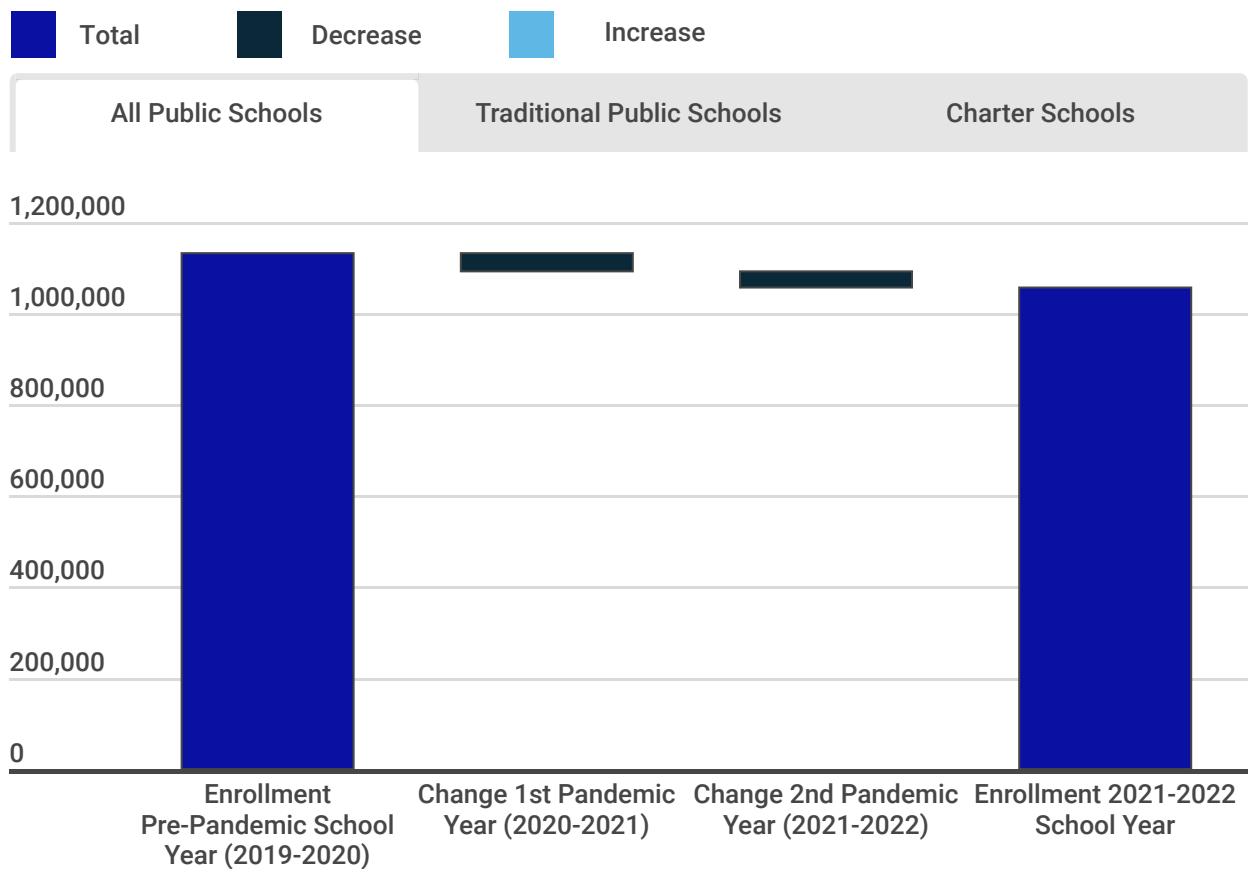
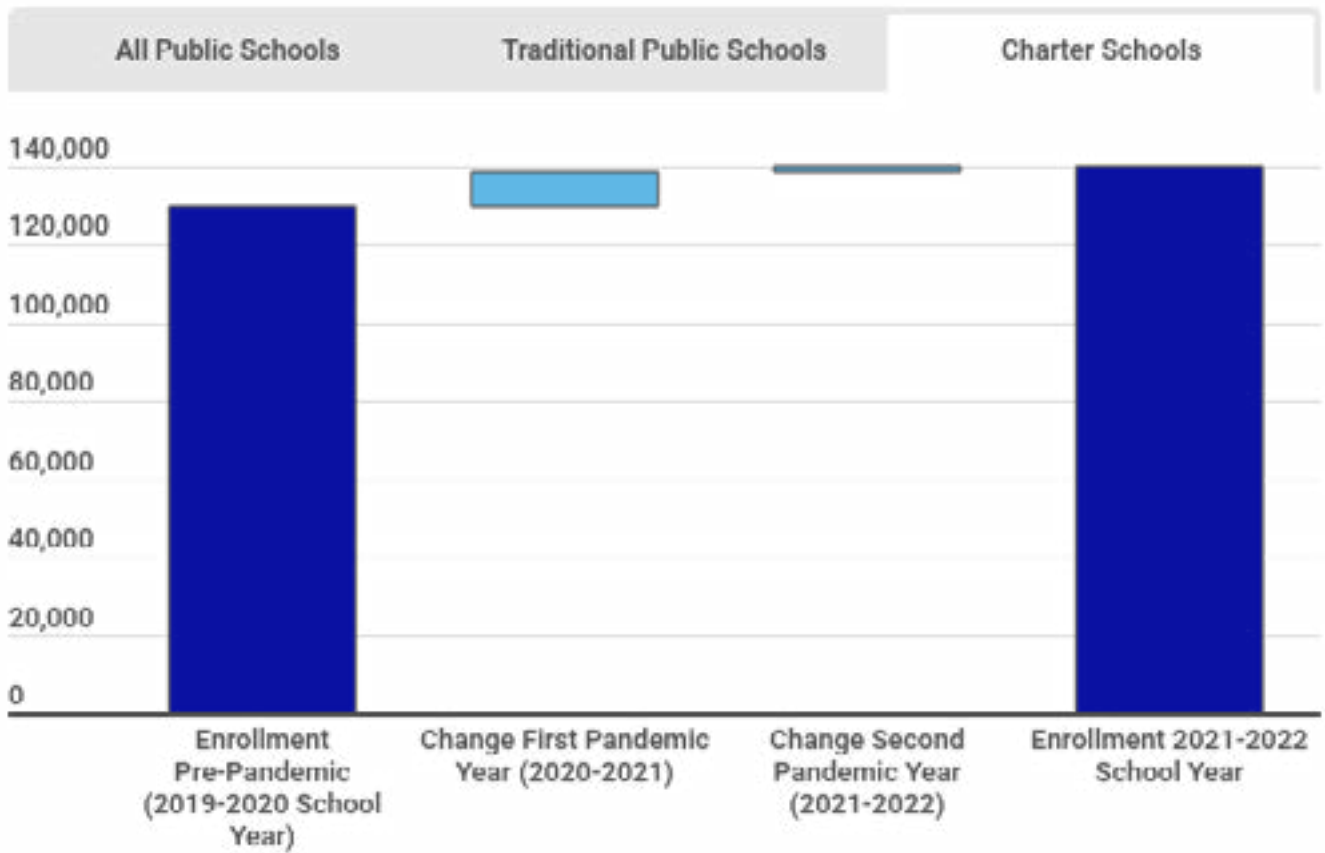
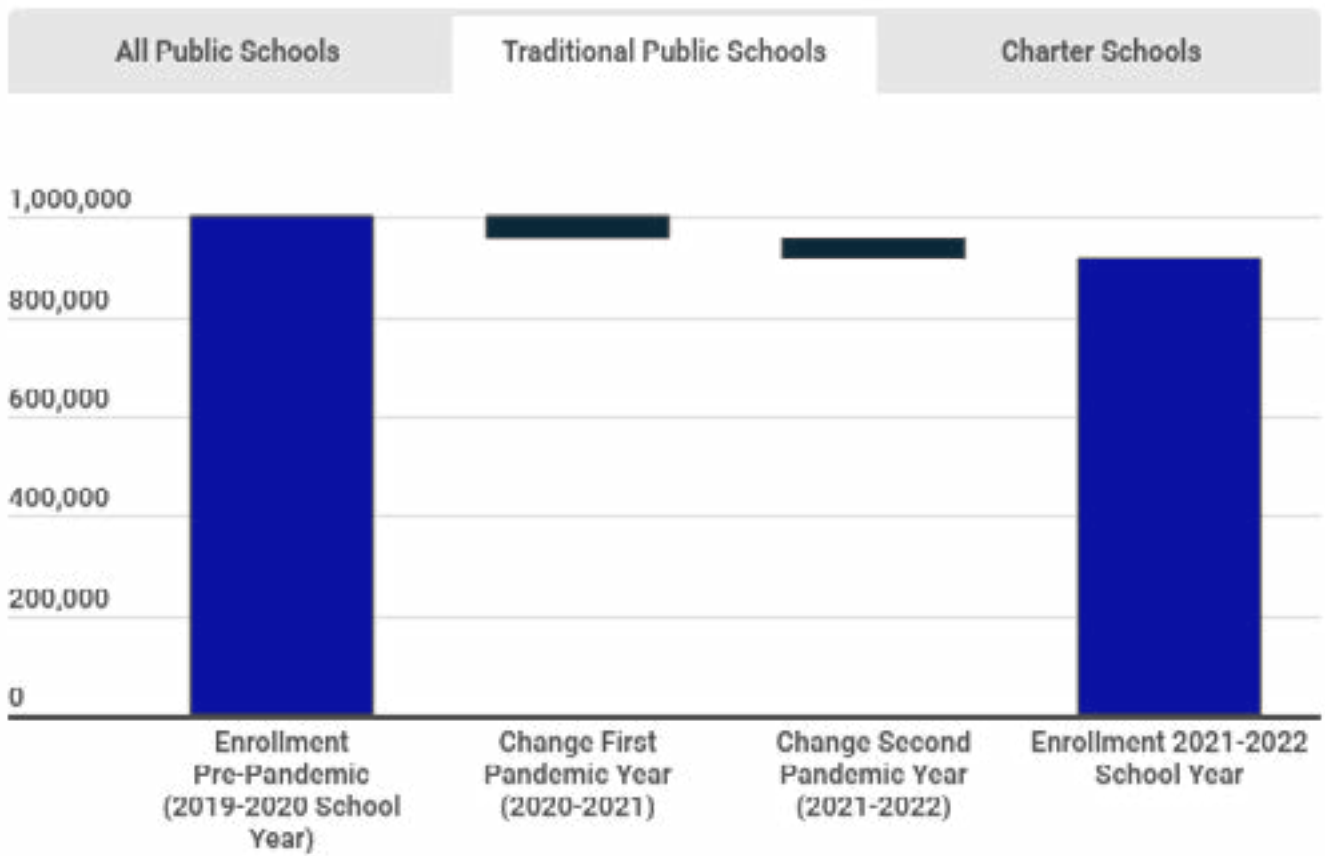


# How Has Public School Enrollment Changed Two Years Into the Covid-19 Pandemic?

There has been much discussion about the decline in the number of New York City’s public school students during the pandemic—particularly due to the recent reductions in school budgets resulting from the shrinking enrollment. In this analysis, IBO compares enrollment changes during the first full school year impacted by the pandemic (2020-2021) with the second school year that just ended (2021-2022), using the 2019-2020 school year as a benchmark of pre-pandemic enrollment. Did the return to fully in-person instruction this past school year result in any reversal of the earlier decline during the hybrid year? We explore the different trends among the city’s traditional public schools and its charter schools, as well as how changes in enrollment varied by grade and by community school district.

## Public School Enrollment Continued its Decline in Second Pandemic School Year *Traditional Public School Enrollment Fell and Charter School Growth Slowed This Past Year*



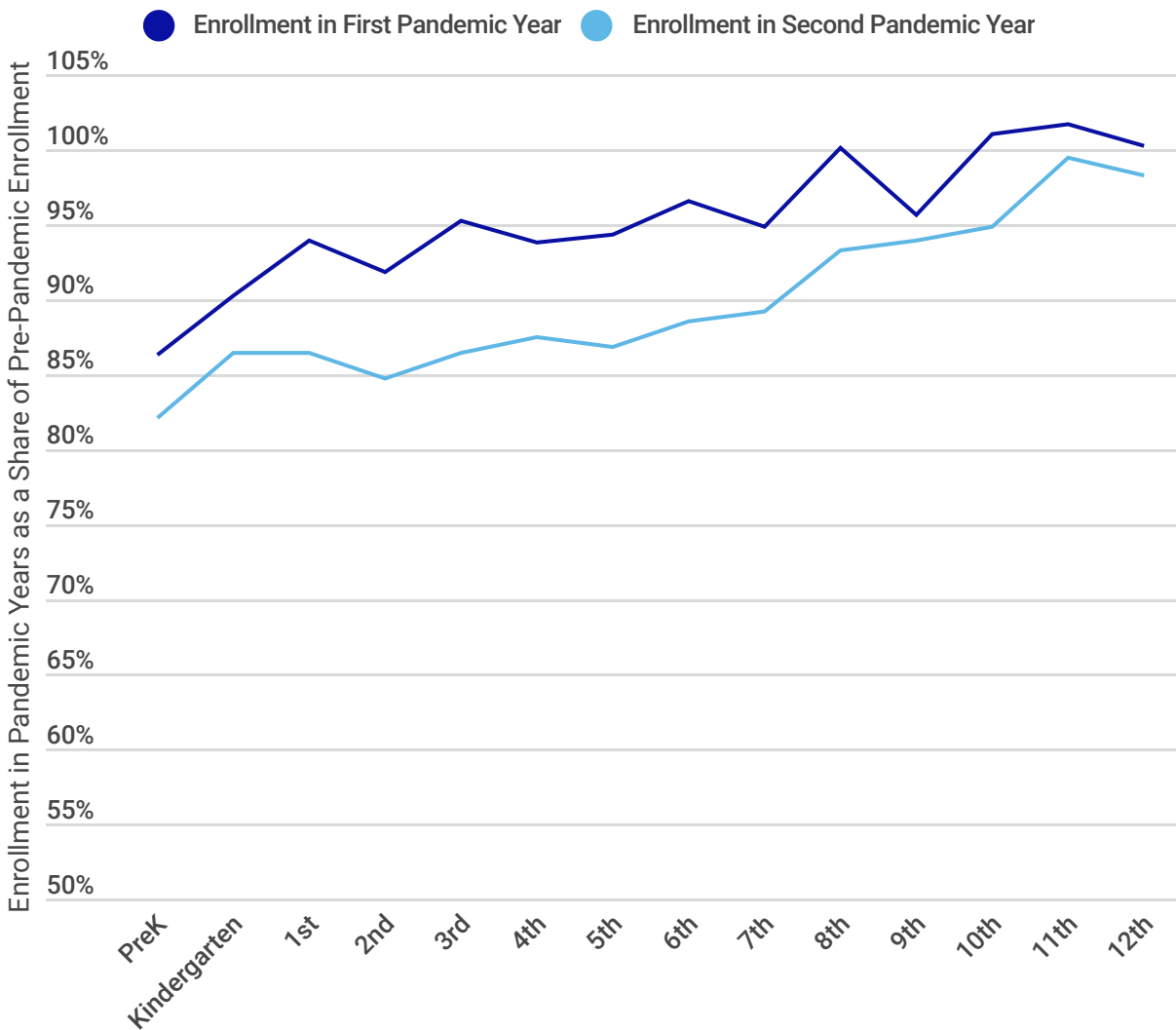


Enrollment in the city's public schools (traditional and charter) continued to decline in the second pandemic year (2021-2022 school year).<sup>1</sup> Total enrollment in 3K through 12th grade was 1,058,900 in the second pandemic year, down 3.2 percent from 1,094,100 in the first pandemic year, which was 3.3 percent less than the 1,131,900 students enrolled in the pre-pandemic year, or a 6.4 percent decline over the two school years.

For both years, the decline was exclusively in the city's traditional public schools, which saw enrollment drop by 8.3 over the two pandemic school years. The city's charter schools did not experience a similar loss. Charter enrollment remained relatively flat in the second pandemic year after a 6.9 percent increase in the first year.

The decline in traditional public school students comes despite an expansion of the city's 3K program—which nearly doubled in size—during the last school year. Excluding 3K, enrollment in the city's traditional public schools would have fallen even further—by 10.1 percent—with a bigger reduction in the second pandemic year (down 55,200 students in pre-K through 12th grade) than the first (a 44,600 decline). (Charter schools do not enroll 3K students and were not impacted by the expansion).

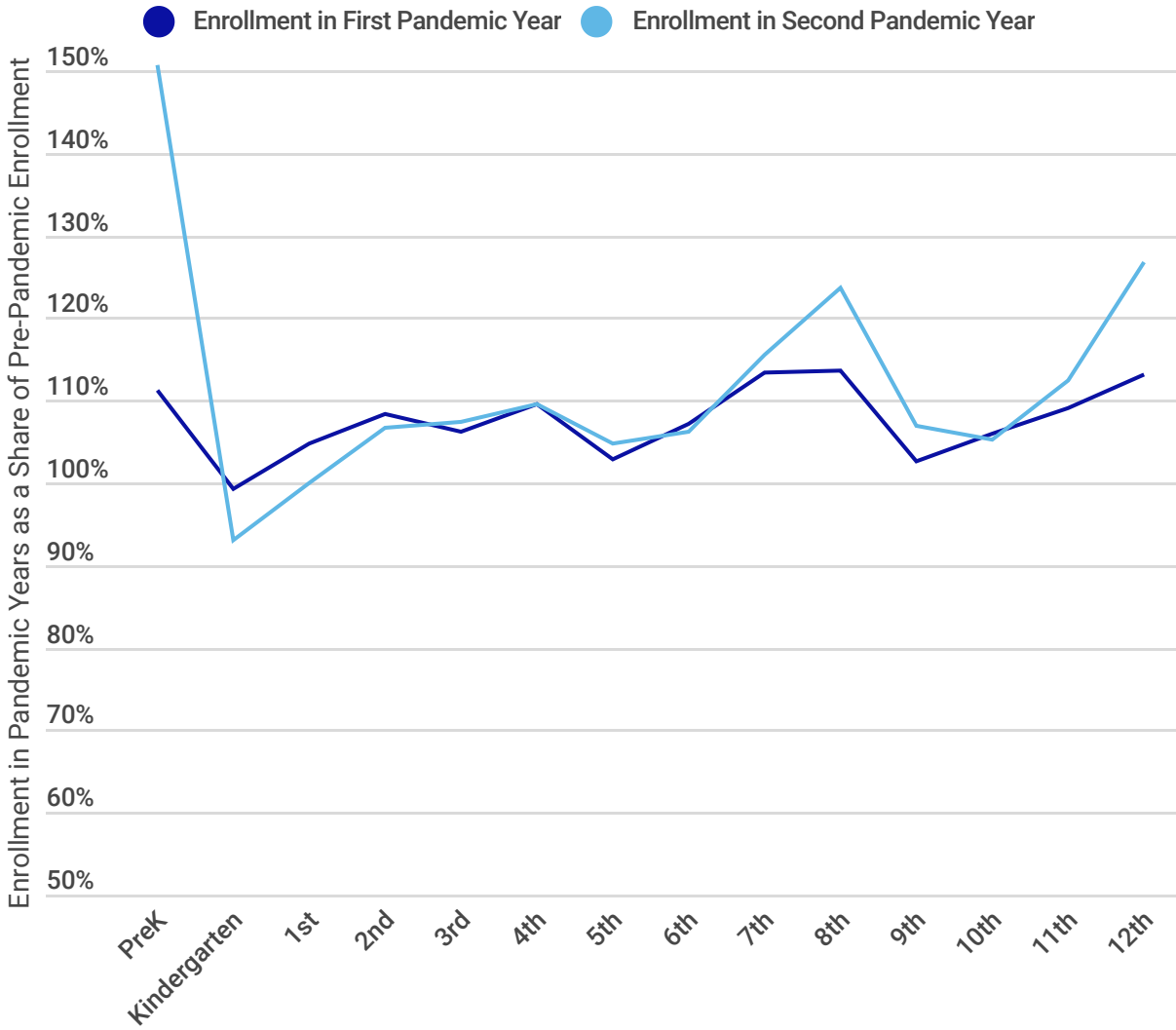
## Traditional Public Schools: Enrollment in Elementary and Middle Grades Remains Lower After Two Pandemic Years



For traditional public schools, the trends by grade level in the second year of the pandemic were similar to the first—the declines were most pronounced in elementary grades, particularly in pre-K and kindergarten. Enrollment in the high school grades were relatively more stable in both years.

For pre-K and kindergarten enrollment in the first pandemic year was 86 percent and 90 percent of pre-pandemic levels, respectively, and fell to 82 percent and 86 percent, respectively, by the second pandemic year. There was a net decline of over 12,400 students in pre-K and of 8,600 students in kindergarten by the second pandemic year.<sup>3</sup>

## Charter Schools: Enrollment Continued to Increase in Most Grades, But Particularly in Pre-K in the Second Pandemic Year

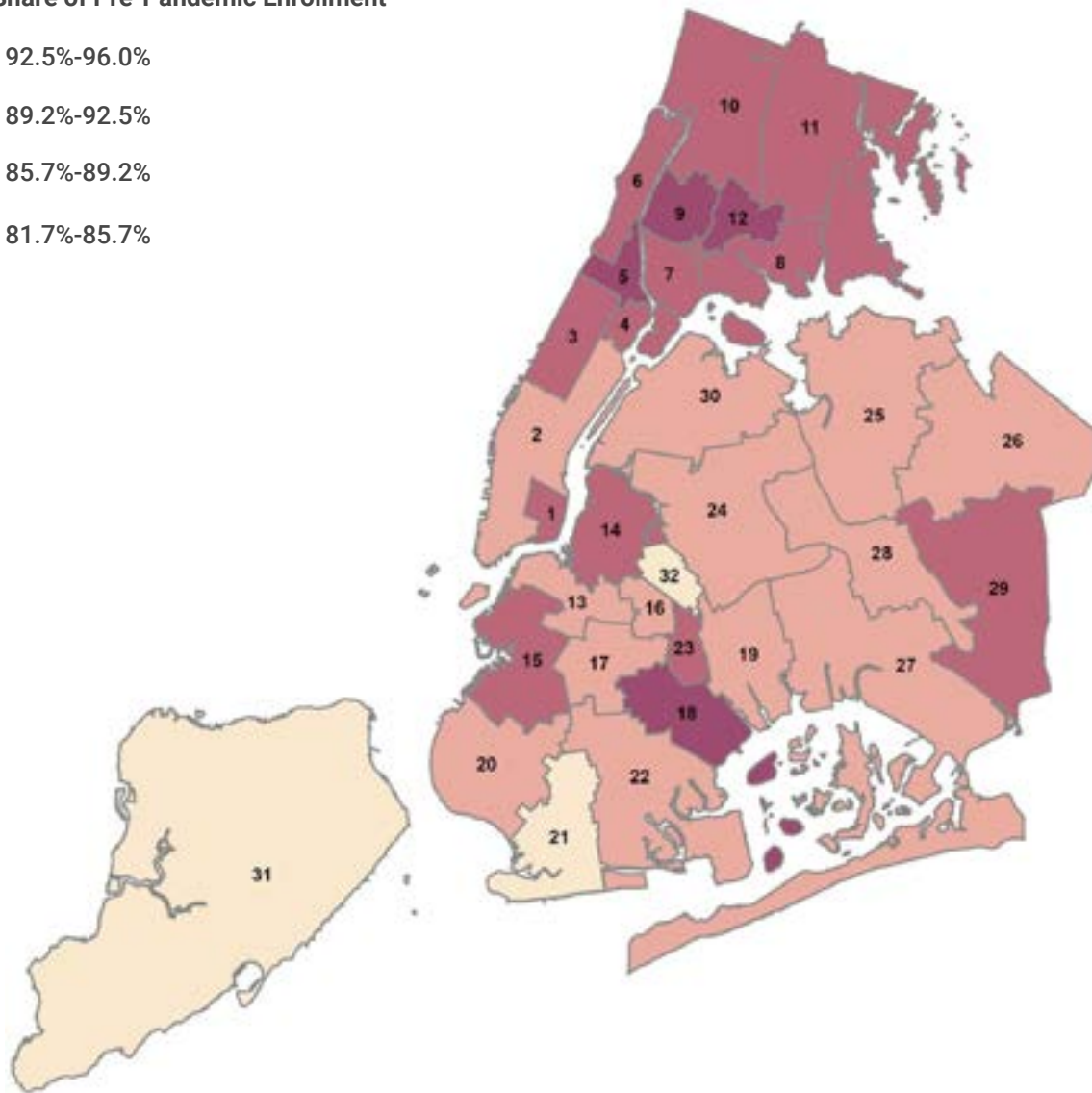
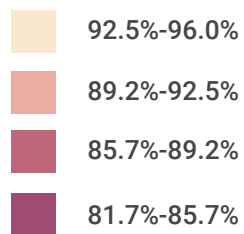


By contrast, charter schools experienced increases in enrollment during the pandemic in all grades except in kindergarten and 1st grades, which fell slightly over the two years. Pre-K enrollment grew the most, reaching 150 percent of pre-pandemic enrollment during the second pandemic year. (Charter schools serve far fewer pre-K students than those attending traditional public school programs). In the pre-pandemic year, charter school pre-K enrollment totaled 572 students, growing to 636 in the first pandemic school year to 862 in the last school year.

## Enrollment Fell in Every Community School District During the Pandemic

Click on the map to see the interactive version.

Enrollment in 2021-2022 (Second Pandemic Year)  
As a Share of Pre-Pandemic Enrollment



Enrollment in 2021-2022 school year was lower than pre-pandemic enrollment in each of the city's 32 community school districts. These data do not include 3K. Charter schools, self-contained special education, and alternative programs (all three of which are grouped in their own administrative districts) are also excluded.

Enrollment in District 18 in Brooklyn (East Flatbush and Canarsie) fell by the largest share and was about 82 percent of pre-pandemic enrollment during 2021-2022 school year. District 21 in Brooklyn (Coney Island and Gravesend/Ocean Parkway) and District 31 (all of Staten Island) experienced the smallest declines, with enrollment in each at a little over 95 percent of pre-pandemic enrollment during the last school year.

Download data.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>These totals include traditional public schools in Districts 1-32, District 75 (Self-Contained Special Education), and District 79 (Alternative Programs). They also include charter schools (administrative District 84).

<sup>2</sup>These totals also exclude District 75 (Self-Contained Special Education), and District 79 (Alternative Programs). District 75 & 79 are excluded as traditional grade levels do not always apply.

<sup>3</sup> Note that part of the decline in the size of the successive kindergarten cohorts in both the overall school system, as well as the charter sector may be a reflection of the decline in the city's birth rate. For more information: Chung, Jen. "NYC Public School Enrollment Falls to 938,000 in Latest Preliminary Numbers." The Gothamist, 29 October 2021, <https://gothamist.com/news/nyc-public-school-enrollment-falls-938000-latest-preliminary-numbers>, accessed 5/31/2022.



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