

Chronic Absenteeism

This term is used to describe when students are absent from school 10% or more school time in a year. The term includes any form of physical absence from medical reasons, to vacations, tournaments, punishments (i.e. suspensions), and even just skipping.



For Research on This Topic...

Birioukov, A. (2021). Absent on absenteeism: Academic silence on student absenteeism in Canadian education. *Canadian Journal of Education/Revue Canadienne de l'éducation*, 44(3), 718–731. <https://doi.org/10.53967/cje-rce.v44i3.4663>

Garcia, E., & Weiss, E. (2018, September 25). *Student absenteeism: Who misses school and how missing school matters for performance*. Economic Policy Institute. <https://www.epi.org/publication/student-absenteeism-who-misses-school-and-how-missing-school-matters-for-performance/>

Whitley, J. (2024, October 22). School absenteeism in Canada: causes, challenges, and collaborative solutions. *Education Canada*, 64(1). Retrieved January 27, 2026, from <https://www.edcan.ca/articles/school-absenteeism-in-canada-causes-challenges-and-collaborative-solutions/>.

Whitley, J., McBrearty, N., Rogers, M. A., & Smith, J. D. (2025). The current state of school attendance research and data in Canada. *Education Sciences*, 15(8), 964. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci15080964>

Yin, M., Szabo, J. & Baumgartner, E. (2023). Social and Emotional Skills and Chronic Absenteeism. Houston, TX: *Houston Education Research Consortium*, Kinder Institute for Urban Research, Rice University.

Find these sources and more on the web



MISSED TIME CREATING KNOWLEDGE GAPS

Addressing Problems & Exploring Solutions



Who is Chronically Absent?

33% Of elementary aged students in the Toronto Catholic District Board as of 2022-2023 following a 9% increase from the previous year

Of elementary aged students in Newfoundland and Labrador in the same year, following a similar increase **50%**

70% Of secondary students from Newfoundland in the same year

Of a 23,073 student group of 15 year old students in Canada (roughly 92% of the 15-year-olds in Canada in 2022) **30%**

How is it Affecting the Students? Academically...

Students that miss as little as 1 or 2 days a month will experience a small disadvantage of -0.1 SD (likely able to reach grades in the 90s but not 100%), while students who miss 10+ days a month will experience a much larger disadvantage of -0.64 SD (likely able to reach grades in the mid 70s)

Socioemotionally...

Chronic absenteeism doesn't just affect academic performance but social and emotional skills as well.

Students that exhibit chronic absenteeism are 18 times less likely to be cooperative, 15 times less likely to have good emotional control, 4.5 times less likely to be high energy.

Types of Absence

Avoiding School for Anxiety-Related Reasons

- Worries of academic, emotional, or social struggles
- Can be related to mental health struggles

Skipping School

- Students choosing to skip school days or classes
- Seeing friends, out-of-school stressors, etc.

Parent Supported Absences

- Parents or guardians keeping their kids out of class
- Helping/supporting family, protective parents, etc.

School-Initiated Absences

- Modified schedules, student safety concerns, suspensions, de-registrations, or even expulsion

The 4 separate types are often interconnected or combined in some way

Most Common Student groups that...

Miss 3+ Days per Month

- 26% of Students on IPPs
- 24.1% of Hispanic English second language students
- 24% of Indigenous students
- 23.2% Free-lunch-eligible students
- 23% of Students of colour
- 20.2% of Female identifying students

Miss 10+ Days per Month

- 3.9% of Hispanic English second language students
- 3.2% of Students on IPPs
- 3.2% of Asian English second language students
- 2.3% Free-lunch-eligible students
- 2.2% of Indigenous students
- 2% of Students of colour

What can be Done to Help?

- 01** Collect data, learn about your students lives. Attendance is more than just present or absent. Knowing what is going on in your students' lives can go a long way in helping them.
- 02** Plan, create, and implement collaborative and supportive interventions to help these students like...

Whole school & preventative interventions

- Different clubs & groups
- Socio-emotional learning programs
- Safe spaces
- Collecting observations and feedback regarding missed time
- Communication with home

Small group and targeted program interventions

- Peer mentor groups at school
- Peer parent support groups
- Buddy programs
- Study/tutoring groups

Intensive and individualized interventions

- Home Visits
- Alternative setting for content completion
- IPPs
- Accommodations
- Mental and Emotional Therapies
- On-site crisis intervention team

