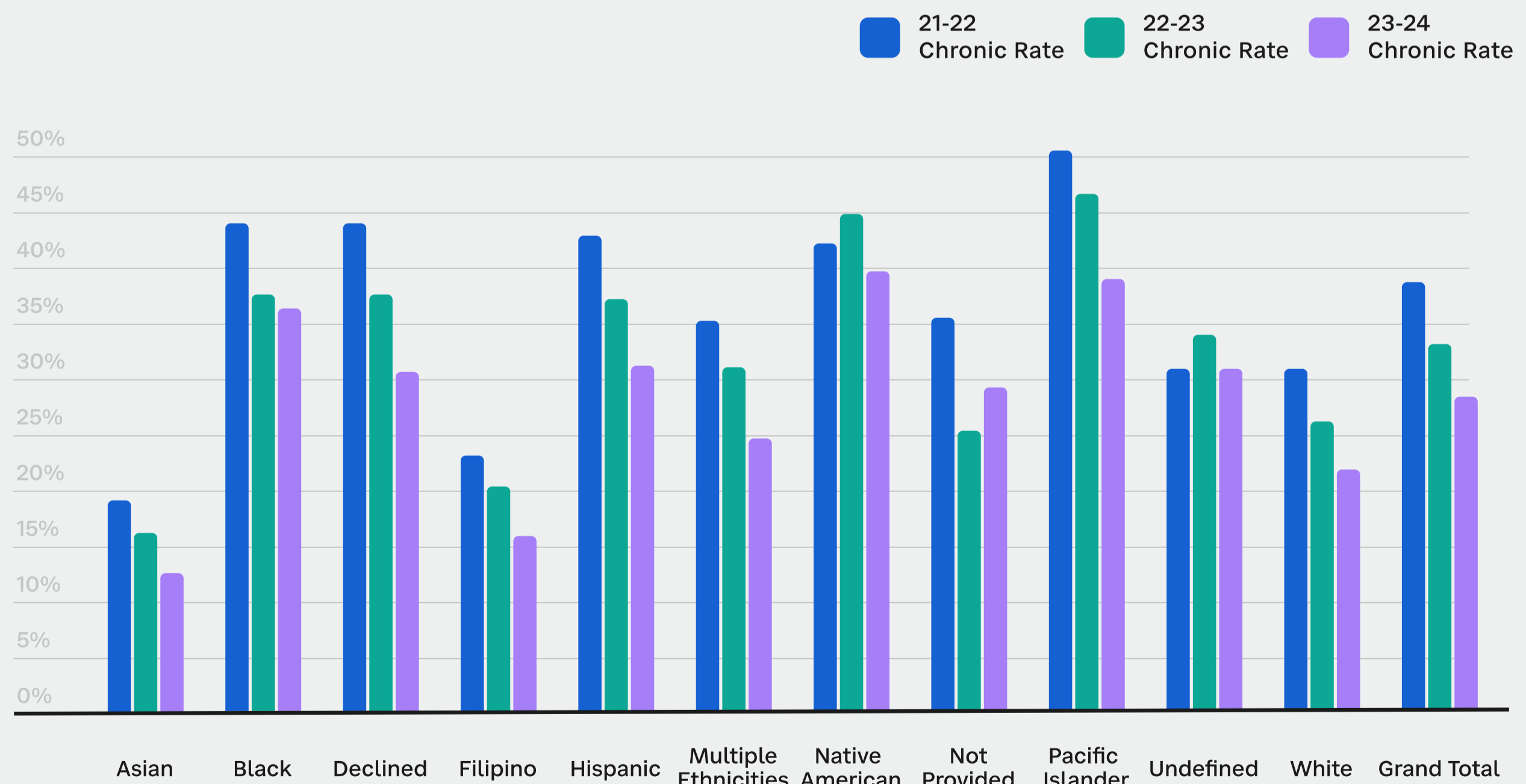


# Chronic Absenteeism by Student Ethnicity

Grade	Asian	Black	Declined	Filipino	Hispanic	Multiple	Native American	Not Provided	Pacific Islander	Undefined	White	Total
2023-24 Enrollment	13,798	80,275	4,971	13,629	594,813	31,251	5,445	1,618	4,755	1,705	196,866	998,007
23-24 Chronic Rate	10.49%	30.10%	25.49%	13.16%	25.72%	20.48%	32.84%	24.23%	32.47%	25.57%	18.36%	23.40%
23-24 Attendance Rate	95.57%	91.15%	92.17%	94.84%	92.00%	93.25%	90.05%	92.41%	90.53%	92.58%	93.49%	92.52%

Examining 2023-24 data by student race/ethnicity reveals some of the most glaring disparities. Students identifying as Black (30.1%), Hispanic/Latinx (25.72%), Native American (32.84%), and Pacific Islander (32.47%) had chronic absenteeism rates of 25% or higher. In contrast, Asian students had a remarkably lower 10.49% chronic absence rate while white students were at 18.36%.

These discrepancies point to the impacts of longstanding systemic inequities, from socioeconomic status to resource gaps to issues like racial discrimination. Students of color disproportionately face obstacles like poverty, housing/food insecurity, lack of community support services, and often experience unwelcoming school environments.

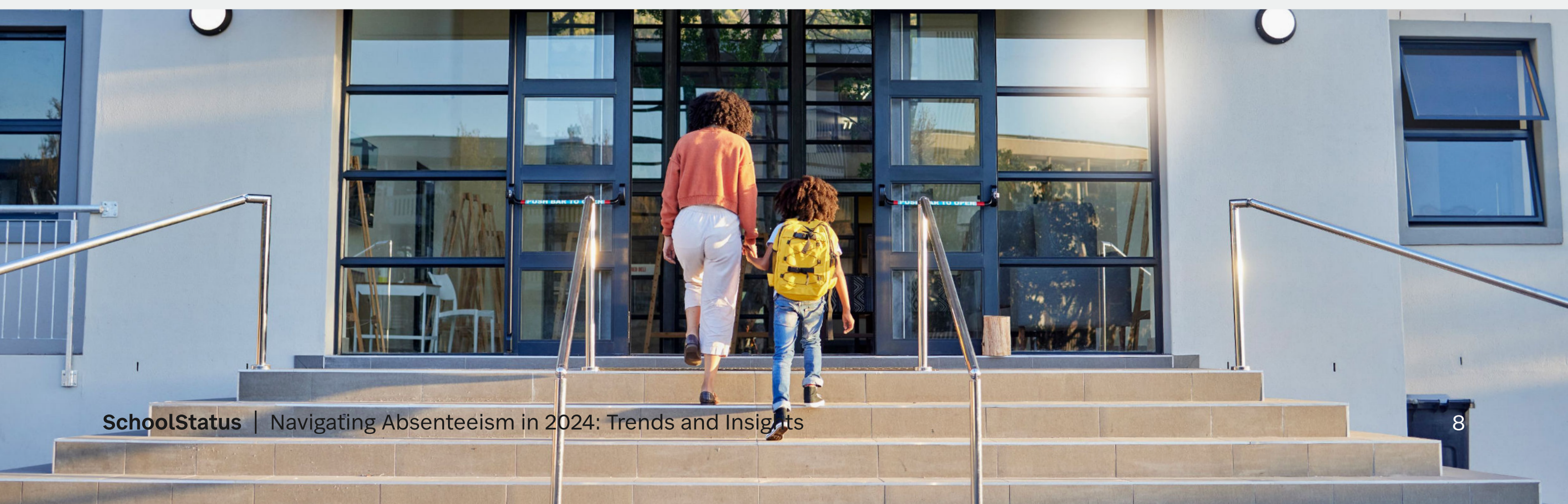


## Chronic Absenteeism & Attendance by District Size

District Size	21-22 Enrollment	22-23 Enrollment	23-24 Enrollment	21-22 Chronic Rate	22-23 Chronic Rate	23-24 Chronic Rate	21-22 Attendance	22-23 Attendance	23-24 Attendance
< 3500	75,414	75,850	75,611	34.47%	27.71%	21.92%	90.53%	91.94%	92.95%
3,500 – 5,000	76,746	75,826	74,800	31.62%	28.07%	22.61%	91.03%	91.89%	92.74%
5,000 – 10,000	205,890	204,054	201,621	31.23%	26.78%	22.44%	91.32%	92.10%	92.88%
10,000 – 20,000	319,131	319,315	322,658	32.11%	27.56%	22.10%	91.13%	92.00%	92.95%
> 20,000	320,996	324,704	323,317	32.12%	28.14%	25.81%	90.64%	91.44%	91.74%
<b>Total</b>	<b>998,177</b>	<b>999,749</b>	<b>998,007</b>	<b>32.07%</b>	<b>27.64%</b>	<b>23.40%</b>	<b>90.96%</b>	<b>91.82%</b>	<b>92.52%</b>

Looking at the improvements in attendance and chronic absenteeism based on district over the course of three years shows that large districts (20K+ students) are struggling to keep up with smaller districts—improving at less than half the rate. While districts of all sizes that implement comprehensive, proactive attendance management strategies are doing significantly better than the national average, smaller districts improved chronic absenteeism rates by 36.39% in three years, while large districts show just under 20% improvement for the same time period.

It's possible that smaller districts are able to be more nimble when implementing policy and procedural changes. If districts have multiple schools facing extreme attendance challenges, it can be difficult to allocate resources to serve each school's needs without a system-wide approach that is supported by all educators and staff. Working with states to identify broader, regional attendance trends and see where the highest rates of chronically absent students are concentrated can help districts understand what factors are specific to their communities versus broader concerns. There may also be an opportunity to learn what's working well for other districts in the state with similar challenges.





# Chronic Absenteeism by State

Source: State-reported data compiled by FutureEd and Return to Learn

State	2021-22	2022-23	Rate Change* 21-22 to 22-23
Alabama	17.90%	17.90%	0.00%
Alaska	48.60%	45%	-7.41%
Arizona	32%	28.10%	-12.19%
Arkansas	27%	Not reported	N/A
California	30%	24.90%	-17.00%
Colorado	35.50%	31.10%	-11.9%
Connecticut	23.70%	20%	-15.61%
Delaware	24.80%	20.80%	-16.13%
District of Columbia	48.10%	43.60%	-9.36%
Florida	32.30%	30.90%	-4.33%
Georgia	24.40%	22.90%	-5.37%
Hawaii	36.90%	30.40%	-17.62%
Idaho	20.60%	17.10%	-16.99%
Illinois	29.80%	28.30%	-5.03%
Indiana	21.10%	19.30%	-8.53%
Iowa	21%	25.60%	+21.90%
Kansas	25.40%	21.80%	-14.17%
Kentucky	Not reported	28.80%	N/A
Louisiana	19.40%	23.30%	+20.10%
Maine	31.50%	27.30%	-13.33%
Maryland	30.90%	29.80%	-3.56%
Massachusetts	27.70%	22.20%	-18.38%
Michigan	38.50%	30.80%	-20.00%
Minnesota	30%	Not reported	N/A
Mississippi	28%	23.90%	-14.64%
Missouri	23.80%	23.40%	-1.68%
Montana	38%	Not reported	N/A

State	2021-22	2022-23	Rate Change* 21-22 to 22-23
Nebraska	23.90%	22.40%	-6.28%
Nevada	36%	34.90%	-3.06%
New Hampshire	34%	Not reported	N/A
New Jersey	18.10%	16.60%	-8.29%
New Mexico	40.40%	39.20%	-2.97%
New York	37.80%	34.10%	-9.79%
North Carolina	31.20%	26.70%	-14.42%
North Dakota	22%	20%	-9.09%
Ohio	30.20%	26.80%	-11.26%
Oklahoma	19.50%	20%	+2.56%
Oregon	36.10%	38.10%	+5.54%
Pennsylvania	26%	22%	-15.38%
Rhode Island	34.10%	28.90%	-15.25%
South Carolina	20.30%	24.70%	+21.67%
South Dakota	22%	21%	-4.55%
Tennessee	20.30%	20.2%	-.49%
Texas	25.70%	Not reported	N/A
Utah	27.20%	25.20%	-7.35%
Vermont	35%	Not reported	N/A
Virginia	20.10%	19.30%	-3.98%
Washington	32.80%	30.30%	-7.62%
West Virginia	29.10%	27.60%	-5.15%
Wisconsin	22.70%	19.50%	-14.10%
Wyoming	37%	Not reported	N/A
<b>National</b>	<b>27.85%</b>	<b>27.07%</b>	<b>-7.22%</b>
<b>Attend Districts</b>	<b>33.2%</b>	<b>25.82%</b>	<b>-22.23%</b>

\*Rate change is the percent change in the number of students, adjusted for enrollment

At the state level, chronic absenteeism ranged widely in both the 2021-22 and the 2022-23 school year. While the majority of districts saw chronic rates decline during that timeframe, a handful experienced ongoing increases in chronic rates, including Oklahoma, Oregon, Louisiana, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Iowa. Seven states have not yet reported 2022-23 attendance numbers.

## Chronic Absenteeism & Attendance by State

While the national average stood at 26.13%, some states had significantly higher rates nearing or exceeding **40%**, including:



On the other end of the spectrum, a handful of states had rates at or below **22%**:



States with the highest rates likely contend with factors such as high proportions of student poverty, rural isolation and resource deficiencies, institutional inequities, and other socioeconomic barriers. The data can help discern which states may require the most intensive interventions and investment.

While chronic absenteeism manifests differently across the K-12 spectrum, ethnicities, and geographies, the common thread is how it **disproportionately impacts marginalized student populations**. Lack of access to resources, economic insecurity, discrimination, and unmet needs amplify the crisis in these vulnerable communities. Understanding where the crisis hits hardest is the first step in marshaling an integrated, systematic response.

# Root Causes of Chronic Absenteeism

While the data clearly quantifies the scale of the chronic absenteeism crisis, it's critical to also examine the complex underlying factors driving these trends. Research across multiple sources, including [Attendance Works](#), [The New York Times](#), [Return to Learn](#), and others, points to an interplay of student/family circumstances, school-based issues, and broader community/systemic barriers.

## Student/Family Factors:

- Economic insecurity and poverty create hurdles like unstable housing, lack of safe transportation, employment, and childcare conflicts that get in the way of consistent attendance
- Physical and mental health challenges, often environmentally-related, such as anxiety and asthma, make it difficult to attend school
- Lack of engagement/disconnection from school due to factors like unmet basic needs, academic struggles with the curriculum, and/or disabilities

## School Factors:

- Harsh disciplinary policies, a punitive approach to absenteeism and truancy, discrimination, or bullying can contribute to a negative school climate that drives students away
- Curriculum and instruction that fails to meaningfully engage students
- Limited resources and inability to identify or support diverse physical, mental, and social-emotional health needs
- High student-to-counselor or student-to-teacher ratios prevent strong student-staff relationships from forming

## Community/Systemic Factors:

- Neighborhood violence, crime, and lack of safety can cause students to avoid transit to/from school
- Lack of coordination and equitable access to community services, agency support, and social safety nets for students and families who need extra support
- Systemic barriers of structural racism, unequal school funding, resource gaps, and discriminatory policies that marginalize certain communities



# Perpetuating Cyclical Disparities

The costs of chronic absenteeism reverberate across multiple dimensions, both short-term and long-term. In the classroom, higher absenteeism directly corresponds to lower academic achievement, skill acquisition, and engagement. SchoolStatus data shows how the highest chronic absence levels in high school correlate with more students falling perilously off-track for graduation.

But the impacts extend far beyond just academic underperformance. Chronically absent students are more likely to drop out of school altogether, vastly diminishing future economic prospects. This perpetuates intergenerational cycles of poverty, unemployment, and increased likelihood of criminal justice system involvement that disproportionately impact marginalized communities.

Student populations from historically marginalized racial or ethnic groups, students in communities with high poverty levels, and students in geographic areas with resource deficiencies are affected most acutely. Chronic absenteeism both results from and contributes to systemic inequities that yield opportunity gaps, and compromised community health/safety nets. Economically, this crisis burdens the future workforce with gaps in skills and educational attainment that impact national GDP.

Reversing these trends requires systematically addressing the roots of chronic absenteeism through strong prevention and intervention frameworks. With data to pinpoint the vulnerability factors, stakeholders can focus their efforts.

# Comprehensive Attendance Intervention Strategies

Reversing chronic absenteeism requires a comprehensive, multi-tiered approach that addresses the root causes through prevention, early intervention, and intensive support. Critical elements of an effective district-wide attendance intervention model include the following.

## Universal Prevention & Engagement

- Proactive, positive messaging and education to all families to build trust and connections
- Fostering an engaging, welcoming school climate and offering a culturally relevant curriculum
- Recognizing good attendance with reinforcements and incentives directly to students

## Early Warning Systems & Targeted Outreach

- Robust data systems to identify attendance issues early through monitoring
- Tailored communications and personalized outreach to students/families based on risk levels
- Offering mentorship programs to build stronger student-staff relationships

## Intensive Supports & Service Coordination

- Coordinating wraparound services like counseling, health services, housing/transportation aid
- Implementing restorative practices and trauma-informed care
- Creating a multi-disciplinary community response team with agencies, providers, and schools
- Policy interventions to allocate equitable funding and resources to high-needs schools

Effective implementation requires a systems-level approach with clear processes, multi-tiered frameworks, consistent accountability across all schools, and robust data infrastructure. The impact of such a strategy can be apparent in one semester—and continues to grow over time.

# What You Can Do: Data-Driven Proactive Engagement

The effects of the nationwide chronic absenteeism crisis undermine not only academic achievement today but rob students of future economic opportunity and communities of thriving prosperous futures. Reversing these trends requires an urgent, coordinated, and sustained commitment on universal, targeted, and intensive fronts.

With robust data insights to pinpoint which students, grade levels, and schools are most impacted, stakeholders can strategically deploy evidence-based interventions and allocate resources most effectively. Schools and districts have the power to get ahead of attendance issues through proactive, personalized engagement and support rather than just reactive punitive measures.

## A Data-Driven Solution

The SchoolStatus dataset demonstrates the impact and importance of taking a proactive, data-driven, and equity-based approach. Our analysis shows that students receiving personal attendance communications had a significant increase in attendance compared to those just getting standard district letters. In addition, by taking a universal prevention approach and sending positive messaging to all families, up to 75% of staff time can be freed up from just notification tasks.

By implementing SchoolStatus Attend's comprehensive attendance intervention system, districts saw an immediate reduction in chronic absence rates across all grade bands after the first batch of messaging and support rollout. Having access to district-wide dashboards allows schools to identify concerning trends quickly, such as a 30.1% chronic absenteeism rate among Black students in 2022-23. Detailed data visualization also helps users identify intersecting root causes and make informed decisions to target evidence-based interventions for specific student populations.

# Outpacing National Averages

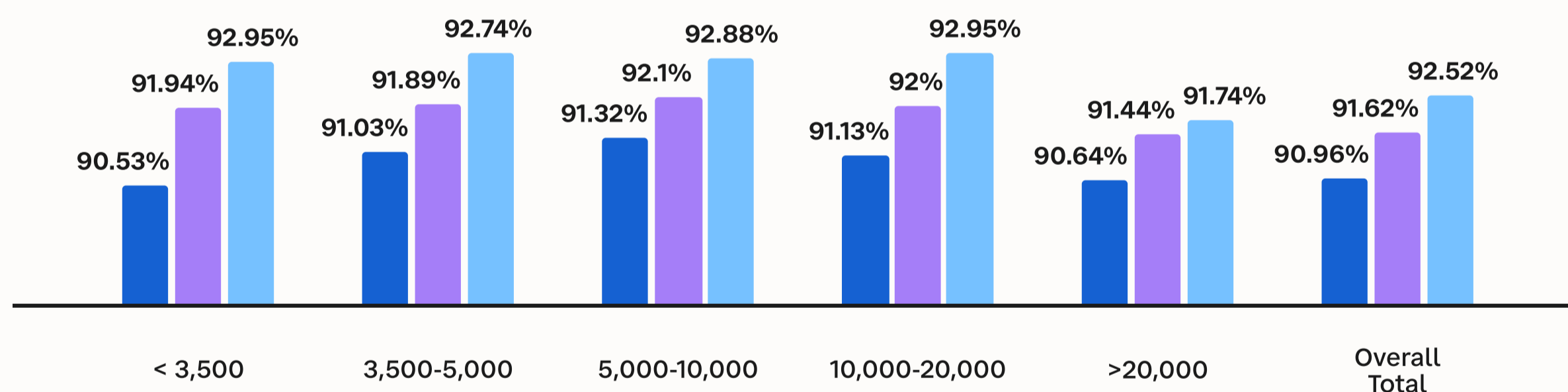
Looking at SchoolStatus partner districts compared with national and state averages reveals a drastic difference in chronic absenteeism improvement. While chronic absence rates only improved 8.54% nationally from 2021-22 to 2022-23, districts powered by SchoolStatus's data-driven systems approach saw a remarkable 22.23% improvement.

	2021-22 Chronic Rate	2022-23 Chronic Rate	Rate Change* 21-22 to 22-23
Attend Districts	33.20%	25.82%	-22.23%
National Average	28.57%	26.13%	-8.54%

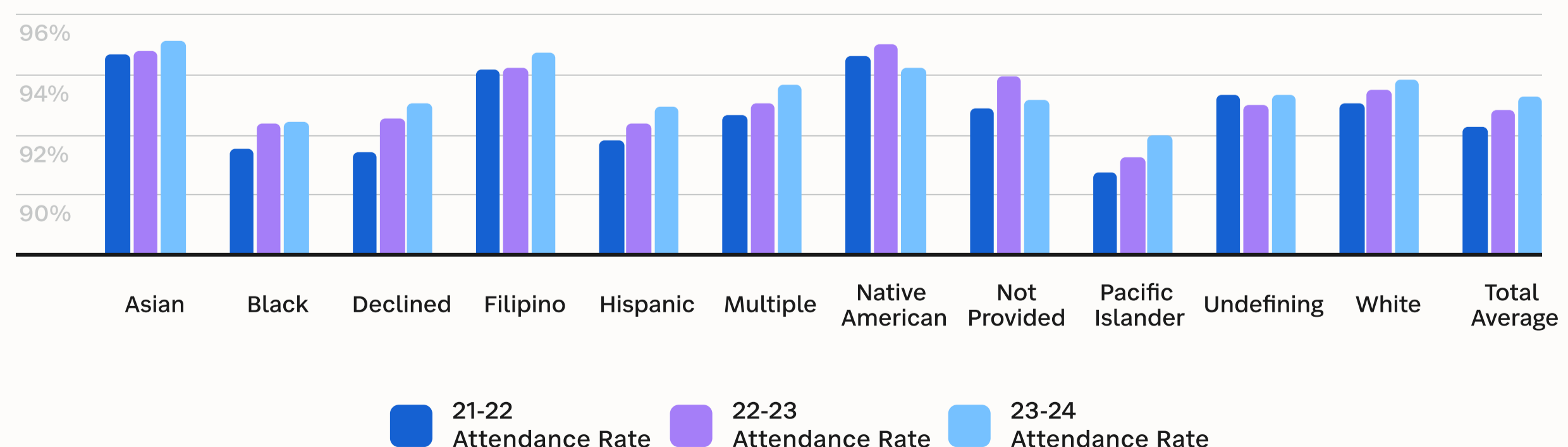
This impact was evident across district sizes, with SchoolStatus Attend partner districts reducing chronic absence by between 19.63% and 36.39% between 2021-22 and 2023-24. That means that an average of 17,000 students for every one million are back in class.

The results also demonstrate SchoolStatus Attend's ability to drive positive change for chronically underserved student groups. For example, Hispanic students in partner districts saw their chronic absenteeism rate drop by 16.68%, double the 8.54% national improvement rate.

## Attendance Rates by District Size



## Attendance Rates by Ethnicity



By combining robust data monitoring with targeted and intensive attendance support, SchoolStatus Attend enables districts to reverse crisis-level chronic absenteeism through a comprehensive, equity-focused approach. With purposeful interventions and easily visualized metrics to measure program success, stakeholders can strategically reinvest in student success and community prosperity.



While no single solution can instantly reverse the crisis, the SchoolStatus data validates that **adopting an integrated system of monitoring, personalized interventions, positive engagement, and policy enablement can dramatically improve outcomes.** Every student is entitled to the fundamental opportunity of attending school consistently and receiving a quality education.

Let's match the urgency of this crisis with the sustained action vital to unlocking every child's potential and progress, for them and for all of us.

## About SchoolStatus

SchoolStatus Attend supports the fight against chronic absenteeism by combining data-driven targeted interventions with inclusive, ongoing communication to families. Book a personalized demo to learn how SchoolStatus can help your district get students back in the classroom.

[Book a Demo](#)