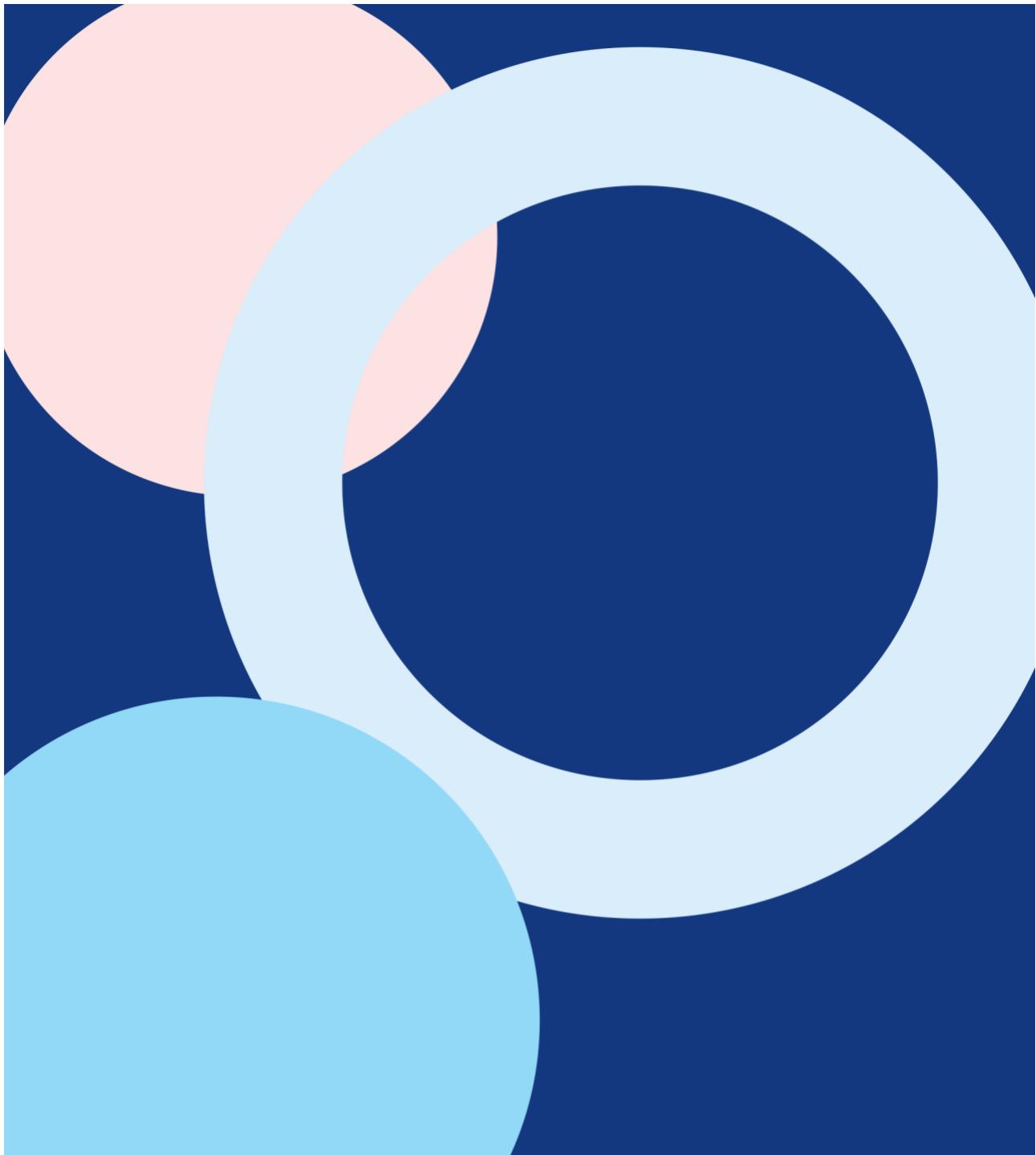


2022 Semester 1 student attendance fact sheet



Introduction

This fact sheet provides an overview of student attendance of NSW Government schools from Kindergarten to Year 12 in Semester 1, 2022. 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 the fact sheet are different to attendance targets reported by the NSW Department of Education and the nationally published My School figures. 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 do not include Kindergarten, Year 11 and Year 12 students.

While there were no COVID-19 lockdowns or learning from home periods in Semester 1, 2022, the prevalence of COVID-19 in the community was much greater than in 2021 and it continued to cause large variability in attendance data. All students, staff and visitors were encouraged to remain at home and only attend school when symptom-free. Students were advised to stay home despite a negative COVID-19 test result if COVID-19 symptoms persisted or until a medical certificate was provided to the school to confirm that symptoms were attributed to another diagnosis. Please refer to the [Advice for families](#) for more information. Absence reasons were analysed in this fact sheet to show causes of decline in student attendance. Furthermore, the number of absence days for schools that were non-operational due to floods in Semester 1 2022 and the number of weekly COVID-19 and influenza cases were analysed to provide contextual factors that may have contributed to the decline in 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 decreased by 4.8 percentage points (pp) from 89.8% in 2021 to 85.0% in 2022. The primary attendance rate declined by 5.1 percentage points from 92.4% to 87.3% and the secondary attendance rate declined by 4.2 percentage points from 85.8% to 81.6%.

The decline in the attendance rate was similar in both primary education sub-levels: Kindergarten to Year 2 (92.7% to 87.7%) and Year 3 to Year 6 (92.1% to 87.0%).

At the secondary education sub-level, the Year 7 to Year 10 attendance rate declined by 4.5 percentage points from 86.1% to 81.6%, slightly greater than the decline in Year 11 and Year 12 of 3.4 percentage points from 85.0% to 81.6%.

Figure 1: Semester 1 2018–2022 attendance rate (%) by education level

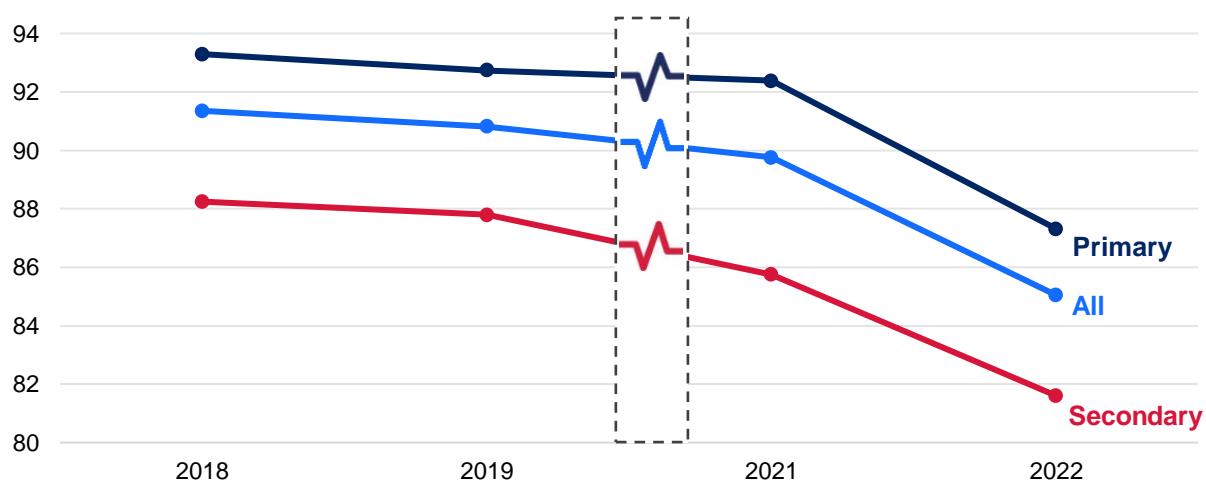
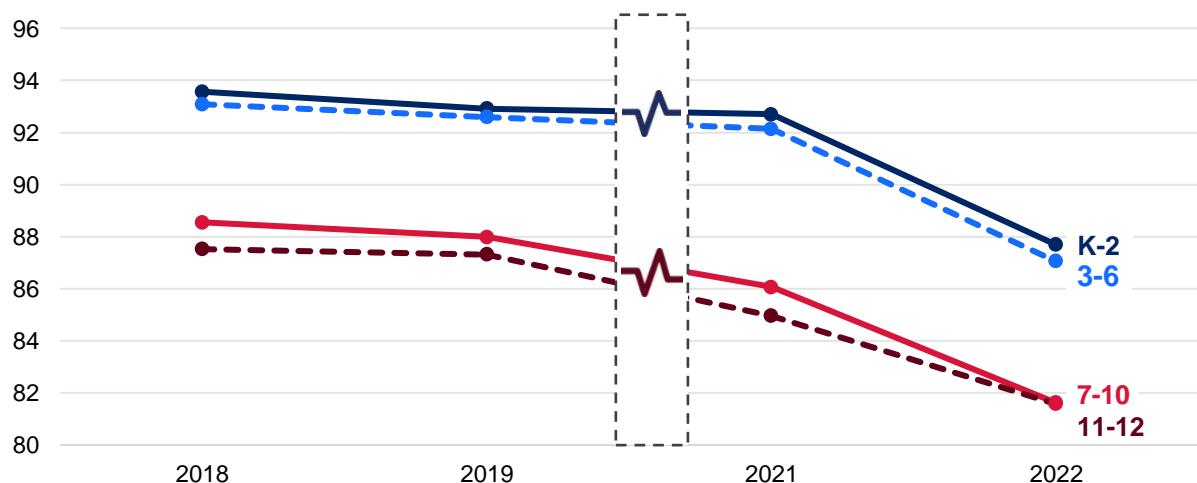


Figure 2: Semester 1 2018–2022 attendance rate (%) by education sub-level



The proportion of students attending 90% or more of the time (attendance level) declined significantly and was at a historic low in 2022. The overall attendance level declined by 22.6 percentage points from 67.2% in 2021 to 44.6% in 2022. At the education level, the primary attendance level declined by 26.0 percentage points from 75.0% to 49.0%, and the secondary attendance level declined by 17.3 percentage points from 55.1% to 37.8%. At the education sub-level, the decline was relatively consistent in both primary education sub-levels. Kindergarten to Year 2 had a decline of 25.8 percentage points from 76.5% to 50.7%, and Year 3 to Year 6 declined by 26.1 percentage points from 73.9% to 47.8%.

At the secondary education sub-level, the Year 7 to Year 10 attendance level decreased by 18.8 percentage points from 55.2% to 36.4%, higher than the decline for Year 11 and Year 12 of 13.8 percentage points from 55.0% to 41.2%. For the first time, the attendance level of Year 7 to Year 10 (in 2022) dipped below the Year 11 and Year 12 attendance level.

Figure 3: Semester 1 2018–2022 attendance level (%) by education level

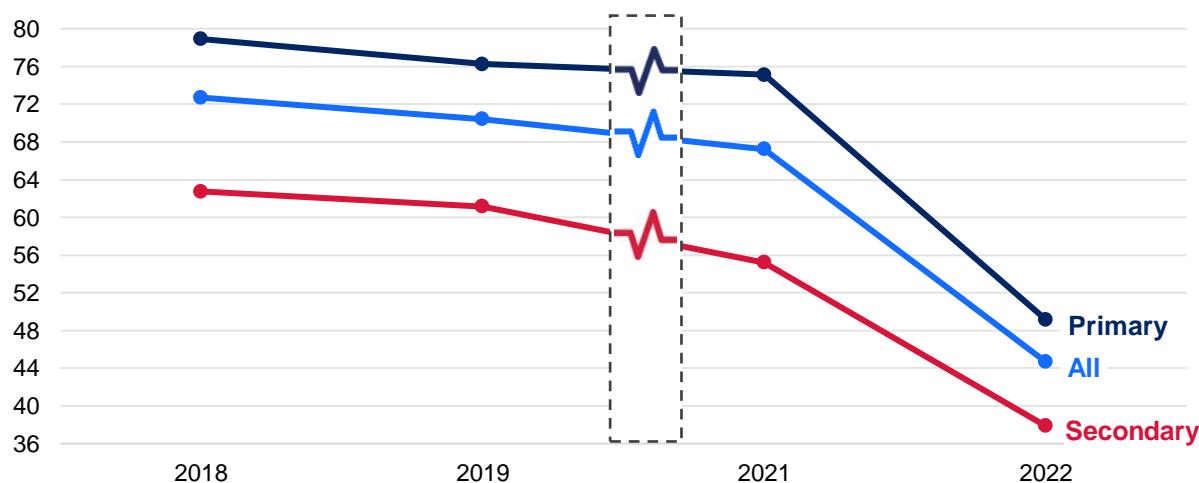
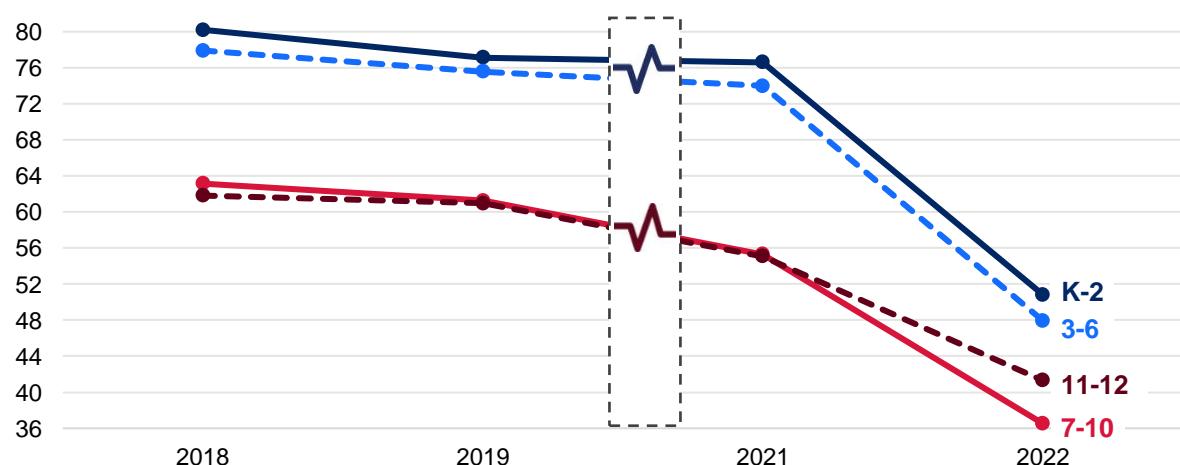


Figure 4: Semester 1 2018–2022 attendance level (%) by education sub-level



Attendance by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status

The overall attendance rate for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students decreased by 5 percentage points from 80.7% in 2021 to 75.7% in 2022. Similar decline was present in the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander primary attendance which decreased by 5.3 percentage points from 86.6% to 81.3%, and the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander secondary attendance rate which decreased by 4.6 percentage points from 72.0% to 67.4%.

The proportion of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students attending 90% or more of the time declined by 16.6 percentage points from 42.0% to 25.4%. For Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander primary students, the decline in the attendance level was 20.5 percentage points from 51.7% to 31.2%, while the decline was smaller for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander secondary students at 10.7 percentage points from 27.6% to 16.9%.

At the education sub-level, the attendance levels for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander primary students were comparable: a 20.7 percentage points decline from 53.4% to 32.7% for Kindergarten to Year 2, and a 20.3 percentage points decline from 50.4% to 30.1% for Year 3 to Year 6. There was a wider difference in attendance levels at the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander secondary student sub-level. The Year 7 to Year 10 attendance level declined by 11.7 percentage points from 28.3% to 16.6%, which was larger than the 7.6 percentage points decline in Year 11 and Year 12, from 25.3% to 17.7%. This brought the attendance level of Year 7 to Year 10 to below the Year 11 and Year 12 attendance level in Semester 1, 2022.

Table 1: Semester 1 2021 and 2022 attendance rate and attendance level by education sub-level, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students

| Education level | Attendance rate (%) | | | Attendance level (%) | | |
|------------------|---------------------|-------------|-------------|----------------------|-------------|--------------|
| | 2021 | 2022 | Change | 2021 | 2022 | Change |
| K-2 | 87.1 | 82.0 | -5.1 | 53.4 | 32.7 | -20.7 |
| 3-6 | 86.1 | 80.8 | -5.3 | 50.4 | 30.1 | -20.3 |
| Primary | 86.6 | 81.3 | -5.3 | 51.7 | 31.2 | -20.5 |
| 7-10 | 73.0 | 68.3 | -4.7 | 28.3 | 16.6 | -11.7 |
| 11-12 | 68.6 | 64.3 | -4.3 | 25.3 | 17.7 | -7.6 |
| Secondary | 72.0 | 67.4 | -4.6 | 27.6 | 16.9 | -10.7 |
| All | 80.7 | 75.7 | -5.0 | 42.0 | 25.4 | -16.6 |

Figure 5: Semester 1 2021 and 2022 attendance rate (%) by education sub-level, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students

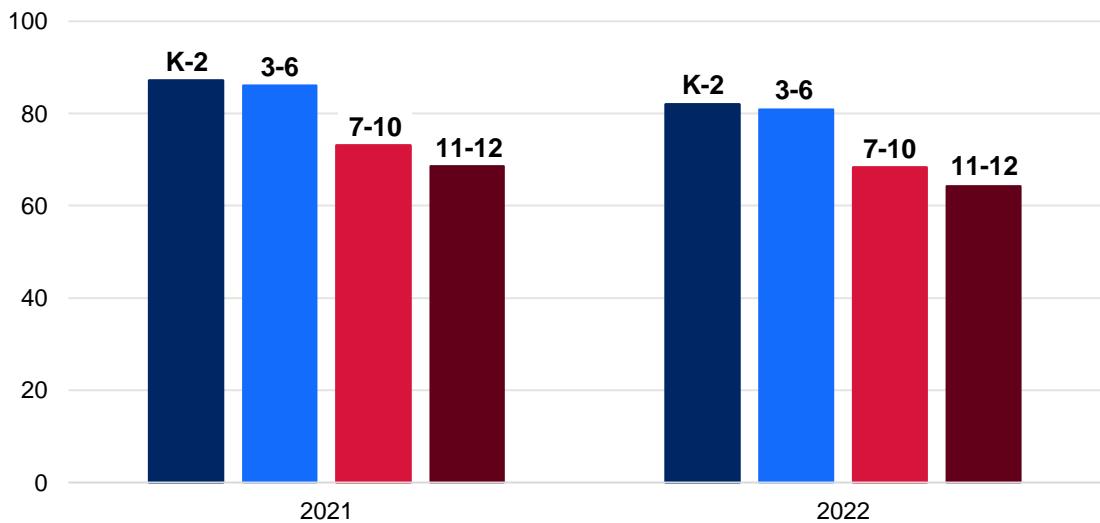
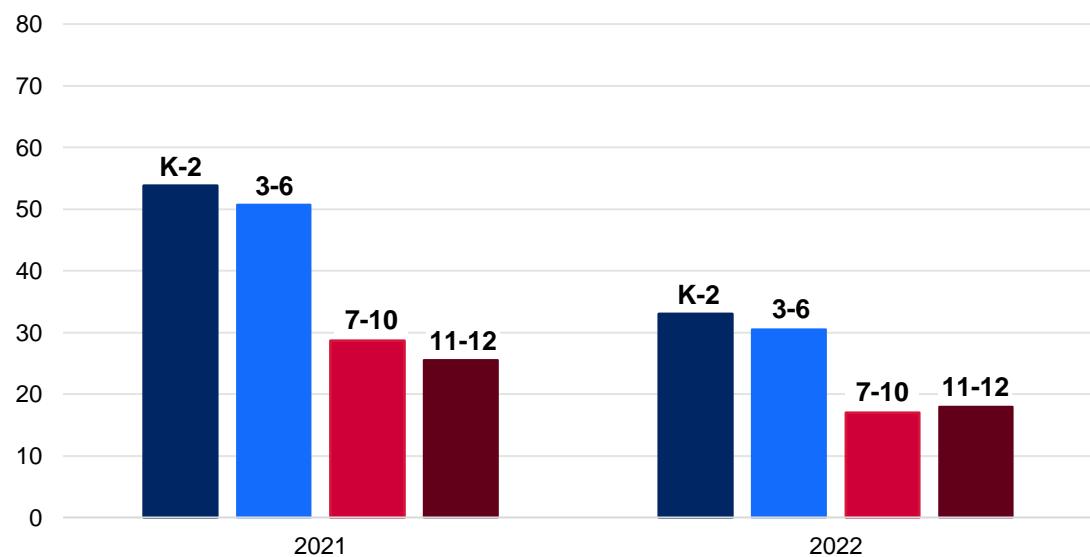


Figure 6: Semester 1 2021 and 2022 attendance level (%) by education sub-level, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students



The overall attendance rate for non-Aboriginal students decreased by 4.6 percentage points from 90.6% in 2021 to 86.0% in 2022. For non-Aboriginal primary students, the attendance rate decreased by 5 percentage points from 92.9% to 87.9%, compared to a decline of 4.1 percentage points from 87.1% to 83.0% for non-Aboriginal secondary students.

At the education sub-level for non-Aboriginal students, both Kindergarten to Year 2 and Year 3 to Year 6 student groups saw a decline of 5 percentage points from 93.2% to 88.3% and from 92.7% to 87.6% respectively. However, at the secondary education sub-level, the attendance rate for Year 7 to Year 10 students decreased by 4.3 percentage points from 87.4% to 83.1%, larger than the 3.3 percentage points decline from 86.2% to 82.9% 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 a decline of 26.2 percentage points from 78.7% to 52.5% and the decline in Year 3 to Year 6 was 26.6 percentage points from 76.1% to 49.5%, reflecting a decline of 26.4 percentage points for non-Aboriginal primary students from 77.2% to 50.8%. For non-Aboriginal secondary students, the overall decline was 17.9 percentage points from 57.7% to 39.8%. Year 7 to Year 10 students showed a larger decline of 19.4 percentage points from 58.0% to 38.6% compared to Year 11 and Year 12 students with the decline of 14.2 percentage points from 57.2% to 43.0%. This positioned the attendance level of Year 7 to Year 10 lower than Year 11 and Year 12 in Semester 1, 2022, and was also evident in the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander student attendance level.

Table 2: Semester 1 2021 and 2022 attendance rate and attendance level by education sub-level, non-Aboriginal students

| Education level | Attendance rate (%) | | | Attendance level (%) | | |
|------------------|---------------------|-------------|-------------|----------------------|-------------|--------------|
| | 2021 | 2022 | Change | 2021 | 2022 | Change |
| K-2 | 93.2 | 88.3 | -4.9 | 78.7 | 52.5 | -26.2 |
| 3-6 | 92.7 | 87.6 | -5.1 | 76.1 | 49.5 | -26.6 |
| Primary | 92.9 | 87.9 | -5.0 | 77.2 | 50.8 | -26.4 |
| 7-10 | 87.4 | 83.1 | -4.3 | 58.0 | 38.6 | -19.4 |
| 11-12 | 86.2 | 82.9 | -3.3 | 57.2 | 43.0 | -14.2 |
| Secondary | 87.1 | 83.0 | -4.1 | 57.7 | 39.8 | -17.9 |
| All | 90.6 | 86.0 | -4.6 | 69.5 | 46.4 | -23.1 |

Figure 7: Semester 1 2021 and 2022 attendance rate (%) by education sub-level, non-Aboriginal students

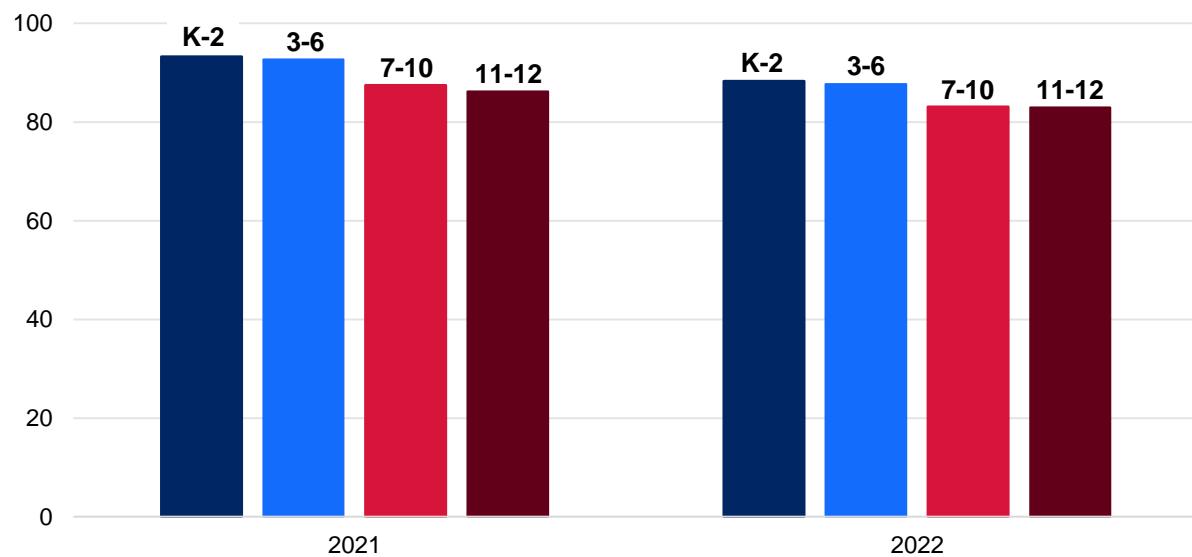
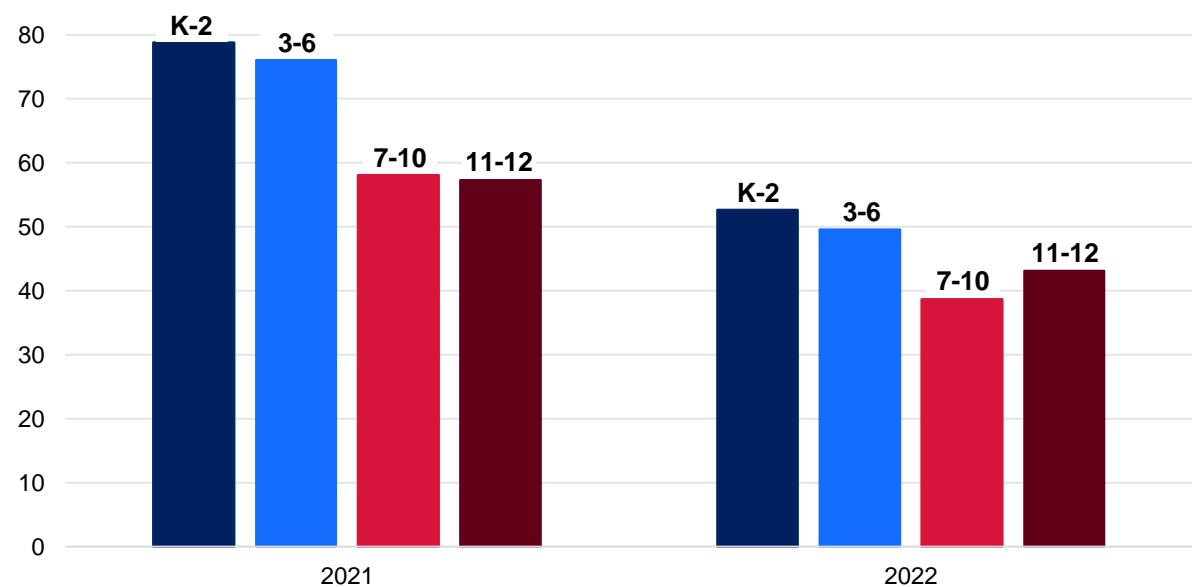


Figure 8: Semester 1 2021 and 2022 attendance level (%) by education sub-level, non-Aboriginal students



Attendance by geolocation

Table 3: Semester 1 2021 and 2022 attendance rate and attendance level by geolocation

| Remoteness | Attendance rate (%) | | | Attendance level (%) | | |
|--------------|---------------------|-------------|-------------|----------------------|-------------|--------------|
| | 2021 | 2022 | Change | 2021 | 2022 | Change |
| Major cities | 90.8 | 86.0 | -4.8 | 70.8 | 47.1 | -23.7 |
| Regional | 86.6 | 82.3 | -4.3 | 56.2 | 36.8 | -19.4 |
| Remote | 78.4 | 72.9 | -5.5 | 41.1 | 25.6 | -15.5 |
| All | 89.8 | 85.0 | -4.8 | 67.2 | 44.6 | -22.6 |

Attendance rates decreased 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 fell by 5.5 percentage points from 78.4% in 2021 to 72.9% in 2022, compared to a 4.3 percentage points decline from 86.6% to 82.3% for schools in regional areas, widening the overall gap between students in the 2 regions. However, the overall gap in the attendance rate between schools in major cities and regional areas narrowed due to a larger decline of 4.8 percentage points in major cities from 90.8% to 86.0%.

Figure 9: Semester 1 2021 and 2022 attendance rate (%) by geolocation, primary students

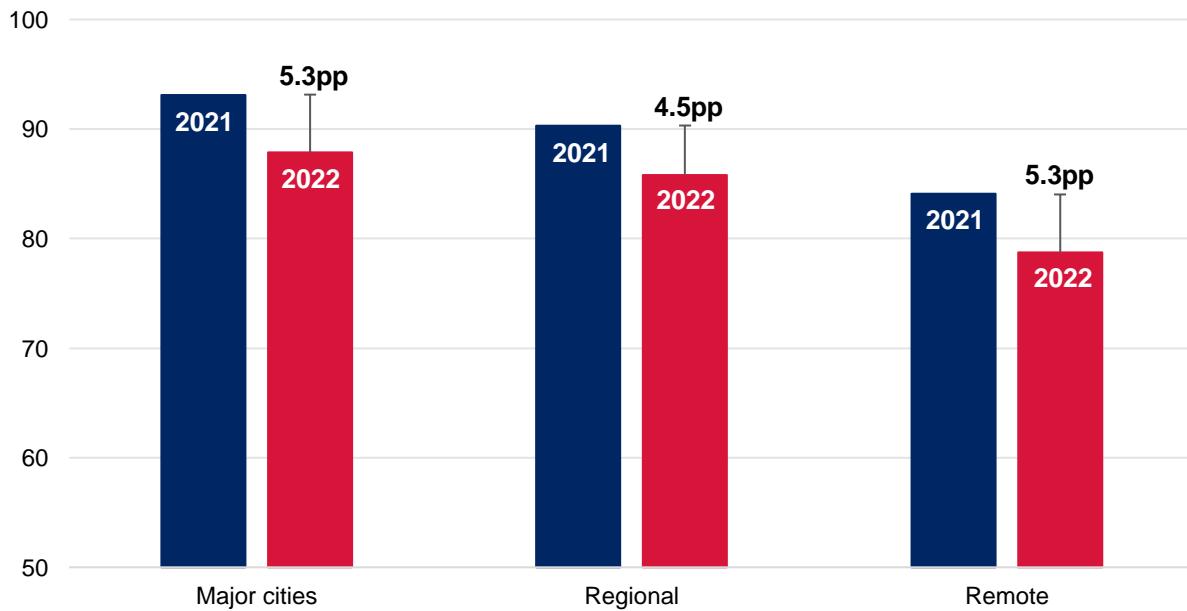
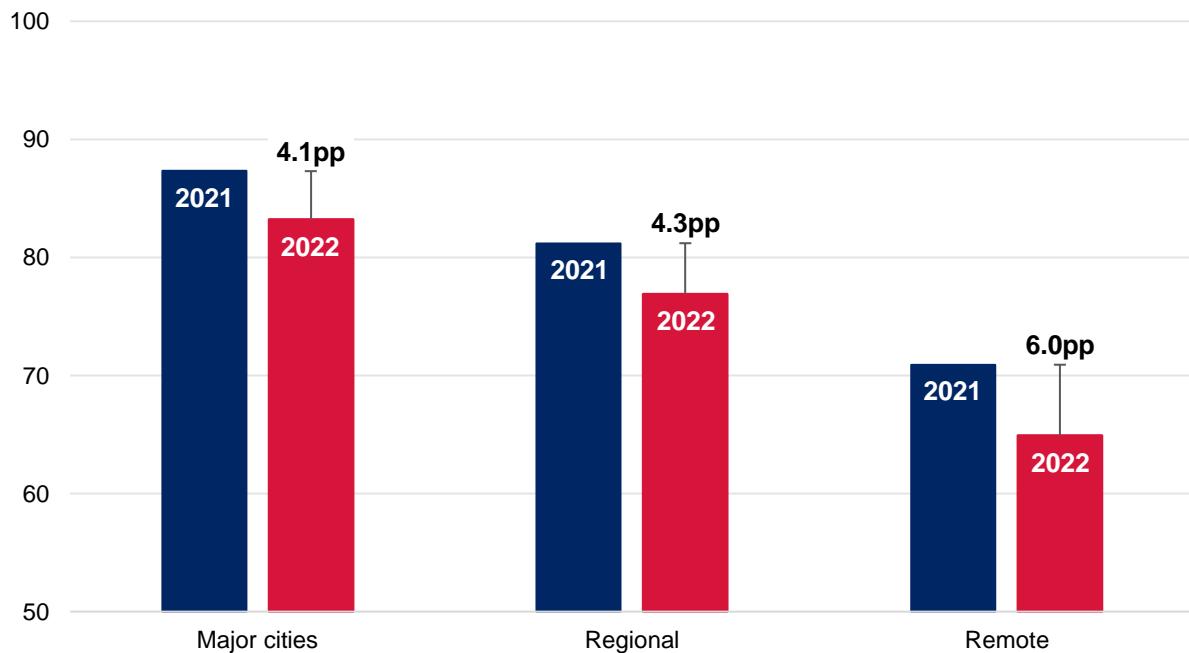


Figure 10: Semester 1 2021 and 2022 attendance rate (%) by geolocation, secondary students



Similarly, Figure 9 shows the decline in attendance rates was largest for schools in major cities and remote areas, followed by regional areas for primary schools. In contrast, Figure 10 indicates that the attendance rates fell the most in remote schools, followed by regional areas and major cities, further widening the gap between major city and regional schools and between regional and remote schools for secondary students.

Figure 11: Semester 1 2021 and 2022 attendance level (%) by geolocation, primary students

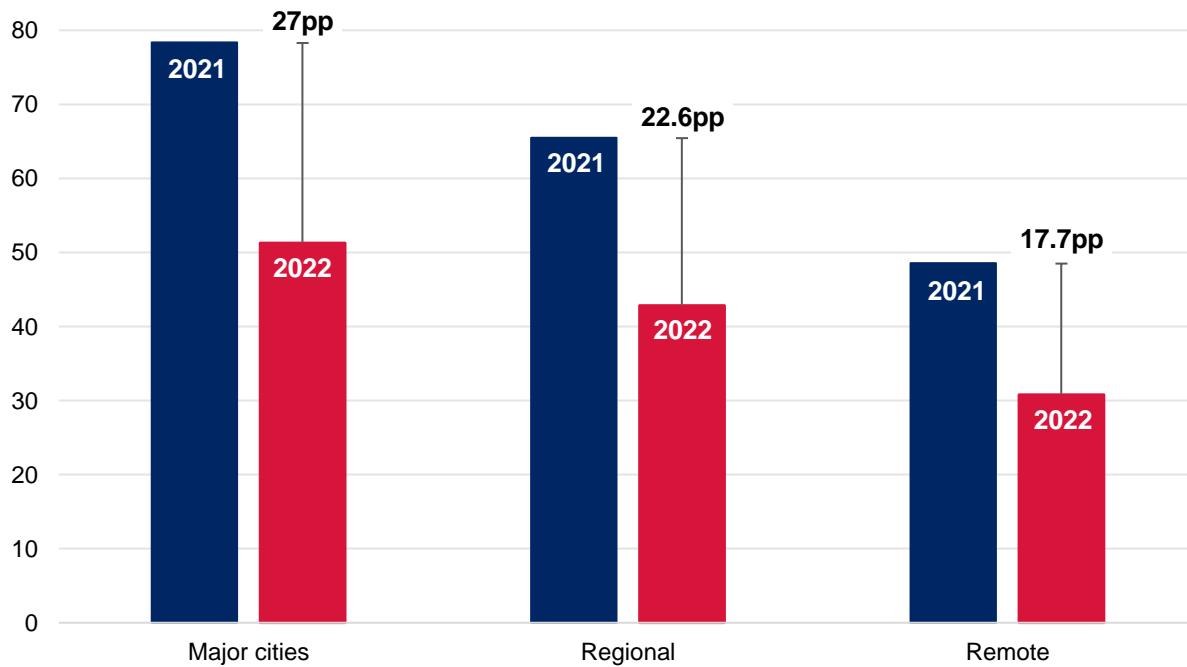
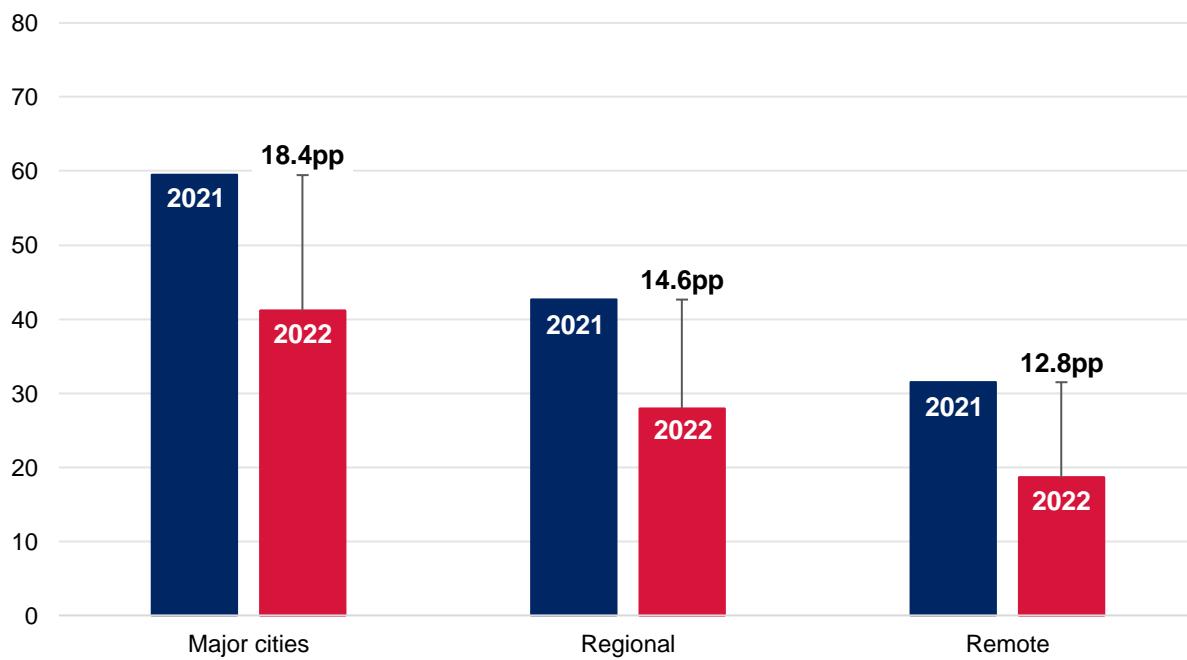


Figure 12: Semester 1 2021 and 2022 attendance level (%) by geolocation, secondary students



Figures 11 and 12 display attendance levels for schools in different geolocations and the gap between regions. The attendance level fell the most in major cities (23.7 percentage points from 70.8% in 2021 to 47.1% in 2022), followed by regional areas (19.4 percentage points from 56.2% to 36.8%) and remote areas (15.5 percentage points from 41.1% to 25.6%), reducing the gap in attendance levels between geolocations. Despite the higher

decline, schools in major cities continued to record the highest attendance level in Semester 1, 2022, 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 decline 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 2021 and 2022. By contrast, absence days per 1,000 enrolled days provides a better comparison over time or between primary and secondary students.

Table 4 shows the total number of absence days for all government schools increased from 8,101,635 days in 2021 to 11,603,084 days in 2022, an increase of 43.2%.

Table 4: Semester 1 total absences by reason, 2021 and 2022, primary and secondary

| Reason | Primary | | Secondary | | Total | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| | 2021 | 2022 | 2021 | 2022 | 2021 | 2022 |
| Leave | 563,489 | 883,210 | 552,063 | 681,243 | 1,115,552 | 1,564,453 |
| Sick | 1,610,766 | 2,994,235 | 1,490,811 | 2,229,945 | 3,101,577 | 5,224,180 |
| Suspended | 28,508 | 20,132 | 167,242 | 139,655 | 195,750 | 159,787 |
| Unexplained / Pending Explanation | 1,104,912 | 1,451,930 | 1,936,540 | 2,353,497 | 3,041,452 | 3,805,427 |
| Unjustified Explanation Received | 292,143 | 505,759 | 355,161 | 343,478 | 647,304 | 849,237 |
| Total | 3,599,818 | 5,855,266 | 4,501,817 | 5,747,818 | 8,101,635 | 11,603,084 |

For both primary and secondary students, the increase in student absence from 2021 to 2022 was mainly due to an increase in leave, sickness, and unexplained/pending explanation absences. The increase is particularly significant for sickness where the number of sick days for primary and secondary combined increased by 68% from 3,101,577 days in 2021 to 5,224,180 days in 2022.

The number of unjustified explanations decreased for secondary students, however it increased largely by 73% for primary students from 292,143 days in 2021 to 505,759 in 2022. It is also notable that the number of suspension days decreased for both primary and secondary students in 2022.

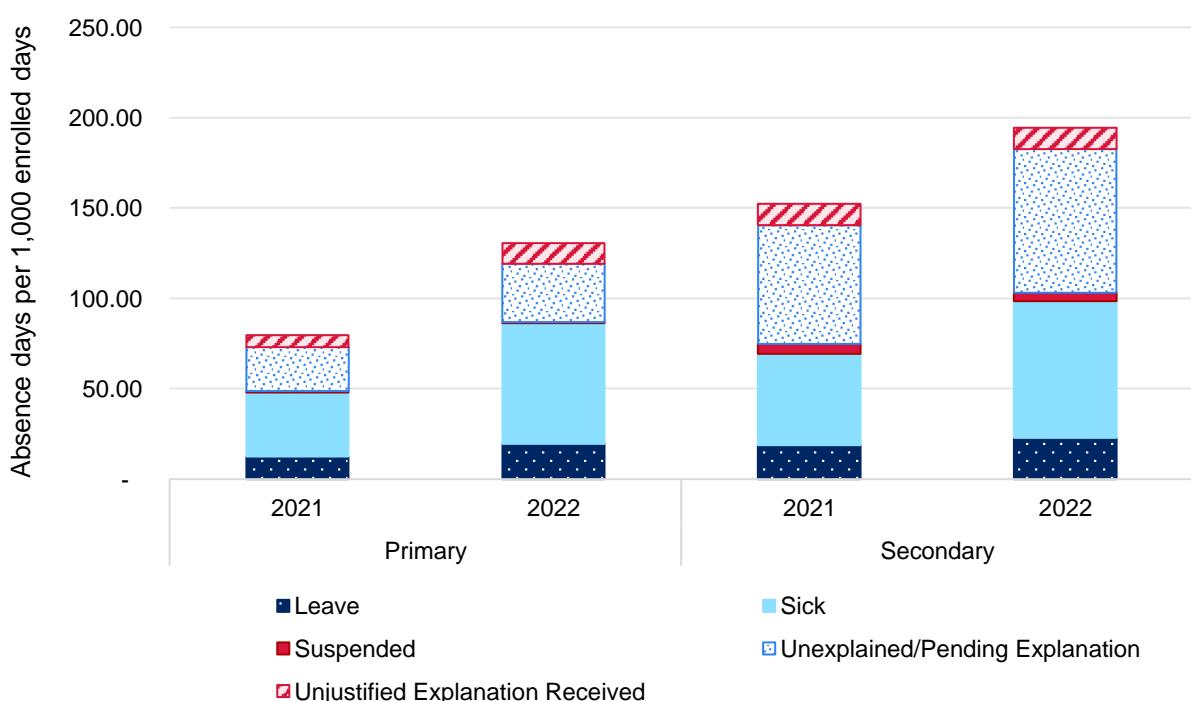
Despite the increase in the gazetted school days from 93 days in 2021 to 96 days in 2022, the total number of enrolled days included in the attendance calculations for all primary and secondary students decreased from approximately 74,700,000 days to 74,400,000 days. This is due to a decrease in the number of students enrolled, 2 industrial action days in Term 2 2022, and schools not operational due to flooding.

Table 5 presents the number of absence days per 1,000 enrolled days for primary and secondary students, which increased for both primary and secondary students in all attendance codes except suspension. For primary students, this increased by 50.9 days from 79.7 days in 2021 to 130.6 days in 2022, and for secondary students, this increased by 41.8 days from 152.5 days to 194.3 days.

Table 5: Semester 1 absences per 1,000 enrolled days by reason, 2021 and 2022, primary and secondary

| Reason | Primary | | Secondary | | Total | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | 2021 | 2022 | 2021 | 2022 | 2021 | 2022 |
| Leave | 12.5 | 19.7 | 18.7 | 23.0 | 14.9 | 21.0 |
| Sick | 35.6 | 66.8 | 50.5 | 75.4 | 41.5 | 70.2 |
| Suspended | 0.6 | 0.4 | 5.7 | 4.7 | 2.6 | 2.1 |
| Unexplained / Pending Explanation | 24.5 | 32.4 | 65.6 | 79.6 | 40.7 | 51.1 |
| Unjustified Explanation Received | 6.5 | 11.3 | 12.0 | 11.6 | 8.7 | 11.4 |
| Total | 79.7 | 130.6 | 152.5 | 194.3 | 108.4 | 155.8 |

Figure 13: Semester 1 absences per 1,000 enrolled days by reason, 2021 and 2022, primary and secondary



Sick days per 1,000 enrolled days increased significantly for primary and secondary students. For primary students, 1 in 2 absence days in 2022 were due to sickness compared with 4 out of 10 absence days for secondary students.

Unexplained days were the second highest category of absences. For secondary students, it increased by 14 days from 65.6 days per 1,000 enrolled days in 2021 to 79.6 days in 2022, compared to an increase of 7.9 days for primary students, from 24.5 days per 1,000 enrolled days to 32.4 days.

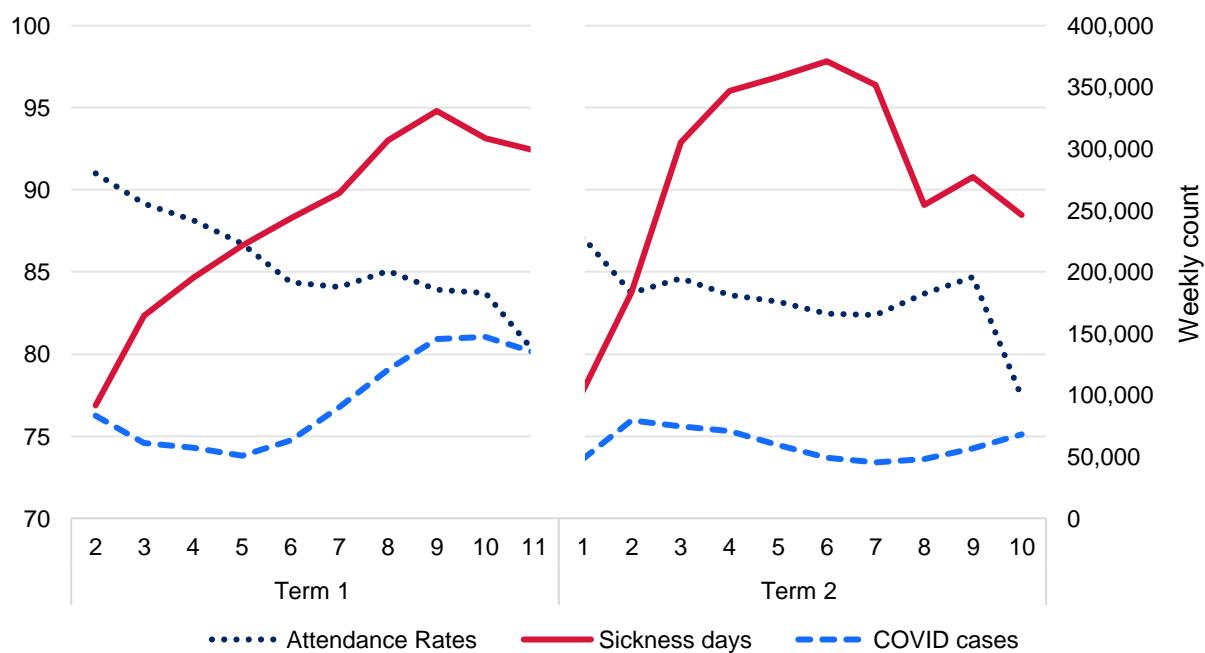
Unjustified days per 1,000 enrolled days increased from 6.5 days in 2021 to 11.3 days in 2022 for primary students, compared to a decrease of 0.4 days for secondary students, from 12.0 days to 11.6 days.

Leave days per 1,000 enrolled days increased by 7.2 days for primary students compared to 4.3 days for secondary students. In addition, the suspensions per 1,000 enrolled days decreased by 1.0 day for secondary students and by 0.2 day for primary students.

Impact of COVID-19, influenza and floods on attendance

To understand the significant increase in absences in 2022, the correlation between absences and COVID-19, influenza and NSW floods was analysed. Figure 14 shows the weekly attendance rates in Term 1 and Term 2 on the primary axis and the corresponding weekly number of COVID-19 cases in NSW and the weekly number of sick days on the secondary axis. In Term 1, it is evident that COVID-19 was a contextual factor in driving the increase in sick days. The number of COVID-19 cases steadily increased throughout Term 1, including the significant breakout from Week 5 to Week 9. This partly explains the incline in the number of sick days, especially from Week 5 to Week 9 in Term 1. It is also evident that the weekly attendance rates declined throughout Term 1 and the further decline from Week 5 may have been partly influenced by the increased number of COVID-19 cases in NSW.

Figure 14: Semester 1 2022 weekly attendance rates (%), student sick days and COVID-19 cases in NSW¹²³

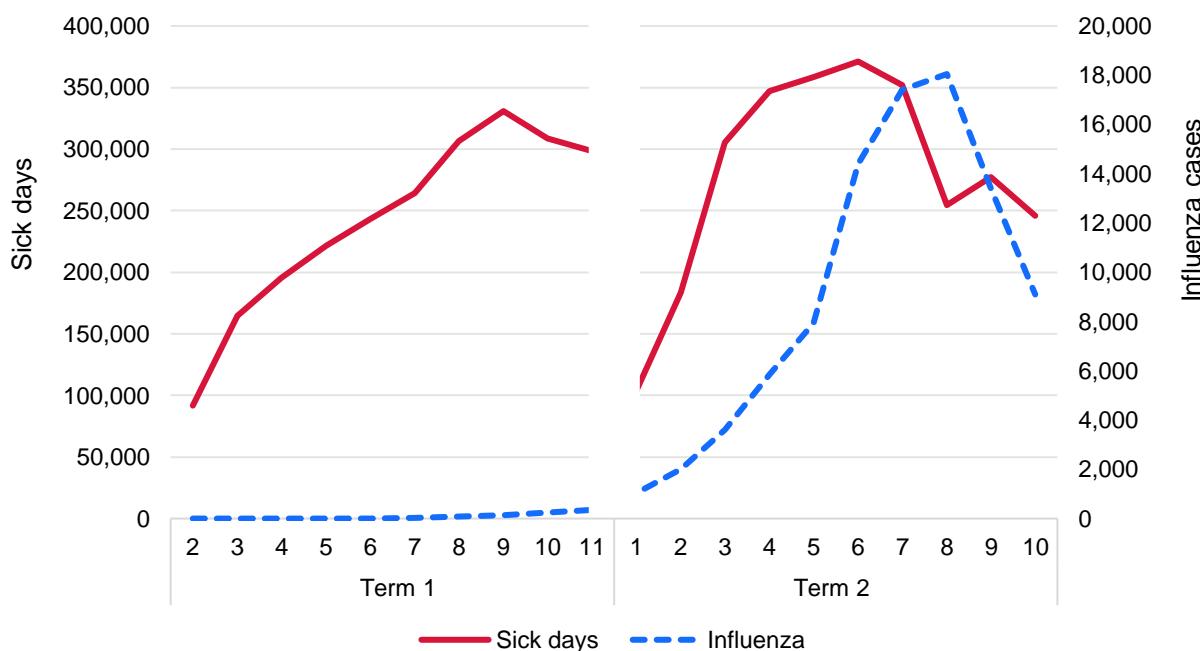


¹ Week 1, Term 1 is excluded from the chart as there was only one school term day in this week

² The COVID-19 data was obtained from [NSW COVID-19 cases data](#). The data was published by NSW Ministry of Health

³ The weekly COVID-19 cases were counted for all confirmed positive PCR and RAT tests for all age groups from Saturday to Friday for each school week in Semester 1, 2022

Figure 15: Semester 1 2022 weekly student sick days and influenza cases in NSW¹⁴⁵



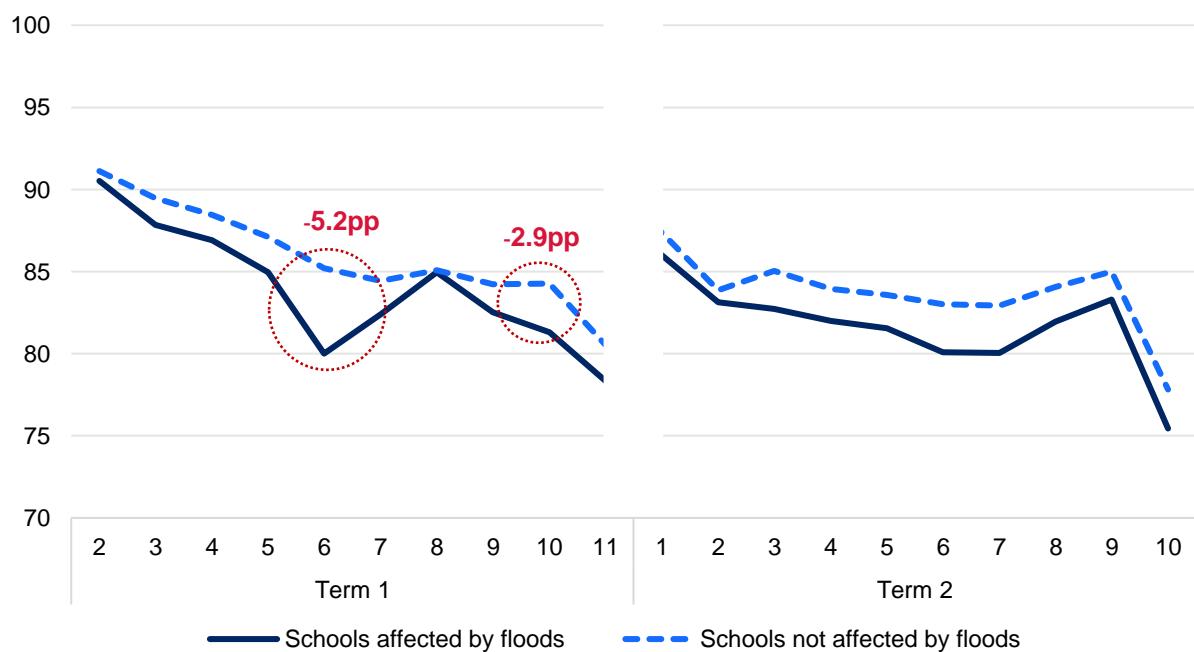
However, the impact of COVID-19 cases on the number of sick days was not evident in Term 2, 2022. The weekly number of COVID-19 cases remained steady while the weekly sick days increased significantly. Figure 15 suggests that this may have been due to the number of increased influenza cases in NSW in Term 2, 2022. The number of influenza cases may be lower than the number of COVID-19 cases as the rapid antigen tests did not test for influenza and it was not a requirement to report self-assessed influenza cases.

⁴ The influenza data was obtained from [COVID-19 weekly surveillance reports – Archive](#). The data was published by NSW Ministry of Health

⁵ The weekly influenza cases were counted for all confirmed positive PCR tests for all age groups with influenza type A, type B and untyped. The cases are counted from Saturday to Sunday for each school week in Term 1, 2022 and from Sunday to Saturday for each school week in Term 2, 2022 due to the availability of data. Data was not available from Week 3 to Week 5 of Term 1, 2022.

Figures 16 and 17 were analysed, comparing schools that were non-operational for at least one day due to floods in Semester 1, 2022 (schools affected by floods) and schools without the known non-operational days due to floods in Semester 1, 2022 (schools not affected by floods). Figure 16 compares the weekly attendance rates of the 2 categories of schools and Figure 17 observes the number of absences days per 1,000 enrolled days of the 2 categories of schools.

Figure 16: Semester 1 2022 weekly attendance rates (%), schools affected by floods vs schools not affected by floods¹



In Figure 16, the attendance rates of schools affected by floods were generally lower than schools not affected by floods. However, in Term 1, the gap between the 2 school groups expanded by 3.0 percentage points from a 2.2 percentage point difference in Week 5 to a 5.2 percentage point difference in Week 6, showing the largest difference in weekly attendance rates of the 2 groups in Semester 1. The gap progressively reduced throughout Term 1 but started expanding again in Week 9 from a 0.1 percentage point difference in Week 8 to a 1.7 percentage point difference in Week 9 and continued to expand to a 2.9 percentage point difference in Week 10. Week 6 to Week 10 were in March when the floods were severe in NSW, showing the impact of floods on attendance rates.

Figure 17: Semester 1 2022 absences per 1,000 enrolled days, schools affected by floods vs schools not affected by floods¹

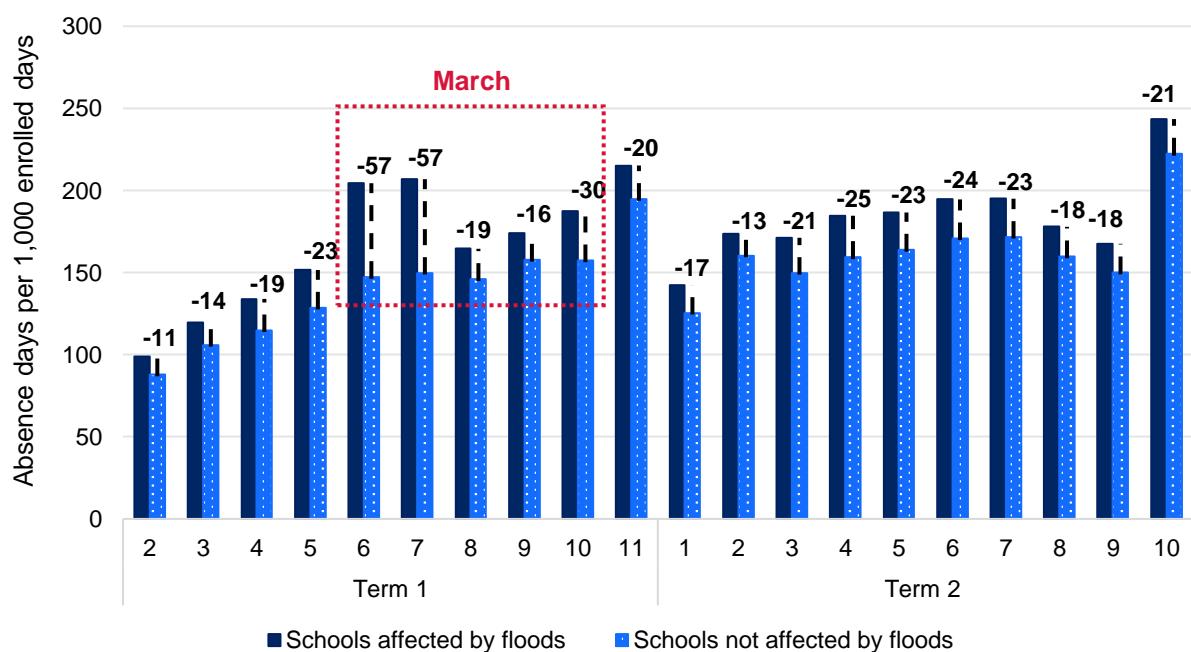


Figure 17 supports Figure 16 as the difference in the number of absence days per 1,000 enrolled days between schools affected by floods and schools not affected by floods widened in March. The number of absence days per 1,000 enrolled days was greater by 22 days on average for schools affected by floods than schools not affected by floods. This difference was significantly larger in Week 6 and Week 7 of Term 1 at 57 days for both weeks. Similarly, the difference was relatively larger at 30 days in Week 10 of Term 1, indicating NSW March floods as one of the factors that influenced an increase in student absences, causing a decline in the student attendance rate.

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 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. 2020 attendance data was not published due to the impact of COVID-19 on student attendance.

This fact sheet includes information on Kindergarten, Year 11 and Year 12, which is additional to the scholastic year groupings described above.

Locations in this fact sheet are determined according to Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) – 2016 Remoteness Structure. This standard outlines 5 possible location areas: major cities, inner regional, outer regional, remote and very remote. This fact sheet at times 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](#)' 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. Reasons for absences

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

- 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.