

NORTHWEST VALLEY DATAPOINTS

Northwest Valley Education

By *Andrea Thomas Brandley, Senior Education Analyst*

April 2026

Northwest Salt Lake County serves as home to 1 in 10 Utahns and makes up one-quarter of the state’s most populous county. Located west of I-15 and hemmed in by Great Salt Lake and the southern suburbs, this region includes West Valley City—Utah’s second largest city—along with the communities of Kearns, Magna, Taylorsville, and the western portion of Salt Lake City.

As the University of Utah establishes its first off-campus hospital—located in the heart of Northwest Salt Lake County—

and launches a suite of local initiatives aimed at long-term societal impact, community stakeholders need data about the region. The Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute meets this need with “Northwest Valley Datapoints,” a series of fact sheets designed to inform local decision makers and community partners. This sixth installment examines educational data for the region, including school enrollment, attendance, academic outcomes, and educational attainment.

GEOGRAPHY & ENROLLMENT

Northwest Salt Lake County includes 85 public schools operated by Granite School District, Salt Lake City School District, and several charter networks, serving approximately 53,000 K–12 students in the 2025-26 school year. Enrollment trends show sharp declines in recent years.

Granite District serves the majority of students in the region (70.3%) while charter schools enroll 20.6%. A relatively minor 9.1% of students enrolled in Northwest Valley schools attend Salt Lake District schools in the region. Salt Lake District’s share is lower in part because all three district-operated high schools are located east of I-15.

- **1 in 3 Salt Lake County students attend school in Northwest Valley** – Northwest Valley schools serve approximately 53,000 students, representing about one-third of Salt Lake County enrollment and 8.0% of statewide enrollment.

- **Granite District enrolls most students across the region** – Fifty-four of the region’s 85 schools operate within Granite District, representing two-thirds (68.4%) of Salt Lake County’s largest school district.

- **1 in 5 students attend a charter school** – Nineteen charter schools operate within Northwest Valley, enrolling about 1 in 5 students in the region. These campuses account for roughly one-third of county charter enrollment and 12.8% of statewide charter enrollment.

- **Declining enrollment** – Since the 2018-19 school year, public school enrollment in Northwest Salt Lake County fell by nearly 7,000 students (11.2%), sharper than declines in Salt Lake County (7.8%) and the state (0.4%). Northwest Valley charter school enrollment grew due to the opening of two new charter schools over this period.

Granite School District enrolls most Northwest Valley students.

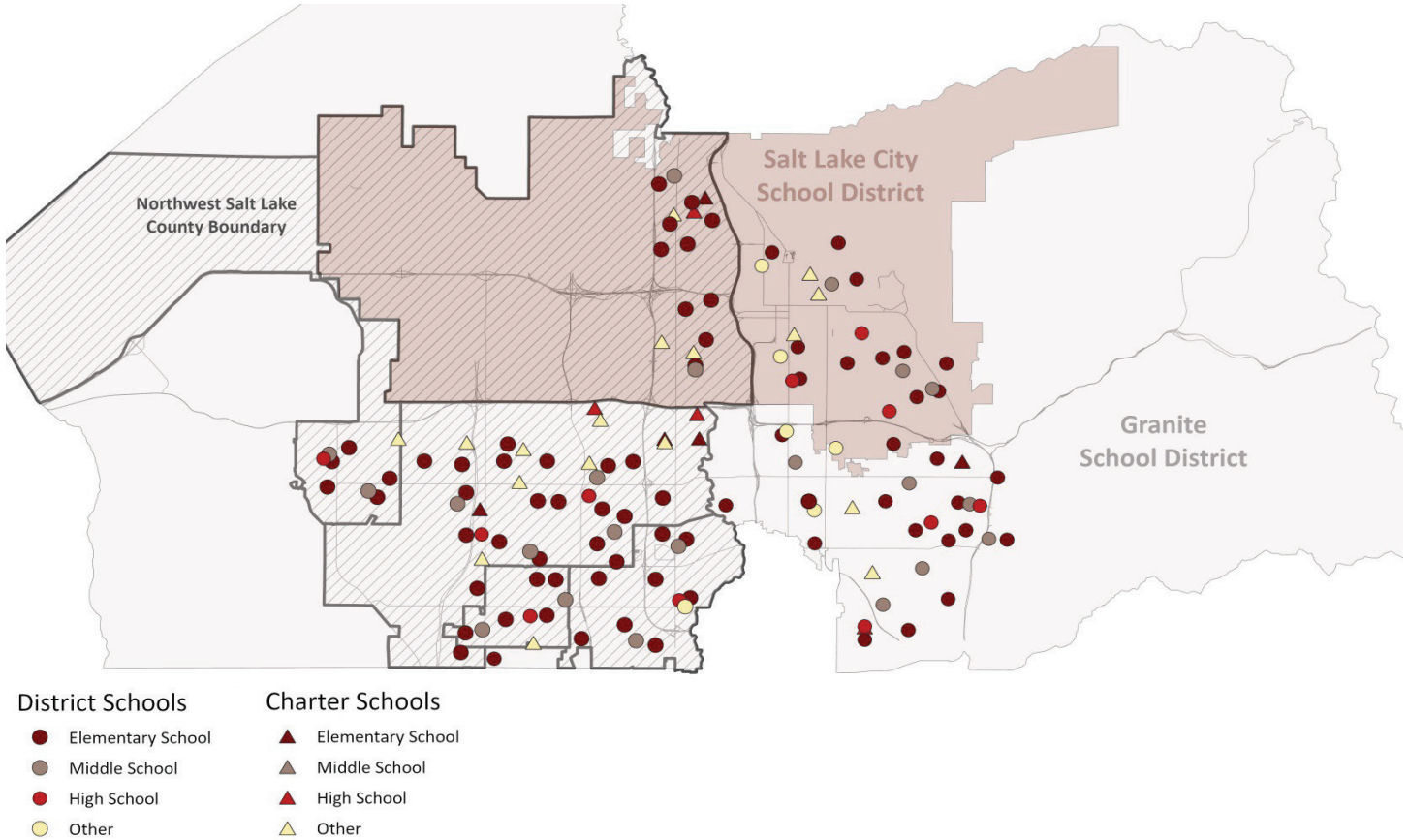
Figure 1: Northwest Salt Lake County Public School Enrollment, 2025-26



Note: Includes enrollment for district and charter schools physically located in Kearns, Magna, Taylorsville, West Valley City, and Salt Lake City west of I-15.
 Source: Utah State Board of Education

Eighty-five public schools operate in Northwest Valley.

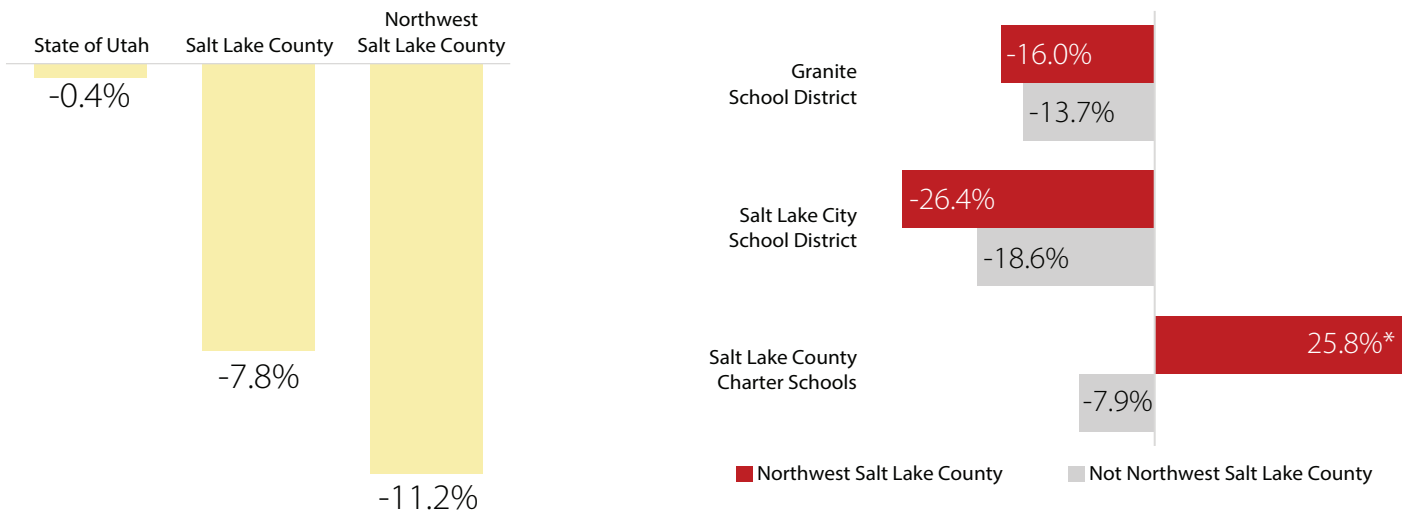
Figure 2: Public Schools Located Within Granite and Salt Lake City School District Boundaries, 2025-26



Note: Elementary schools include grades K-5 or K-6; middle schools include grades 6-8; high schools include grades 9-12; other includes schools spanning multiple grade configurations (e.g. K-8, K-12, and 7-12).
Source: Utah State Board of Education

Northwest Valley faces steep enrollment declines.

Figure 3: Percent Change in Student Enrollment in Select Geographies, 2018-19 to 2025-26



Note: *Two new charter schools opened in Northwest Salt Lake County during this period, accounting for nearly all of the increase in charter school enrollment.
Source: Utah State Board of Education

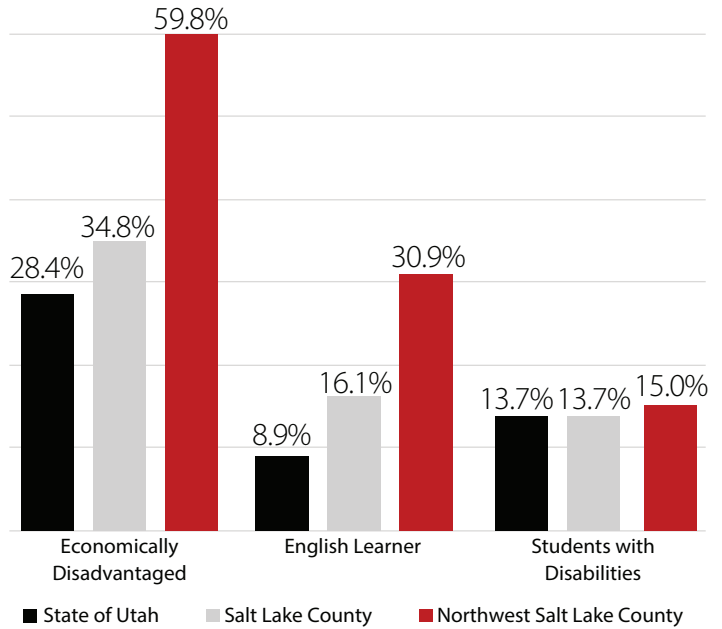
STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Northwest Salt Lake County schools serve a racially and ethnically diverse student population with higher concentrations of economically disadvantaged students and English learners than the county and state. In the 2025–26 school year, students of color comprised a majority of enrollment in Northwest Valley schools, reflecting the region’s broader demographic profile. Hispanic or Latino students represent the largest share of enrollment. The region also stands out with high shares of students identifying as Pacific Islander and Black or African American.

- **Majority students of color** – Students of color comprise 70.0% of Northwest Valley enrollment, compared with 45.0% in Salt Lake County and 31.2% statewide. Granite and Salt Lake districts are among only four districts statewide — alongside Ogden and San Juan — that serve majority-minority student populations.
- **Higher Hispanic enrollment** – Hispanic students account for over half (53.4%) of Northwest Valley enrollment, compared with 30.8% countywide and 21.7% statewide.
- **Economic characteristics** – More than half (59.8%) of Northwest Valley students qualify as economically disadvantaged, compared with about a third (34.8%) in Salt Lake County and 28.4% statewide.
- **Large English learner population** – Nearly one third (30.9%) of students identify as English learners, almost double the county rate (16.1%) and more than triple the statewide rate (8.9%).
- **Comparable special education rates** – About 1 in 7 (15.0%) Northwest Valley students receive special education services, similar to Salt Lake County (13.7%) and Utah (13.7%).

Northwest Valley enrolls higher shares of economically disadvantaged and English learner students.

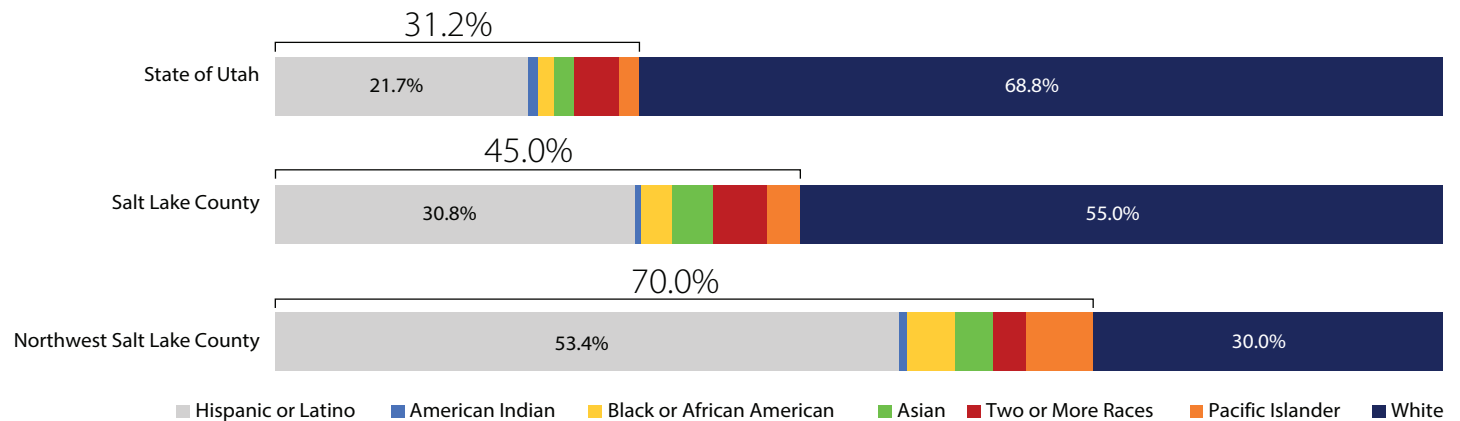
Figure 4: Select Student Characteristics in Utah, Salt Lake County, and Northwest Salt Lake County Public Schools, 2025-26



Note: Includes district and charter schools physically located within each geographic area. For methodology, see endnote 2. Source: Utah State Board of Education

Northwest Valley serves a majority-student-of-color population.

Figure 5: Student Race and Ethnicity in Utah, Salt Lake County, and Northwest Salt Lake County Public Schools, 2025-26



Note: Includes enrollment at district and charter schools physically located within each geographic area. All racial and ethnic groups are non-Hispanic (except Hispanic or Latino) and single race alone (except two or more races). Source: Utah State Board of Education

Salt Lake City School District: A Capital City Example

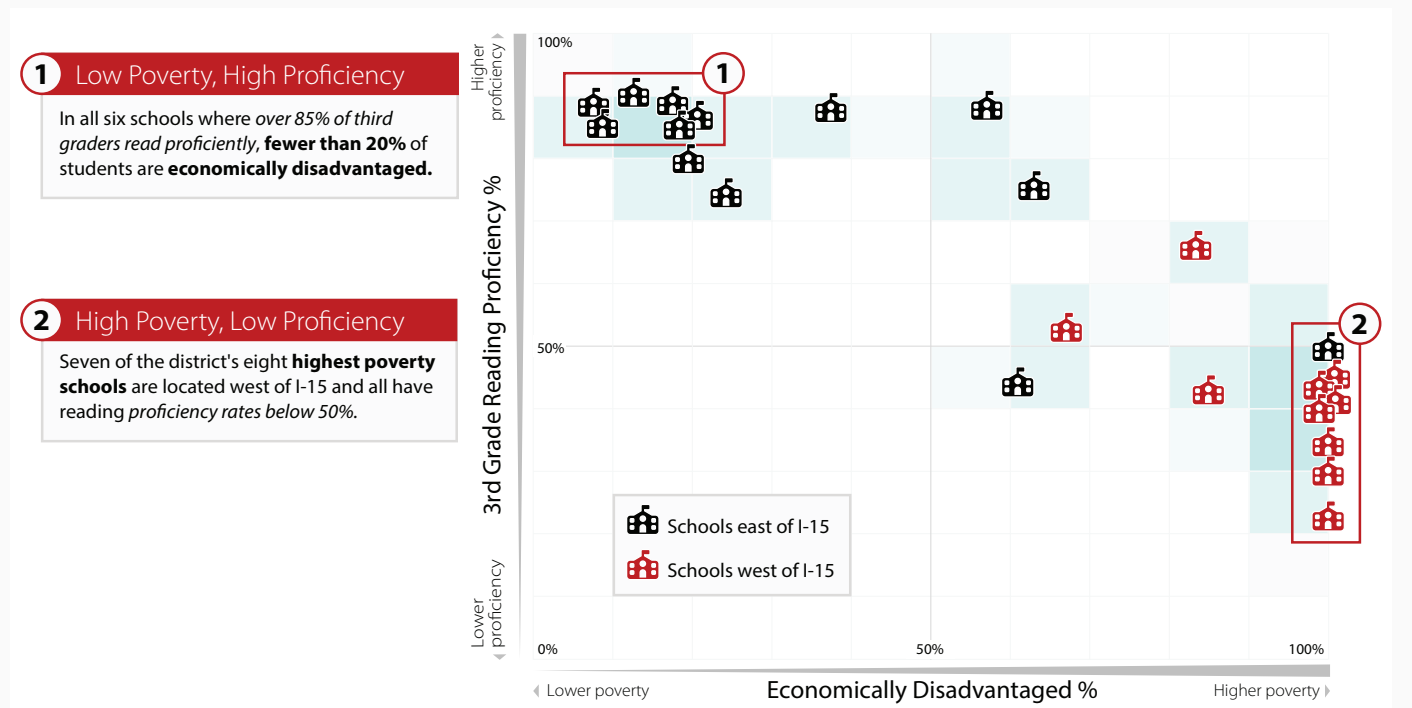
Salt Lake City School District highlights the varied conditions schools serve within a single urban system. Utah's capital city includes some of the state's highest-income neighborhoods as well as communities with high rates of economic disadvantage, resulting in a student population with diverse backgrounds and a wide range of educational needs.

While there is variation across schools, schools serving west-side neighborhoods enroll higher shares of economically

disadvantaged students and multilingual learners than those serving east-side communities. Schools west of I-15 generally report higher absenteeism and mobility, along with lower academic outcomes.

These patterns illustrate the complexity of serving diverse communities within a single district and demonstrate how differences in community context can contribute to variation in student outcomes.

Figure 6: Share of Economically Disadvantaged Students and 3rd Grade Reading Proficiency for Salt Lake City School District Schools, 2024-25



Note: Reading proficiency rates reflect the share of third-grade students scoring at or above benchmark on the end-of-year Acadience reading assessment. Schools reporting that 100% of their students are economically disadvantaged met thresholds for the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) of the National School Lunch Program, indicating that a high percentage of students participate in SNAP, TANF, FDPIR, or Medicaid, or are homeless, runaway, migrant, or foster children.
Source: Utah State Board of Education

ATTENDANCE AND STUDENT MOBILITY

High rates of absenteeism disrupt student learning throughout Northwest Salt Lake County. During the 2024-25 school year, 32.3% of students in Northwest Valley schools were chronically absent, missing more than 10% of school days. This high rate exceeds both the state (23.8%) and county (25.5%) rates and reflects lower student engagement and lost classroom time.

High student mobility poses another challenge. Over 1 in 5 (21.8%) Northwest Valley students left their school midyear in 2024-25, disrupting the sequence and flow of instruction. In comparison, 10.5% of students statewide experienced midyear enrollment changes.

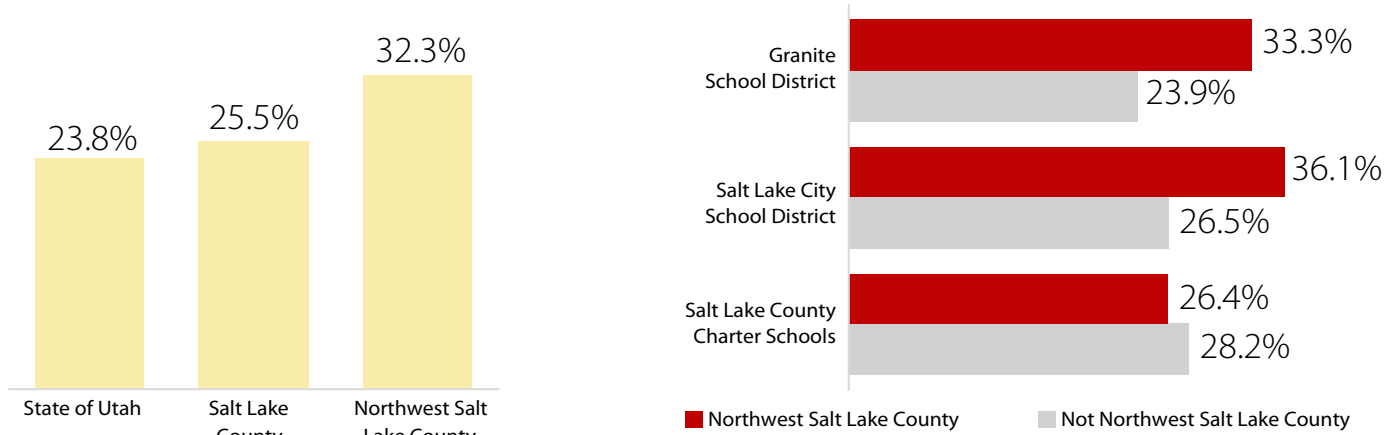
- **1 in 3 students are chronically absent** – Within Granite District, chronic absenteeism in Northwest Valley schools (33.3%) exceeded the rate in the rest of the district (23.9%).

Similarly, in Salt Lake District, absenteeism was substantially higher in Northwest Valley schools (36.1%) than in other district schools (26.5%) in 2024-2025.

- **Nearly 1 in 4 district students experienced midyear enrollment changes** – Mobility was higher in Northwest Valley schools within both Granite (23.3% vs. 19.7%) and Salt Lake City School District (24.2% vs. 16.3%) in the 2024-25 school year.
- **Charter patterns differ** – Northwest Valley charter schools reported lower chronic absenteeism (26.4%) and mobility (15.3%) than district schools in the region, though both chronic absenteeism and mobility remain elevated relative to statewide averages.

Northwest Valley schools face higher rates of absenteeism.

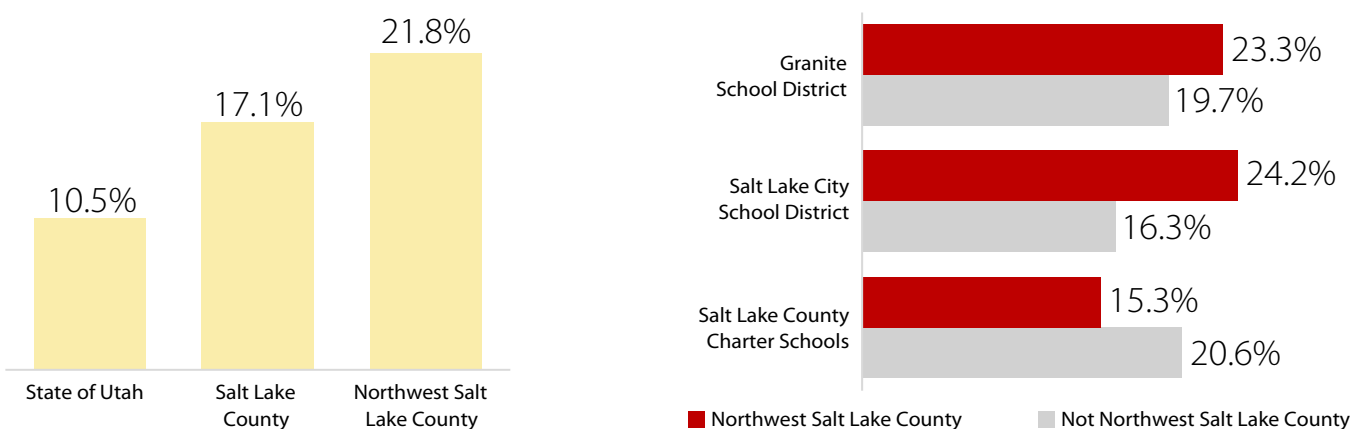
Figure 7: Chronic Absenteeism Rates for Public Schools in Select Geographies, 2024–25



Note: A student is considered chronically absent if they were absent for more than 10% of days enrolled. Includes district and charter schools physically located within each geographic area. For methodology, see endnote 2. Source: Utah State Board of Education

High student turnover in Northwest Valley schools.

Figure 8: Student Mobility Rates for Public Schools in Select Geographies, 2024–25



Note: A student is considered mobile if they have one or more enrollment records for fewer than 160 days during the school year. Includes district and charter schools physically located within each geographic area. For methodology, see endnote 2. Source: Utah State Board of Education

EARLY LEARNING

In Northwest Salt Lake County, fewer students begin school ready to learn compared to their peers elsewhere in the county and state. In 2024-25, less than one-third (29.9%) of Northwest Valley kindergarten students met beginning-of-year reading benchmarks, compared with 51.5% in Salt Lake County and 55.6% statewide. Beginning-of-year math scores show similar patterns.

Preschool participation patterns mirror these differences. In Northwest Valley, 37.2% of three- and four-year-olds attend preschool, compared with 46.4% in Salt Lake County and 42.5% statewide. These gaps persist in later grades, as reflected in third grade reading and statewide assessment results.

- **District school readiness gaps** – Within Granite District, less than one-third (29.5%) of Northwest Valley kindergarten students met beginning-of-year reading benchmarks

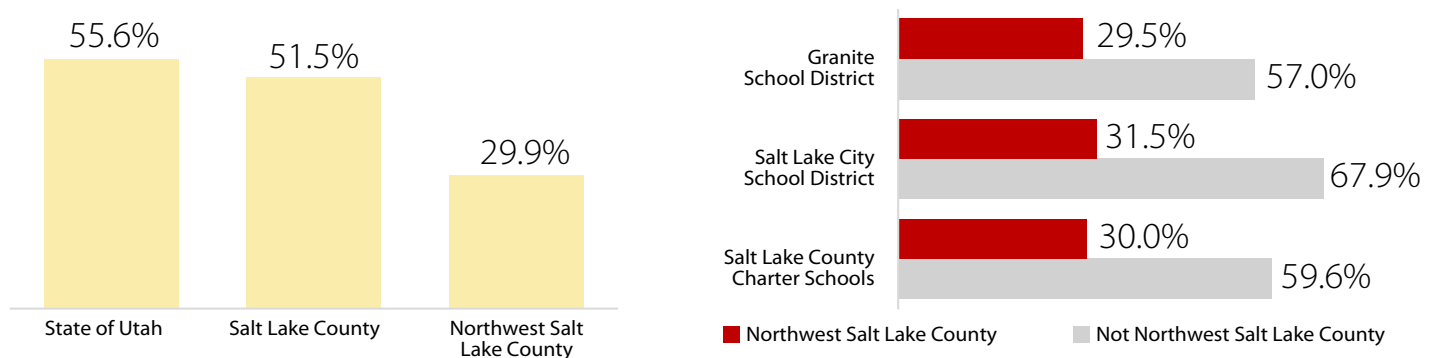
compared with 57.0% in the rest of the district. In Salt Lake District, 31.5% met benchmark in Northwest Valley schools compared with 67.9% in the rest of the district.

- **Charter school students also start behind** – Just under one-third (30.0%) of Northwest Valley charter school students met benchmark at the beginning of kindergarten—about half the rate of kindergarteners in other Salt Lake County charter schools (59.6%).

- **Lower preschool enrollment driven by private sector gap** – While public preschool enrollment aligns with county and state levels, private preschool participation is substantially lower (9.4%) than in Salt Lake County (20.1%) and statewide (17.8%). Preschool enrollment ranges from 16.0% in Kearns to 42.7% in West Valley City.

Fewer students begin kindergarten at benchmark in Northwest Valley.

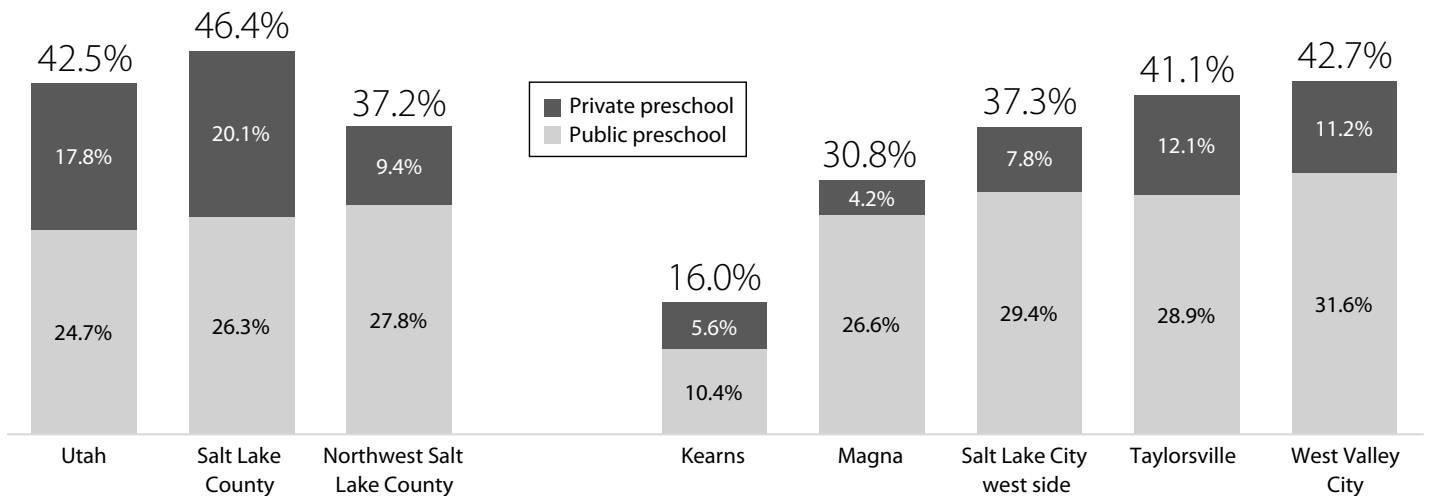
Figure 9: Beginning-of-Year Kindergarten Reading Proficiency Rates for Public Schools in Select Geographies, 2024–25



Note: Includes district and charter schools physically located within each geographic area. Rates reflect the estimated share of kindergarten students scoring at or above benchmark on the beginning-of-year Acadience reading assessment. For methodology, see endnote 2.
Source: Utah State Board of Education

Preschool enrollment below county levels in Northwest Valley.

Figure 10: Share of Three- and Four-Year-Olds Enrolled in School in Select Communities, 2020-2024



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2020–2024 5-Year Estimates

ACADEMIC OUTCOMES

Students in Northwest Valley score lower on standardized tests than peers living elsewhere in Utah. Differences emerge early in elementary school and continue through middle and high school across reading, math, and science. In 2024–25, 53.6% of Northwest Valley third grade students met grade-level reading benchmarks, compared with 67.3% in Salt Lake County and 70.5% statewide. Similar patterns appear on statewide RISE assessments in grades 3–8 and on high school ASPIRE assessments in grades 9 and 10.

Differences extend beyond proficiency levels. Northwest Valley schools’ median growth percentiles indicate that, on average, students in Northwest Valley achieve less academic growth over a school year compared to peers across the county and state. Economic disadvantage does not fully explain differences in academic achievement, as economically disadvantaged students in Northwest Valley perform below their economically disadvantaged peers outside the region.

- **Early literacy varies by district** – Half (52.3%) of Northwest Valley third graders attending Granite schools met reading

benchmarks, versus 70.9% in the rest of the district. In Salt Lake District, 43.8% of Northwest Valley third graders met benchmark compared with 79.6% elsewhere in the district. Northwest Valley charter schools (62.9%) also trailed other county charter schools (74.3%).

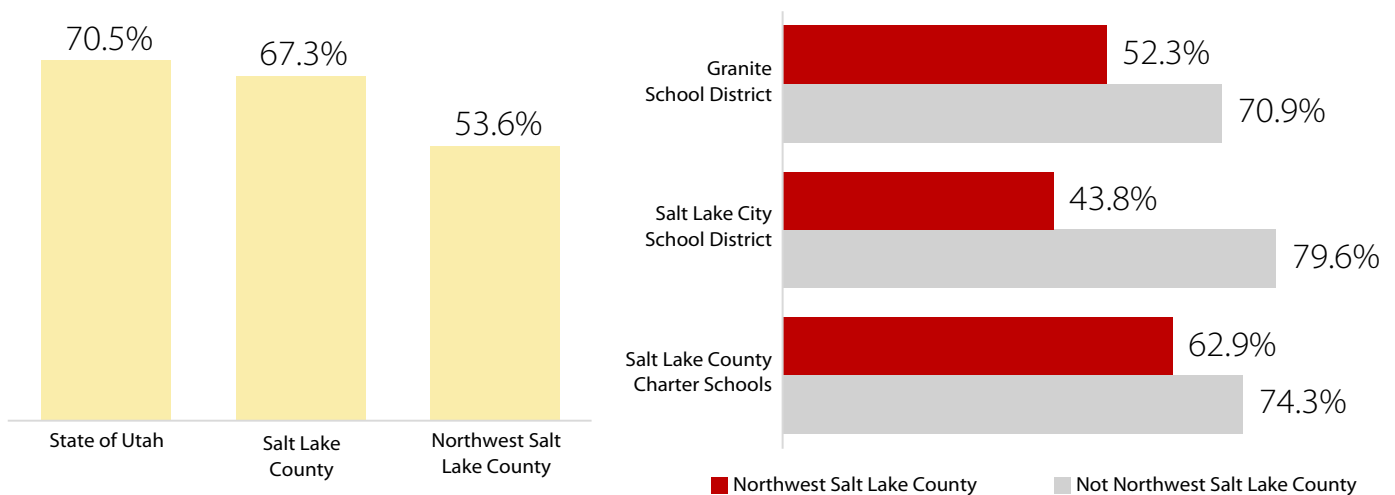
- **Lower proficiency across subjects in grades 3-8** – Northwest Valley proficiency rates lagged the state by nearly 20 percentage points on RISE assessments for English language arts (25.4%), math (24.6%), and science (30.9%).
- **Achievement gaps persist into high school** – On ASPIRE assessments for 9th and 10th graders, Northwest Valley high school students’ proficiency rates trailed the state by nearly 20 percentage points in English language arts (26.8%), math (16.2%), and science (22.2%).
- **Math outcomes consistently lowest** – Across grade levels and assessments, math proficiency remains the lowest-performing subject in Northwest Valley schools, a trend also observed in Salt Lake County overall.

Reading Proficiency Definition Update

SB 241, passed during the 2026 General Session, revised Utah’s definition of “reading on grade level” to include students scoring *at or above* benchmark on the Acadience assessment. Previously, only students scoring *above* benchmark were counted. This definitional change increases reported rates and does not represent a sudden improvement in student performance.

About half of Northwest Valley third-graders read proficiently.

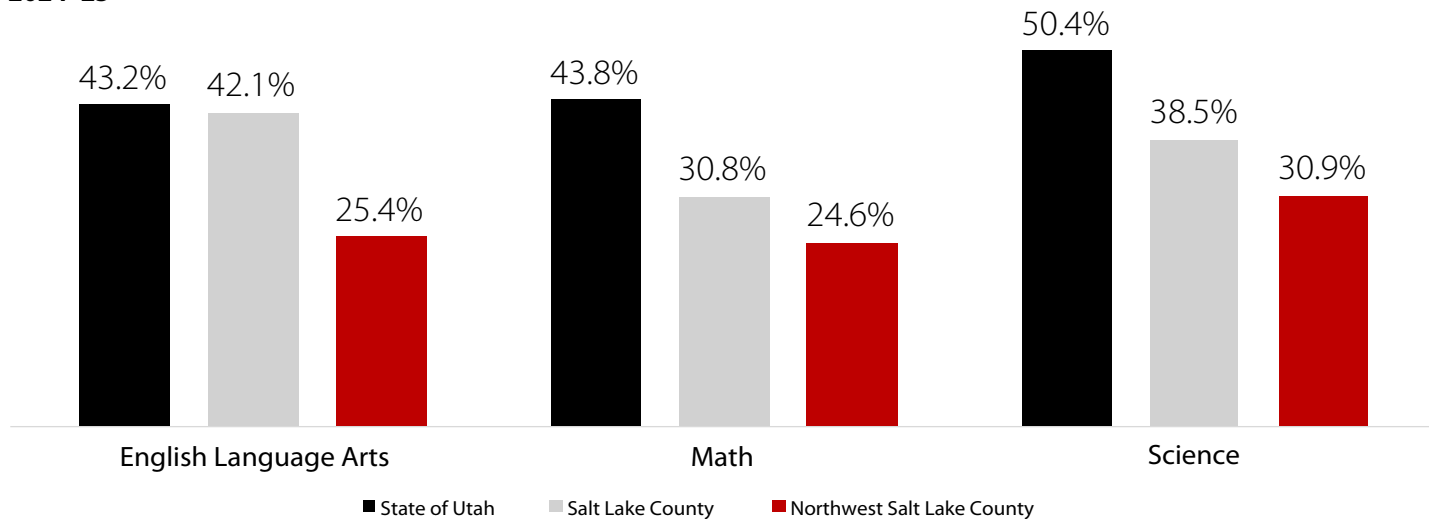
Figure 11: Third-Grade Reading Proficiency for Public Schools in Select Geographies, 2024–25



Note: Includes district and charter schools physically located within each geographic area. Rates reflect the estimated share of third-grade students scoring at or above benchmark on the end-of-year Acadience reading assessment. For methodology, see endnote 2.
Source: Utah State Board of Education

RISE proficiency remains lower in Northwest Valley.

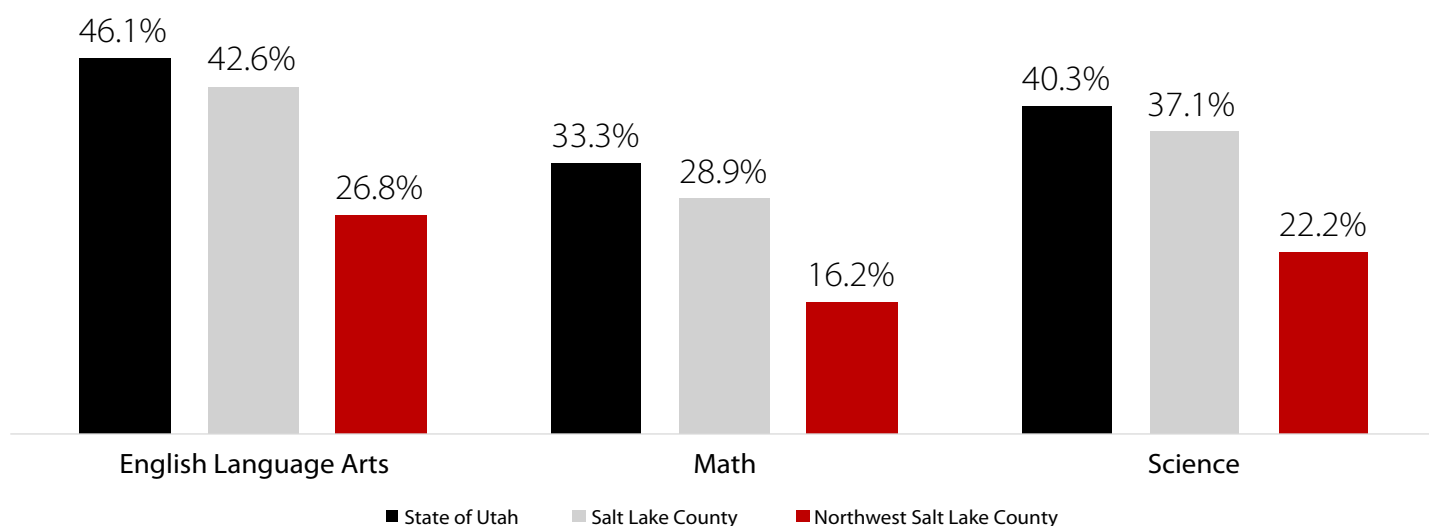
Figure 12: RISE Assessment Proficiency Rates in Utah, Salt Lake County, and Northwest Salt Lake County Public Schools, 2024–25



Note: Includes district and charter schools physically located within each geographic area. Rates reflect the estimated share of students in grades 3-8 (English Language Arts and Math) and grades 4-8 (Science) scoring proficient or highly proficient on the RISE end-of-year assessments. For methodology, see endnote 2.
Source: Utah State Board of Education

Achievement gaps extend into high school.

Figure 13: ASPIRE Assessment Proficiency Rates in Utah, Salt Lake County, and Northwest Salt Lake County Public Schools, 2024–25



Note: Includes district and charter schools physically located within each geographic area. Rates reflect the estimated share of 9th-10th grade students scoring proficient or highly proficient on the ASPIRE assessments. For methodology, see endnote 2.
Source: Utah State Board of Education

HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION AND POSTSECONDARY READINESS

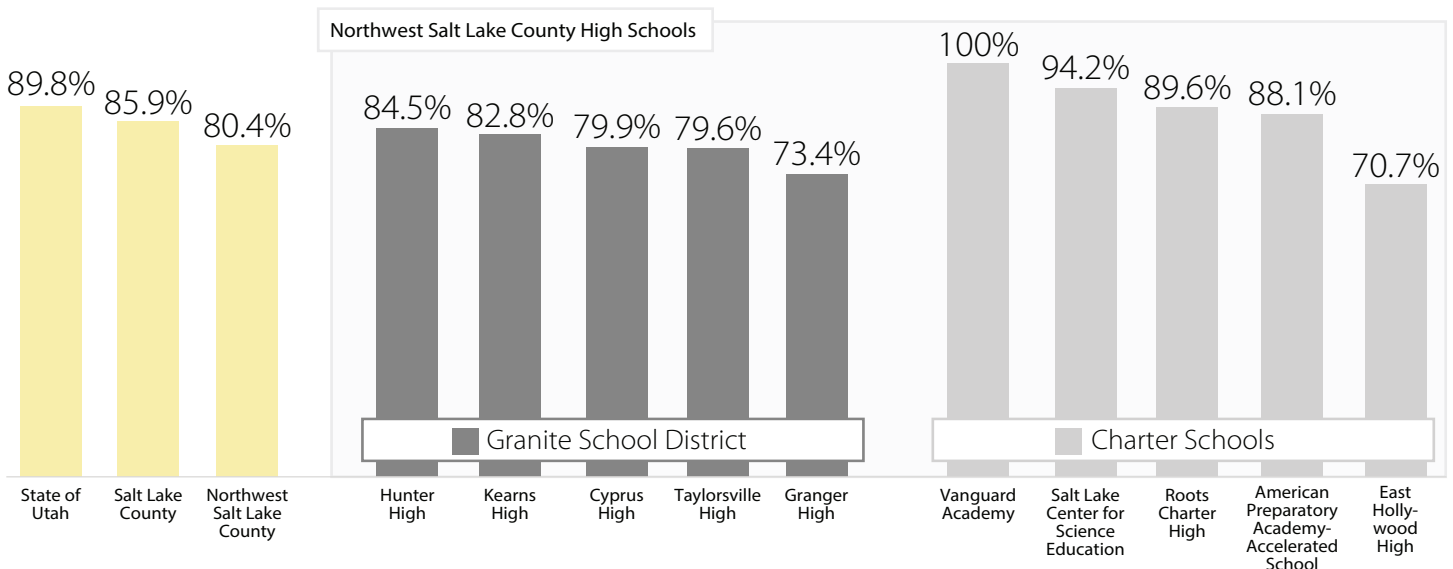
High school graduation rates and ACT scores indicate smaller shares of Northwest Valley students complete high school with the skills required for college success. In 2024–25, the four-year graduation rate for Northwest Valley high schools was 80.4%, compared with 85.9% in Salt Lake County and 89.8% statewide. Similarly, about one-third (34.8%) of Northwest Valley students scored 18 or higher on the ACT, a common metric of college readiness, compared with 57.9% countywide and 62.6% statewide.

- **Graduation rates higher at Hunter High and Kearns High** – Among Granite high schools in Northwest Valley, graduation rates range from 73.4% (Granger High) to 84.5% (Hunter High).

- **Charter high schools report higher completion rates** – Four of five Northwest Valley charter high schools report graduation rates above the Salt Lake County average, though their graduating cohorts are much smaller than those of district high schools.
- **ACT scores highest at Taylorsville High** – Among Granite high schools, the share of students scoring 18 or higher ranges from 29.6% (Granger) to 39.3% (Taylorsville). Charter high schools show more variability, ranging from 20.0% to 65.1%.

Northwest Valley students graduate at lower rates.

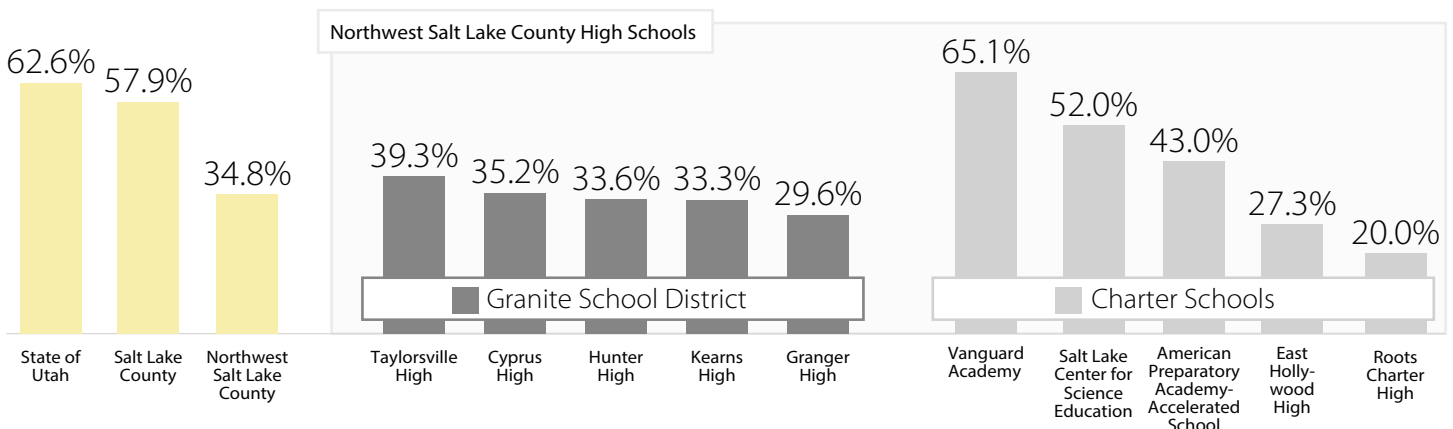
Figure 14: Graduation Rates in Utah, Salt Lake County, and Northwest Salt Lake County Public Schools, 2024–25



Note: 4-year graduation rate. Includes district and charter schools physically located within each geographic area. For methodology, see endnote 2. All included charter high schools had graduating cohorts of 125 students or fewer, while Granite District high schools each had cohorts exceeding 600 students.
Source: Utah State Board of Education

Fewer Northwest Valley students ready for college.

Figure 15: Share of Students Scoring 18 or Higher on the ACT in Select Communities, 2024–25



Note: Includes district and charter schools physically located within each geographic area. Rates reflect the estimated share of students scoring 18 or higher on the ACT. For methodology, see endnote 2.
Source: Utah State Board of Education

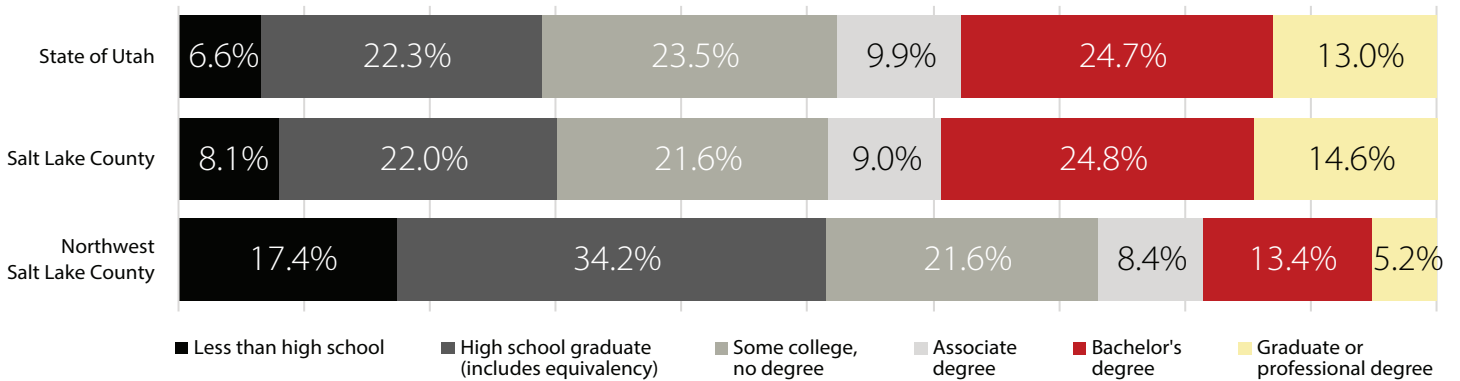
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

About 1 in 6 Northwest Valley adults lack a high school diploma (17.4%), more than double the statewide rate (6.6%). Additionally, only 18.5% of adults in Northwest Valley hold a bachelor's degree or higher, compared with 39.4% in Salt Lake County and 37.7% statewide. Attainment levels vary considerably across communities, ranging from 13.0% with bachelor's degrees in Magna to 24.3% in Taylorsville. These differences in educational attainment are associated with variation in economic opportunity, workforce participation, and civic engagement. On average, lower educational attainment limits employment opportunities and reduces lifetime earnings.

- **High school completion gap** – In Kearns, 20.8% of adults lack a high school diploma, followed by West Valley City and Salt Lake City's west side (19.0% and 18.8% respectively). In comparison, fewer than 1 in 10 adults lack a diploma in Salt Lake County (8.1%) and Utah (6.6%).
- **Attainment gaps span generations** – While younger adults in Northwest Valley (25–34) report higher shares with a bachelor's degree or higher than older residents, the region trails county and statewide averages at every age level.
- **Few residents hold graduate degrees** – Only 5.2% of adults in Northwest Valley hold a graduate or professional degree, compared with 14.6% in Salt Lake County and 13.0% statewide.

Northwest Valley educational attainment lags county and state levels.

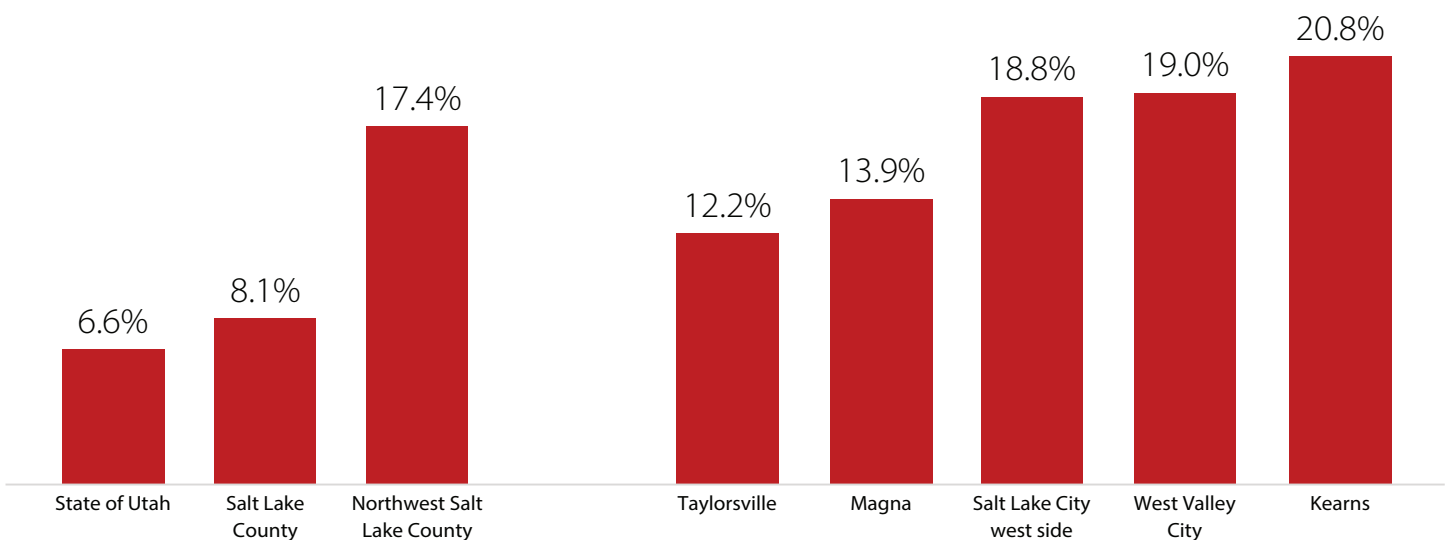
Figure 16: Educational Attainment for Adults Ages 25 and Older in Northwest Salt Lake County, Salt Lake County, and Utah, 2020-2024



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2020-2024 5-Year Estimates

High school non-completion varies, with lower rates in Taylorsville and Magna.

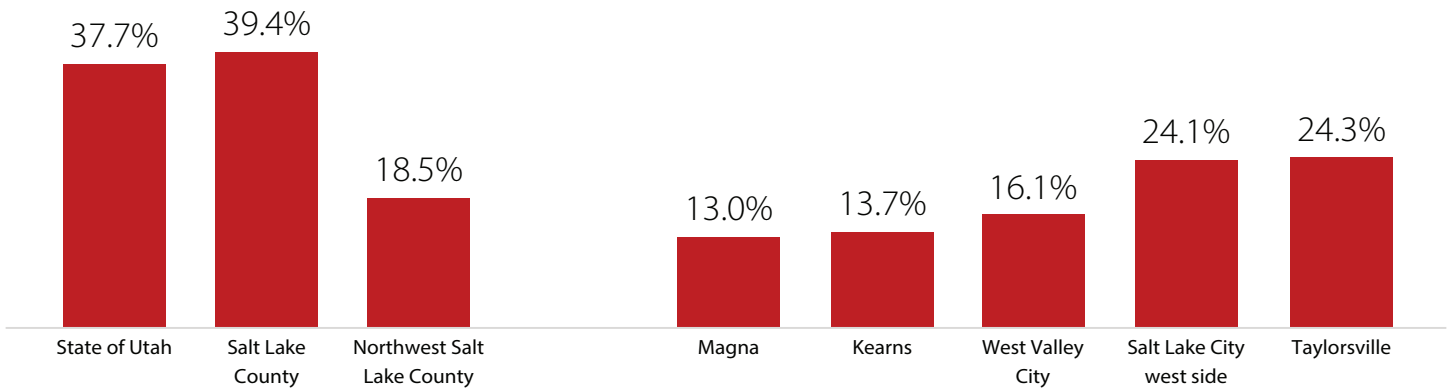
Figure 17: Share of Population 25 and Older with Less than a High School Diploma in Select Communities, 2020-2024



Note: Includes population lacking a high school diploma or equivalent.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2020–2024 5-Year Estimates

Bachelor's degrees most common in Taylorsville and on the west side of Salt Lake City.

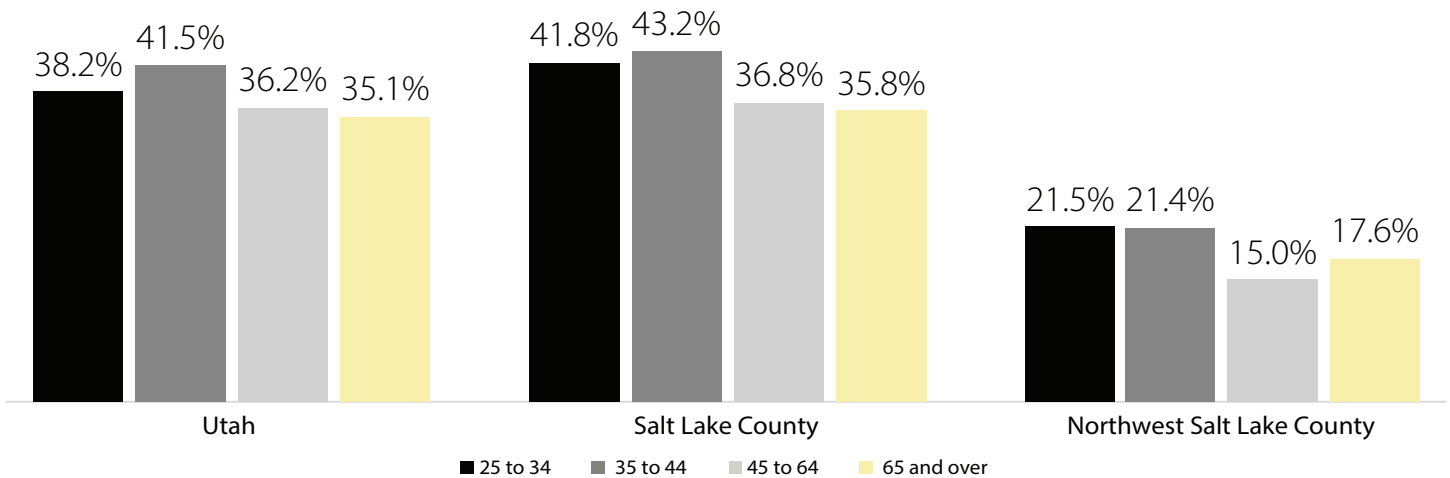
Figure 18: Share of Population 25 and Older with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher in Select Communities, 2020-2024



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2020-2024 5-Year Estimates

Bachelor's degree attainment remains lower across all age groups in Northwest Valley.

Figure 19: Share of Population Ages 25 and Older with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher by Age in Utah, Salt Lake County, and Northwest Salt Lake County, 2020-2024



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2020-2024 5-Year Estimates

* The Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute utilizes the terms "Northwest Valley" and "Northwest Salt Lake County" interchangeably to reference the communities of Kearns, Magna, Salt Lake City (west of Interstate 15), Taylorsville, and West Valley City. These terms define a statistical geography useful for data analysis that overlaps with areas commonly referred to as "West Valley," the "west side," and "west side communities."

i Due to Utah's open enrollment policies, attendance patterns extend beyond community boundaries. Some Northwest Valley youth may attend schools outside the region, and some students enrolled in Northwest Valley schools may live outside of Northwest Valley. This analysis captures only students who attend district and charter schools within the geography of Northwest Salt Lake County.

ii Data include all district and charter schools physically located within the specified geographic area with K-12 enrollment in the 2025-26 school year that reported data for the measure shown. Schools may be excluded from specific figures if data were unavailable, suppressed due to small student counts, or not applicable to the grade levels assessed. School classifications for Northwest Salt Lake County are based on 2025-26 school locations. When outcome data are drawn from 2024-25, schools that closed prior to 2025-26 are not included. For geographic aggregates (e.g., Northwest Salt Lake County, Salt Lake County, or district subregions), rates reflect weighted averages based on the relevant student population for the measure (e.g., grade-level enrollment for assessment results).

Partners in the Community

The following individuals and entities help support the research mission of the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute.

Legacy Partners

The Gardner Company
 Christian and Marie Gardner Family
 Intermountain Health
 Clark and Christine Ivory Foundation
 KSL and Deseret News
 Larry H. & Gail Miller Family Foundation
 Mountain America Credit Union
 Salt Lake City Corporation
 Salt Lake County
 University of Utah Health
 Utah Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity
 WCF Insurance
 Zions Bank

Executive Partners

The Boyer Company
 Clyde Companies

Sustaining Partners

Enbridge
 Salt Lake Chamber
 Staker Parson Materials and Construction
 Utah Chamber
 Wells Fargo

Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute Advisory Board

Conveners

Michael O. Leavitt
 Mitt Romney

Board

Scott Anderson, Co-Chair
 Gail Miller, Co-Chair
 Doug Anderson
 Deborah Bayle
 Roger Boyer
 Michelle Camacho
 Sophia M. DiCaro

Cameron Diehl
 Kurt Dirks
 Lisa Eccles
 Spencer P. Eccles
 Christian Gardner
 Kem C. Gardner
 Kimberly Gardner
 Natalie Gochnour
 Brandy Grace
 Jeremy Hafen
 Clark Ivory
 Ann Marie McDonald

Derek Miller
 Ann Millner
 Sterling Nielsen
 Jason Perry
 Ray Pickup
 Gary B. Porter
 Taylor Randall
 Jill Remington Love
 Josh Romney
 Charles W. Sorenson
 James Lee Sorenson
 Vicki Varela

Ex Officio (invited)

Governor Spencer Cox
 Speaker Mike Schultz
 Senate President
 Stuart Adams
 Representative
 Angela Romero
 Senator Luz Escamilla
 Mayor Jenny Wilson
 Mayor Erin Mendenhall

Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute Staff and Advisors

Leadership Team

Natalie Gochnour, Associate Dean and Director
 Jennifer Robinson, Chief of Staff
 Mallory Bateman, Director of Demographic Research
 Phil Dean, Chief Economist and Research Director
 Shelley Kruger, Director of Accounting and Finance
 Colleen Larson, Associate Director of Administration
 Nate Lloyd, Director of Economic Research
 Maddy Oritt, Director of Public Finance Research
 Laura Summers, Director of Public Policy Research
 Nicholas Thiriot, Communications Director
 James A. Wood, Ivory-Boyer Senior Fellow

Staff

Eric Albers, Senior Natural Resources Policy Analyst
 Samantha Ball, Dignity Initiative Research Director
 Parker Banta, Public Policy Analyst
 Melanie Beagley, Senior Health Research Analyst
 Kristina Bishop, Research Economist
 Andrea Thomas Brandley, Senior Education Analyst
 Kara Ann Byrne, Senior Health and Human Services Analyst
 Nate Christensen, Research Economist
 Moira Dillow, Housing, Construction, and Real Estate Analyst
 John C. Downen, Senior Research Fellow
 Dejan Eskic, Senior Research Fellow and Scholar
 Kate Farr, Monson Center Maintenance Specialist
 Chance Hansen, Communications Specialist

Emily Harris, Senior Demographer
 Michael T. Hogue, Senior Research Statistician
 Mike Hollingshaus, Senior Demographer
 Madeleine Jones, Dignity Initiative Field Director
 Jennifer Leaver, Senior Tourism Analyst
 Levi Pace, Senior Research Economist
 Praopan Pratoomchat, Senior Research Economist
 Heidi Prior, Public Policy Analyst
 Megan Rabe, Demography Research Associate
 Natalie Roney, Senior Public Finance Economist
 Shannon Simonsen, Research Coordinator
 Paul Springer, Senior Graphic Designer
 Gaby Velasquez, Monson Center Special Events Coordinator
 Cayley Wintch, Monson Center Building Manager
 David Witt, Dignity Initiative Program Associate

Senior Advisors

Jonathan Ball, Office of the Legislative Fiscal Analyst
 Ari Bruening, Community-at-Large
 Silvia Castro, Suazo Business Center
 Gary Cornia, Marriott School of Business
 Beth Jarosz, Population Reference Bureau
 Dianne Meppen, Community-at-Large
 Pamela S. Perlich, Community-at-Large
 Chris Redgrave, Community-at-Large
 Juliette Tennert, Community-at-Large