



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **First COVID-Era NAEP Assessment Shows Steep Declines In Mathematics and Reading for 9-Year-Olds**

*Scores are lowest since early 2000s; larger declines for lower-performing students*

WASHINGTON – Average mathematics and reading scores for the nation’s 9-year-olds have declined since 2020, according to results released today from the 2022 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Long-Term Trend (LTT) assessment. The results are the first nationally representative measure of the pandemic’s impact on learning.

Compared to 9-year-olds in winter 2020, the 9-year-olds who took the assessment in winter 2022 scored seven points lower in mathematics and five points lower in reading—the largest score decline in reading since the 1990s and the first-ever decline in mathematics.

The pandemic hit just as the 2020 LTT administration to 9-year-olds ended. The National Assessment Governing Board, which sets the NAEP assessment schedule, and the National Center for Education Statistics, which administers NAEP, decided to schedule the next LTT for 9-year-olds for January through March 2022 to compare learning before and after COVID disrupted schools.

Since its debut in the 1970s, the LTT assessment has measured fundamental reading and mathematics skills among nationally representative age-based cohorts. At the time of the 2022 assessment, 61 percent of the participating 9-year-olds were in 4th grade and 39 percent were in 3rd grade or below.

“The results confirm our fears that students have not made adequate academic progress,” said former North Carolina Gov. Beverly Perdue, chair of the National Assessment Governing Board. “Fewer 9-year-olds now have the basic reading and math skills they need. This puts their futures—and our nation’s—at great risk and should spur us all to action. We can’t keep blaming COVID. We need to accelerate their learning.”

#### **Scores Decline Across Performance Levels**

NAEP reports scores at five selected percentiles to show the progress made by lower- (10<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> percentiles), middle- (50<sup>th</sup> percentile), and higher- (75<sup>th</sup> and 90<sup>th</sup> percentiles) performing students. In mathematics and reading, scores for students at all five performance levels declined.

Prior to the pandemic, [widening gaps](#) between higher- and lower-performing students emerged across subject areas, grade levels, and age groups. The latest LTT results show those gaps have grown as lower-performing students’ scores declined more sharply than scores for higher-performing students.

Scores for students at the 25th percentile declined 11 points in mathematics and eight points in reading compared to 2020, while scores for students at the 75th percentile declined five points in mathematics and three points in reading. Declines were even greater for students at the 10th percentile.

“While we see declines at all performance levels, the growing gap between students at the top and those at the bottom is an important but overlooked trend. These results show that this gap widened further during the pandemic,” said Governing Board member Martin West, the academic dean and a professor of education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. “Supporting the academic recovery of lower-performing students should be a top priority for educators and policymakers nationwide.”

Changes in scores varied by race/ethnicity. In mathematics, Black 9-year-olds’ scores dropped 13 points, significantly more than the 5-point drop by White 9-year-olds. Hispanic 9-year-olds recorded an 8-point decline, which did not differ significantly from the decline among White students. In reading, average scores for Black, Hispanic, and White students all declined six points.

In reading and mathematics, scores did not change significantly since 2020 among Asian students, American Indian/Alaska Native students, and students of two or more races.

Results from the more comprehensive main NAEP assessments will be released this fall and will include national-, state-, and selected district-level results for grades 4 and 8 in mathematics and reading.

For full results from the 2022 NAEP Long-Term Trend assessment, visit <http://www.nationsreportcard.gov/highlights/ltr/2022/>

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*The National Assessment Governing Board is an independent, nonpartisan board whose members include governors, state legislators, local and state school officials, educators, business representatives, and members of the general public. Congress created the 26-member Governing Board in 1988 to set policy for the National Assessment of Educational Progress. For more information, visit [www.nagb.gov](http://www.nagb.gov).*