School Attendance Pre- and Post-COVID

Changes in attendance among 9th–11th graders

OCID

Data Brief
August 2026

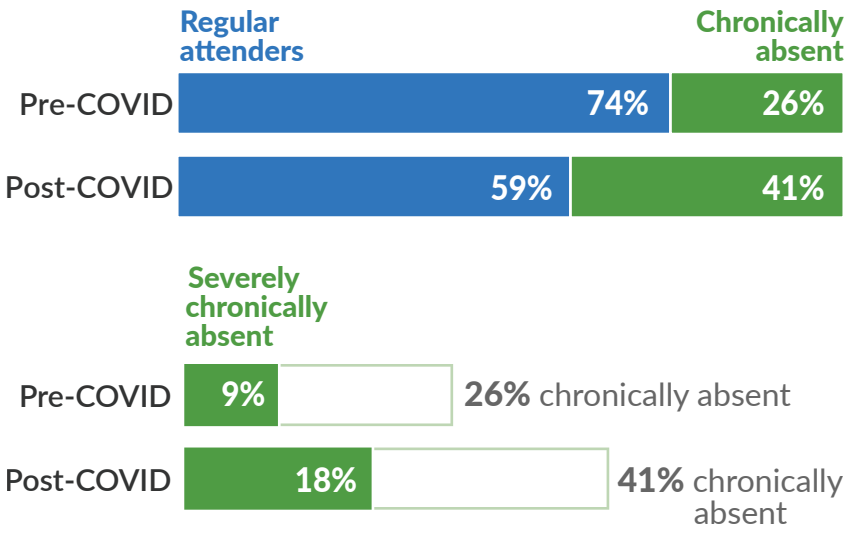
Nationwide, school attendance dropped sharply after the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Chronic absenteeism in grades K–12 is associated with reduced academic performance and worse health and economic outcomes in adulthood. Although the decrease in regular attendance has occurred nationwide, the trend is particularly pronounced in Oregon, where over a third (34%) of all students were chronically absent in the 2023–2024 school year (ODE Attendance and Absenteeism). This brief highlights differences in attendance for high schoolers in Oregon before and after the pandemic.

How has attendance among Oregon 9th–11th graders changed since the COVID pandemic?

In the 2023–2024 school year, 59% of Oregon's 9th–11th graders regularly attended school, representing a 15-percentage-point drop from the 2018–2019 school year (74%). Rates of chronic absenteeism increased from 26% in 2018–2019 to 41% in 2023–2024. Additionally, the percentage of students identified as severely chronically absent doubled over this period (from 9% to 18%).

Historically, absenteeism is higher among high school students than for students in most other grades. This analysis focuses on attendance among public school students in grades 9–11. Students in grade 12 are not included due to incomplete data for the 2018–2019 school year.

Figure 1. Changes in regular attendance and absenteeism pre- and post-COVID



Analysis Definitions

Pre-COVID: 2018–2019 school year
Post-COVID: 2023–2024 school year

Attendance Definitions

Regular attender:
Attending more than 90% of instructional days within a school year

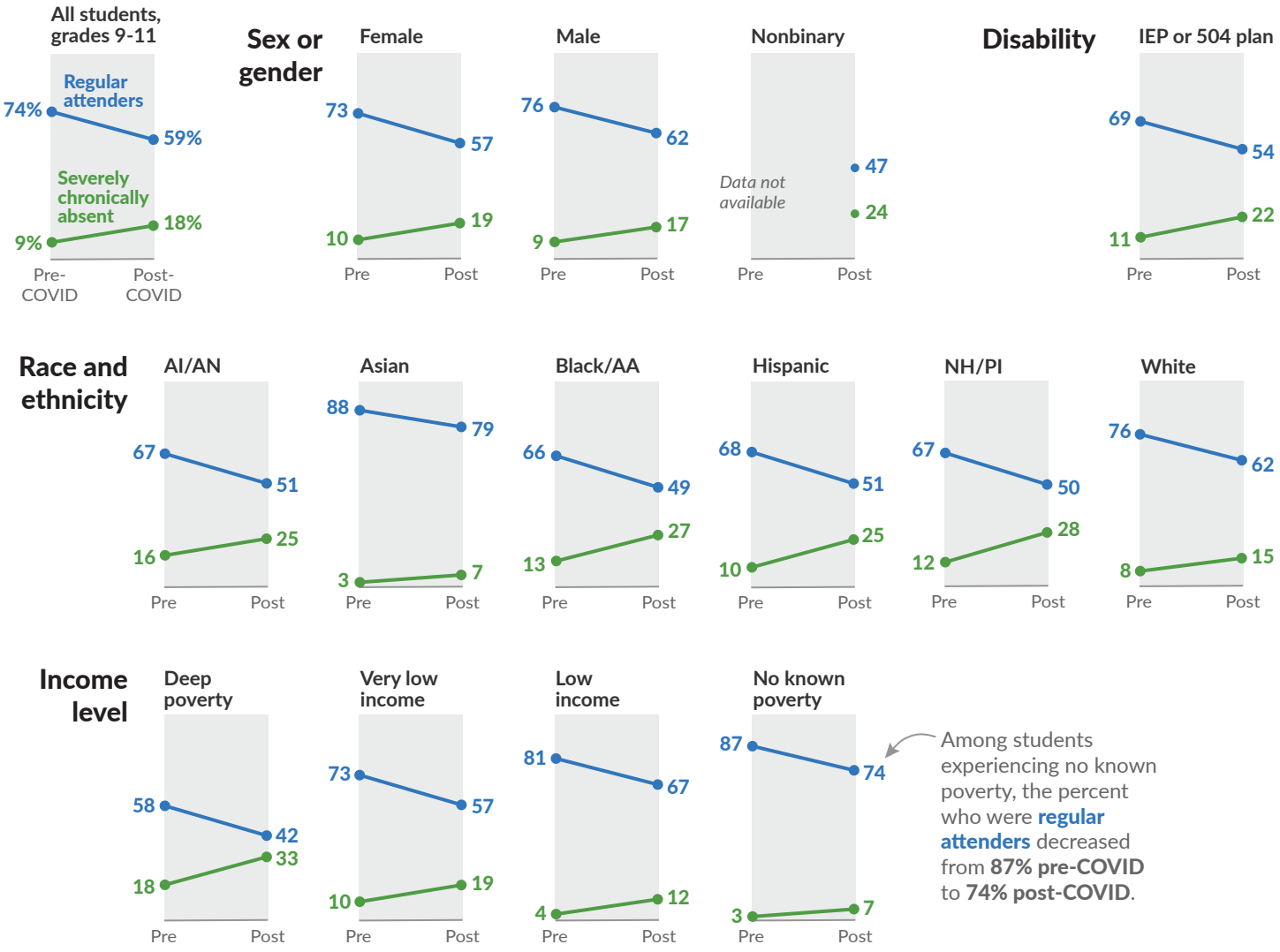
Chronically absent:
Attending 90% or fewer instructional days within a school year

Severely chronically absent:
Attending 80% or fewer instructional days within a school year

Which student groups experienced the largest changes in school attendance?

Figure 2 displays changes in regular attendance and severe chronic absenteeism rates by student demographics. Regular attendance rates dropped and severe chronic absenteeism rates increased across all demographic groups following the COVID pandemic. Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic, and Black/African American students, and students experiencing deep poverty saw the largest drops in regular attendance and increases in severe chronic absenteeism.

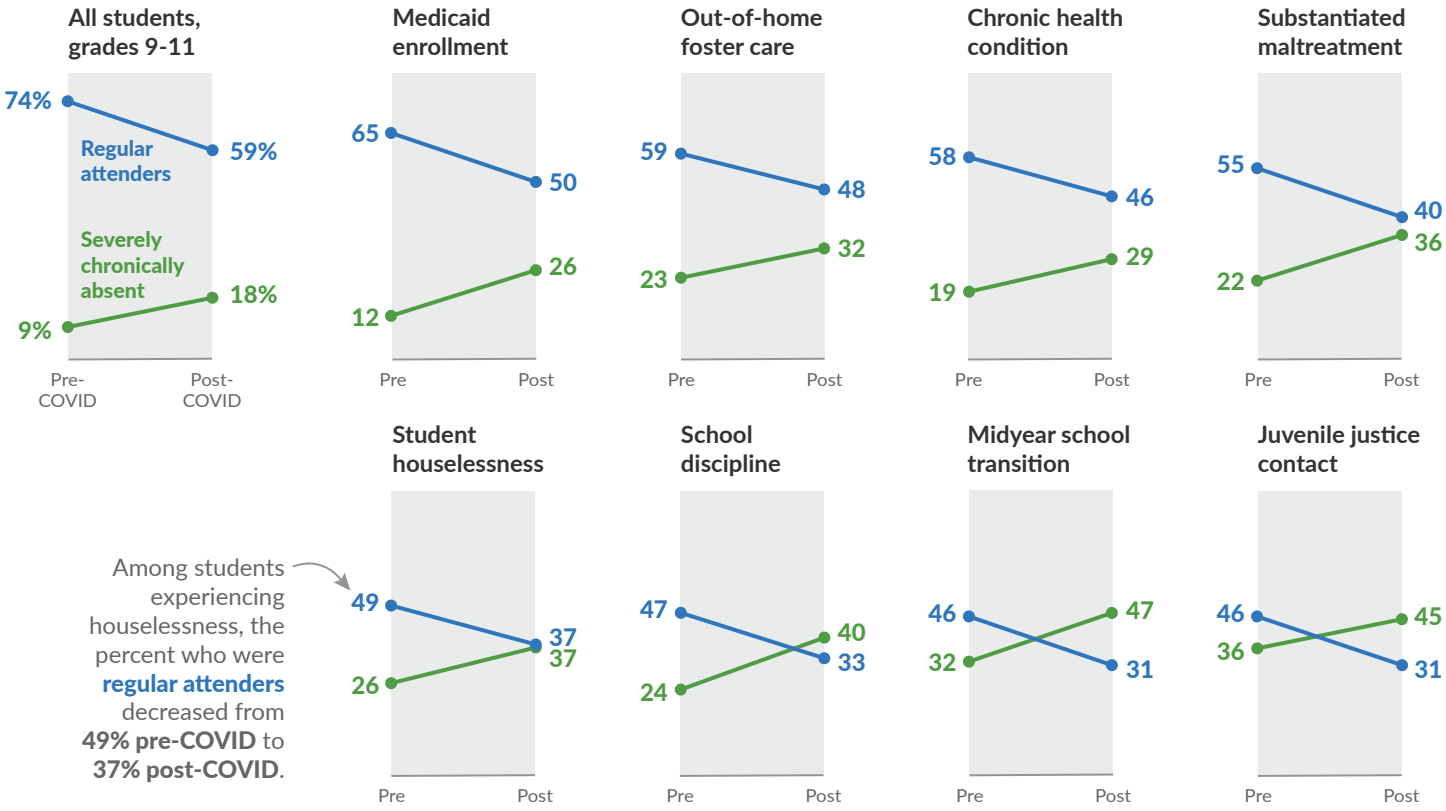
Figure 2. Changes in school attendance by student demographic groups



Note. Student demographics and experiences represent identified categories and exposures within the 2018–2019 (pre-COVID) and 2023–2024 (post-COVID) school years. Race and Ethnicity is determined using OCID's race and ethnicity methodology. OCID does not receive income data and instead uses program enrollment as a proxy for family income. This data may not fully capture a household's economic situation.
Definitions. Deep poverty: Ever enrolled in Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Very low income: Ever enrolled in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and never enrolled in TANF. Low income: Ever enrolled in Medicaid or Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) but never enrolled in TANF or SNAP. No known poverty: No record of enrollment in TANF, SNAP, or Medicaid or CHIP.
Abbreviations. AA: African American; AI: American Indian; AN: Alaskan Native; IEP: Individual Education Program; NH: Native Hawaiian; PI: Pacific Islander.

Figure 3 shows the changes in regular attendance and severe chronic absenteeism rates by program participation (i.e., Medicaid, foster care) or exposure to specific events (i.e., student houselessness, substantiated maltreatment). Regular attendance rates dropped and severe chronic absenteeism rates increased across all experiences following the COVID pandemic. In the 2023–2024 school year, students in 3 experience groups—those with midyear school transitions, school discipline, and juvenile justice contact—were more likely to be severely chronically absent than to regularly attend school.

Figure 3. Changes in school attendance by student experiences



Note. Student experiences represent exposures within the 2018–2019 (pre-COVID) and the 2023–2024 (post-COVID) school years.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON SCHOOL ATTENDANCE IN OREGON

OCID

- OCID Child Well-being Dashboard: Regular Attendance
- Class of 2020 Severe Chronic Absenteeism Spotlight
- Class of 2020 Foundational Analyses and Interactive Visualizations

Oregon Department of Education

- Attendance and Absenteeism Overview
- Attendance and Absenteeism Data
- School and District Profiles and Reports