Chronic Absenteeism

Summit Education Initiative 30 YEARS
30 Years of Progress, A Future of Promise

What is Chronic Absenteeism?

Chronic absenteeism (CA) refers to students missing 10% (18 days) or more of school in an academic year, regardless of whether absences are excused.[1]

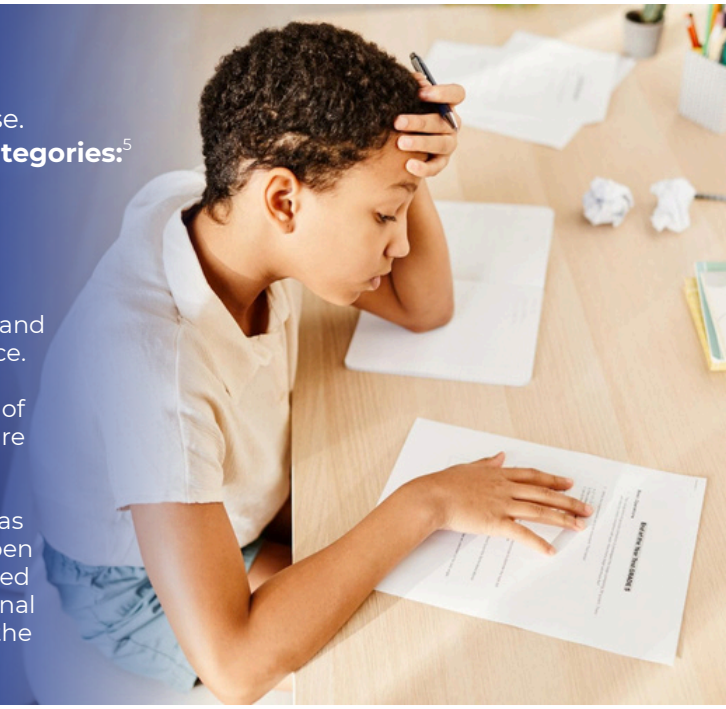
Rates of CA across the country increased dramatically during the COVID-19 pandemic and remain elevated compared to pre-pandemic rates. During the 2024-2025 school year, approximately 22% (10.8 million) of students nationwide were chronically absent, compared to just 15% between 2017 and 2019.[2] During the same year, more than 25% of students (approximately 400,000) were chronically absent across the state of Ohio.[3]

Faucet theory suggests that when students are exposed to instruction and other resources provided by schools, they exhibit higher academic achievement even when accounting for a variety of demographic factors.[4] Conversely, when the resource faucet is shut off, such as when students are chronically absent, academic progress slows and some students may even lose what they previously gained.

What Contributes to Chronic Absenteeism?

Like most social phenomena, CA does not have a singular cause. **Generally, issues contributing to CA fall under four broad categories:**[5]

- **Barriers to attendance**, including illness, non-academic responsibilities, and inconsistent access to housing, food, transportation, and services.
- **Aversion to school**, often induced by unfair disciplinary practices and struggles with mental health, behavior, and academic performance.
- **Disengagement from school** due to lack of stimulation, absence of meaningful relationships with peers or school personnel, and failure to earn credits.
- **Misconceptions** about the detrimental impact of absences, such as absences only being an issue if they are unexcused or if they happen in high school. Additionally, since COVID-19, an adaptation to relaxed attendance expectations and the introduction of virtual instructional practices has been posited as a contributor to misconceptions of the importance of in-person attendance.[2]



Effects of Chronic Absenteeism

Chronic absenteeism is important to track as it serves as an early indicator for several short-and-long-term outcomes for youth of all ages:

- **Reduced likelihood of reading at grade level**[1]
- **Lower educational attainment**/academic achievement[6,7]
- Increased rates of **delayed graduation or dropping out**[7,8]
- **Weakened college and career readiness**, contributing to less employment and economic mobility[6,7]
- **Initiation of substance use** and increased **likelihood of juvenile justice system involvement**[7,9]

Chronic Absenteeism

Chronic Absenteeism Trends: National and Statewide

2024-2025 SCHOOL YEAR

OHIO ABSENTEEISM

25% of students in Ohio were chronically absent

2024-2025 SCHOOL YEAR

NATIONWIDE ABSENTEEISM

22% *(10.8 million)* of students nationwide were chronically absent[2,3]

40%+

of students in the 5 largest districts in Ohio were chronically absent

pointing to higher rates in urban school districts[8]

69%

of all districts nationally reported significant, high, or extreme rates of CA

significant (10-20%), high (20-30%), extreme (30%+)

CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM NATIONALLY & STATEWIDE

CA affects students

of color, from low-income households, and living with disabilities

at higher rates than their peers.[2,8]

urban school districts are 6x more likely to report extreme CA

compared to rural and suburban districts[2]

Chronic Absenteeism Trends: Summit County

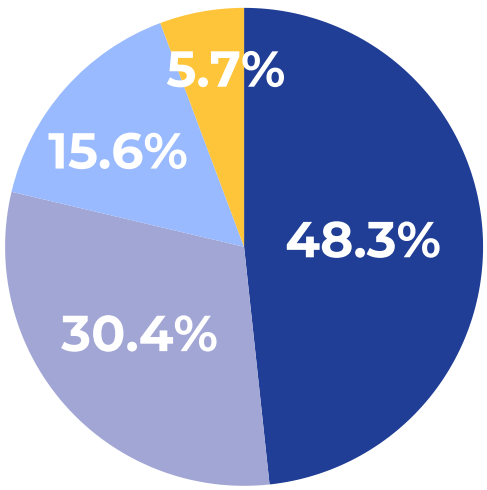
While national and statewide trends are useful for understanding CA at a larger scale, local trends often vary depending on several factors. To aid the goal of reducing CA at the local level, absenteeism trends for Summit County students are outlined here.

Attendance categories defined by the State of Ohio (percentage of school hours missed):

- **Satisfactory:** Less than 5%
- **At-Risk:** 5-10%
- **Moderate:** 10-20%
- **Severe:** 20%+

2025-2026 SCHOOL YEAR

SUMMIT COUNTY ABSENTEEISM



7.48%

mean absence rate

meaning the average student was At-Risk of being chronically absent

21.27%

(13,195) students were CA

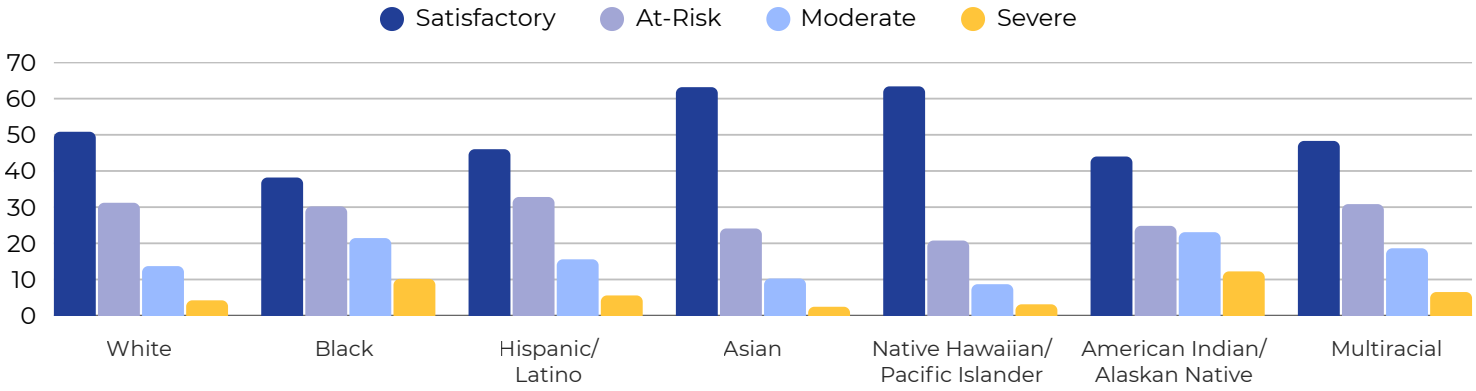
which is notably lower than the 25% rate for all of Ohio during the 2024-2025 school year

Chronic Absenteeism

Chronic Absenteeism Trends: Summit County by Factors

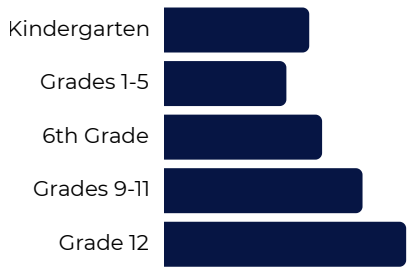
RACE/ETHNICITY

Chi-2 analysis suggests that attendance differences exist based on race and ethnicity. **Black, American Indian/Alaskan Native, and multiracial students had the highest rates of Moderate CA and Severe CA.** Hispanic/Latino students had the next highest rates of CA, while White, Asian, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students had the lowest rates of CA.



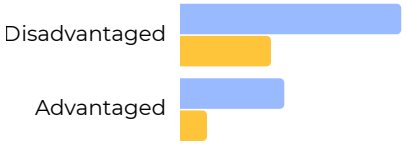
GRADE LEVEL

Absenteeism data included students from kindergarten through 12th grade. Analyses show that CA rates were higher in kindergarten (19% total) than in grades 1-5, with overall rates of CA remaining around 16-16.5% during these years. CA rates began to increase in 6th grade, quickly surpassing kindergarten rates at 20.69%. CA rates continued to grow during high school, hovering around 25.5%-27% from grades 9 through 11, and peaking at 31.73% in grade 12.

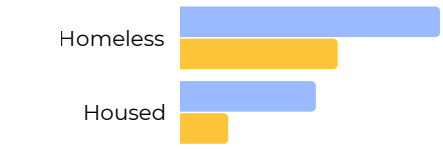


ECONOMIC DISADVANTAGE AND HOMELESSNESS

Economically disadvantaged students in Summit County had a Moderate CA rate of 20.70% and a Severe CA rate of 8.48%, compared to just 9.73% and 2.48%, respectively, for their non-disadvantaged peers.

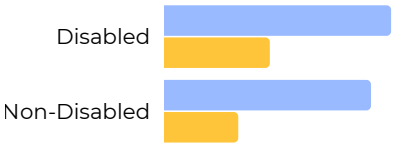


Students experiencing homelessness tend to face similar or more severe barriers to attendance as those who are economically disadvantaged. Homeless students in Summit County had a Moderate CA rate of 29.20% and a Severe CA rate of 17.68%, compared to just 15.23% and 5.36%, respectively, for their housed peers.



DISABILITY

Students living with a disability had a Moderate CA rate of 17% and a Severe CA rate of 7.9%, compared to 15.49% and 5.53%, respectively, for their non-disabled peers.



Evidence-Based Prevention and Intervention Strategies

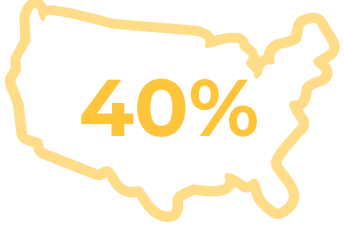
Tracking CA and identifying consequences with which it is associated is only half the battle. It is crucial to the futures of our youth that we use evidence-based approaches to reducing CA. The Ohio Department of Education and Workforce, for example, has set the goal of reducing statewide CA by 50% by the end of the 2028-2029 school year.[10]

To this end, they developed 5 action steps to guide districts in their efforts to reduce CA:[11]

1. **IDENTIFY THE RIGHT VOICES**
   through engagement with students, their families, school staff, and the community.
2. **SET A COMMON PURPOSE**
   by reaching agreement about the importance of attendance and clarifying what needs to be accomplished to reach attendance goals.
3. **DEVELOP A DATA-DRIVEN CONTINUUM OF SUPPORTS**
   by identifying barriers, creating tailored approaches to addressing those barriers, and organizing available supports into tiered systems to adequately address needs.
4. **COMMUNICATE AND COLLABORATE**
   through sharing data and analyses, and seeking input from families and community partners.
5. **MONITOR PROGRESS**
   by tracking the impact of the tiered system of supports on CA and adjusting approaches based on data

Attendance Works provides a guideline of tiered support for students, closely aligning with the continuum of supports offered by the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce:[12]

- **Foundational Supports:** general practices aimed at producing a positive learning environment for all students
- **Tier 1:** strategies aimed at preventing absenteeism for all students
- **Tier 2:** more personalized interventions designed to remove barriers to attendance for students who meet the definition of chronically absent (10% or more of school year missed)
- **Tier 3:** interventions for chronically absent students who miss 20% or more of school. This intensive intervention may involve support from schools, health agencies, and housing/social services.



of districts nationwide identified reducing CA as a top 3 most pressing challenge in the 2024-2025 school year.[2]

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