



# Absenteeism in Tennessee schools

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# Agenda

- Absenteeism definitions
- Absenteeism in the state
- Chronically absent students
- Lost instructional time due to disciplinary action
- Disciplinary action disparities across student groups
- The relationship between attendance and student outcomes

# Absenteeism definitions



# Definitions of terms

- **Absent:** Student is marked not present at school, for either unexcused or excused reasons. According to the state attendance policy, a student who is absent for half of the school day should be marked absent.
- **Excused absent:** A student is absent due to excused reasons. This usually requires documentation. However, what constitutes an excused absence is determined by district policy\*.
- **Unexcused absent:** A student is absent due to unexcused reasons. District policy defines an unexcused absence\*.

\*Excused or unexcused absences are a matter of local school board policy as long as the local policy is not in conflict with state law, [State Board of Education Rules, Regulations and Minimum Standards](#) and the Student Membership and Attendance Accountability Procedures Manual.

**(NOTE: See School Approved Activities Section D-104 and B-105)**

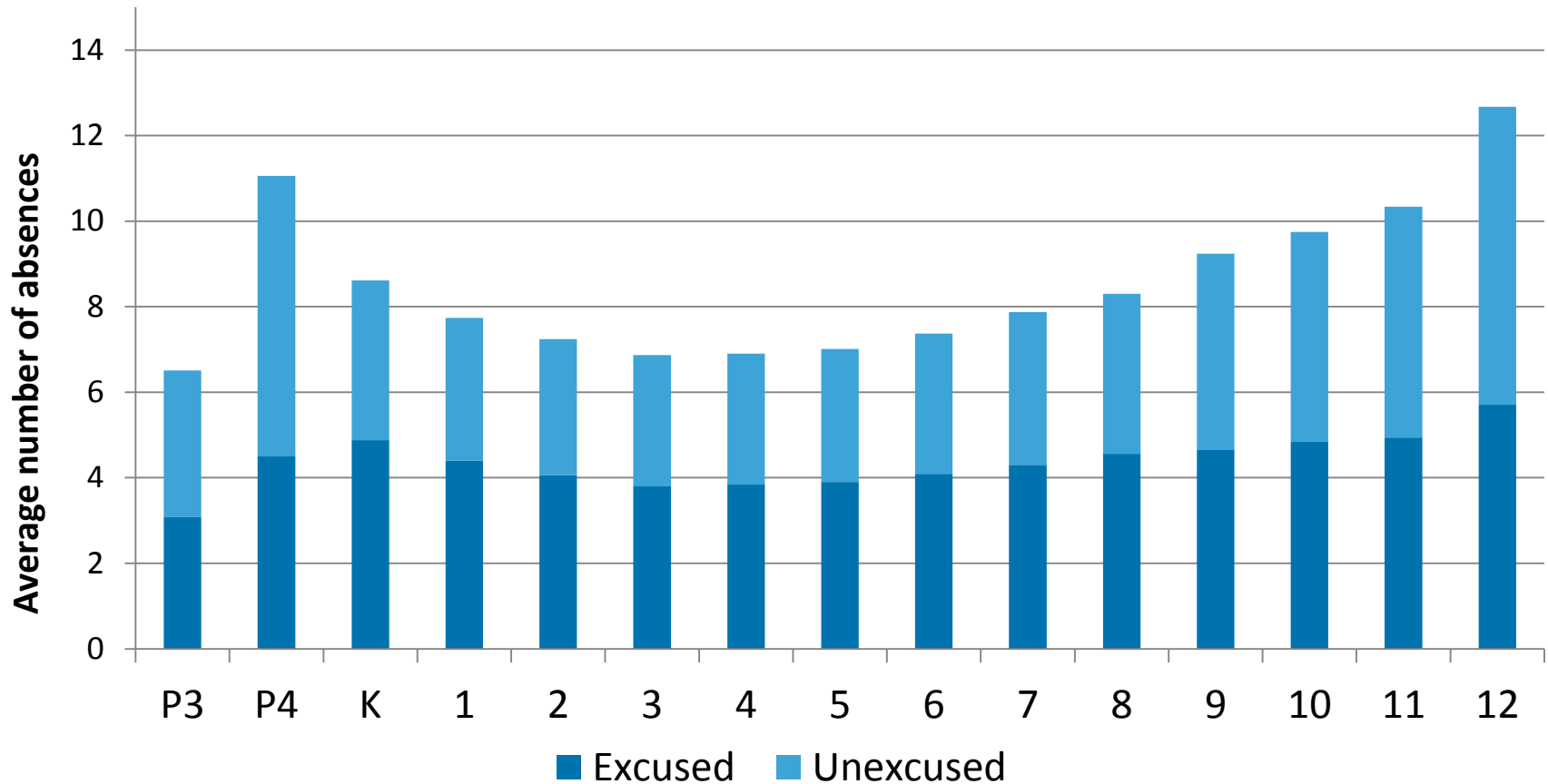
# Buckets of absenteeism

- **Chronic absenteeism:** absence rate greater than 10%.  
In a 180-day school year, a student is missing more than 18 days.
- **High absenteeism:** absence rate greater than or equal to 6% and less than 10%.  
In a 180-day school year, a student is missing between 11 and 18 days.
- **Mid absenteeism:** absence rate greater than or equal to 3% and less than 6%.  
In a 180-day school year, a student is missing between 6 and 10 days.
- **Low absenteeism:** absence rate less than 3%.  
In a 180-day school year, a student is missing less than 6 days.

# Absenteeism in the state

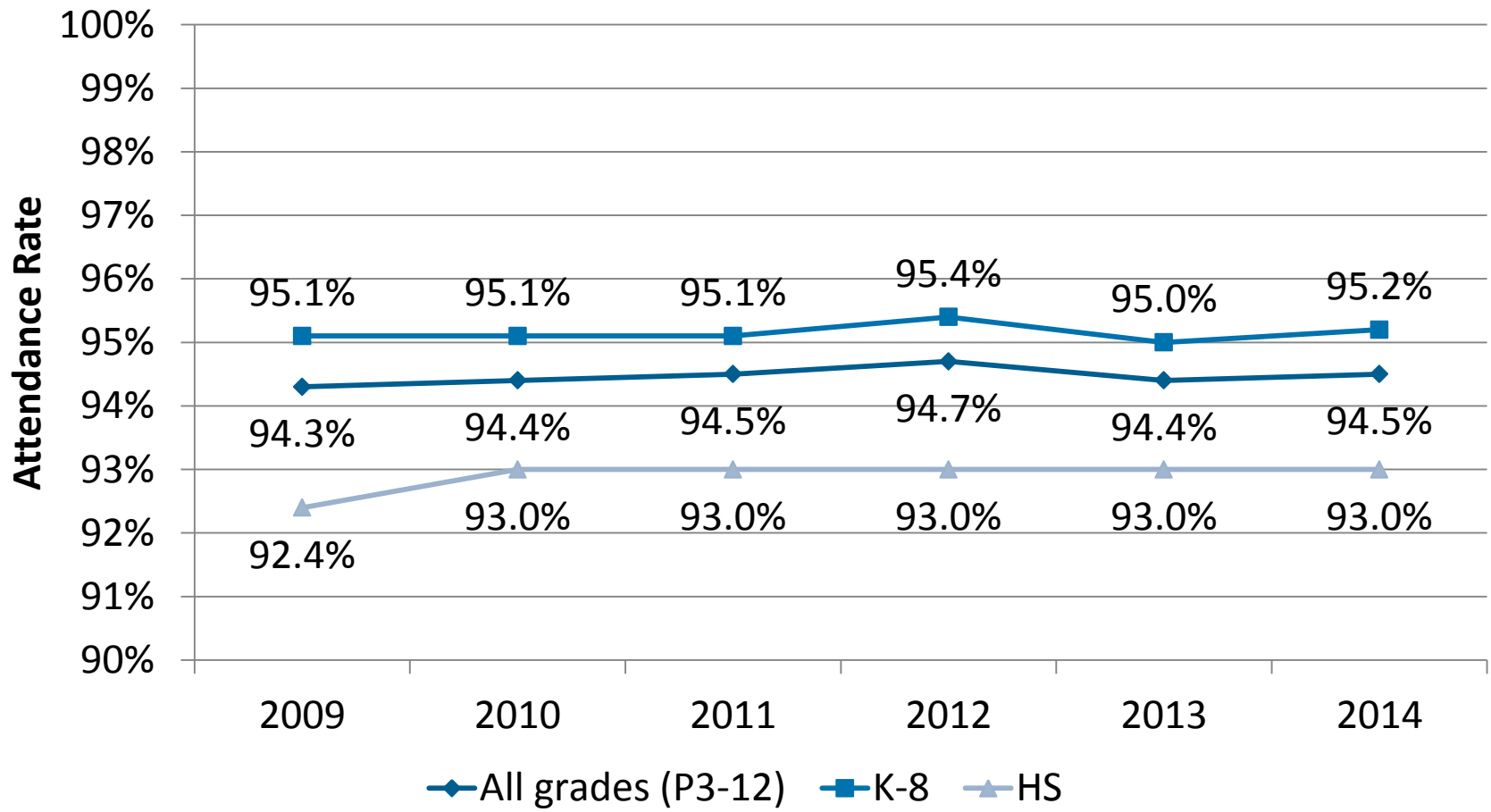


# On average, Tennessee students missed 8 days of school last year.



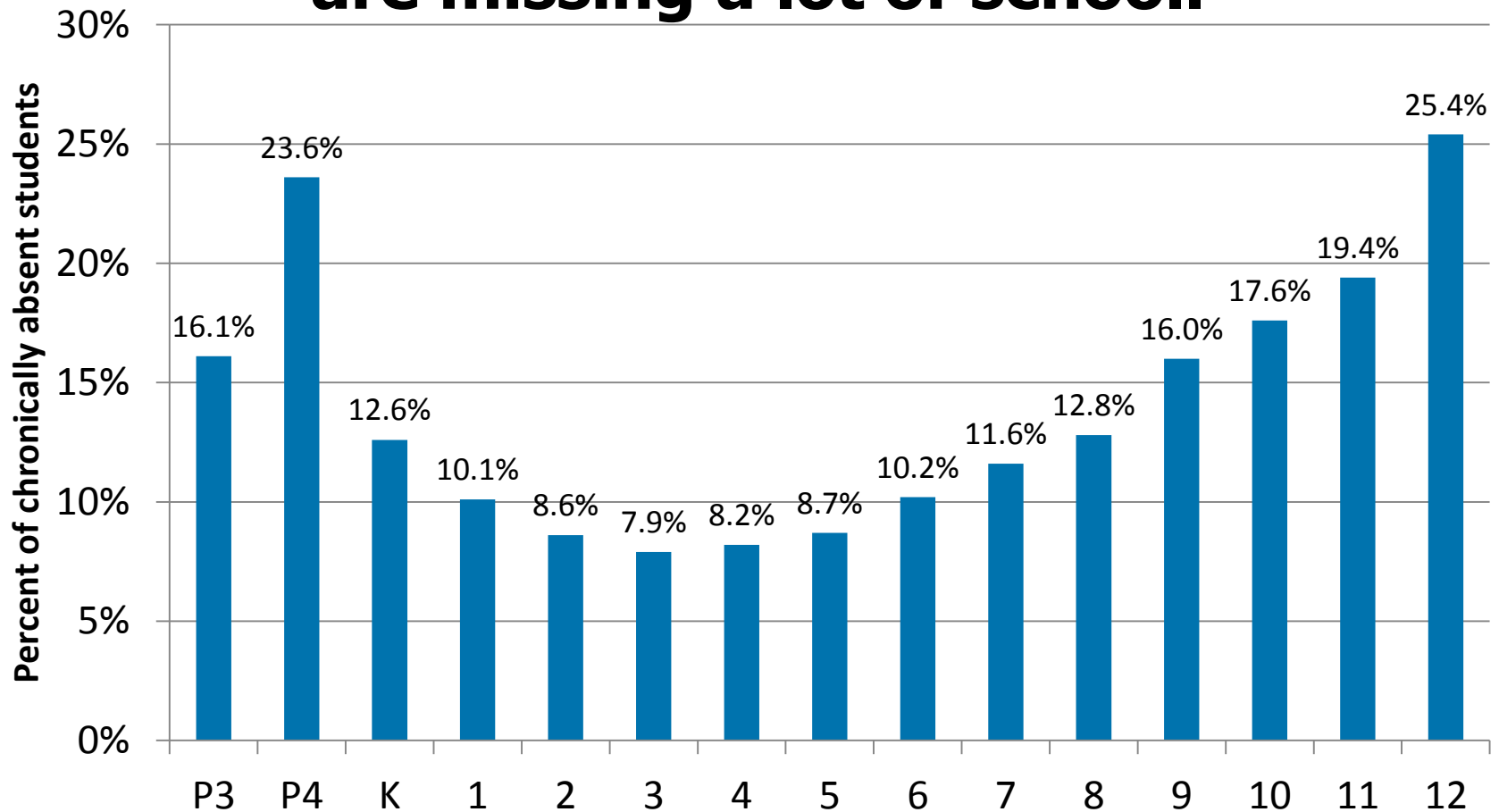
Each bar represents a grade level.

# Attendance has been stable across the last six school years.



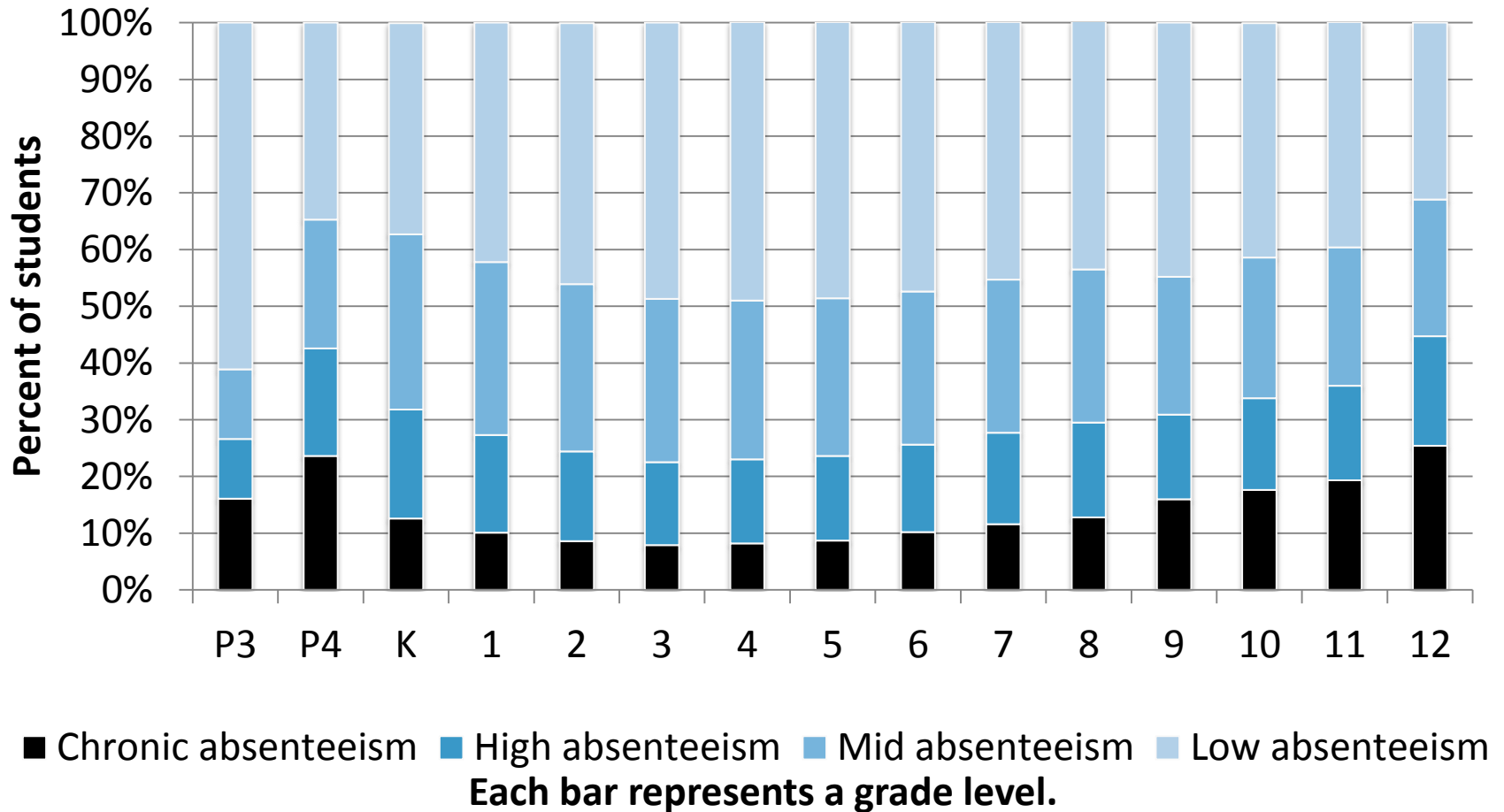


# However, the attendance rate hides the fact that some students are missing a lot of school.



Each bar represents a grade level.

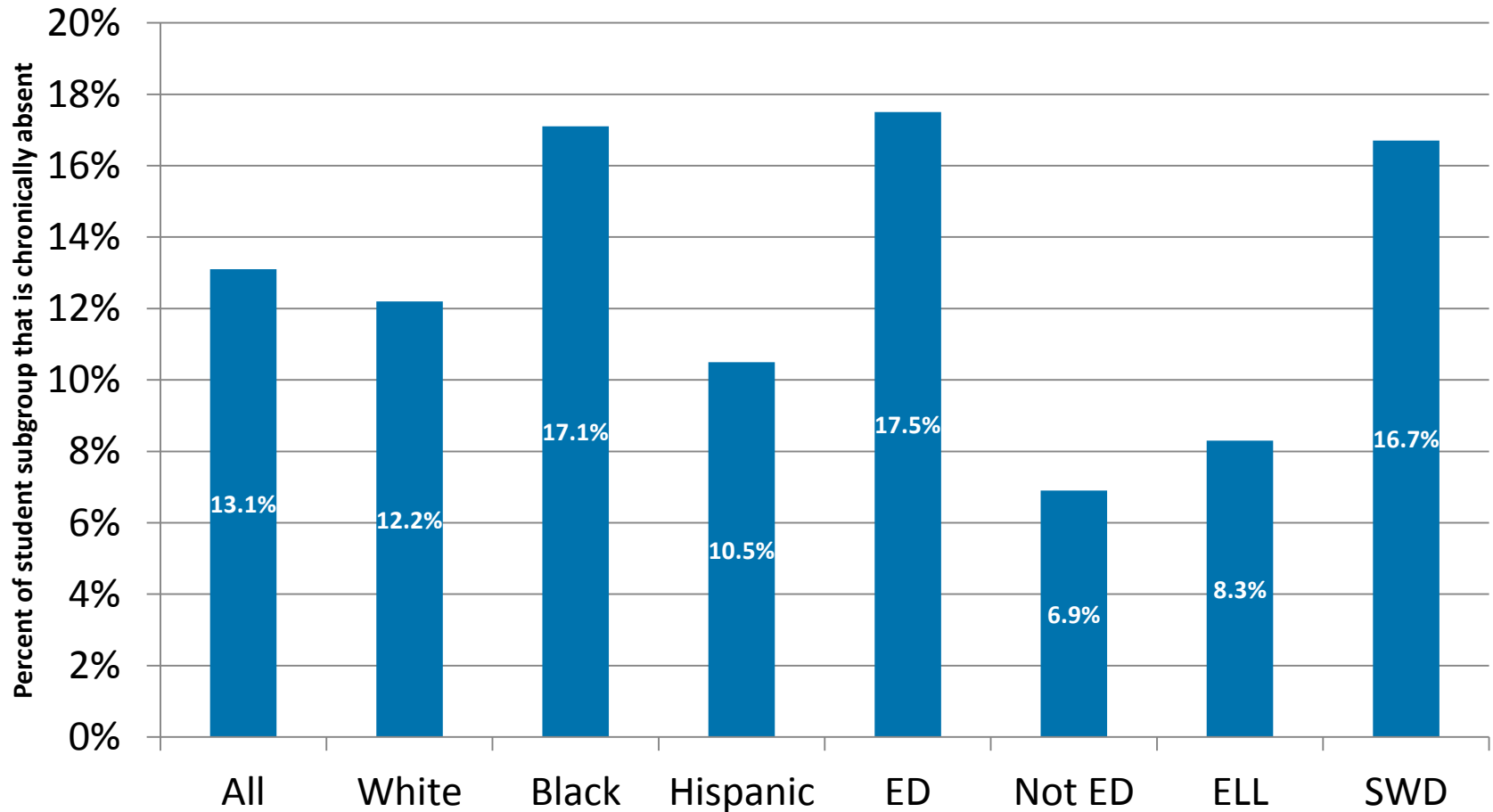
# Over half of the students in the state miss more than one week of instruction in an 180-day school year.



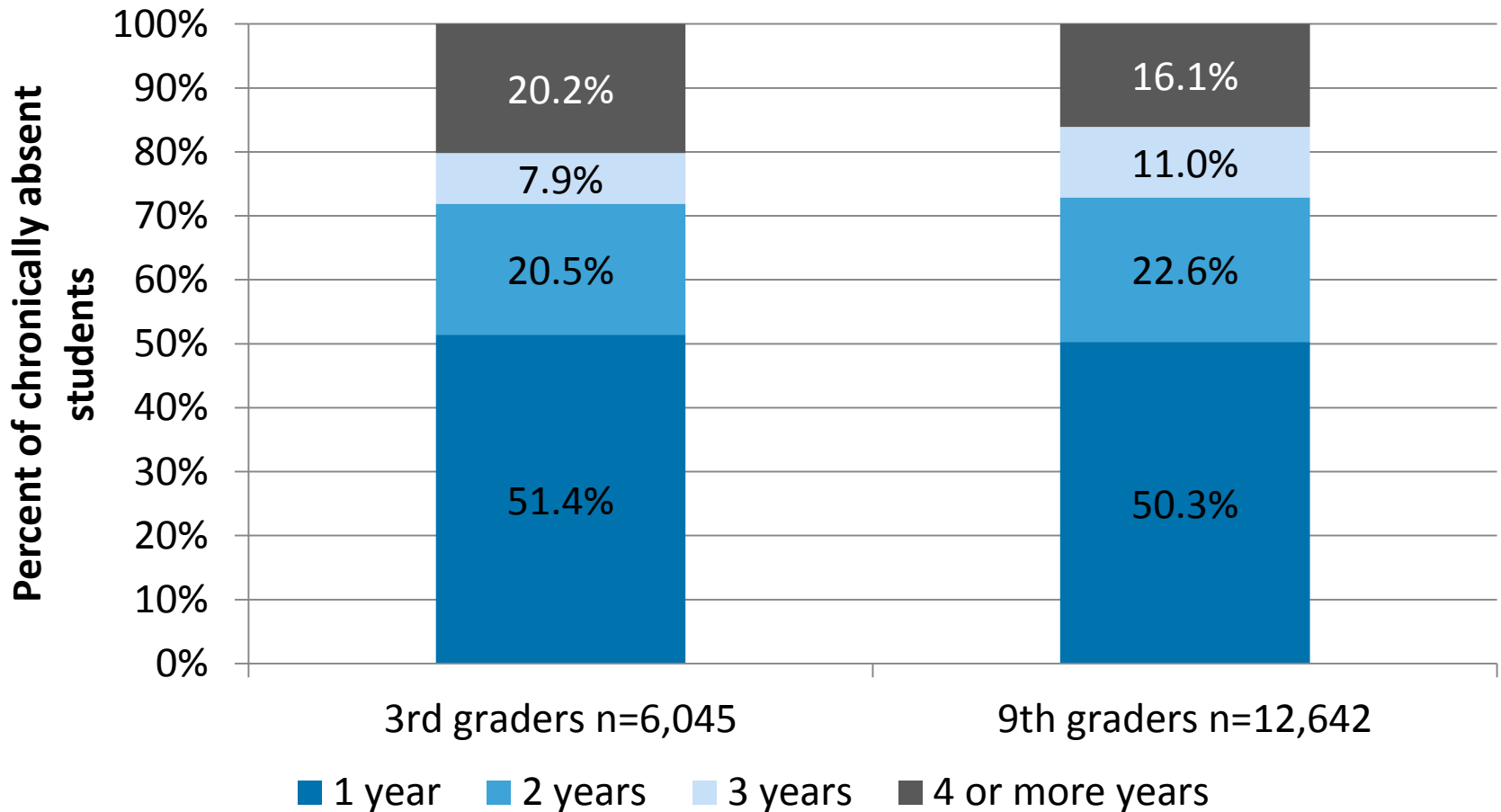
# Chronically absent students



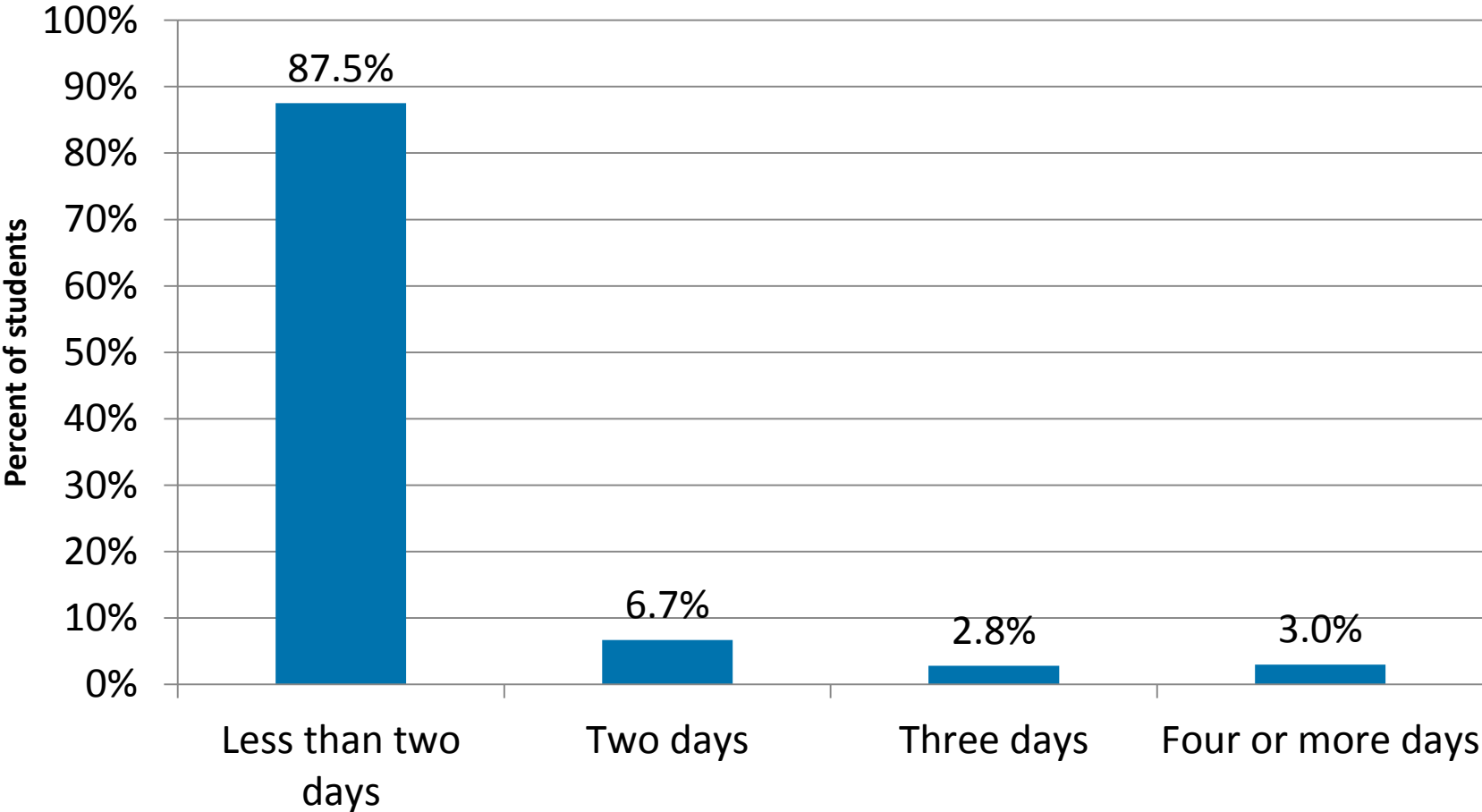
# Some student subgroups are overrepresented in the chronically absent student population.



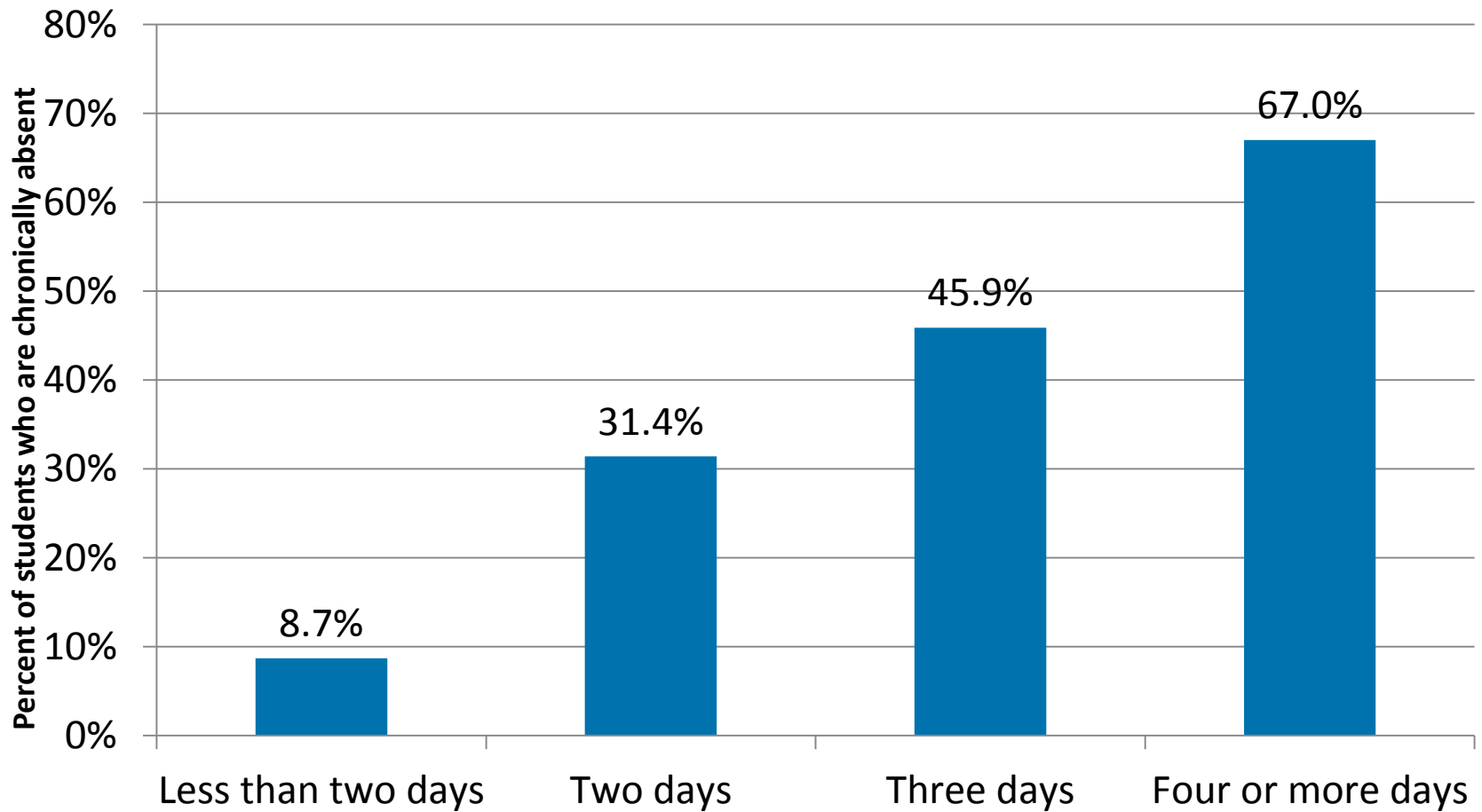
# About half of chronically absent students in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades have been chronically absent for multiple years in a row.



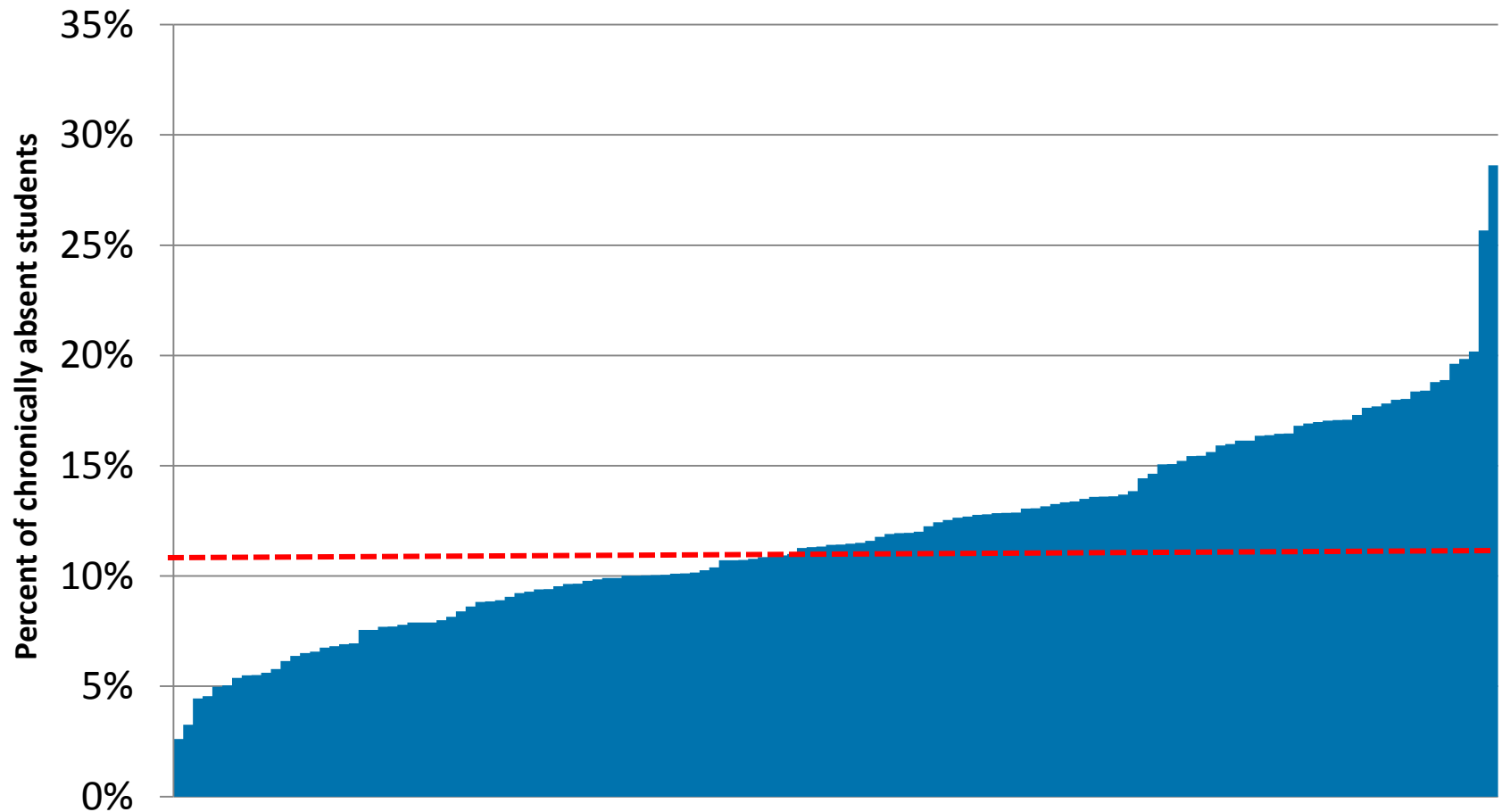
# The vast majority of students miss less than two days of schools in August.



# Students missing two or more days in August are five times as likely as their peers to be chronically absent.



# The percent of chronically absent students differs substantially across districts.



Each bar represents a district.



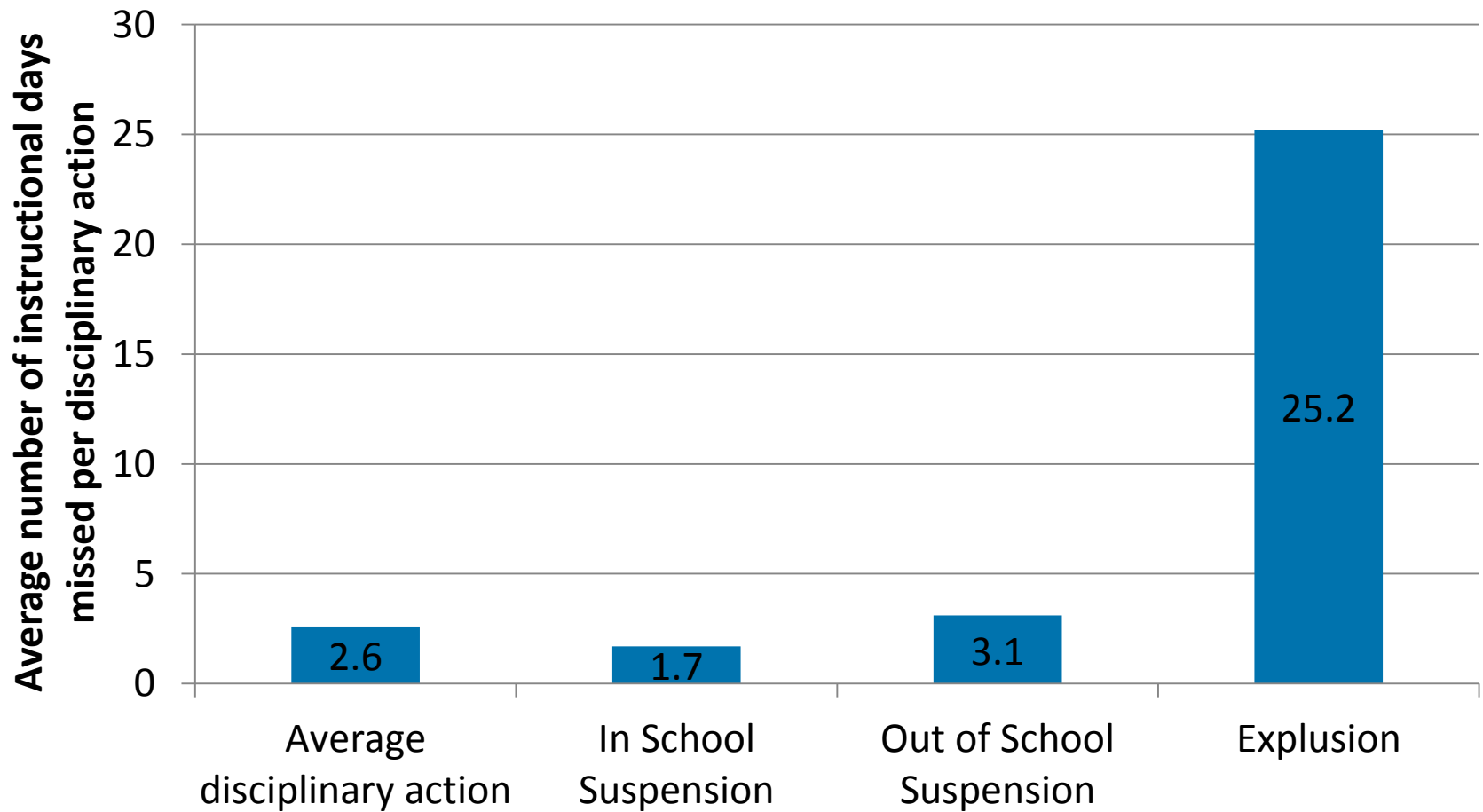
# **Lost instructional time due to disciplinary action**



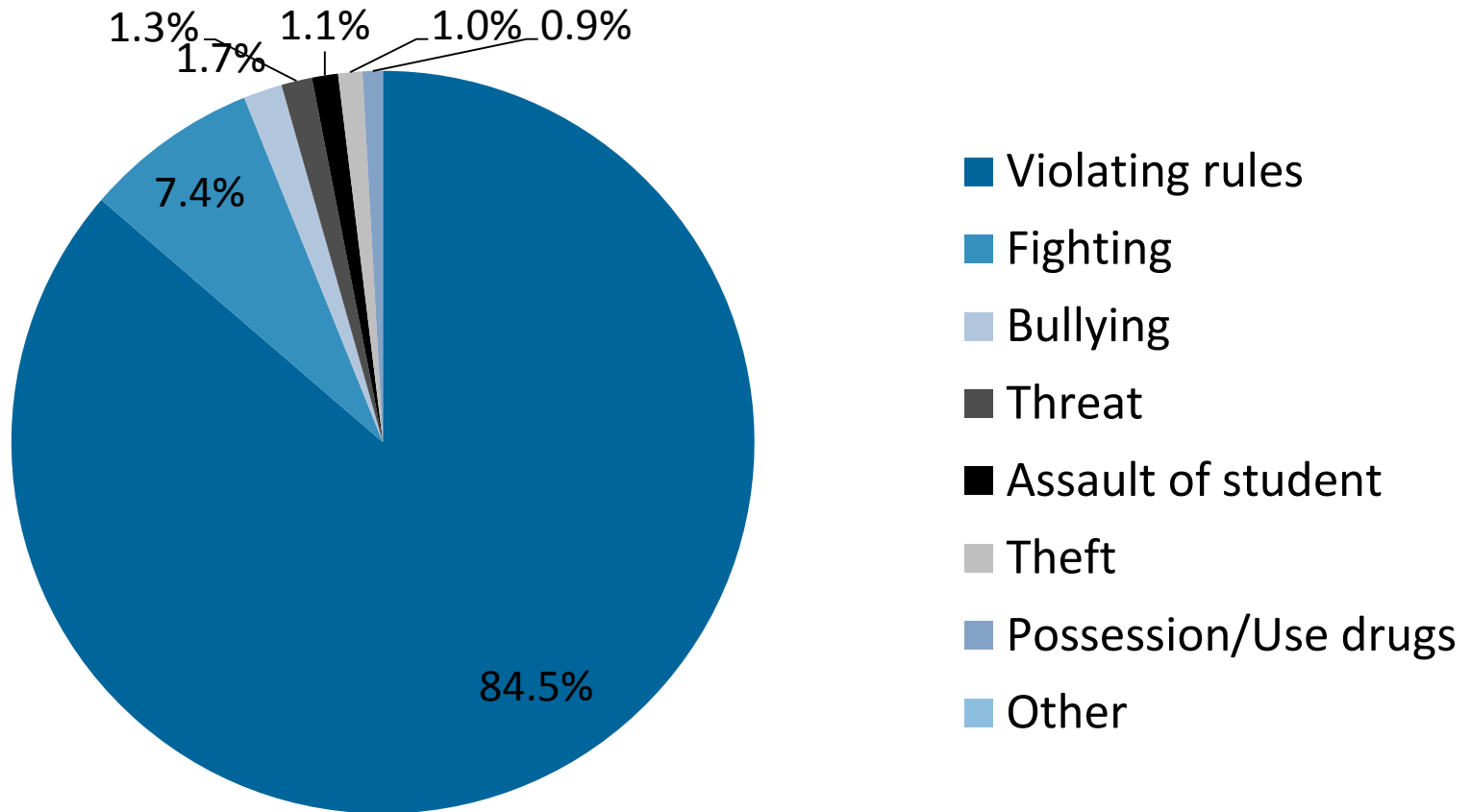
# Disciplinary actions are actions that result in the removal of a student for more than half of an instructional day.

- **In school suspension:** The student was removed from his or her regular classroom and assigned to an in-school suspension program for 10 or fewer days.
- **Out of school suspension:** The student was removed from his or her regular classroom and barred from school grounds for 10 or fewer days and did not receive educational services.
- **Expulsion:** The student was expelled from all school district settings, for more than 10 days, with total cessation of educational services.
- **Change of Placement:** The student was assigned to another school facility or program (for more than 10 days) that allowed him/her to continue to participate in the general curriculum at a school setting.

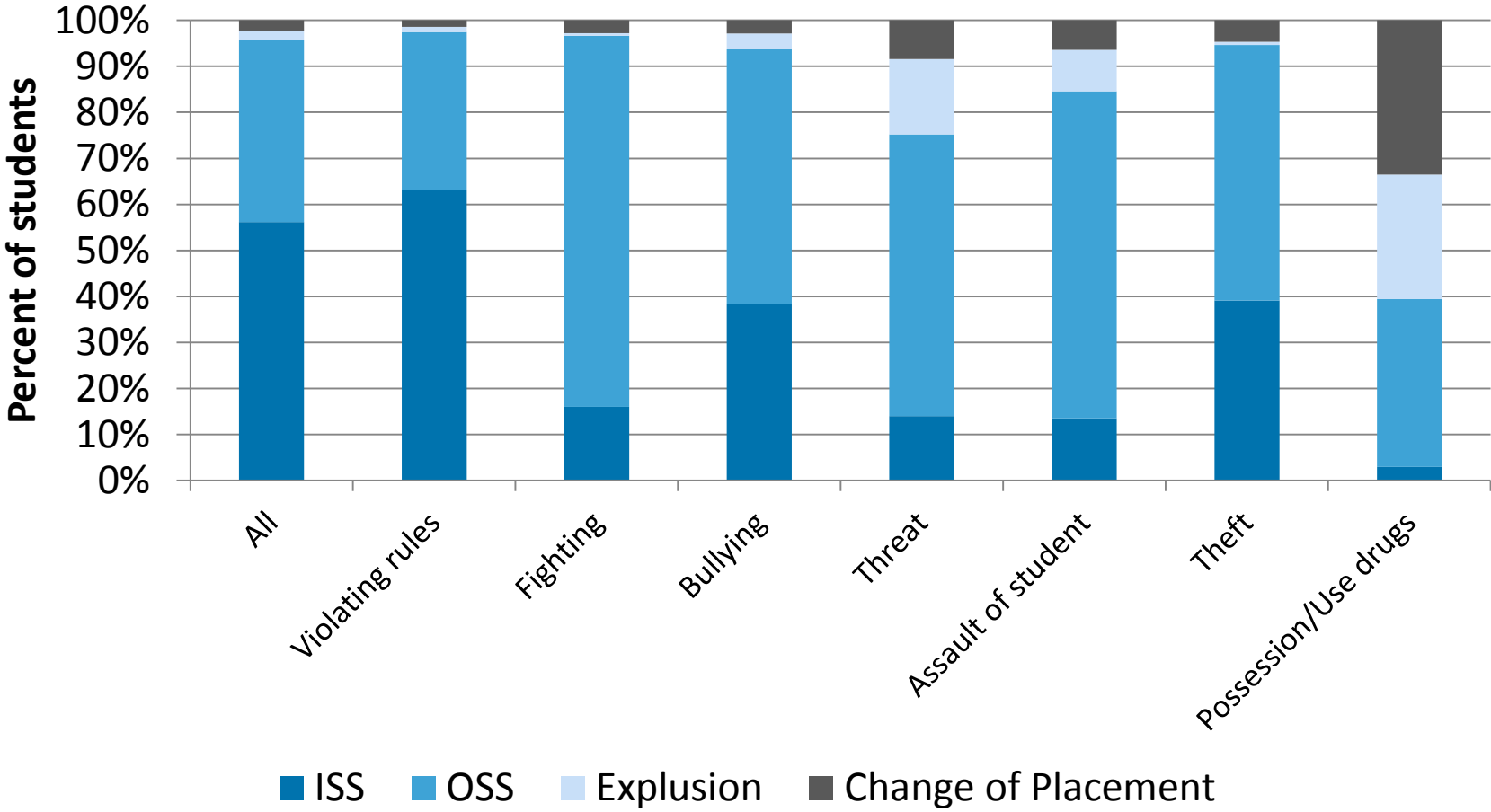
# On an average school day, about 5,000 Tennessee students are absent from their classroom due to a disciplinary action.



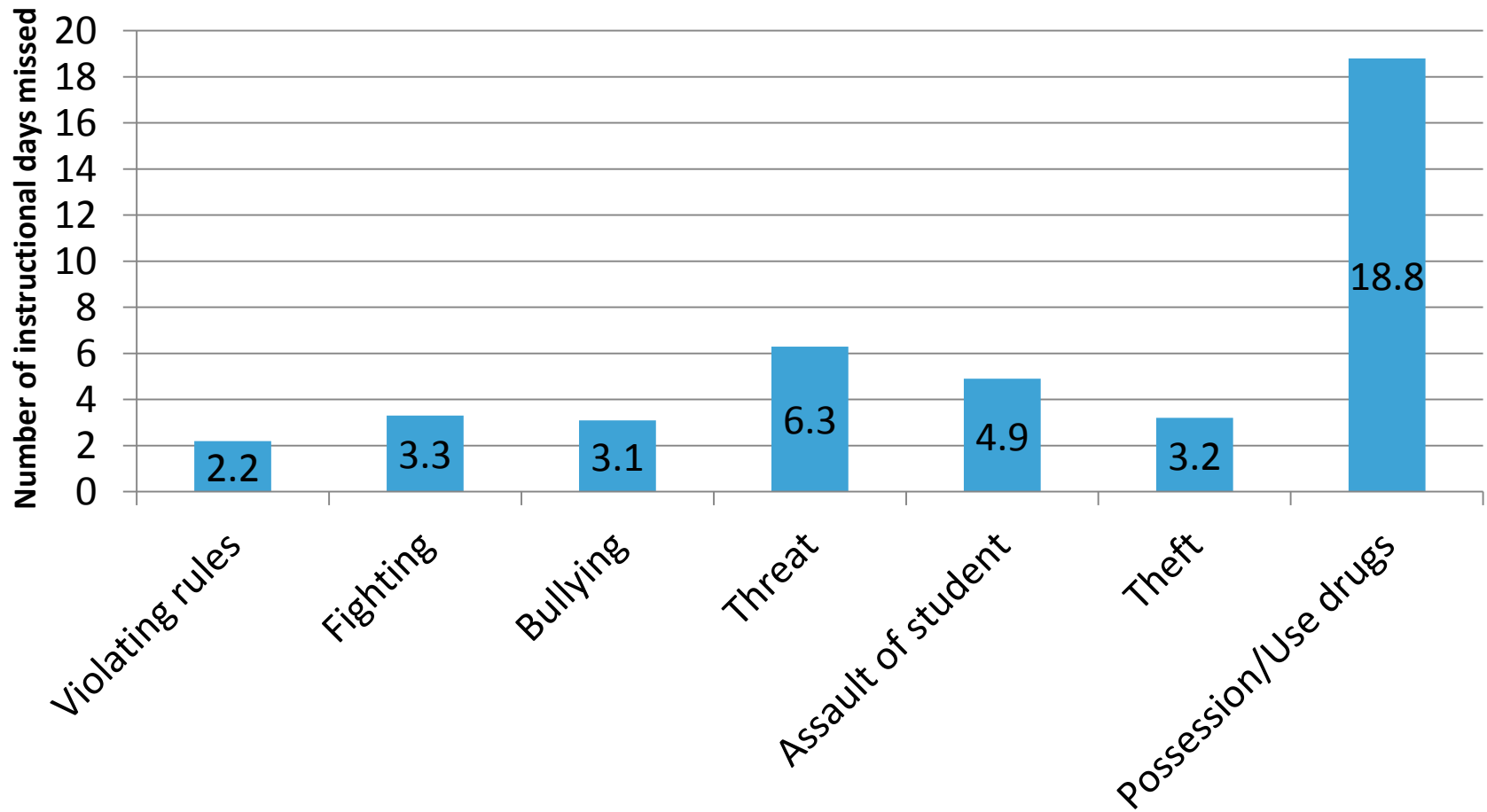
# The vast majority of students receive disciplinary actions due to violation of school rules.



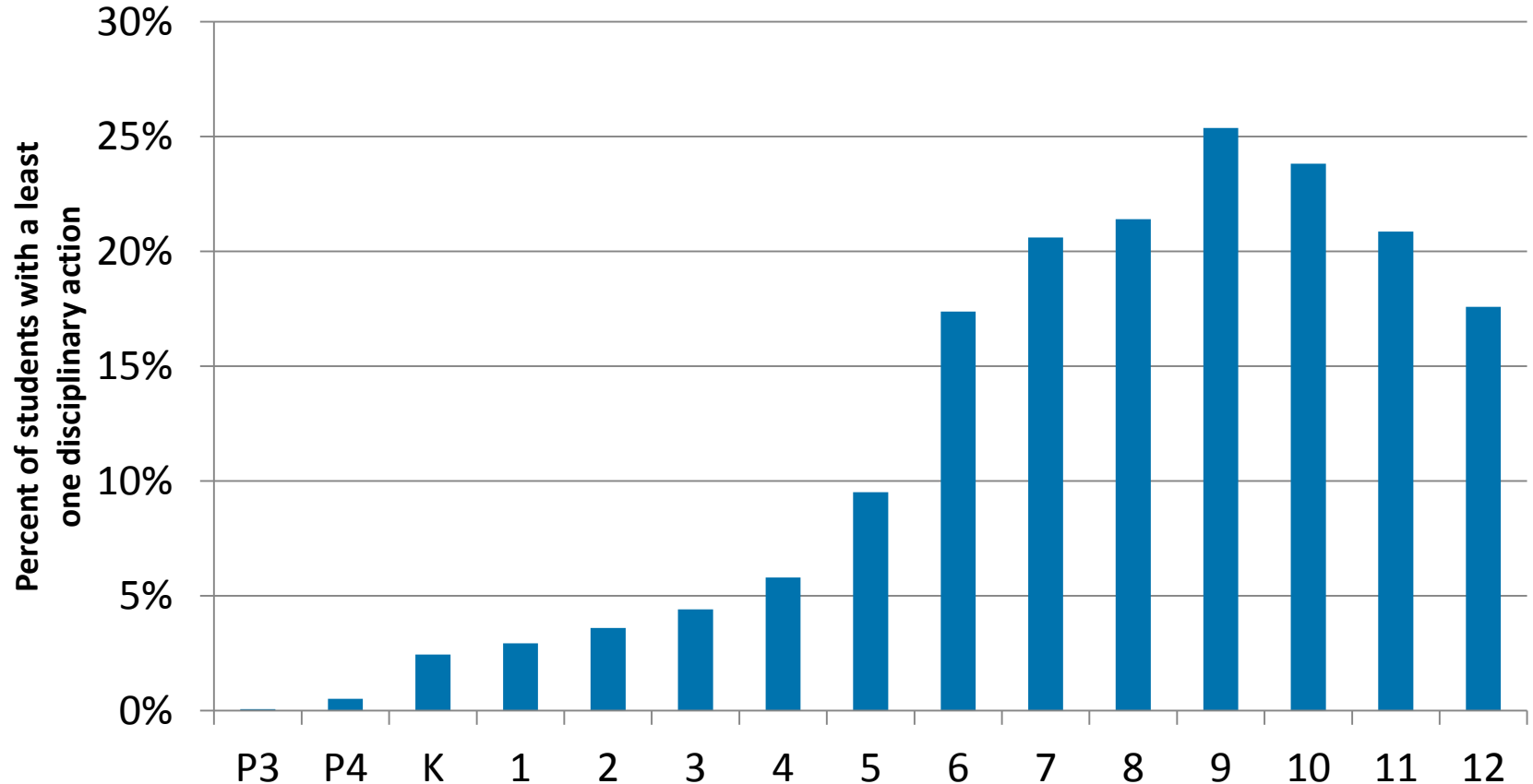
# The type of disciplinary action differs by the disciplinary reason.



# The number of instructional days missed varies by the disciplinary reason.



# In 2013, one in four 9<sup>th</sup> graders experienced at least one disciplinary action.



Each bar represents a grade level.

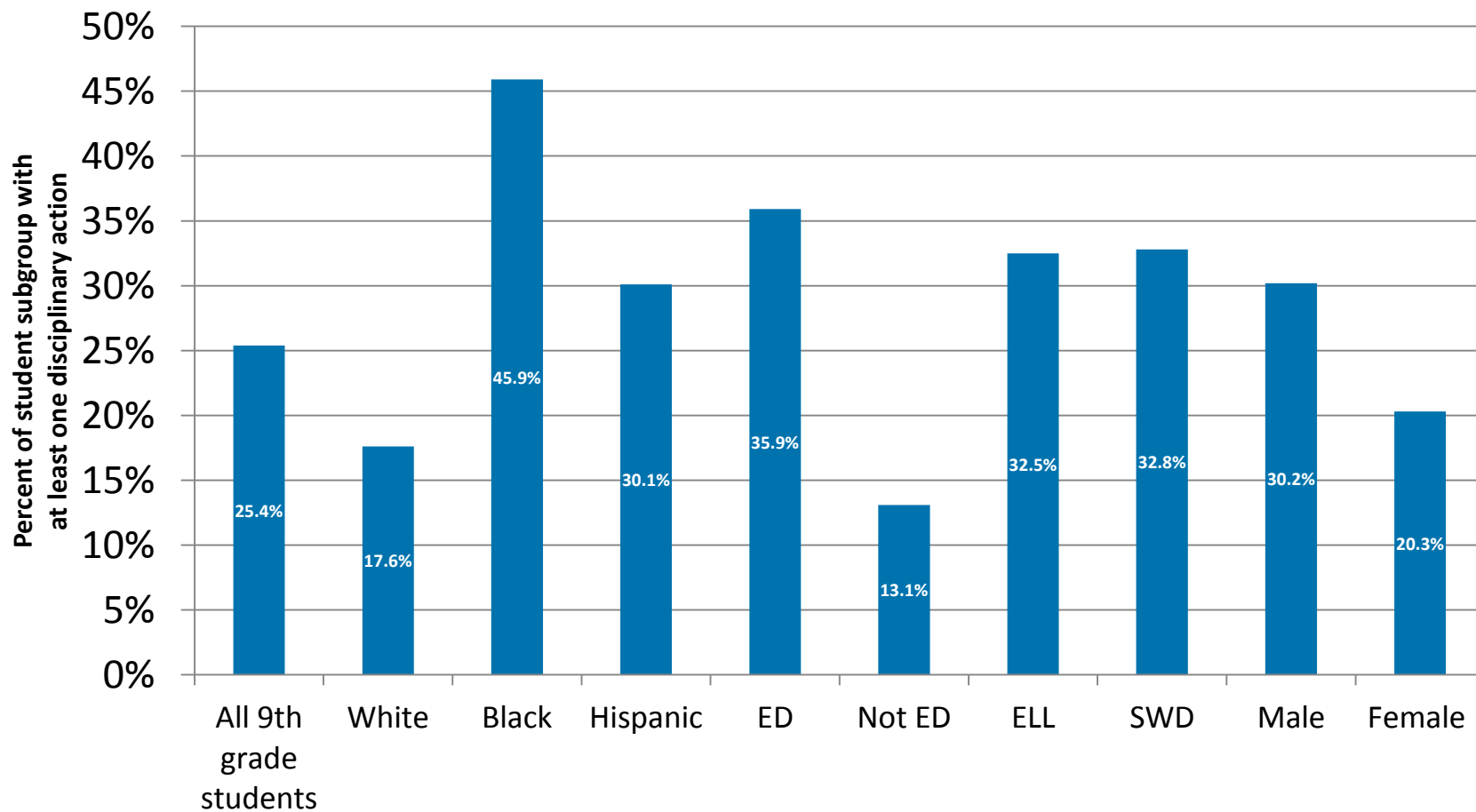
# Disciplinary action disparities across student groups

Note: The following slides focus only on 9<sup>th</sup> graders.  
However, these trends are similar across all grades.

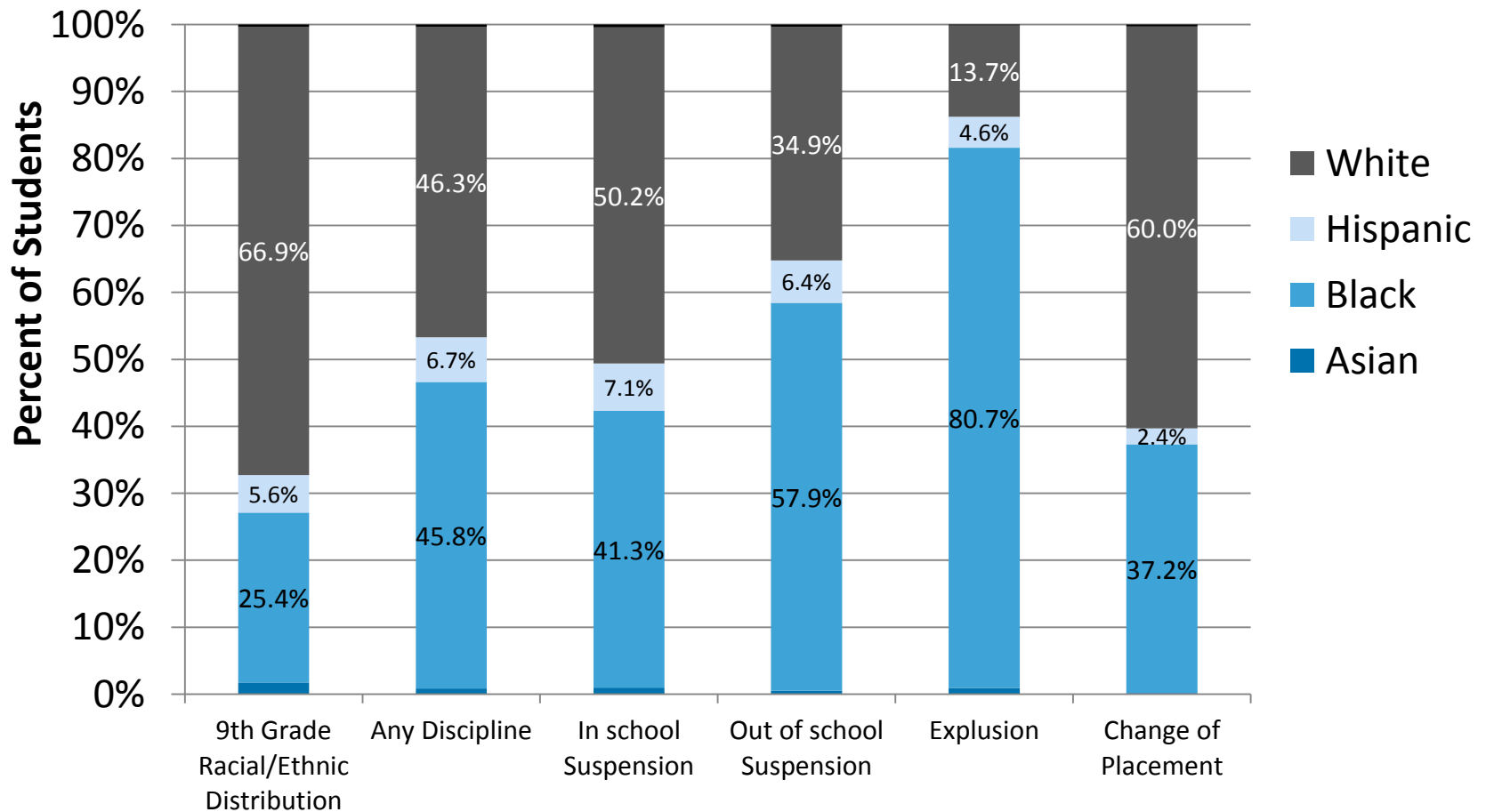




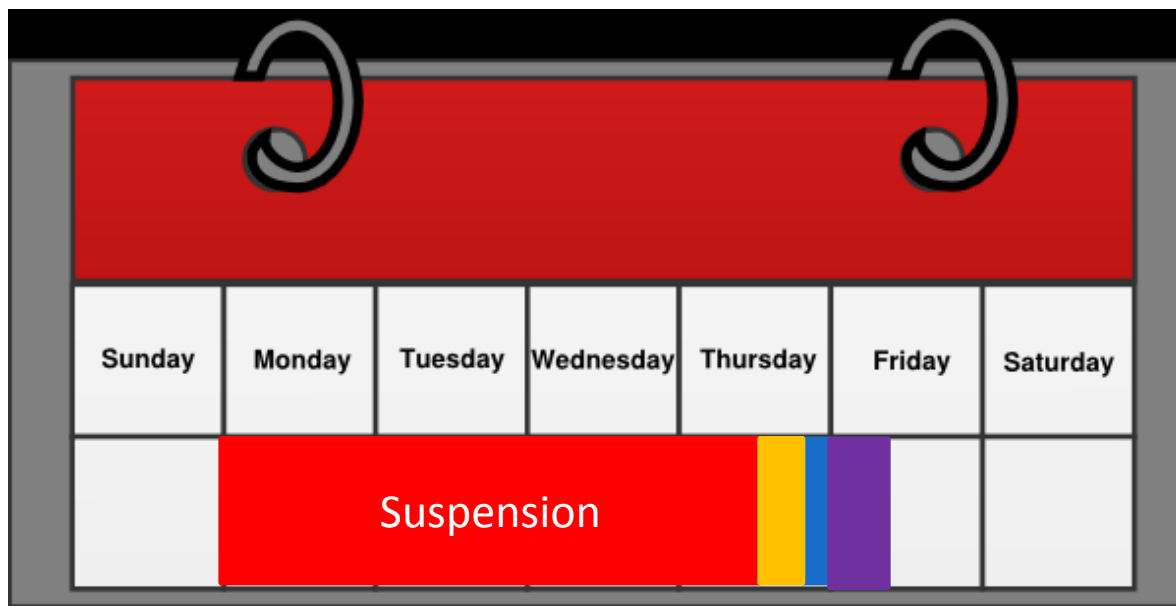
# Some student subgroups are overrepresented in student population with at least one disciplinary action.



# Black students make up 25% of the 9<sup>th</sup> grade student body across the state but more than 80% of expulsions.



# Black females receive about one more day of out of school suspension for fighting compared to white males.



■ Non-black males

■ Non-black females

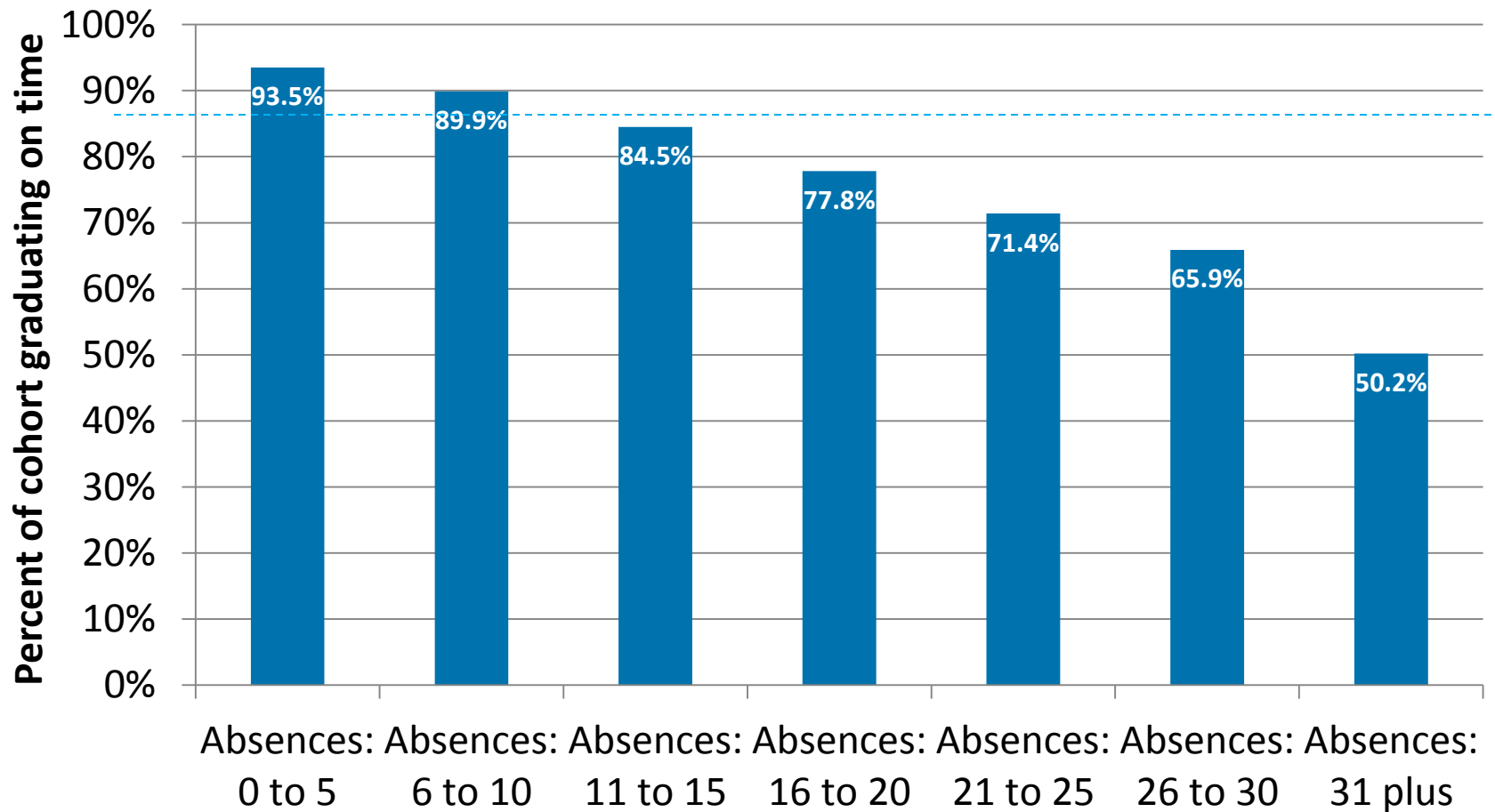
■ Black males

■ Black females

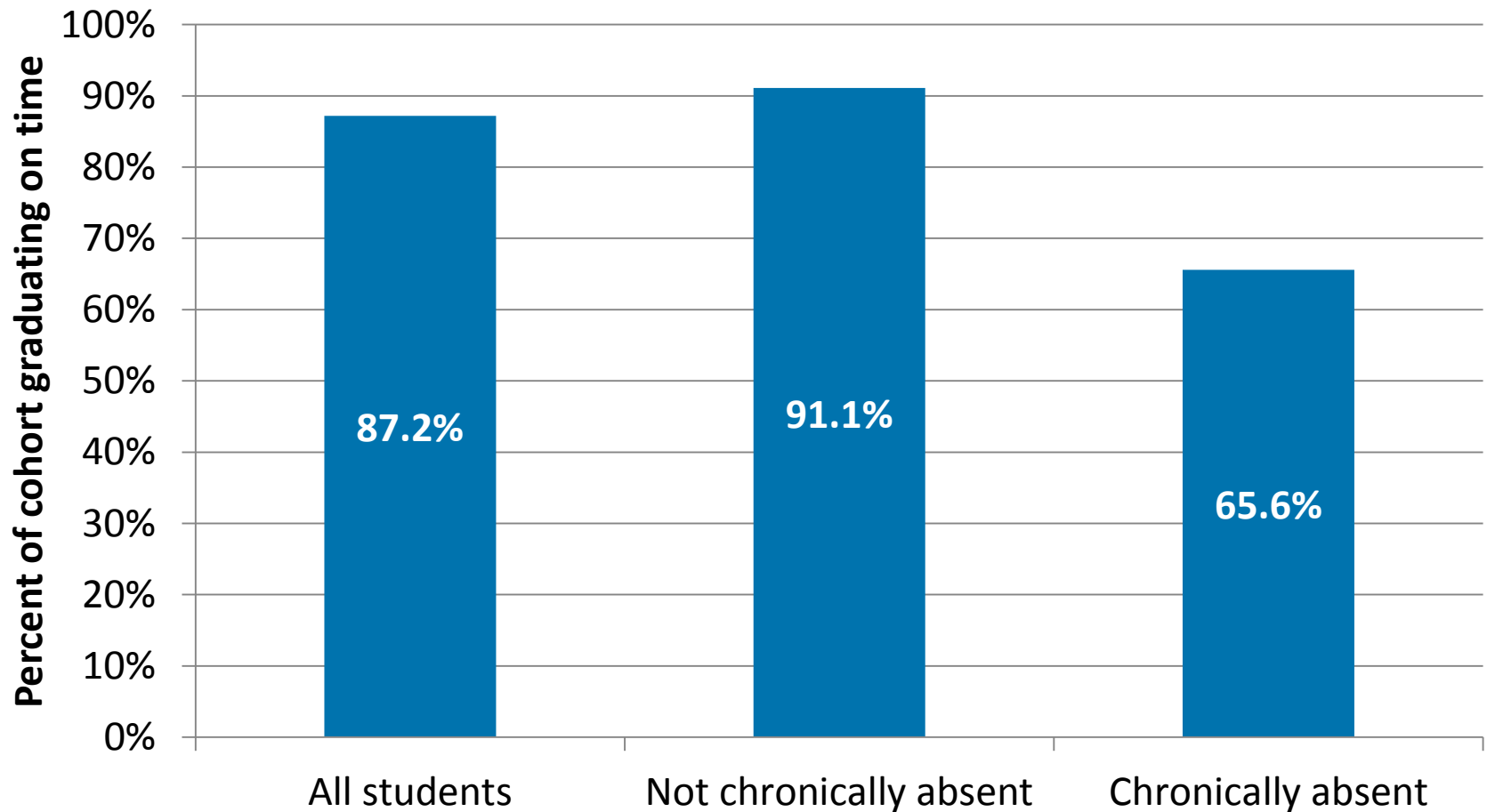
# **The relationship between attendance and student outcomes**



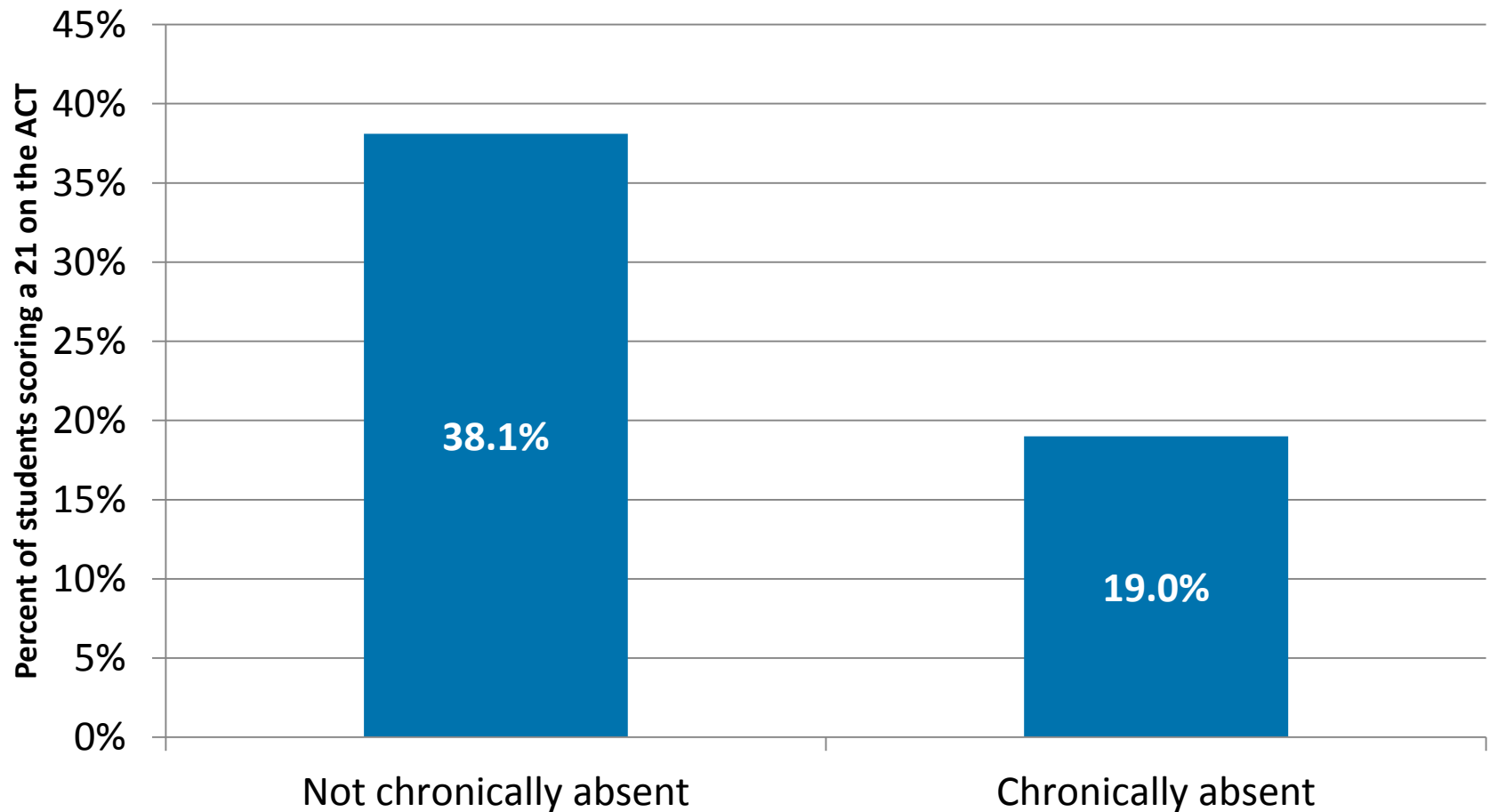
# As absences increase in freshman year, the likelihood that a student will graduate on time decreases.



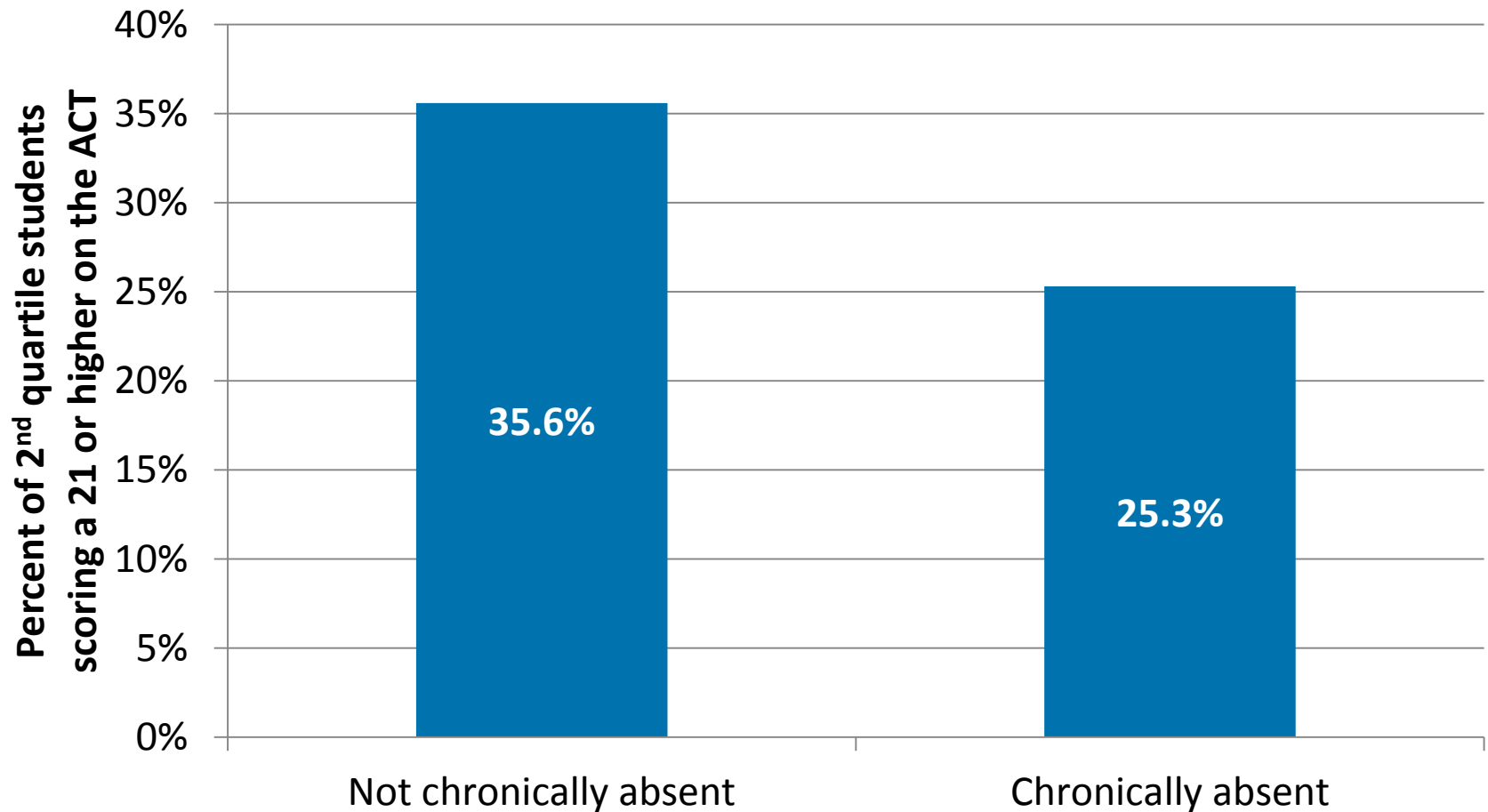
# Students who are chronically absent in their freshman year are not as likely to graduate on time as their peers.



# Students are less likely to score a 21 or higher on the ACT if they are chronically absent.

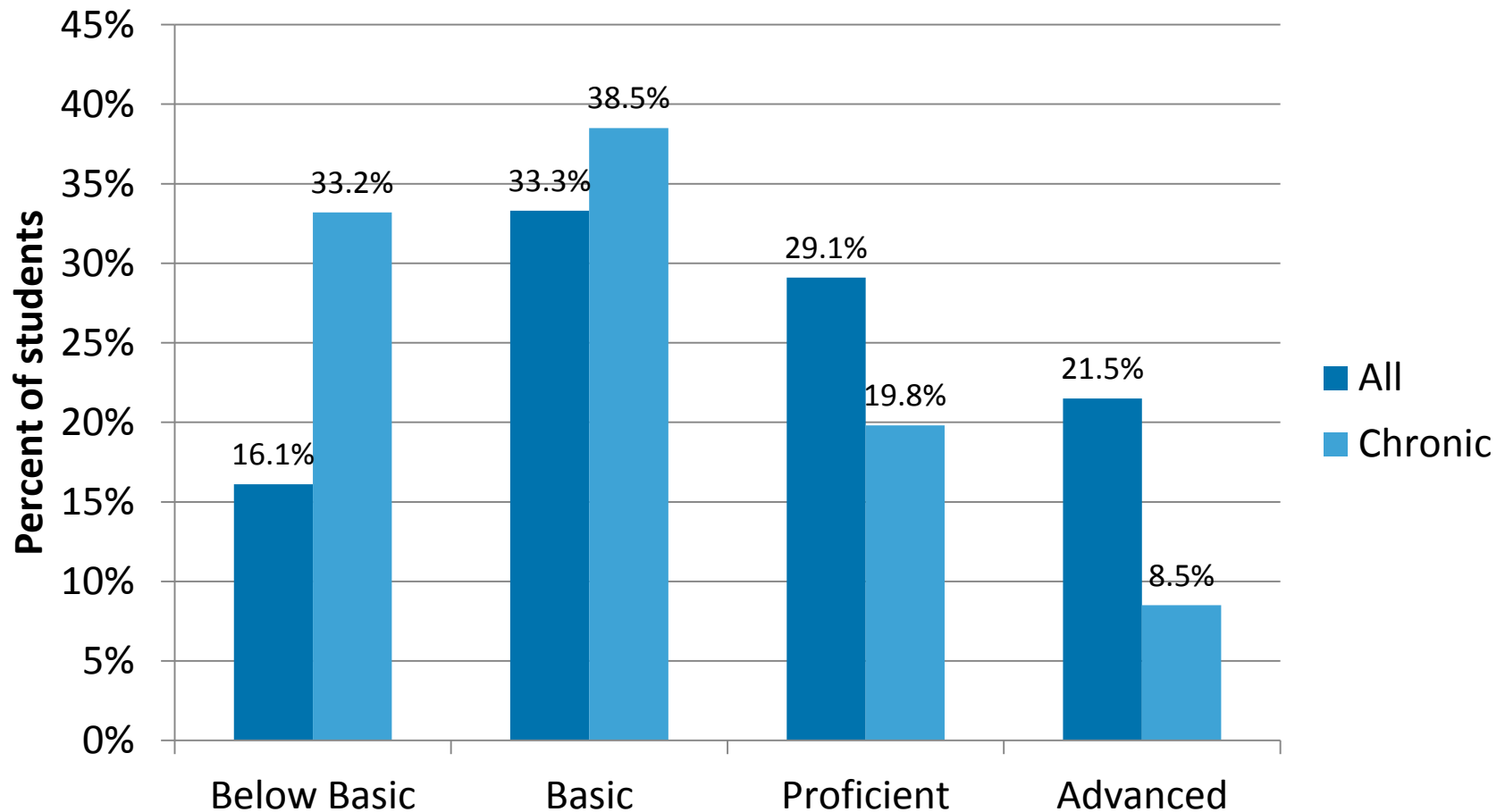


# Even when we control for prior achievement, chronically absent students are less likely to score a 21 or higher on the ACT.

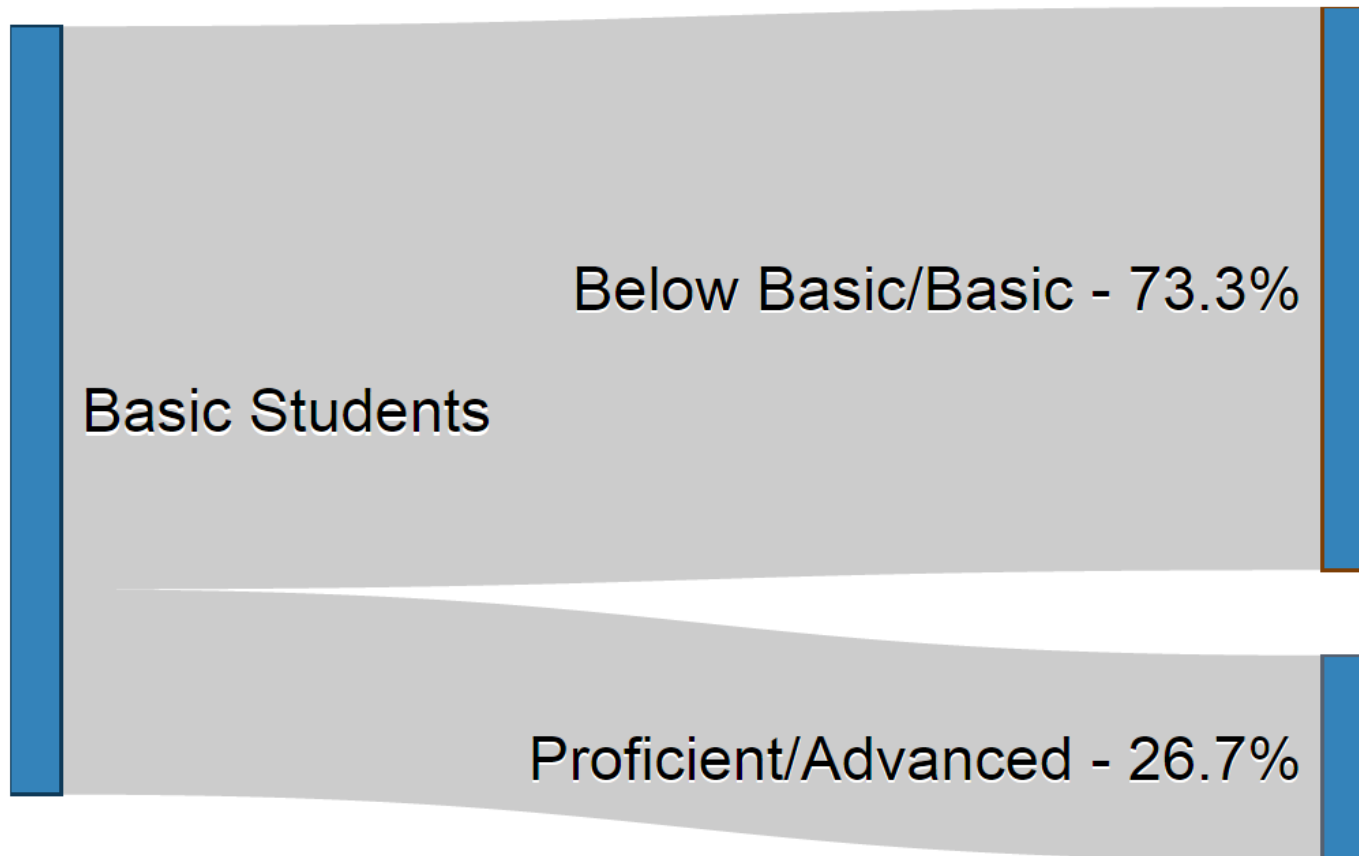




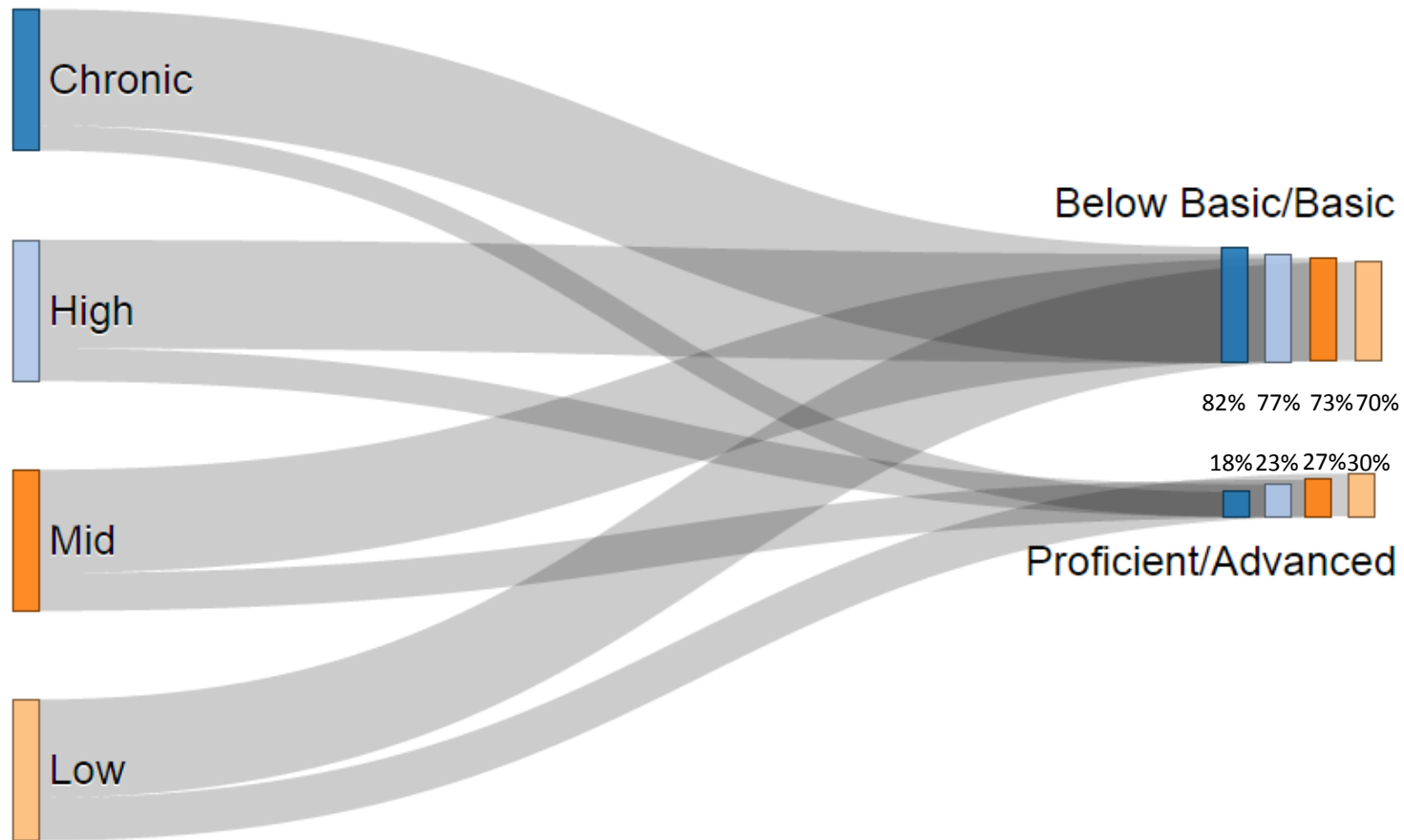
# Students who are chronically absent score proficient or advanced on math TCAP at much lower rates than their peers.



# About 27% of students who scored basic on the math TCAP in 2013 scored proficient in 2014.



# Students who scored basic on the math TCAP in 2013 were more likely to score proficient in 2014 if they had low absenteeism.



# Takeaways

- Students are missing lots of instructional time, especially in P4 and high school.
- Attendance rates mask the issues the state and some districts are having with chronic absenteeism.
- About half of chronically absent students are chronically absent for two or more years in a row.
- Students who miss school early in the year are very likely to chronically absent.
- Students lose considerable amounts of instructional time due to disciplinary actions.
- Troublesome differences in the use of disciplinary actions exist among racial subgroups.
- Absenteeism has a negative relationship with student success on achievement measures.