

# Chronic Absenteeism

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TRENDS IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY

**Live Well Schools**

County of San Diego



# PARTNERSHIPS FOR HEALTHY SCHOOLS



VISIT OUR SITE!

## TO COMBAT CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM...

**MORE THAN  
81,000**

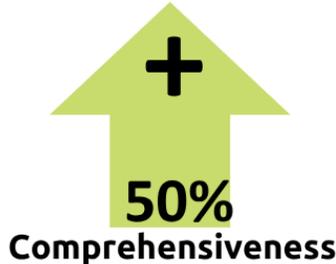
SAN DIEGO COUNTY  
STUDENTS MISSED  
10% OR MORE OF  
SCHOOL DAYS IN  
SY 2023-2024

Since School Year (SY) 2023-2024, the number of chronically absent students in San Diego County has decreased from **24.7%** to **20.1%**, a difference of **over 19,000 students**.



## ...DISTRICTS NEED STRONG WELLNESS POLICIES...

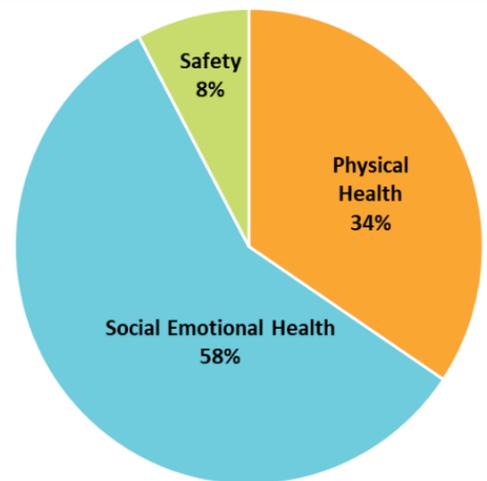
WellSAT\* scores of district Wellness Policies show significant improvement over the past 10 years.



\*The WellSAT 3.0 is a national assessment tool to identify where local school wellness policies are strong and where they could be improved to meet current requirements and best practices.

## ...SUPPORTED BY FUNDING.

- In 2023-2024, San Diego County school districts collectively spent **\$190 million** on Health and Wellness actions, a decrease of **48%** from the previous year.
- This number represents **8%** of the state funding provided, a decrease of **10%** over the previous year.
- Similarly, itemization of funding decreased by **46%** from the previous year (**52% to 28%**) making district spending for Health and Wellness less transparent.



To learn more about your district's trends in these key areas, contact [Pam Smith](#) of Live Well Schools.



**LIVE WELL  
SAN DIEGO**

Revised March 2025

# Chronic Absenteeism

## ATTENDANCE MATTERS

### 1 What is chronic absenteeism?

Defined as a student missing 10% or more of enrolled school days, whether excused or not (typically, ~18 days) in California



### 2

#### Why is this a problem?

When schools have a lot of absent students, a breakdown of positive learning conditions occurs



### 3 What is the Wellness Connection?

Research tells us that "place" has a significant impact on well-being. Adults need to create healthy schools where children feel they belong and can thrive.



### THE IMPACT...

Missing too many days of preschool, kindergarten, and first grade can set students back in their reading abilities. Students who drop out of high school are at a higher risk of having health and social problems, negatively impacting a student's life-long success.

### RESOURCES

Visit the Live Well Schools website:  
[Chronic Absenteeism](#)  
[Tools For Schools](#)  
[Live Well Schools Program Map](#)

**Brief Background:**

Chronic absenteeism is defined as a student missing 10% or more of enrolled school days, whether excused or not (typically, ~18 days) in California. Chronic absenteeism should not be confused with truancy (unexcused absences) or average daily attendance (ADA) rates which are applied to state report cards and used for federal accountability.

There are many individual and external factors that contribute to chronic absenteeism but in general, certain student subgroups, such as youth in foster care, youth experiencing homelessness, students with disabilities, and English learners have higher rates of chronic absenteeism.

**Data Summary:**

Below are compiled chronic absenteeism rates for all 42 school districts in San Diego County. The percentage of chronically absent students was calculated using publicly available data from the [California Department of Education](#). Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of chronically absent students for a specific subgroup by the total number of the subgroup students in the school.

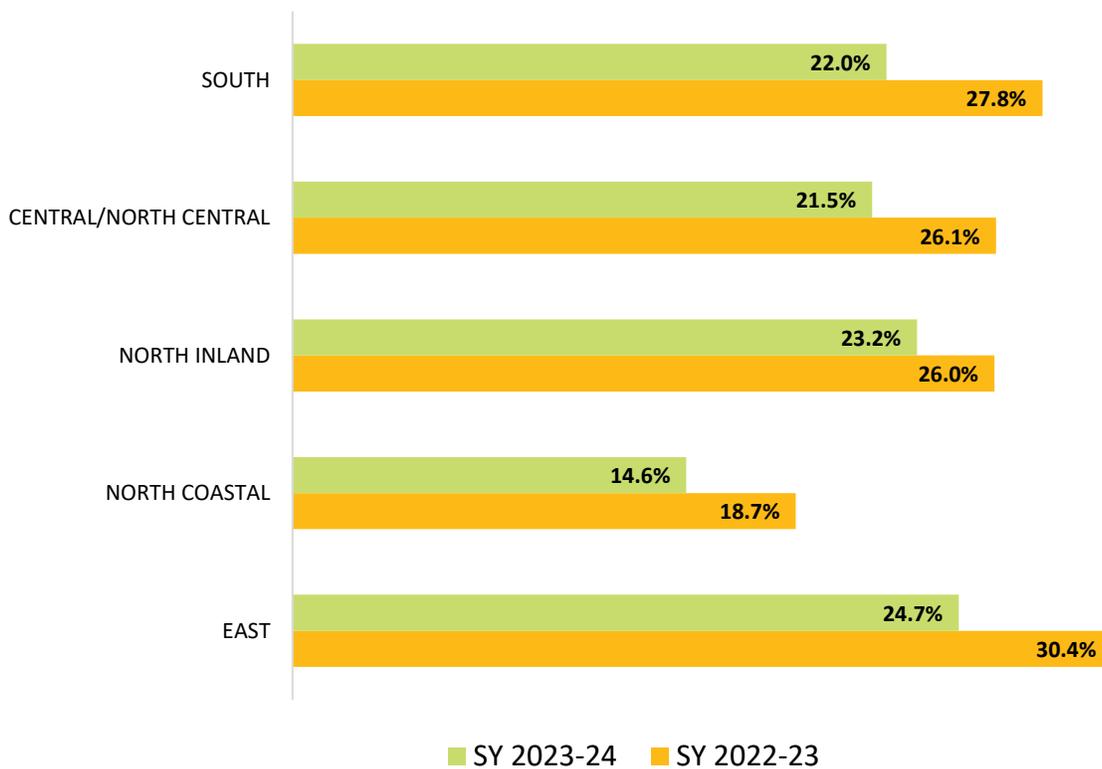
The data below is for non-charter schools only and “#” refers to the number of chronically absent students. Highlighted information indicates an overall San Diego County average chronic absenteeism rate that exceeds the state of California average.

Absenteeism Rates for ALL Students in School Year	San Diego County		California Average
	# Chronically Absent Students	% Chronically Absent	
<b>2022-23</b>	100,454	<b>24.7%</b>	25.4%
<b>2023-24</b>	81,109	<b>20.1%</b>	20.6%

Absenteeism Rates by Student Subgroup	% Chronically Absent in SY 2023-24		
	Difference from Previous Year	San Diego County Average	California Average
Male	-4.7	20.0%	20.5%
Female	-4.6	20.1%	20.5%
Foster Youth	+0.1	39.6%	36.6%
English Learners	-7.6	26.8%	22.8%
Students with Disabilities	-5.4	29.0%	29.7%
Homeless	-5.4	39.2%	36.1%
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	-5.5	27.0%	25.4%
Migrant	-6.4	23.3%	18.0%

*\*Sections highlighted yellow indicates a chronically absent % that is higher than the state %*

## Regional Averages for Total Chronic Absenteeism Rates



Above is a graphical comparison of regional averages for total chronic absenteeism rates by school year. Chronic absenteeism rates decreased across all regions in San Diego County from School Year 2022-23 to School Year 2023-24.

- **Find** resources to support better attendance on the [Tools for Schools](#) searchable database from Live Well Schools.
- **Learn** what County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency programs are in, or could be in, your schools by using the [Live Well Schools Map](#).
- **Contact** [Live Well Schools](#) for additional information and support.

Recognizing that students living in foster care face have very high rate of chronic absenteeism, HHSA's Child and Family Well-Being department offers specific supports and strategies to address the unique challenges these students face:

### **1. Identify and Support:**

- Have a designated staff member as a point of contact for students with chronic absenteeism. If possible, conduct home visits for youth with chronic absenteeism to address and work through barriers.
- Regularly communicate with guardians or caseworkers to understand specific challenges these students may face.
- Pair youth with mentors to provide support, encouragement, and guidance.
- Offer small group therapy or programs such as COMPACT that work with youth and partner with other supports to combat absenteeism.

### **2. Address Basic Needs**

- Offer transportation assistance or bus passes to ensure students can get to school.
- Allow flexibility in assignment deadlines and attendance policies to accommodate unavoidable disruptions.
- Offer flexibility and tailor schedules to timeframes where youth are more likely to attend school and be successful. Need to take into consideration the required number of instructional minutes and if this is feasible to be implemented.
- Have school supplies available for youth and let youth know how they can request these supplies from the school.

### **3. Awareness and Training**

- Conduct training for all staff members on the unique challenges faced by foster and homeless youth.
- Raise awareness among all educators and peers to foster a culture of empathy and reduce stigma.
- Organize community outreach events or workshops focusing on the needs of foster and homeless youth.

### **4. Monitoring and Evaluation:**

- Regularly monitor attendance and academic progress of foster and homeless youth.
- Use data to identify trends and adjust support strategies as needed.

### **5. Long-term Planning:**

- Develop transition plans for students moving between schools or into independent living situations.

### **6. Incentive Programs:**

- Establish a reward system to recognize and encourage regular attendance.