

2023 Semester 1 student attendance fact sheet



Introduction

This fact sheet provides an overview of student attendance in NSW Government schools from Kindergarten to Year 12 in Semester 1 2023. It contains information on different cohorts of students, including observations on student attendance by multiple education levels, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status and geolocations.

There are 2 different measures of student attendance: attendance rate and attendance level. The **attendance rate** is the percentage of days students attended school, compared to student enrolled days. The **attendance level** is the proportion of students attending 90% or more of the time. This measure was introduced in 2018 and is more variable than the attendance rate as it is binary (that is, a student attending less than 90% of the time **or** a student attending 90% or more of the time). For most students, their attendance rate is concentrated around 90%. Therefore, a small shift in their attendance will likely mean changes in their attendance position to below / at or above the 90% threshold, resulting in a larger variation in the attendance level.

The attendance rates and levels in this fact sheet are different to the nationally published My School figures due to the inclusion of Kindergarten, Year 11 and Year 12 students. The attendance calculation methodology was revised in 2020 to align with the third edition of ACARA's 'National standards for student attendance data and reporting', differing to the target calculation methodology developed in 2018. The nationally published My School figures include data for students in Year 1 to Year 10.

While there were no COVID-19 lockdowns or learning from home periods in Semester 1 2023, the prevalence of COVID-19 and general illness in the community continued to cause large variability in attendance data. All students, staff and visitors were encouraged to remain at home if unwell, and only attend school when symptom-free. Absence reasons are analysed in this fact sheet to explain increases in student attendance. In this fact sheet, student attendance data for 2020 is excluded due to the impact of COVID-19.

Please refer to [Effects of COVID-19 on attendance during Semester 1 2020](#) for more information.

Summary of attendance

The overall attendance rate for NSW Government schools increased by 2.8 percentage points (from 85.0% in 2022 to 87.8% in 2023). The primary attendance rate increased by 3.2 percentage points (from 87.3% in 2022 to 90.5% in 2023) and the secondary attendance rate increased by 2.2 percentage points (from 81.6% to 83.8%) for the same period.

The increase in the attendance rate from 2022 to 2023 was similar in both primary education sub-levels: 3.1 percentage points for Kindergarten to Year 2 (from 87.7% to 90.8%) and 3.3 percentage points for Year 3 to Year 6 (from 87.0% to 90.3%).

At the secondary education sub-levels, the Year 7 to Year 10 attendance rate increased by 2.3 percentage points (from 81.6% in 2022 to 83.9% in 2023), slightly greater than the increase in Year 11 and Year 12 of 1.8 percentage points (from 81.6% to 83.4%) for the same period.

In 2023, primary Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander student attendance rates experienced a 4.0 percentage point increase from the previous year (from 81.3% in 2022 to 85.3% in 2023). This was slightly higher than the 3.2 percentage point increase in attendance rates for non-Aboriginal primary students (from 87.9% in 2022 to 91.1% in 2023). Additionally, secondary Aboriginal student attendance rates experienced a 2.2 percentage point increase (67.4% in 2022 to 69.6% in 2023), mirroring the 2.3 percentage point rise observed in non-Aboriginal student attendance rates (83.0% in 2022 to 85.3% in 2023).

Figure 1: Semester 1 2019 to 2023 attendance rate (%) by education level

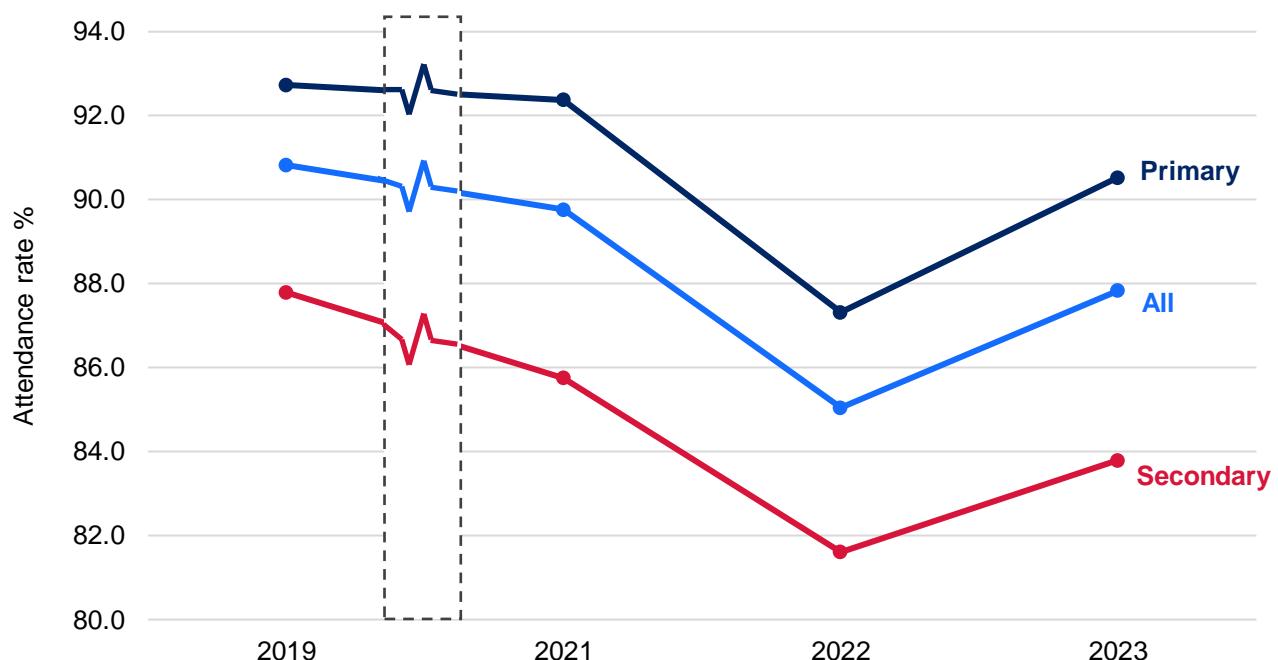
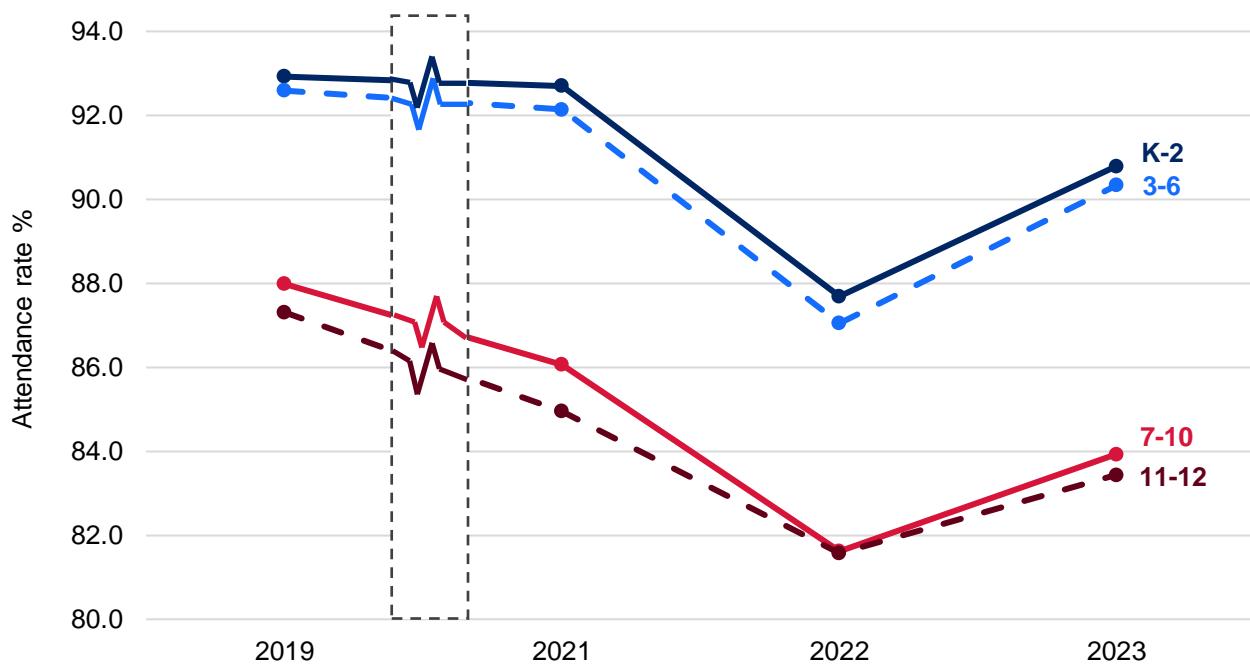


Figure 2: Semester 1 2019 to 2023 attendance rate (%) by education sub-level



The proportion of students attending 90% or more of the time (attendance level) increased significantly after reaching a historic low in 2022. The overall attendance level increased by 15.0 percentage points (from 44.6% in 2022 to 59.6% in 2023). By education levels, the primary attendance level increased by 17.7 percentage points (from 49.0% to 66.7%), and the secondary attendance level increased by 11.1 percentage points (from 37.8% to 48.9%).

In both primary education sub-levels, the increase was similar. Kindergarten to Year 2 had an increase of 17.3 percentage points (from 50.7% to 68.0%), and Year 3 to Year 6 increased by 18.0 percentage points (from 47.8% to 65.8%).

By secondary education sub-levels, the Year 7 to Year 10 attendance level increased by 11.8 percentage points (from 36.4% to 48.2%), higher than the increase for Year 11 and Year 12 of 9.5 percentage points (from 41.2% to 50.7%). For the second consecutive year, the attendance level of Year 7 to Year 10 (in 2023) was below the Year 11 and Year 12 attendance level.

In 2023, primary Aboriginal student attendance levels experienced a 16.6 percentage point increase from the previous year (from 31.2% in 2022 to 47.8% in 2023). The attendance level for non-Aboriginal primary students experienced a 17.9 percentage point increase (from 50.8% in 2022 to 68.7% in 2023). Additionally, secondary Aboriginal student attendance levels experienced a 7.4 percentage point increase (from 16.9% in 2022 to 24.3% in 2023). This growth was comparatively lower than the 11.7 percentage point increase observed in non-Aboriginal secondary student attendance levels (from 39.8% in 2022 to 51.5% in 2023).

Table 1: Semester 1 2022 and 2023 attendance rate and attendance level by education level and sub-level (all students)

Education level	Attendance rate (%)			Attendance level (%)		
	2022	2023	Change	2022	2023	Change
K-2	87.7	90.8	3.1	50.7	68.0	17.3
3-6	87.0	90.3	3.3	47.8	65.8	18.0
Primary	87.3	90.5	3.2	49.0	66.7	17.7
7-10	81.6	83.9	2.3	36.4	48.2	11.8
11-12	81.6	83.4	1.8	41.2	50.7	9.5
Secondary	81.6	83.8	2.2	37.8	48.9	11.1
All	85.0	87.8	2.8	44.6	59.6	15.0

Figure 3: Semester 1 2019 to 2023 attendance level (%) by education level

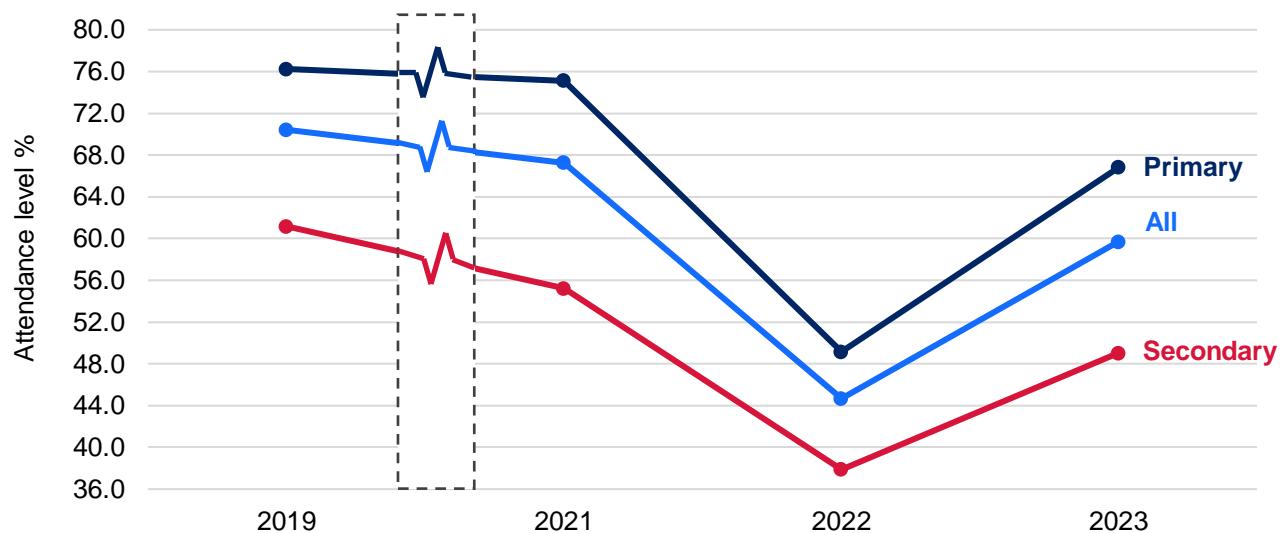
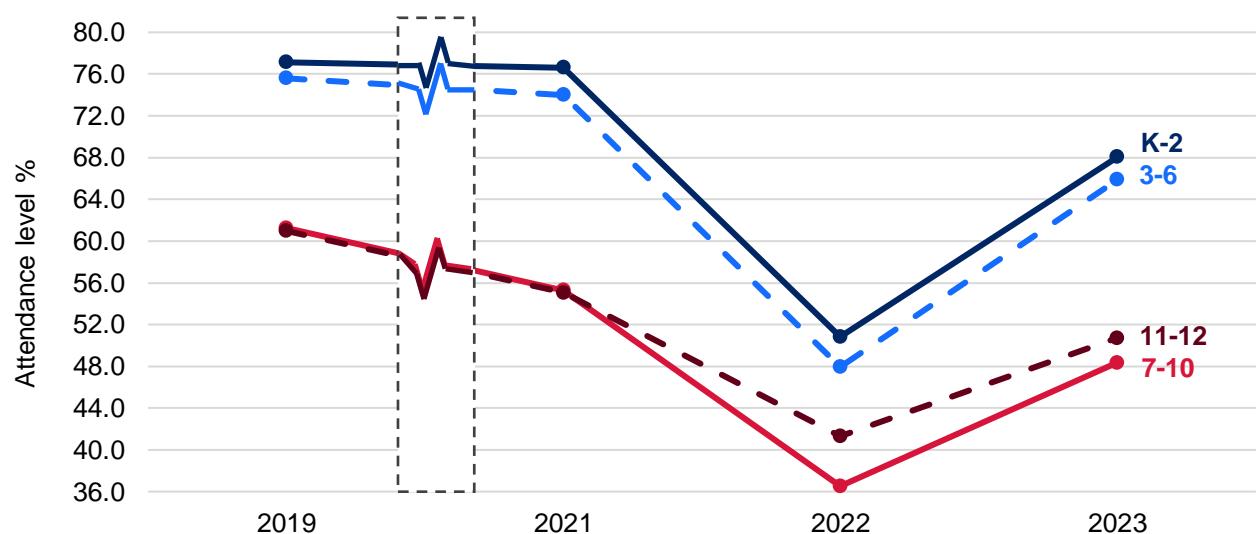


Figure 4: Semester 1 2019 to 2023 attendance level (%) by education sub-level



Attendance by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status

The overall attendance rate for Aboriginal students increased by 3.4 percentage points (from 75.7% in 2022 to 79.1% in 2023). A slightly larger increase was present in the Aboriginal primary student attendance rate, which increased by 4.0 percentage points (from 81.3% to 85.3%), than the Aboriginal secondary student attendance rate which increased by 2.2 percentage points (from 67.4% to 69.6%).

The proportion of Aboriginal students attending 90% or more of the time in Semester 1 2023 increased by 13.1 percentage points (from 25.4% to 38.5%). For Aboriginal primary students, the increase in the attendance level was 16.6 percentage points (from 31.2% to 47.8%), while the increase was significantly smaller for Aboriginal secondary students at 7.4 percentage points (from 16.9% to 24.3%).

At the primary education sub-levels, the increases in the attendance levels for Aboriginal primary students were comparable: a 17.0 percentage point increase (from 32.7% to 49.7%) for Kindergarten to Year 2, and a 16.4 percentage point increase (from 30.1% to 46.5%) for Year 3 to Year 6.

There was a wider difference in the increases of the attendance levels at the Aboriginal secondary student sub-levels. The Year 7 to Year 10 attendance level increased by 7.7 percentage points (from 16.6% to 24.3%), which was larger than the 6.7 percentage point increase in Year 11 and Year 12 (from 17.7% to 24.4%). While the increase between the secondary sub-levels was noticeable, the overall attendance levels for Year 7 to Year 10 and Year 11 to Year 12 were similar in Semester 1 2023 (24.3% and 24.4% respectively).

Table 2: Semester 1 2022 and 2023 attendance rate and attendance level by education level and sub-level, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students

Education level	Attendance rate (%)			Attendance level (%)		
	2022	2023	Change	2022	2023	Change
K-2	82.0	85.9	3.9	32.7	49.7	17.0
3-6	80.8	84.9	4.1	30.1	46.5	16.4
Primary	81.3	85.3	4.0	31.2	47.8	16.6
7-10	68.3	70.6	2.3	16.6	24.3	7.7
11-12	64.3	66.0	1.7	17.7	24.4	6.7
Secondary	67.4	69.6	2.2	16.9	24.3	7.4
All	75.7	79.1	3.4	25.4	38.5	13.1

Figure 5: Semester 1 2022 and 2023 attendance rate by education sub-level, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students

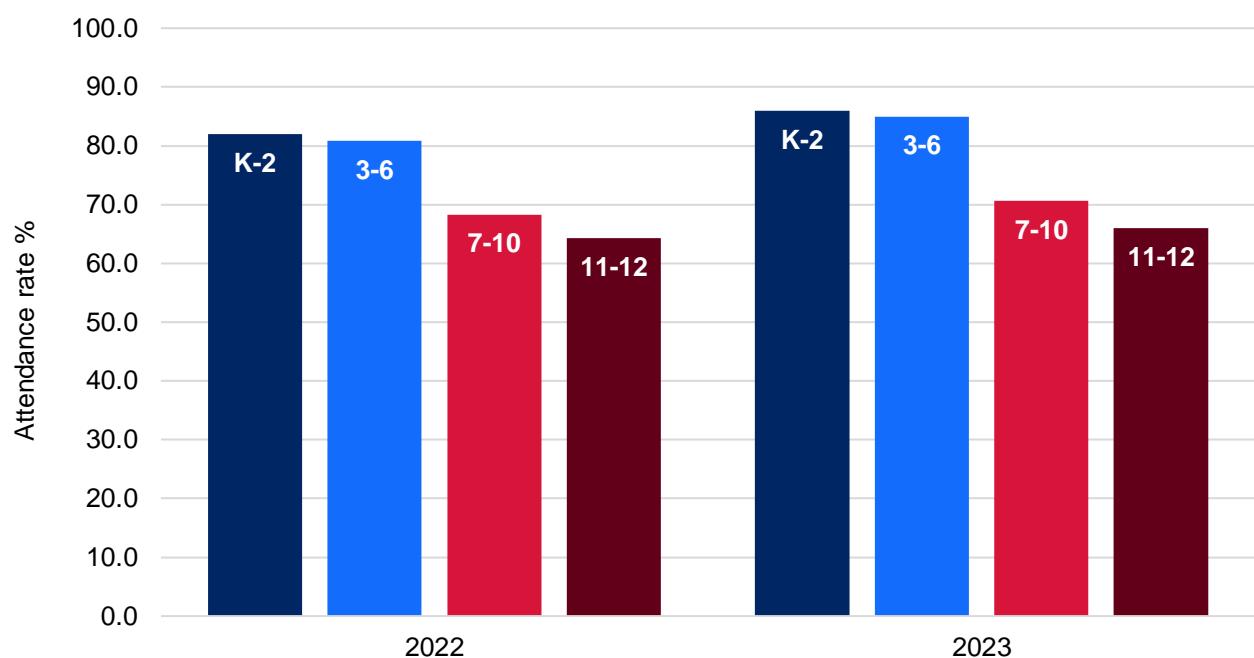
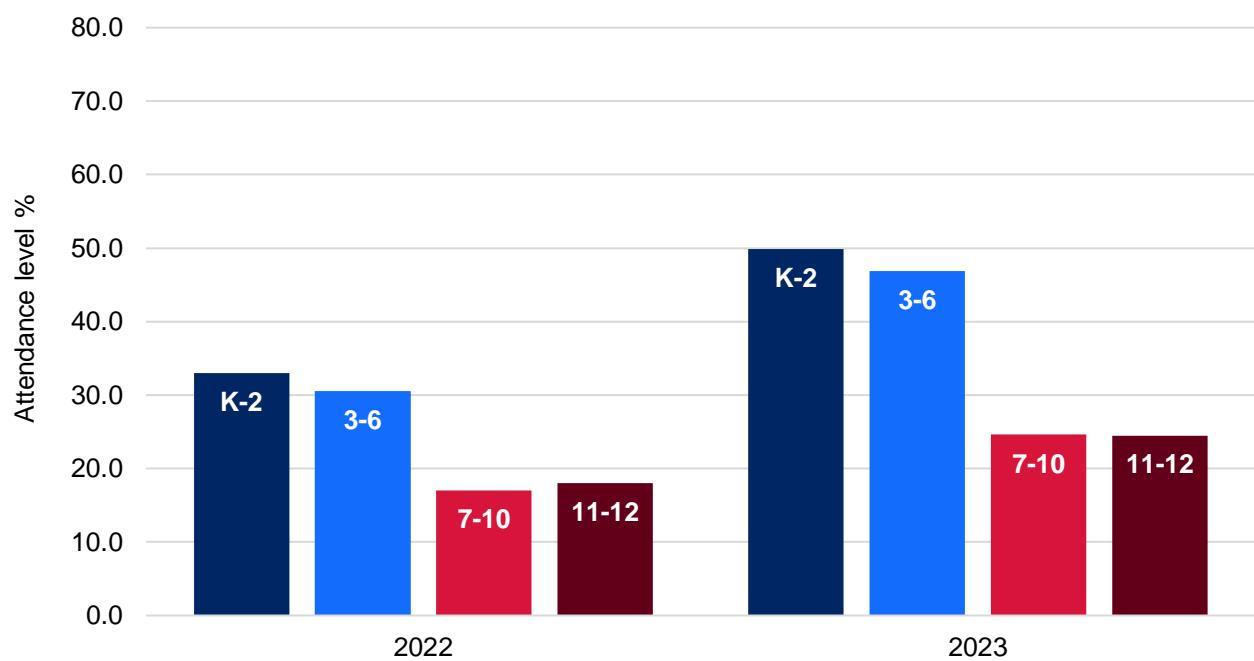


Figure 6: Semester 1 2022 and 2023 attendance level by education sub-level, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students



The overall attendance rate for non-Aboriginal students increased by 2.7 percentage points (from 86.0% in 2022 to 88.7% in 2023). For non-Aboriginal primary students, the attendance rate increased by 3.2 percentage points (from 87.9% to 91.1%), compared to an increase of 2.3 percentage points (from 83.0% to 85.3%) for non-Aboriginal secondary students.

At the primary education sub-level for non-Aboriginal students, both groups saw similar increases – from 88.3% to 91.3% (3 percentage points) for Kindergarten to Year 2, and from 87.6% to 90.9% (3.3 percentage points) for Year 3 to Year 6. However, at the secondary education sub-level, the attendance rate for Year 7 to Year 10 students increased by 2.3 percentage points (from 83.1% to 85.4%). This is larger than the 1.9 percentage point increase (from 82.9% to 84.8%) for Year 11 and Year 12 students.

For the proportion of non-Aboriginal students attending 90% or more of the time, Kindergarten to Year 2 students saw an increase of 17.4 percentage points (from 52.5% to 69.9%) and the increase in Year 3 to Year 6 was 18.3 percentage points (from 49.5% to 67.8%), reflecting an overall increase of 17.9 percentage points for non-Aboriginal primary students (from 50.8% to 68.7%). For non-Aboriginal secondary students, the overall increase was 11.7 percentage points (from 39.8% to 51.5%).

Year 7 to Year 10 students showed a larger increase of 12.3 percentage points (from 38.6% to 50.9%) compared to Year 11 and Year 12 students, with an increase of 9.7 percentage points (from 43.0% to 52.7%). This positioned the attendance level of Year 7 to Year 10 lower than Year 11 and Year 12 in Semester 1 2023 for the second year in a row.

Table 3: Semester 1 2022 and 2023 attendance rate and attendance level by education level and sub-level, non-Aboriginal students

Education level	Attendance rate (%)			Attendance level (%)		
	2022	2023	Change	2022	2023	Change
K-2	88.3	91.3	3.0	52.5	69.9	17.4
3-6	87.6	90.9	3.3	49.5	67.8	18.3
Primary	87.9	91.1	3.2	50.8	68.7	17.9
7-10	83.1	85.4	2.3	38.6	50.9	12.3
11-12	82.9	84.8	1.9	43.0	52.7	9.7
Secondary	83.0	85.3	2.3	39.8	51.5	11.7
All	86.0	88.7	2.7	46.4	61.8	15.4

Figure 7: Semester 1 2022 and 2023 attendance rate (%) by education sub-level, non-Aboriginal students

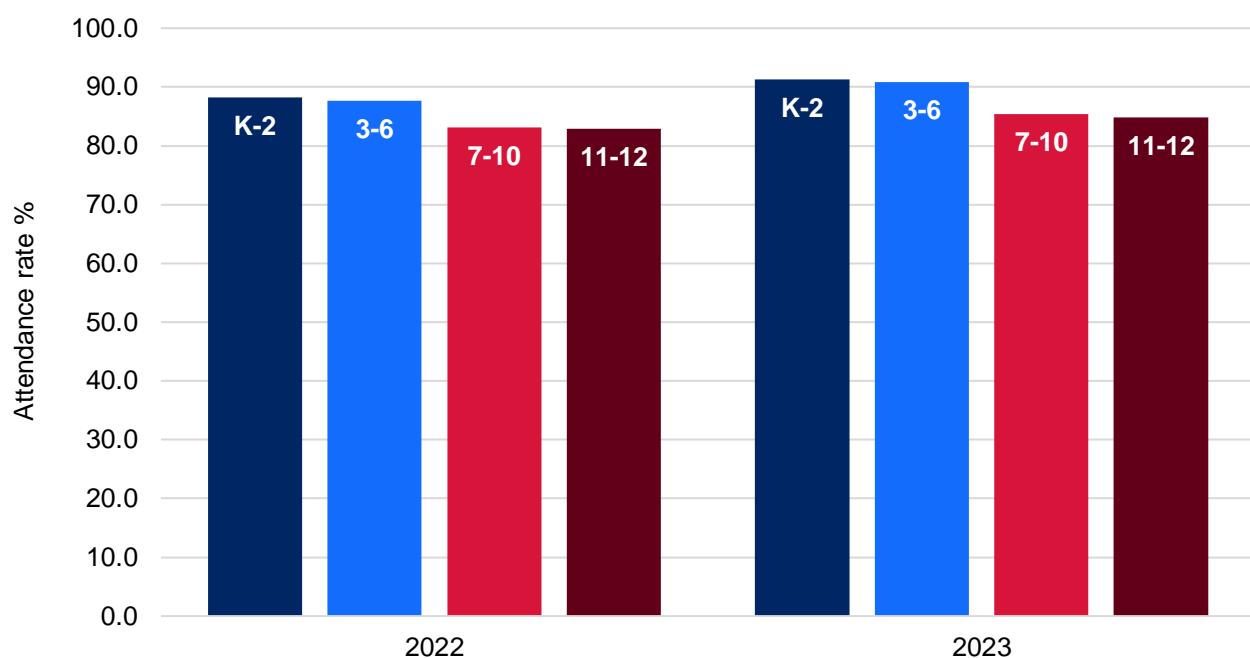
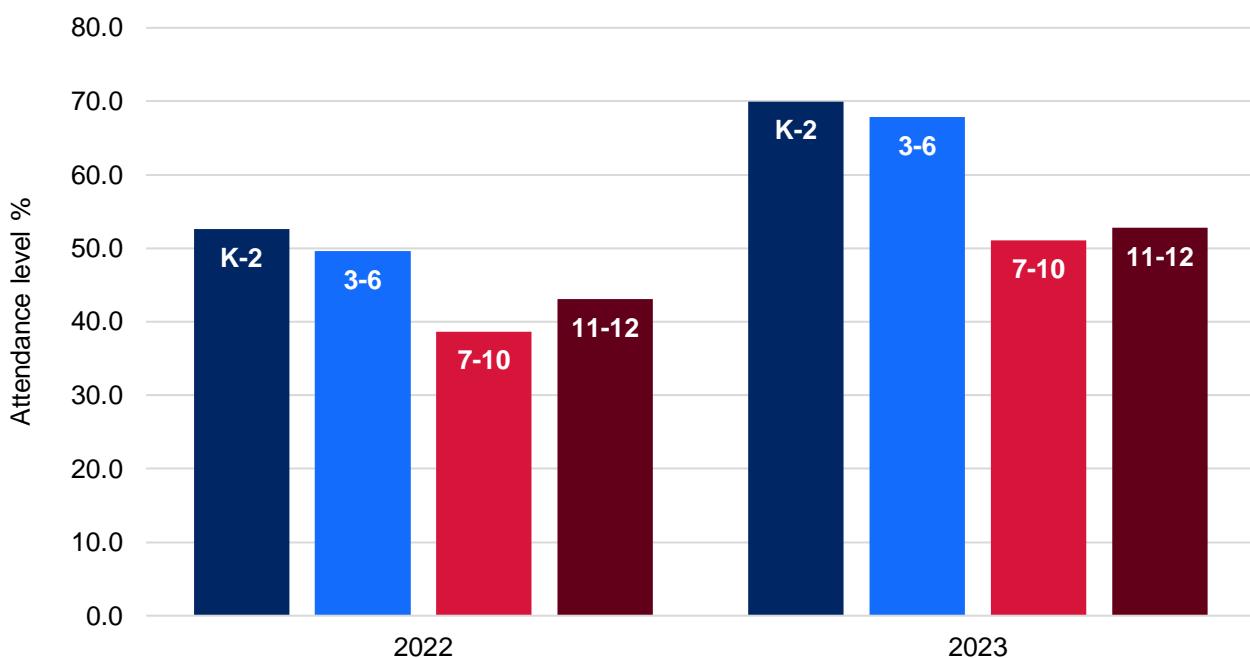


Figure 8: Semester 1 2022 and 2023 attendance level (%) by education sub-level, non-Aboriginal students



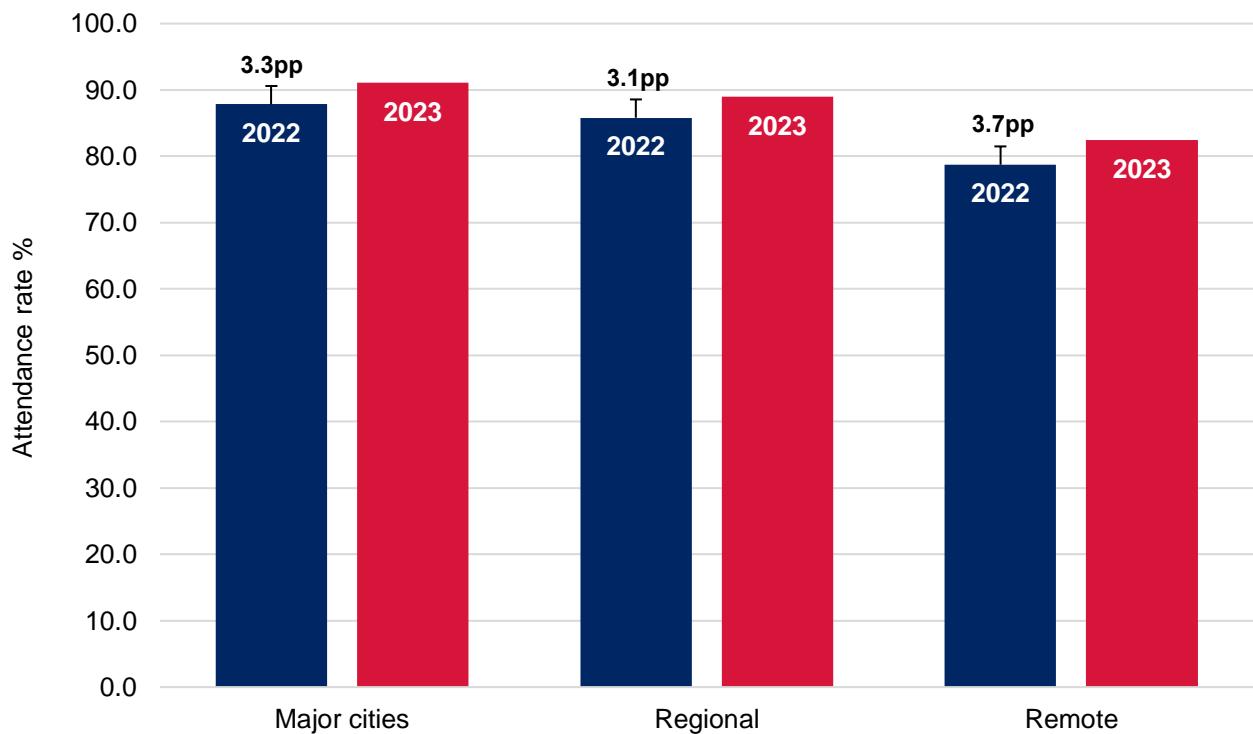
Attendance by geolocation

Table 4: Semester 1 2022 and 2023 attendance rate and attendance level by geolocation

Remoteness	Attendance rate (%)			Attendance level (%)		
	2022	2023	Change	2022	2023	Change
Major cities	86.0	88.8	2.8	47.1	62.5	15.4
Regional	82.3	84.8	2.5	36.8	50.6	13.8
Remote	72.9	76.4	3.5	25.6	36.5	10.9
All	85.0	87.8	2.8	44.6	59.6	15.0

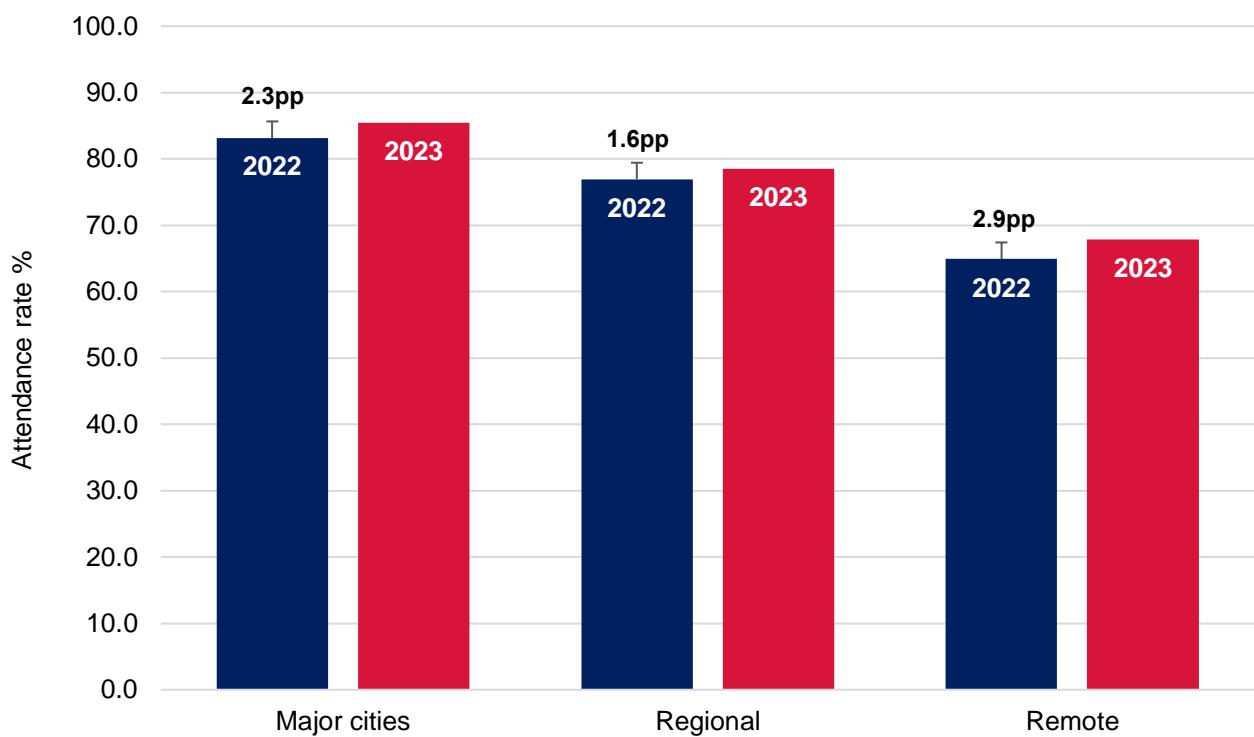
As shown in Table 4, attendance rates increased more for students attending schools in remote areas of NSW than students attending schools in major cities or regional areas of NSW. In remote areas, the attendance rate increased by 3.5 percentage points (from 72.9% in 2022 to 76.4% in 2023), compared to a 2.5 percentage point increase (from 82.3% to 84.8%) for schools in regional areas, and a 2.8 percentage point increase for schools in major cities (86.0% to 88.8%).

Figure 9: Semester 1 2022 and 2023 attendance rate (%) by geolocation, primary students



Note: pp = percentage points.

Figure 10: Semester 1 2022 and 2023 attendance rate (%) by geolocation, secondary students



Similarly, Figure 9 shows the increase in attendance rates was largest for primary schools in remote areas, with a similar increase found for primary schools in major cities and regional areas. In contrast, Figure 10 indicates that the attendance rates for secondary students increased the least in regional schools (1.6 percentage points), with the greatest increase (2.9 percentage points) found in secondary schools in remote areas.

Figure 11: Semester 1 2022 and 2023 attendance level (%) by geolocation, primary students

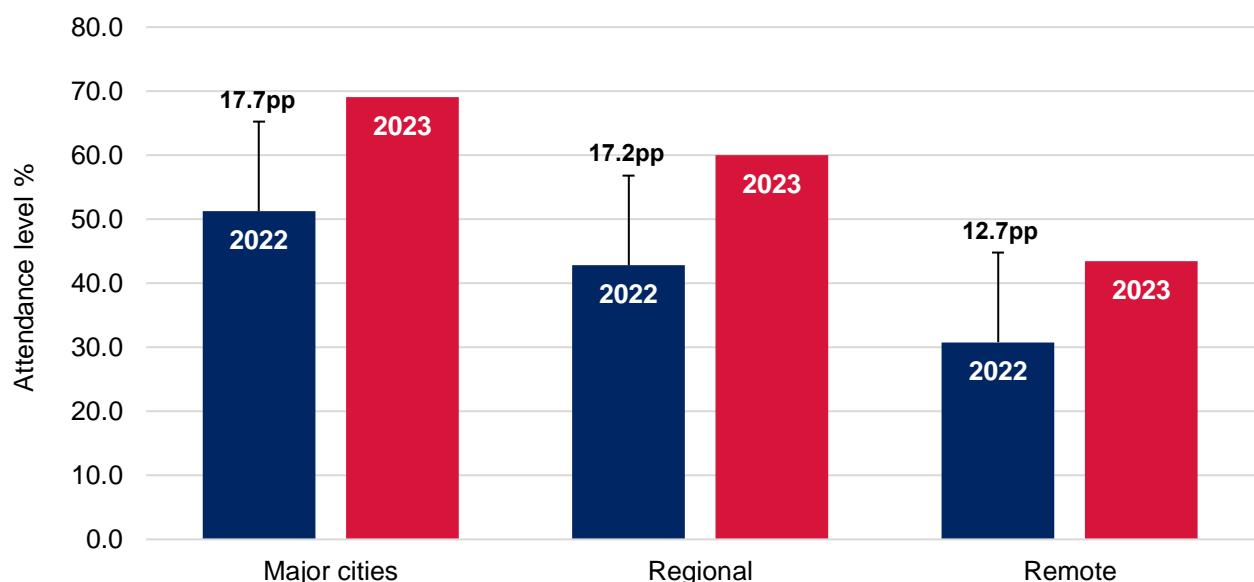
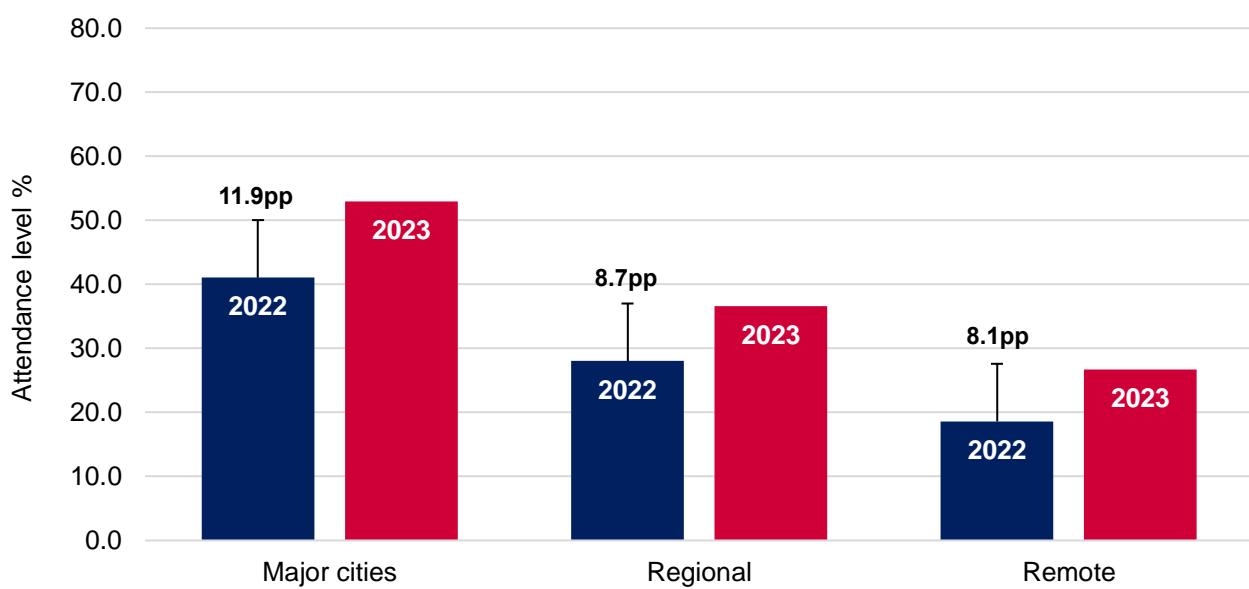


Figure 12: Semester 1 2022 and 2023 attendance level (%) by geolocation, secondary students



Figures 11 and 12 display attendance levels for schools in different geolocations, by education level and the gap between regions. The attendance level increased the most in major cities (15.4 percentage points, from 47.1% in 2022 to 62.5% in 2023), followed by regional areas (13.8 percentage points, from 36.8% to 50.6%) and remote areas (10.9 percentage points, from 25.6% to 36.5%). Despite the overall increase (15 percentage points) for all schools, schools in major cities continued to record the highest attendance level in Semester 1 2023, followed by schools in regional areas and remote areas. A similar pattern was also observed at the primary and secondary education levels where the attendance level also remained the highest for schools in major cities, followed by regional areas and remote areas at both education levels.

Analysis of absence reasons

The attendance codes provide insight into the reasons for the changes in attendance measures. There are 2 sets of measures provided: total absence days, and absence days per 1,000 enrolled days. Total absence days can be misinterpreted as it does not account for changes in the number of enrolled days between Semester 1 2022 and 2023. By contrast, absence days per 1,000 enrolled days provides a better comparison over time or between primary and secondary students.

Table 5 shows the total number of absence days for all NSW Government schools decreased from 11,108,540 days in 2022 to 9,060,496 days in 2023, a decrease of 2,048,044.

Table 5: Semester 1 total absence days by reason, 2022 and 2023 by education level

Reason	Primary		Secondary		Total	
	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023
Leave	837,401	757,556	622,482	566,002	1,459,883	1,323,558
Sick	2,939,755	2,032,254	2,174,708	1,765,317	5,114,463	3,797,570
Suspended	19,996	22,424	139,199	117,799	159,195	140,223
Unexplained / pending explanation	1,424,838	969,252	2,174,443	1,977,591	3,599,281	2,946,843
Unjustified explanation received	462,550	468,407	313,168	383,896	775,718	852,303
All	5,684,540	4,249,892	5,424,000	4,810,604	11,108,540	9,060,496

Note: Due to rounding, the total number of absence days may not equal the sum of absence days for primary and secondary students.

For both primary and secondary students, the decrease in student absence from 2022 to 2023 was mainly due to a decrease in leave, sickness, and absences that were unexplained / pending explanation. The decrease is particularly significant for sickness, where the number of sick days for primary and secondary combined decreased by 25.7% (from 5,114,463 days in 2022 to 3,797,570 days in 2023).

The number of unjustified explanations increased for secondary students by 22.6% (from 313,168 days in 2022 to 383,896 in 2023) and slightly increased by 1.3% for primary students (from 462,550 in 2022 to 468,407 in 2023). It is also notable that the number of suspension days increased for primary students by 12.1% (from 19,996 in 2022 to 22,424 in 2023). By contrast, the number of suspension days for secondary students decreased by 15.4% (from 139,199 in 2022 to 117,799 in 2023).

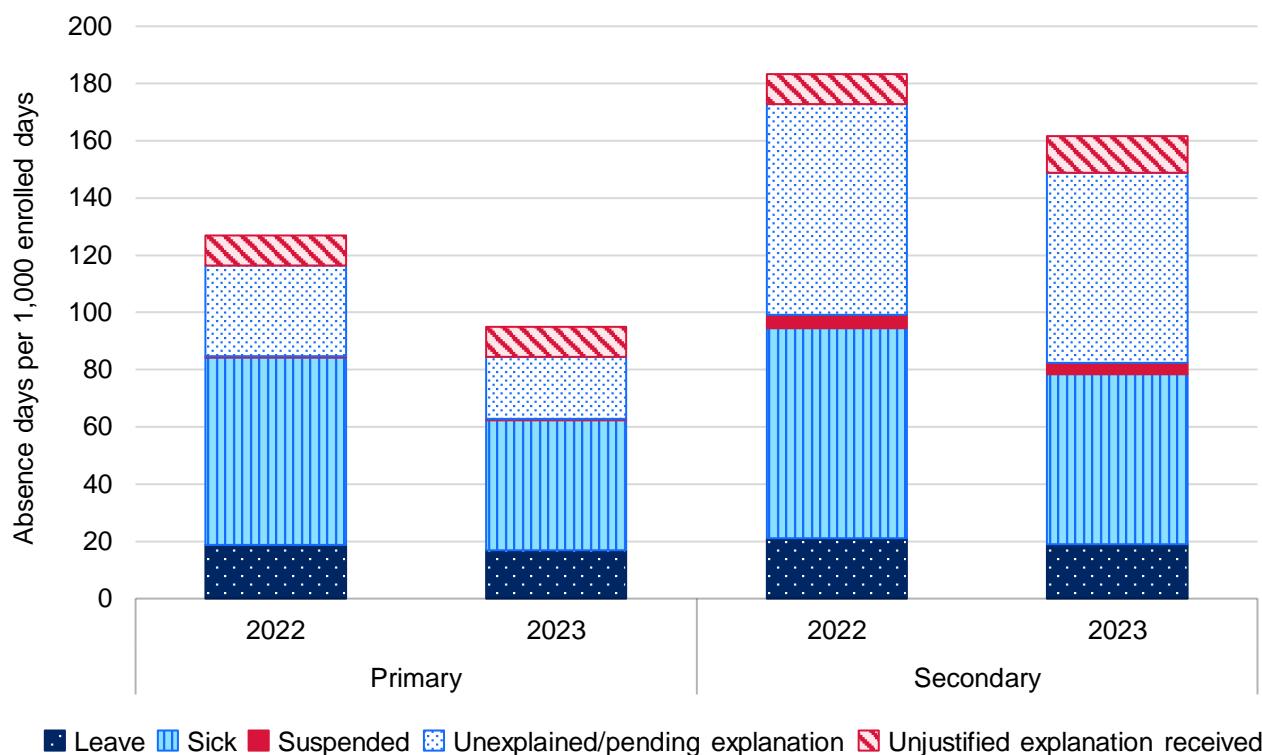
Due to 2 industrial action days and schools not being operational due to flooding in Semester 1 2022, the total number of enrolled days included in the attendance calculations for all students increased (from approximately 74,400,000 days in 2022 to 74,500,000 days in 2023). This is despite the number of gazetted school days remaining stable (96 days in 2022 and 95 days in 2023).

Table 6 presents the number of absence days per 1,000 enrolled days for primary and secondary students. The absence trends from 2022 to 2023 indicate an overall reduction in student absences, except for unjustified explanation which increased by 1.02 days, representing a 9.8% rise. Notably, absences due to sickness demonstrated the most significant decrease of 25.9%, followed by unexplained absences which experienced a decline of 18.2%. Suspensions observed a decline of 12.1%, followed by leave showing a percentage decrease of 9.5%.

Table 6: Semester 1 absence days per 1,000 enrolled days by reason, 2022 and 2023, primary and secondary

Reason	Primary		Secondary		Total		
	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	% change
Leave	18.68	16.93	21.04	19.02	19.62	17.76	-9.5%
Sick	65.57	45.41	73.52	59.31	68.73	50.96	-25.9%
Suspended	0.45	0.50	4.71	3.96	2.14	1.88	-12.1%
Unexplained / pending explanation	31.78	21.66	73.51	66.44	48.37	39.55	-18.2%
Unjustified explanation received	10.32	10.47	10.59	12.90	10.42	11.44	9.8%
All	126.79	94.97	183.36	161.62	149.28	121.59	-18.5%

Figure 13: Semester 1 absence days per 1,000 enrolled days by reason, 2022 and 2023, primary and secondary



The frequency of sick days per 1,000 enrolled days decreased for both primary and secondary students in 2023. Specifically, sick days for primary students saw a reduction of 20.16 days per 1,000 enrolled days, while for secondary students, the decrease was 14.21 days. Combining the totals for primary and secondary, there was an overall reduction of 17.77 days.

Unexplained absence was the second highest category of absences. For primary students, this decreased by 10.12 days (from 31.78 per 1,000 enrolled days in 2022 to 21.66 days in 2023), compared to a decrease of 7.07 days for secondary students (from 73.51 days per 1,000 enrolled days to 66.44 days).

Unjustified absences per 1,000 enrolled days rose for both primary and secondary students. For primary students, this increased by 0.15 days (from 10.32 days per 1,000 in 2022 to 10.47 days in 2023) while unjustified absences of secondary students grew by 2.31 days (from 10.59 days per 1,000 days in 2022 to 12.90 days in 2023).

Absence days for leave per 1,000 enrolled days decreased for both primary and secondary students. Primary leave absences decreased by 1.75 days (from 18.68 days per 1,000 days in 2022 to 16.93 days in 2023). For secondary students, the reduction was 2.02 days (from 21.04 days per 1,000 days in 2022 to 19.02 days in 2023).

In addition, the suspension days per 1,000 enrolled days increased for primary students by 0.05 days (from 0.45 days per 1,000 days in 2022 to 0.50 days in 2023) and decreased by 0.75 days for secondary students (from 4.71 days per 1,000 days in 2022 to 3.96 days in 2023).

Notes

Government school systems in Australia measure attendance rates and levels throughout the first semester, which includes Term 1 and Term 2. This is the time period of data collection as specified in National Education Agreements between the Commonwealth and state and territory governments. Attendance data from NSW schools for specific purposes (SSPs) was collected for the first time in 2020.

Nationally, the **attendance rate** is defined as the number of actual full-time equivalent student days attended by full-time students in Years 1 to 10 in Semester 1 as a percentage of the number of possible student-days attended in Semester 1 (Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia – Key Performance Measure 1(b)).

The **attendance level** is defined as the proportion of full-time students in Years 1 to 10 whose attendance rate in Semester 1 is equal to or greater than 90% (Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia – Key Performance Measure 1(c)).

National student attendance data for Years 1 to 10 is published annually on the National Report on Schooling in Australia (ANR) data portal. The data portal includes more information on the Measurement Framework for Schooling Australia and Key Performance Measures previously mentioned. Attendance data from 2020 was not published due to the impact of COVID-19 on student attendance.

The attendance rates and levels in this fact sheet are different to the nationally published figures due to the inclusion of Kindergarten, Year 11 and Year 12 students.

Locations in this fact sheet are determined according to Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) – 2021 Remoteness Structure. This standard outlines 5 possible location areas: major cities, inner regional, outer regional, remote and very remote. This fact sheet combines inner regional and outer regional into one regional location and combines remote and very remote into one remote location.

Explanatory notes

1. National standards for student attendance data reporting

Since 2018, NSW Government schools have reported attendance data in accordance with the National Standards published on the [ACARA website](#).

ACARA published the '[National standards for student attendance data reporting – third edition](#) [PDF 374KB]' in July 2020. As a result, in 2021 the following changes to attendance calculations were made:

- no rounding to determine whether a student's attendance rate meets the 90% threshold for attendance level calculations
- including the final week of Term 2
- treating partial absences over 120 minutes as a half-day absence instead of their actual value as a proportion of a 6-hour day.

2. Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students

Students are counted as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders if they are identified as such on the school enrolment form. Throughout this fact sheet the term 'Aboriginal' is used to refer to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students.

3. Reasons for absences

Students may be absent from school for a number of reasons, including sickness, suspension or truancy. Examples of other reasons include:

- misadventure or unforeseen event
- participation in special events not related to the school
- domestic necessity, such as serious illness of an immediate family member
- attendance at funerals
- travel in Australia and overseas
- recognised religious festivals or ceremonial occasions
- other absences not explained by parents, or the principal does not accept the explanation offered for the absence.

In particular communities, attendance rates can be affected by other factors, including the level of sickness in the community and natural events such as floods.