
A Closer Look at Private School Student Performance

Using National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Data to Understand the Composition and Performance of Catholic School Students



Ebony Walton, Statistician

National Center for Education Statistics

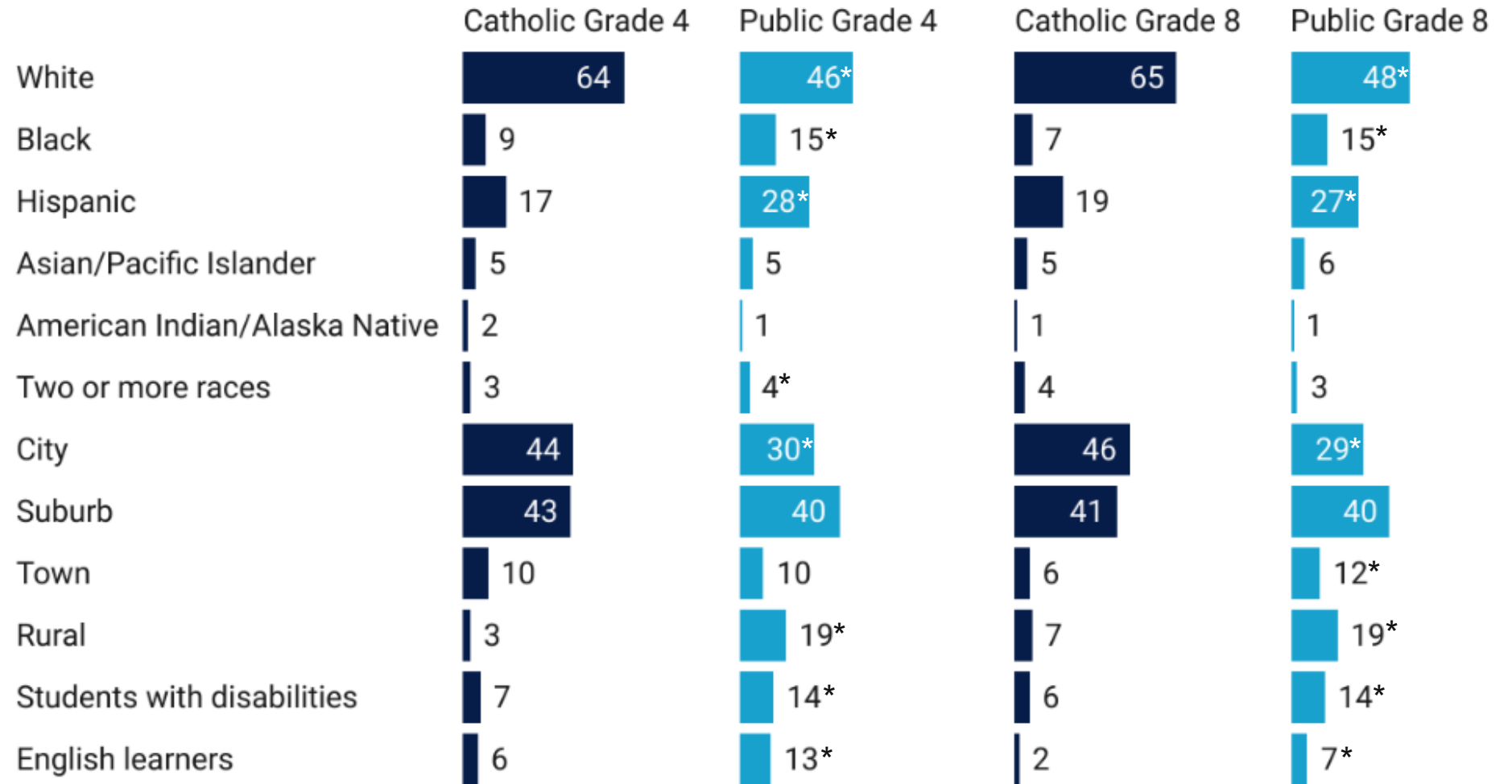
04/22/2022

Available data on national private school achievement

- Grades 4 and 8 mathematics and reading: 1990/2–2019
 - Private school data reportable through 2013
 - Catholic school data reportable throughout the trendlines
- Grades 4 and 8 science: 2009–2019
 - Private school data not reportable
 - Catholic school data reportable only (also reportable at grade 12 in 2015)
- Other national-level assessments
 - Civics, U.S. history, geography — private school data reportable until 2014; Catholic school data available in 2018
 - Technology and engineering literacy — only Catholic school data reportable

Larger proportions of White and urban students in Catholic schools; smaller percentages of students with disabilities and English learners

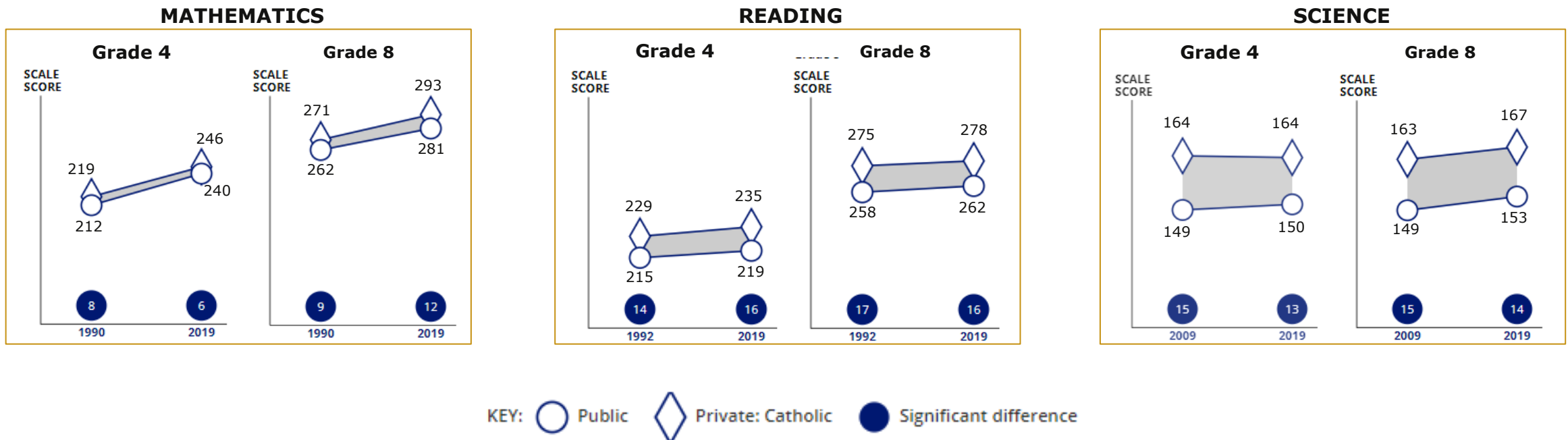
Percentage of fourth- and eighth-grade public and Catholic school students, by selected characteristics: 2019



*Significantly different ($p < .05$) from Catholic.

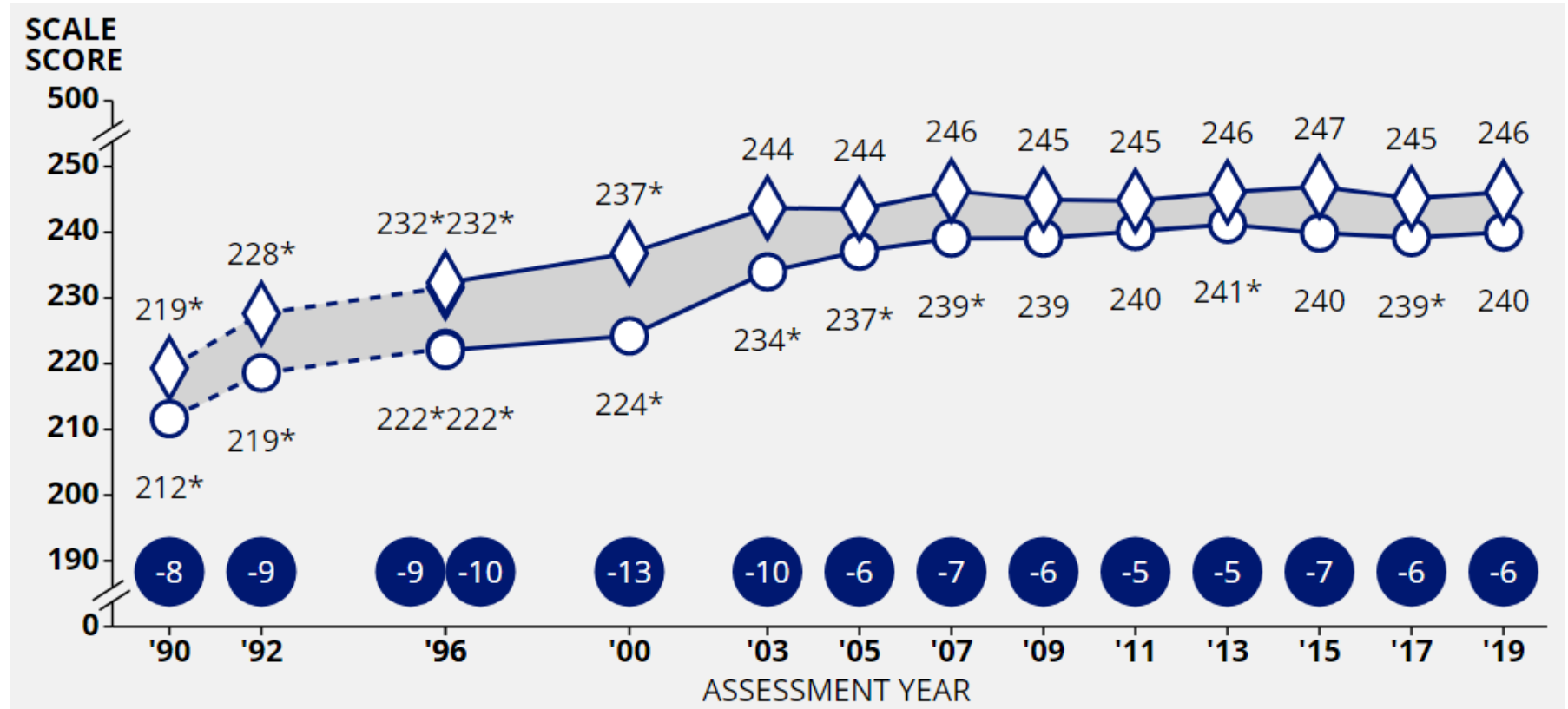
Catholic school students outperform public school students on average

Average mathematics, reading, and science scores of fourth- and eighth-grade public and Catholic school students: select years, 1990–2019



Grade 4 mathematics score for Catholic school students on par with results from 2003

Average mathematics scores of fourth-grade public and Catholic school students: 1990–2019



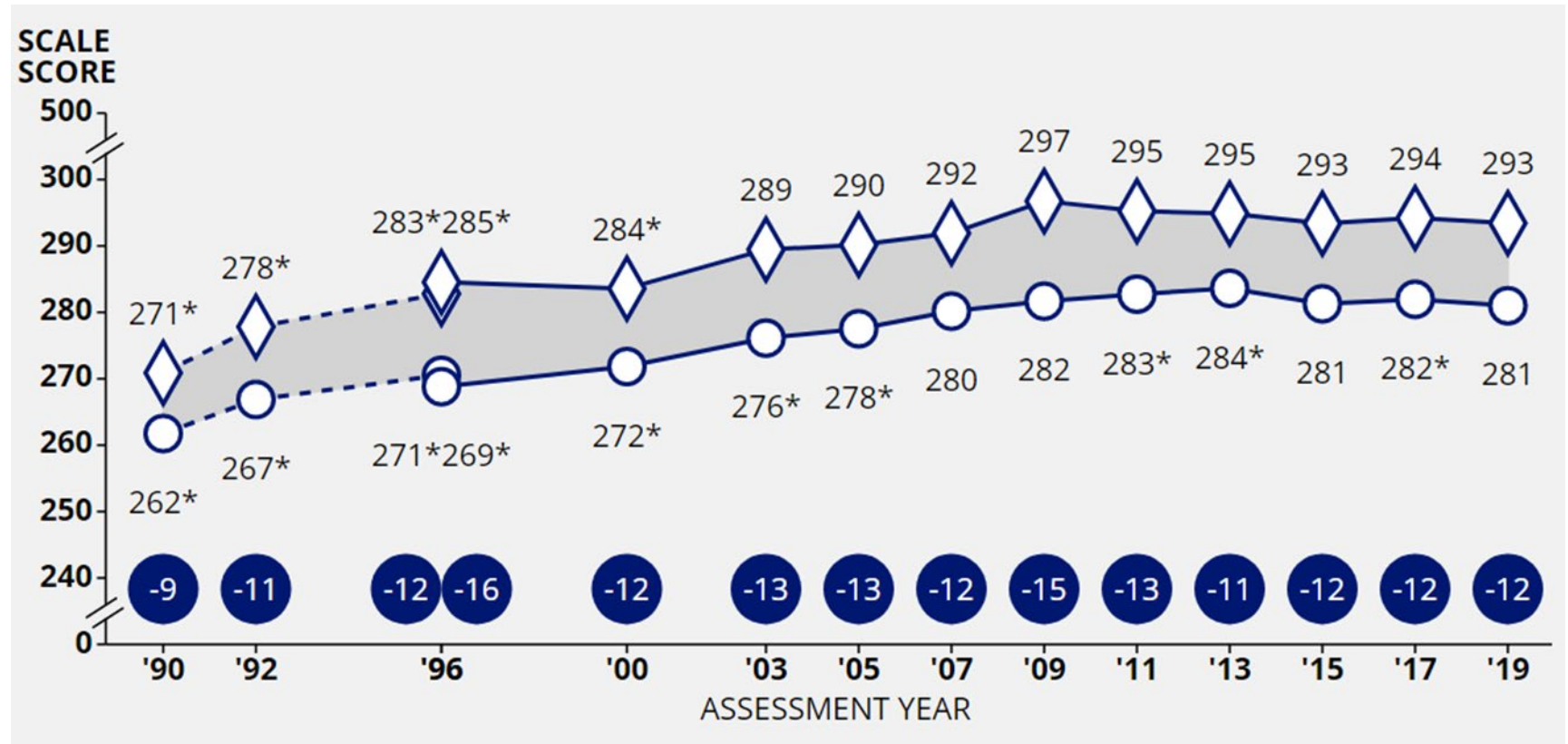
*Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2019.

---Accommodations not permitted.

KEY: ○ Public ◇ Private: Catholic ● Significant difference

Grade 8 mathematics score for Catholic school students also unchanged from 2003

Average mathematics scores of eighth-grade public and Catholic school students: 1990–2019



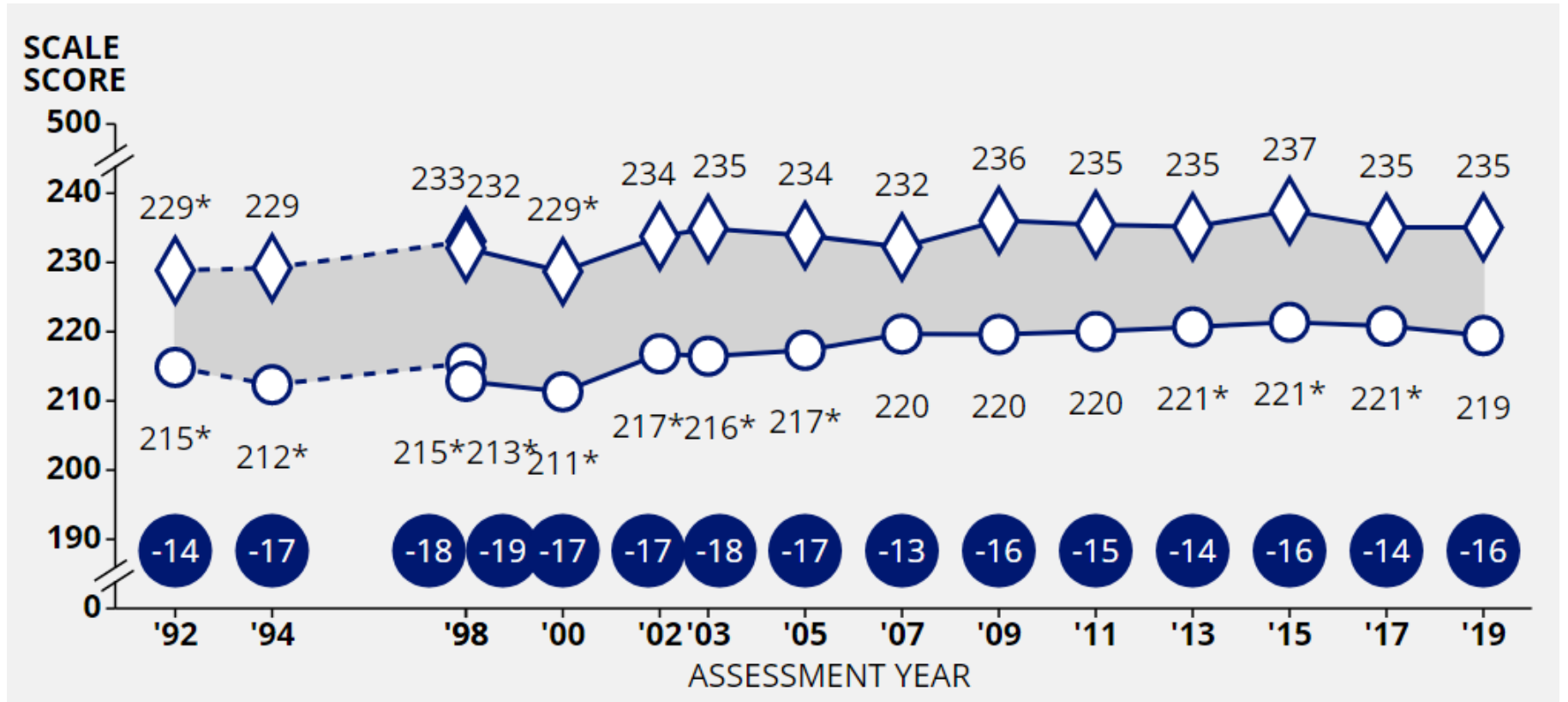
*Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2019.

---Accommodations not permitted.

KEY: ○ Public ◇ Private: Catholic ● Significant difference

Grade 4 reading score for Catholic school students not changed compared to 2002

Average reading scores of fourth-grade public and Catholic school students: 1992–2019



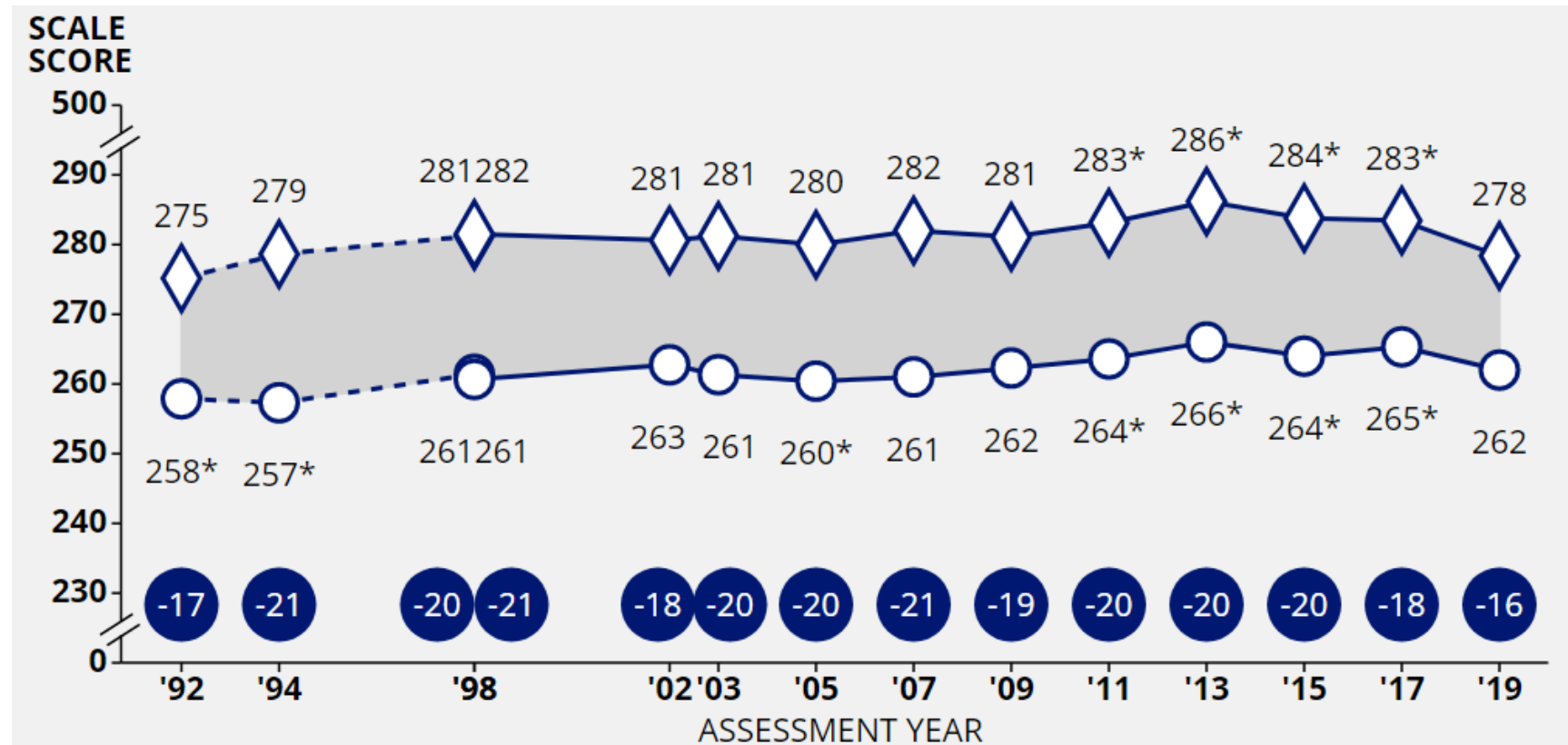
*Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2019.

---Accommodations not permitted.

KEY: ○ Public ◇ Private: Catholic ● Significant difference

Grade 8 reading score for Catholic school students declined recently

Average reading scores of eighth-grade public and Catholic school students: 1992–2019



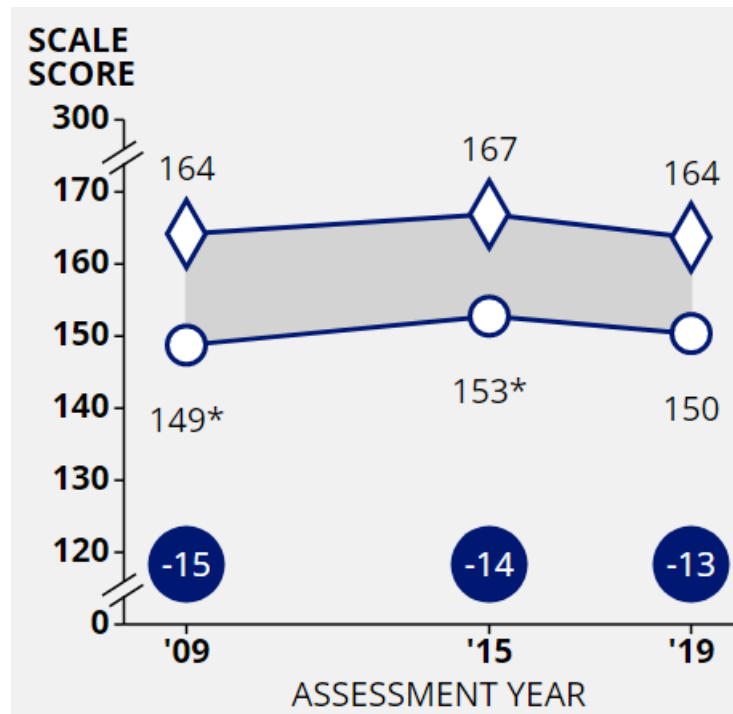
*Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2019.

---Accommodations not permitted.

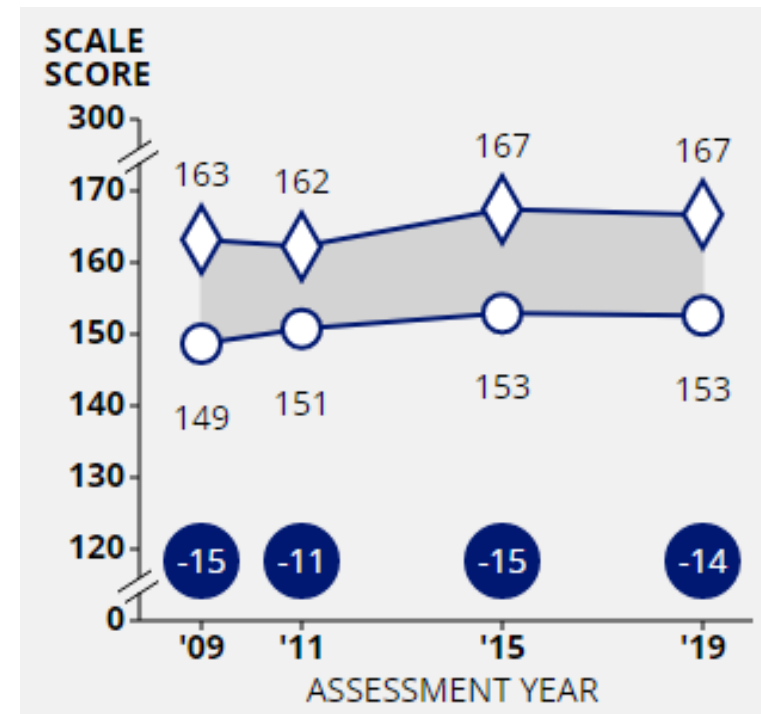
KEY: ○ Public ◇ Private: Catholic ● Significant difference

No change in grades 4 and 8 science scores for Catholic school students

Average science scores of fourth-grade public and Catholic school students: 2009–2019



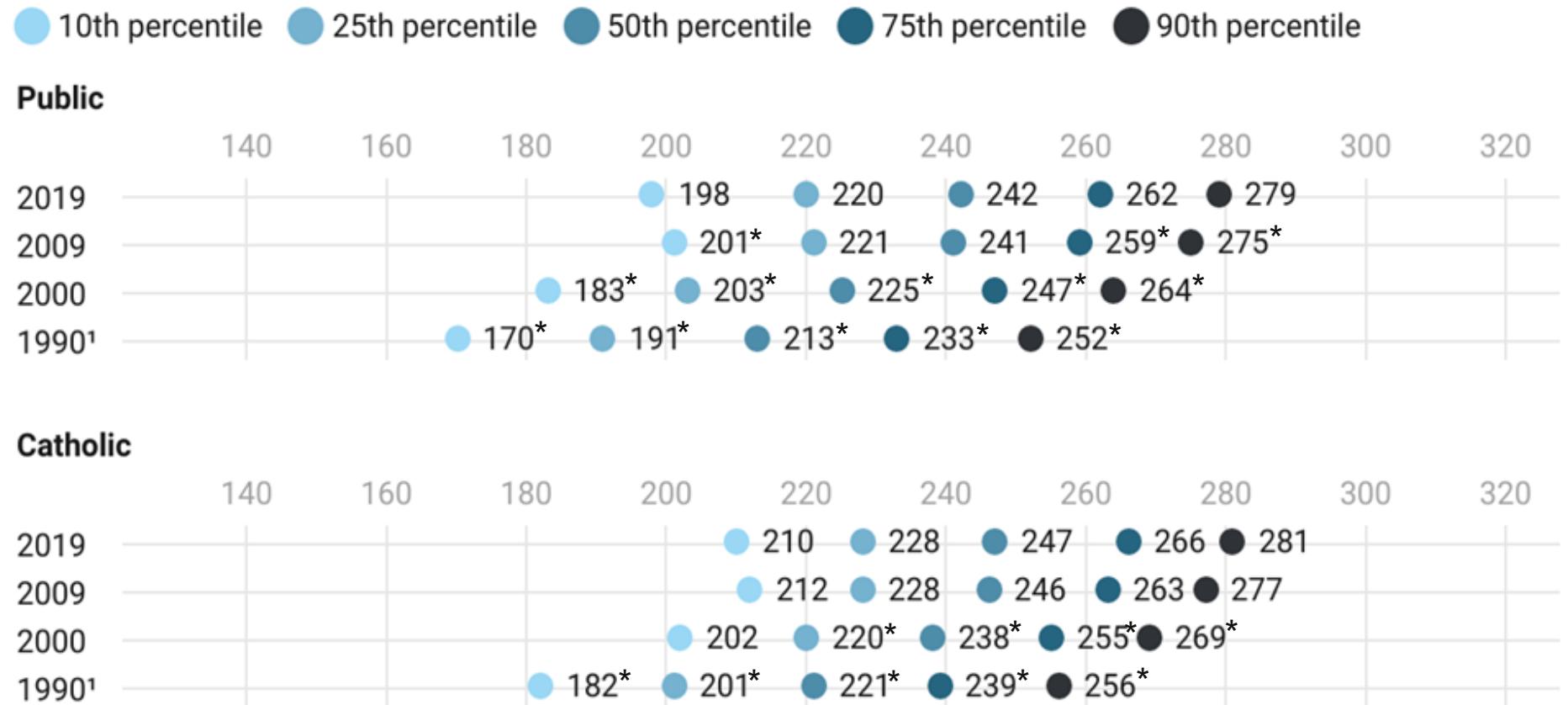
Average science scores of eighth-grade public and Catholic school students: 2009–2019



*Significantly different (p<.05) from 2019.

KEY: ○ Public ◇ Private: Catholic ● Significant difference

No change across the performance distribution in grade 4 mathematics for Catholic school students over the last decade, while diverging trends appear for public school students



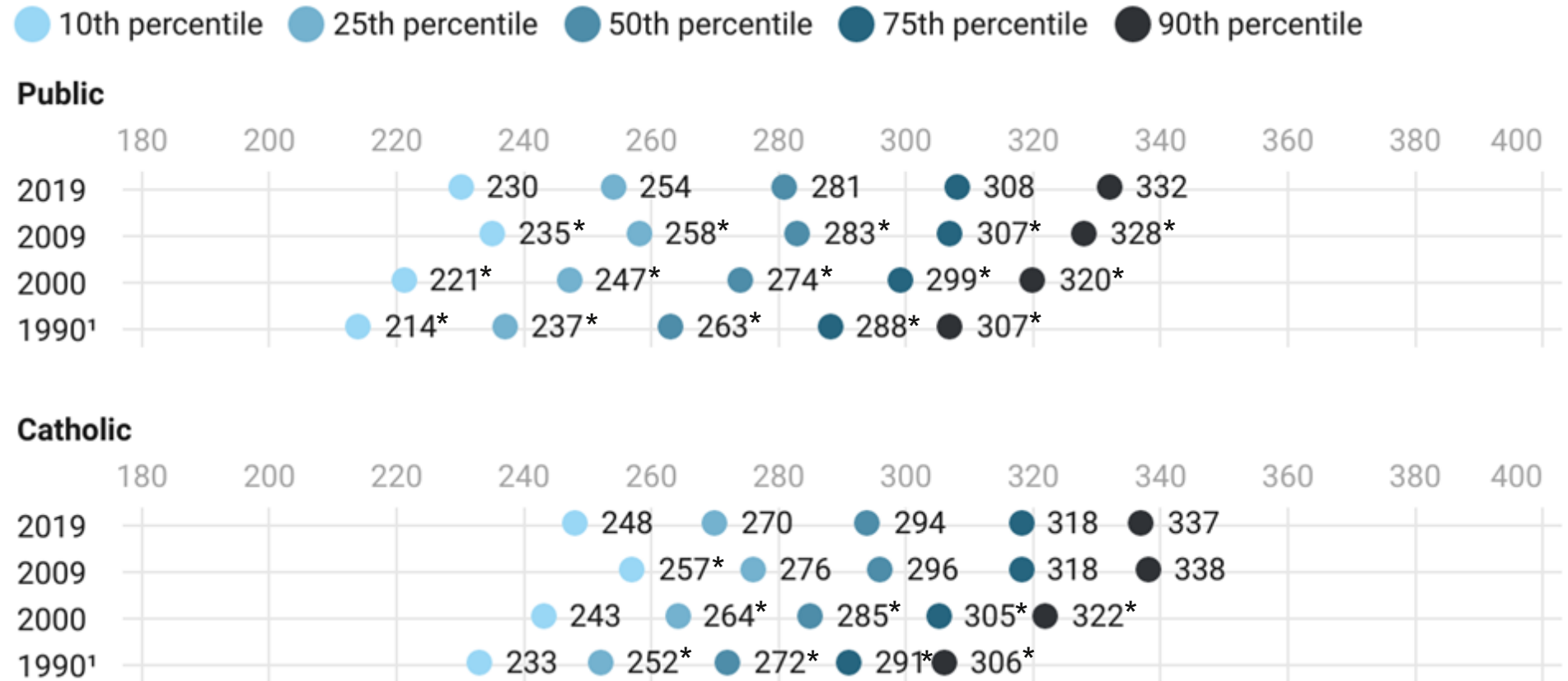
Fourth-grade mathematics scores, by selected percentiles and school type: selected years, 1990–2019

*Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2019.

¹Accommodations not permitted.

Score decline at the 10th percentile in grade 8 mathematics for Catholic school students

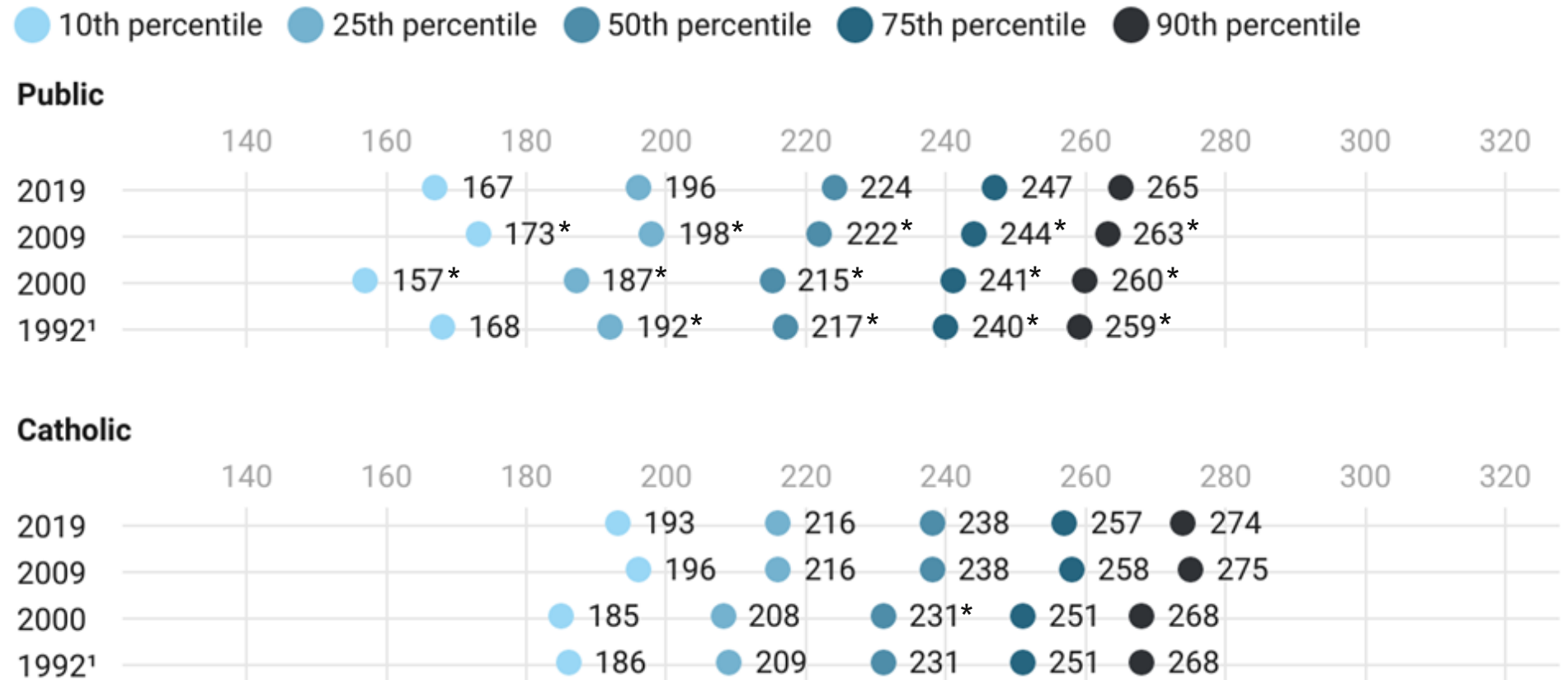
Eighth-grade mathematics scores, by selected percentiles and school type: selected years, 1990–2019



*Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2019.

¹Accommodations not permitted.

No change across the performance distribution in grade 4 reading for Catholic school students over the last decade, while diverging trends appear for public school students

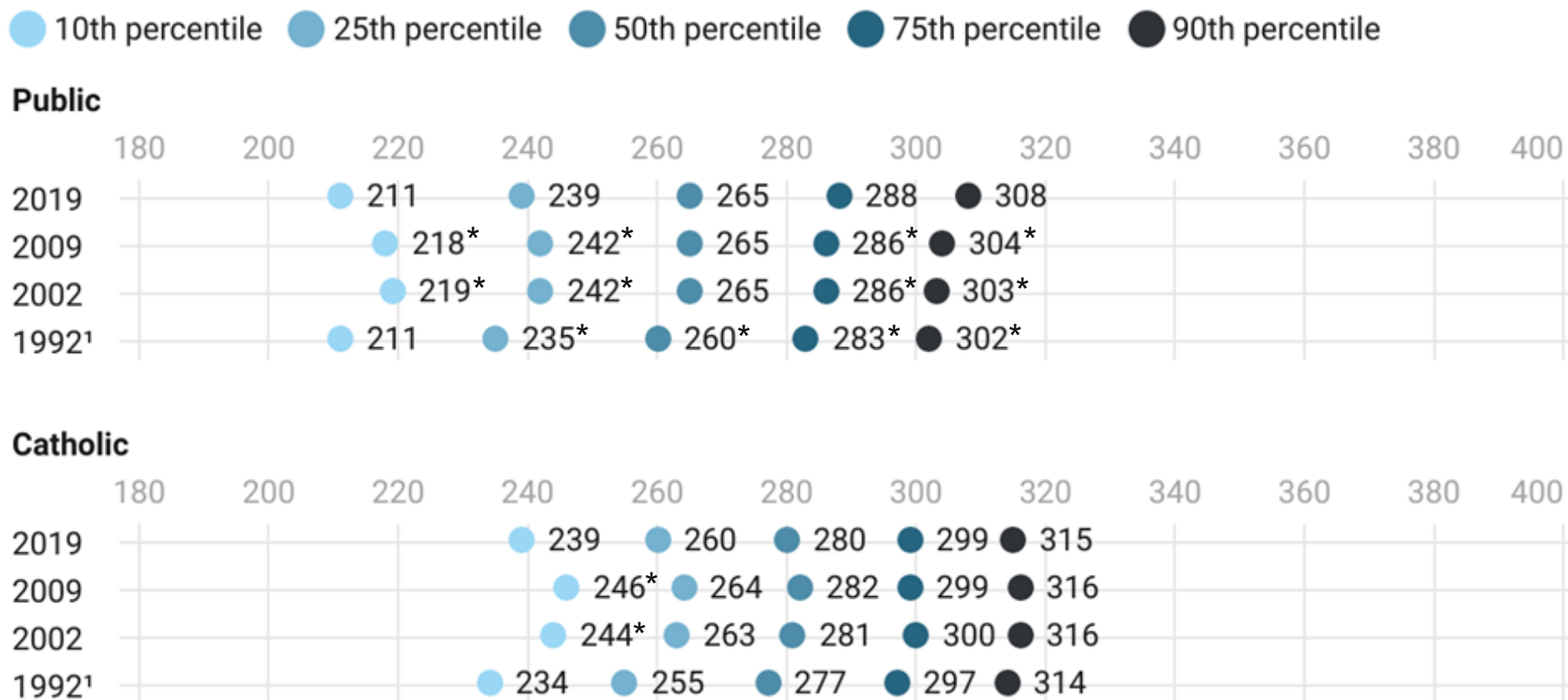


Fourth-grade reading scores, by selected percentiles and school type: selected years, 1992–2019

*Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2019.

¹Accommodations not permitted.

Score decline at the 10th percentile in grade 8 reading for Catholic school students



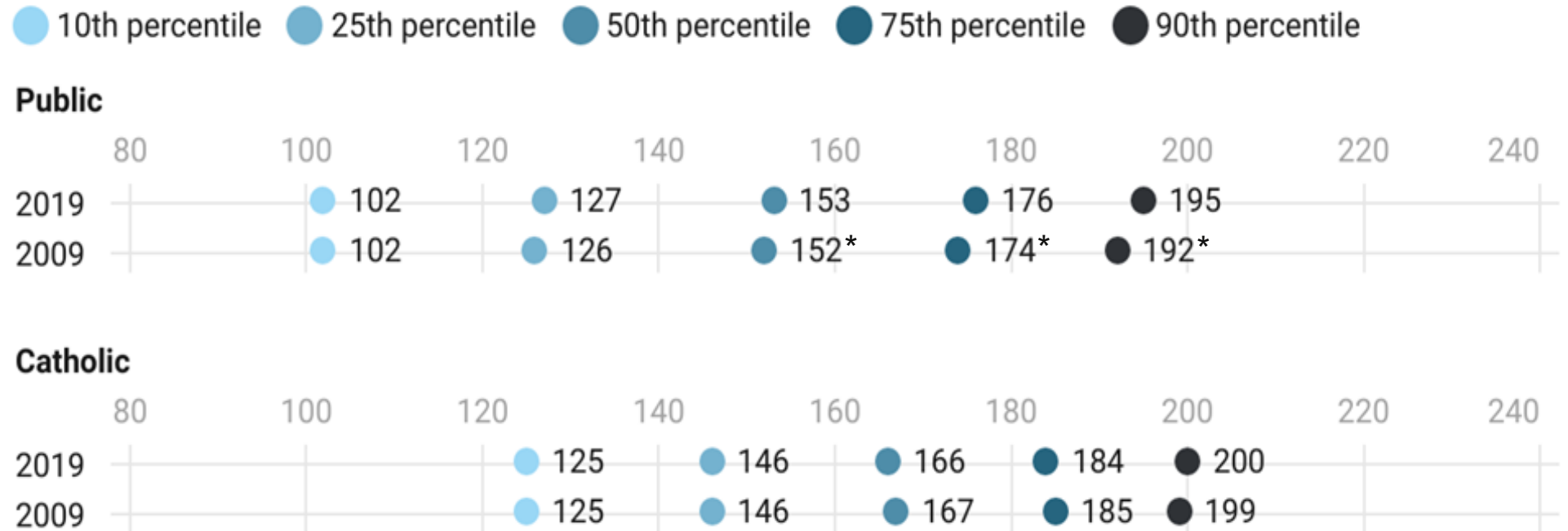
Eighth-grade reading scores, by selected percentiles and school type: selected years, 1992–2019

*Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2019.

¹Accommodations not permitted.

No change in grade 4 science scores for Catholic school students

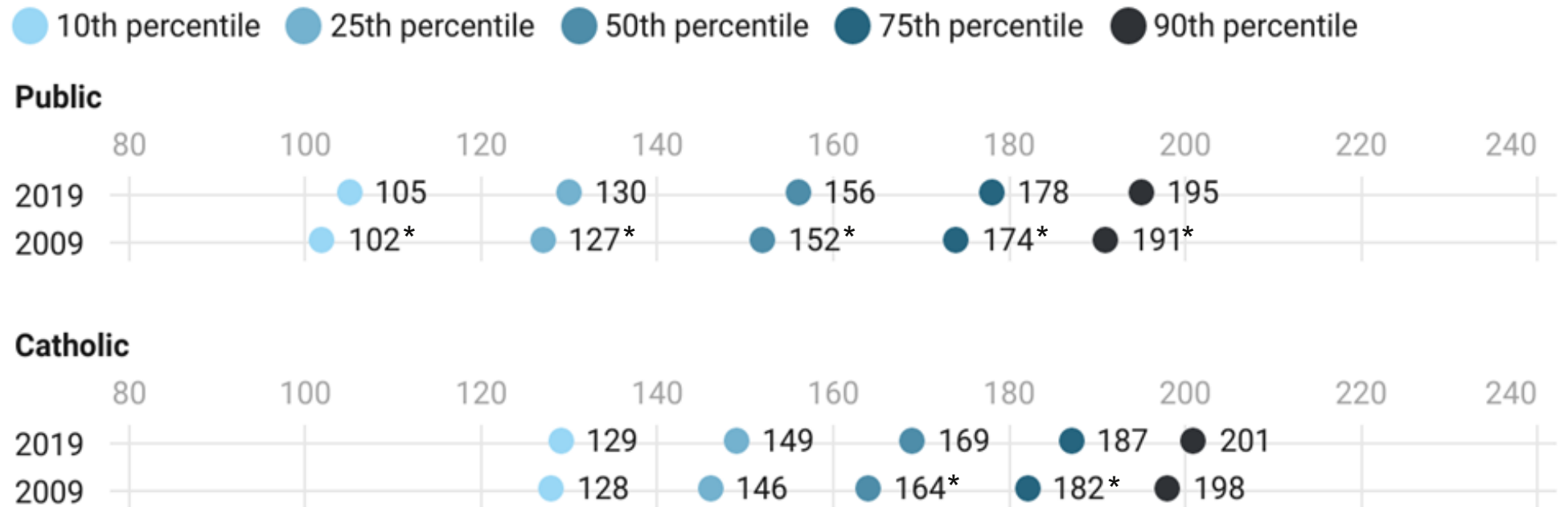
Fourth-grade science scores, by selected percentiles and school type: selected years, 2009–2019



*Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2019.

Gains at the 50th and 75th percentiles in grade 8 science for Catholic school students

Eighth-grade science scores, by selected percentiles and school type: selected years, 2009–2019



*Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2019.

Summary

- Catholic schools were made up of more White and urban students than public schools and have smaller proportions of students with disabilities and English learners
- Catholic school students outperformed public school students on average in grades 4 and 8 mathematics, reading, and science
- Recent Catholic school student performance was similar to results from almost two decades ago
- Lower-performers in Catholic schools had score declines in grade 8 mathematics and reading over the last decade, while there were gains made by middle- and higher-performers in grade 8 science

Thank you

**A Closer Look Private School Student Performance:
Using National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)
Data to Understand the Composition and Performance of
Catholic School Students**



Ebony Walton, Statistician

National Center for Education Statistics

04/22/2022

