



Colorado Charter Schools Annual Conference

February 25-27, 2026
Denver Marriott Tech Center



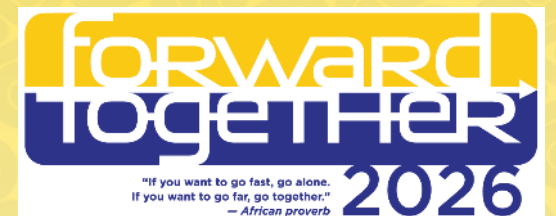
PRESENTED BY



Demographics, Data, and Decision Making: Using Predictive Analytics to Shape Your Enrollment Strategy

Brian Eschbacher
Raja Ridgway
Education Data Collective

Evergreen B
February 27, 2026 | 1:30 - 2:30 PM
Enrollment and Community



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We make it our priority to **advocate** for high-quality public charter schools across Colorado.



Be a part of the action.



Colorado Charter Enrollment Landscape

February 2026

Evolving Education Landscape

The K-12 education landscape is being impacted by a variety of external forces that complicate an organizations long-term planning capabilities.

Macro forces impacting child populations

Lowest birth rates
in U.S. history

Housing
affordability

Migration of
families both
domestic and
international

Intra-district and
inter-district open
enrollment

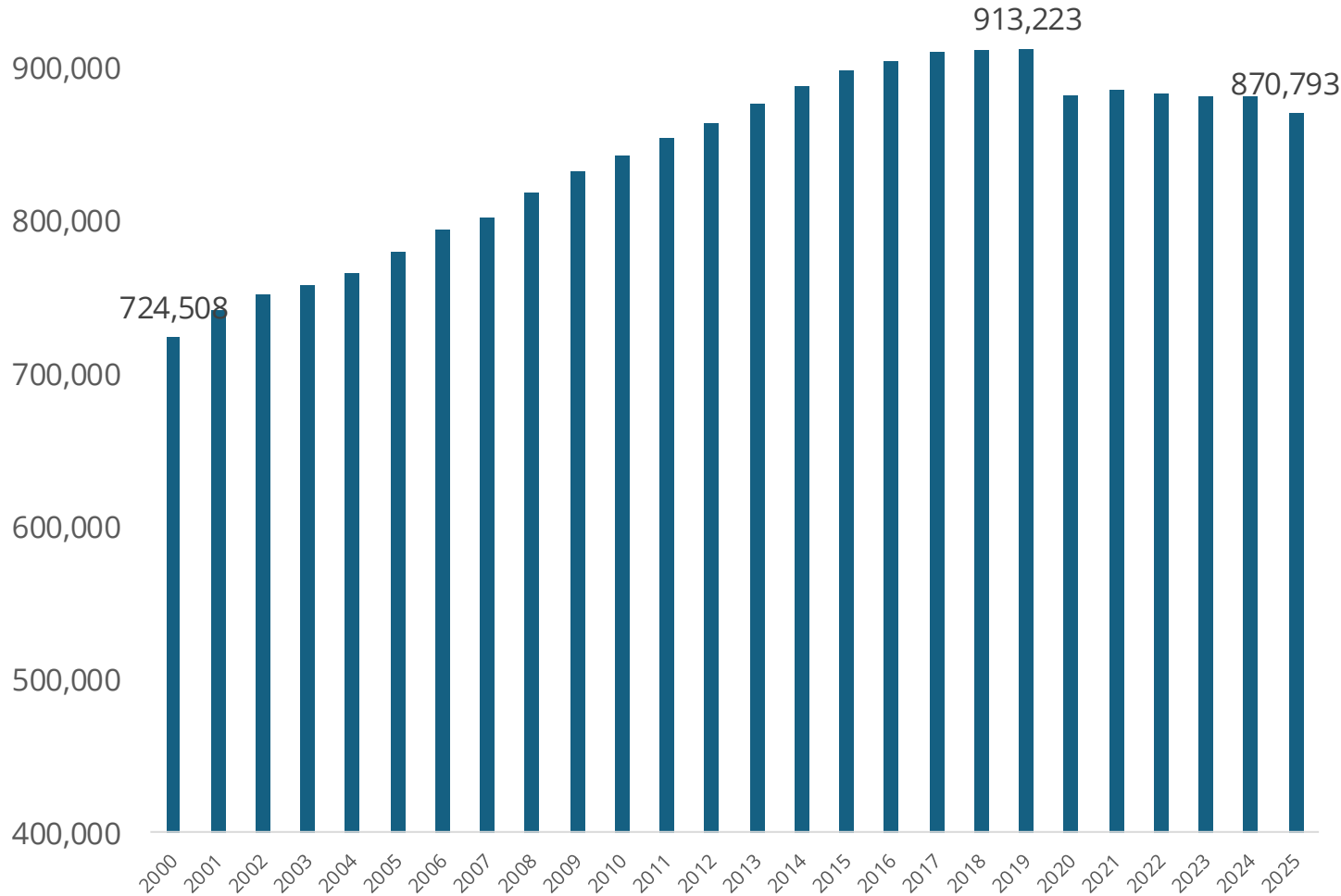
Increased charter
presence

ESA's, vouchers,
home schooling,
and micro schools

School choice landscape

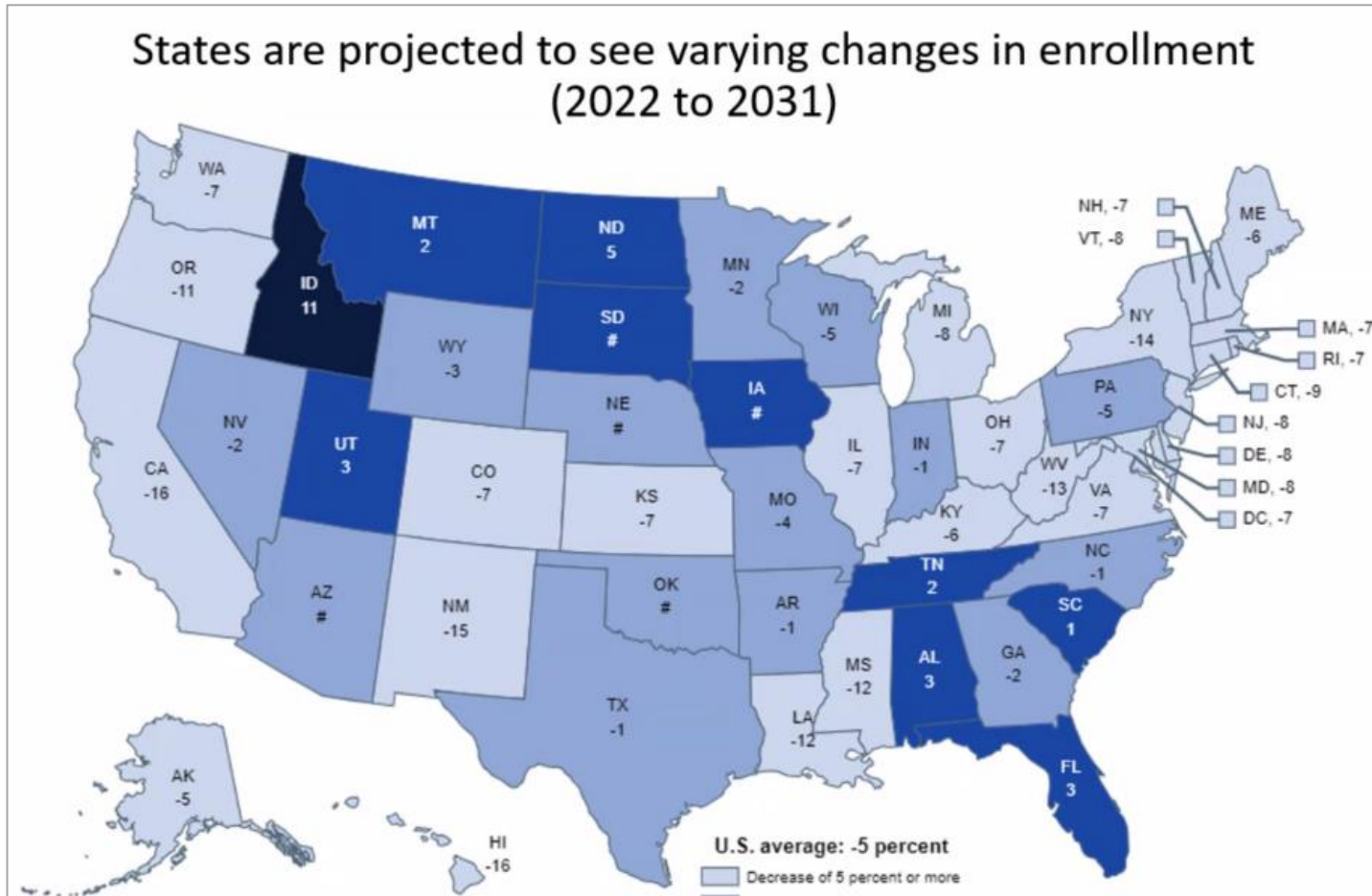
Colorado public school enrollment peaked in 2019, dropped during COVID but did not rebound

1,000,000



While 2020 declines are heavily attributable to COVID, enrollment was going to be declining anyway as larger cohorts of students were graduating 12th grade and replaced by smaller kinder cohorts as a result of fewer births and slower in-migration of residents into Colorado

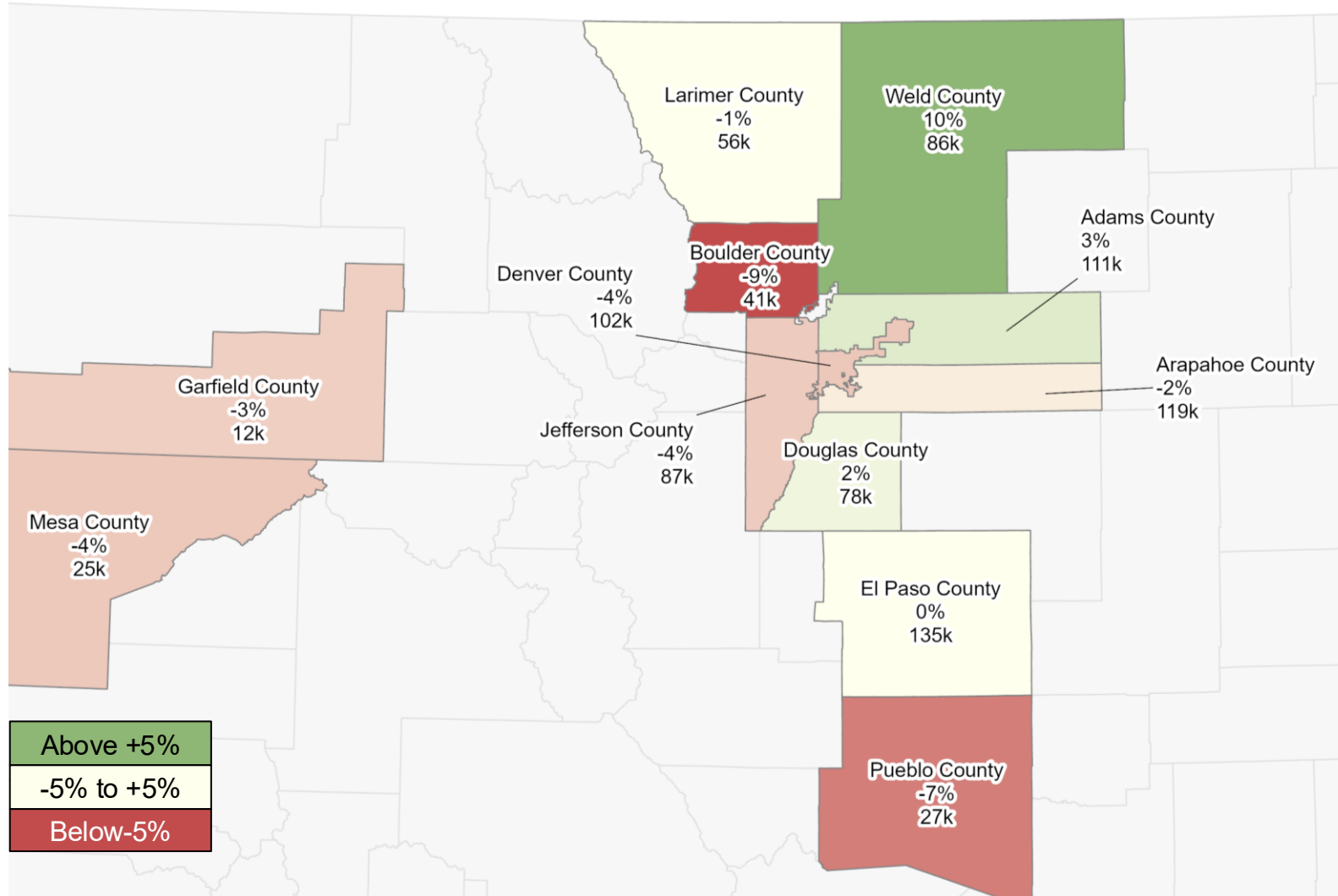
Enrollment declines are impacting most US states and are projected to continue for the foreseeable future



Colorado's projection has elements of both Kansas-New Mexico's rural declines along with Washington, Oregon, and California's coastal aging dynamics.

This state-wide projection contrasts Colorado with the growth in Utah, Idaho, and Montana, though residential development in those states appears similar to growth in El Paso and Weld counties.

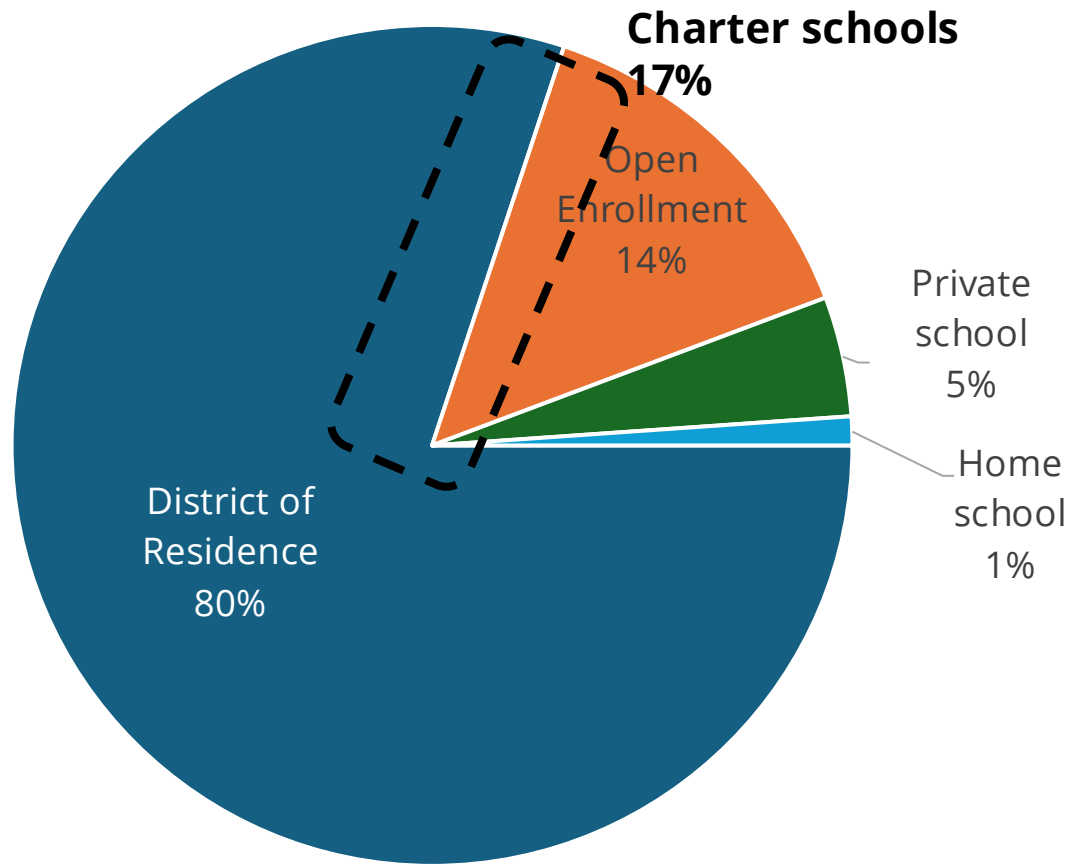
Colorado's state demographer projects 1% fewer children in the state by 2030, with variance between areas



State-wide child populations (0 to 14) are projected to decline 1% between 2024 and 2030, there is variance between the most populous counties.

While Weld (+10%), Adams (+3%), and Douglas (+2%) have growth and El Paso is steady, most others are projected to decline with Boulder's -9% the most significant.

The are more school choice options now that in years past, increasing competition for a smaller student population



Charter schools enroll 17% of public school students, or 139k students and includes students in the orange and blue segments on the chart based on authorization and where students live.

Open enrollment has increased 50% over the last decade, from 77k to 126k, due CSI growth and more districts backfilling seats to counter enrollment declines.

Home school students peaked at 15k in 2020, but has declined to 10k, or 1%, of students this year.

Private schools enroll 41,000 students, or 5%, which has not drastically changed over the past decade, but has potential growth from Federal HB1 scholarships.

Schools are assigned to one of three groups, with analysis of enrollment trends focused primarily on steady state schools.

New schools

Not open in 2019
(35 schools)



Phasing-in/out schools

Added or removed 1+ grades since 2019
(48 schools)



Steady state schools

Open + same grades as 2019
(171 schools)

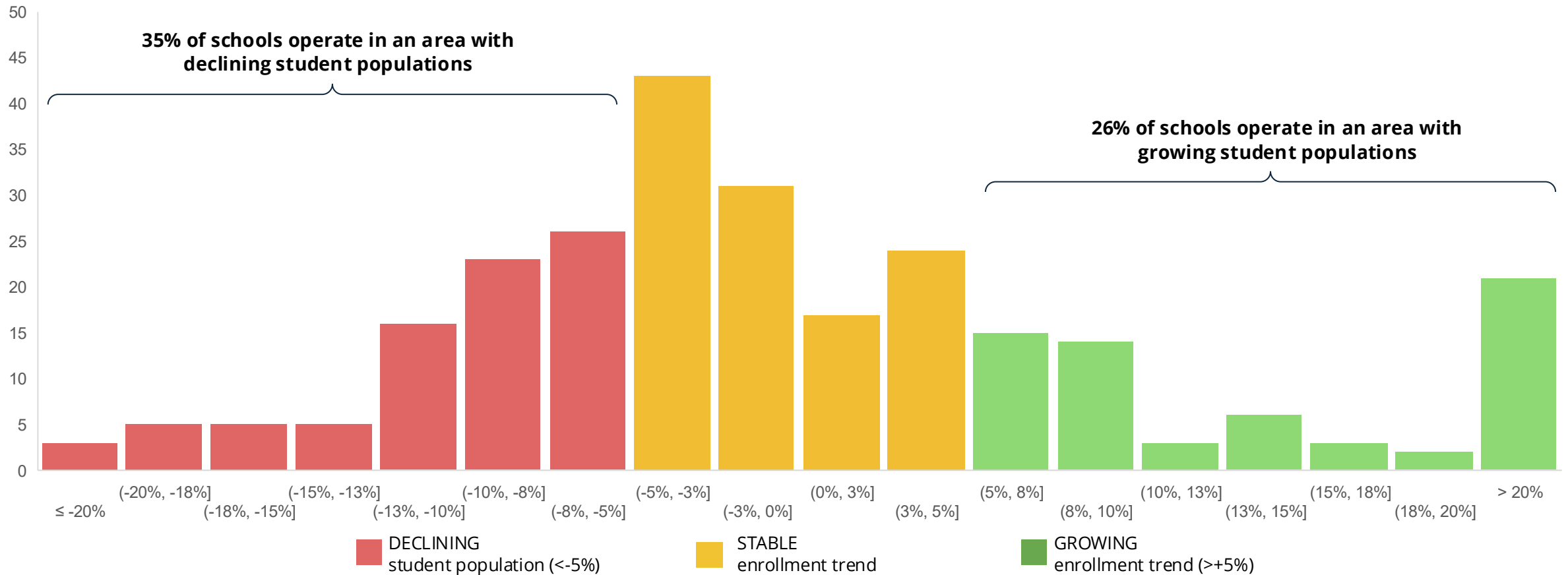


19-20

25-26

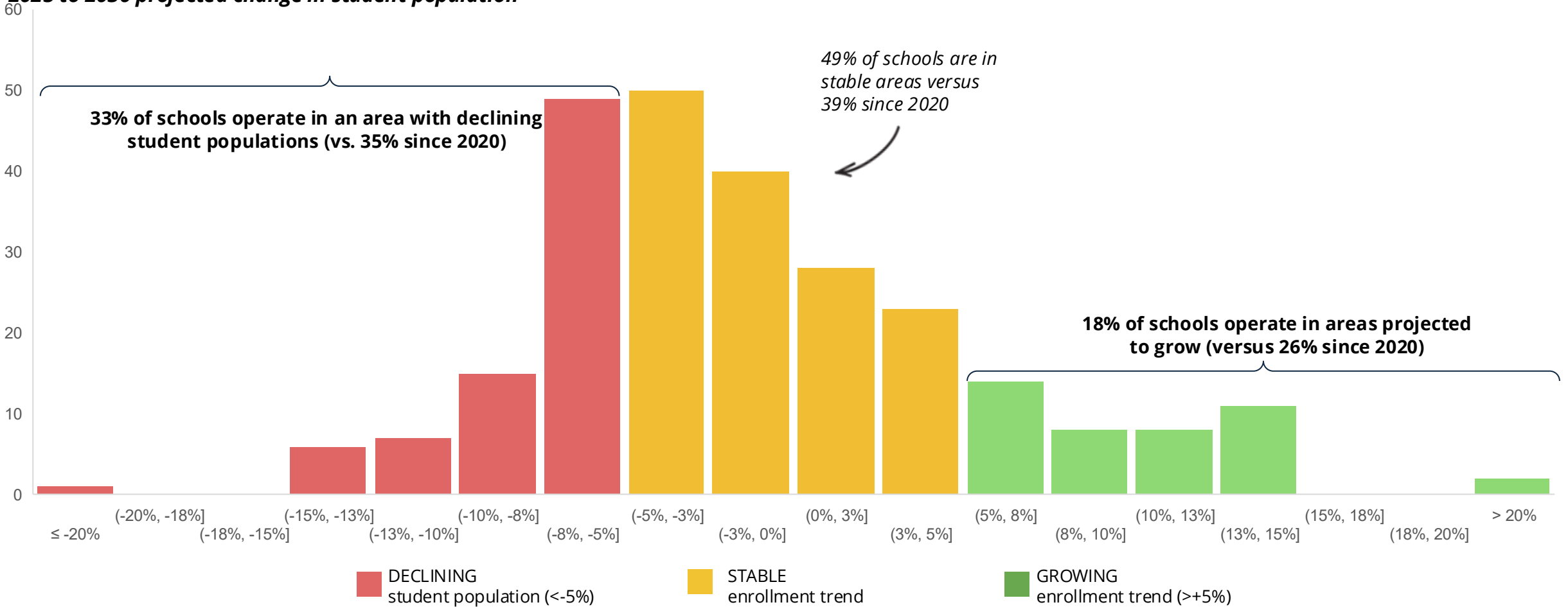
35% of charter schools serve areas with declining student populations, creating pressure for future enrollment

2020 to 2025 change in student population



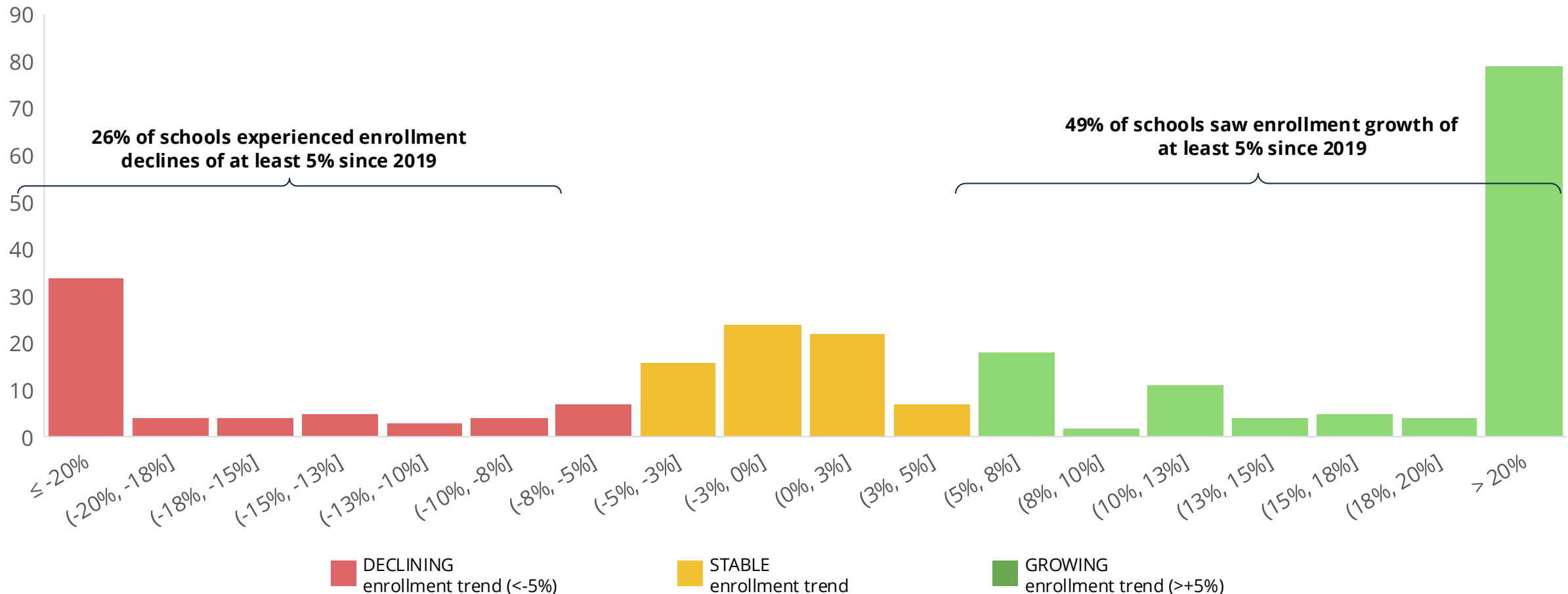
Looking forward, 67% of schools serve areas projected to grow or have stable student populations through 2030

2025 to 2030 projected change in student population



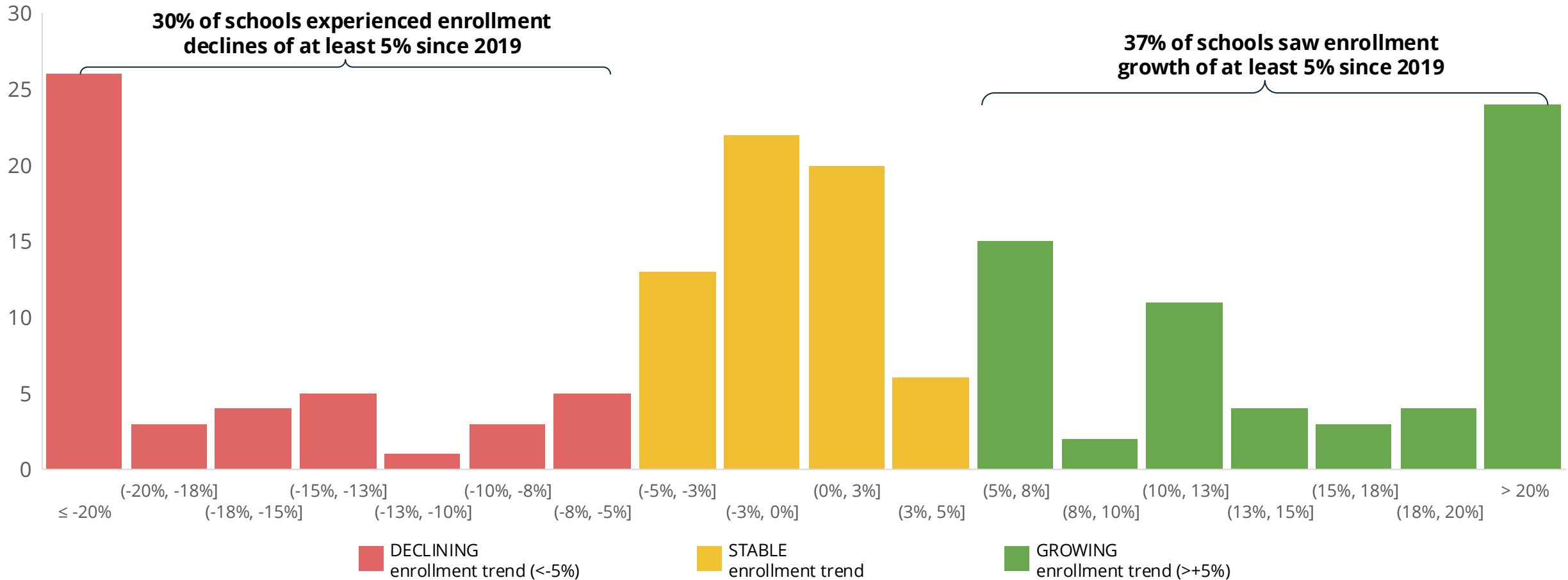
Despite area population declines, 74% of all charter schools have steady or growing enrollment since 2019

2019 to 2025 change in enrollment



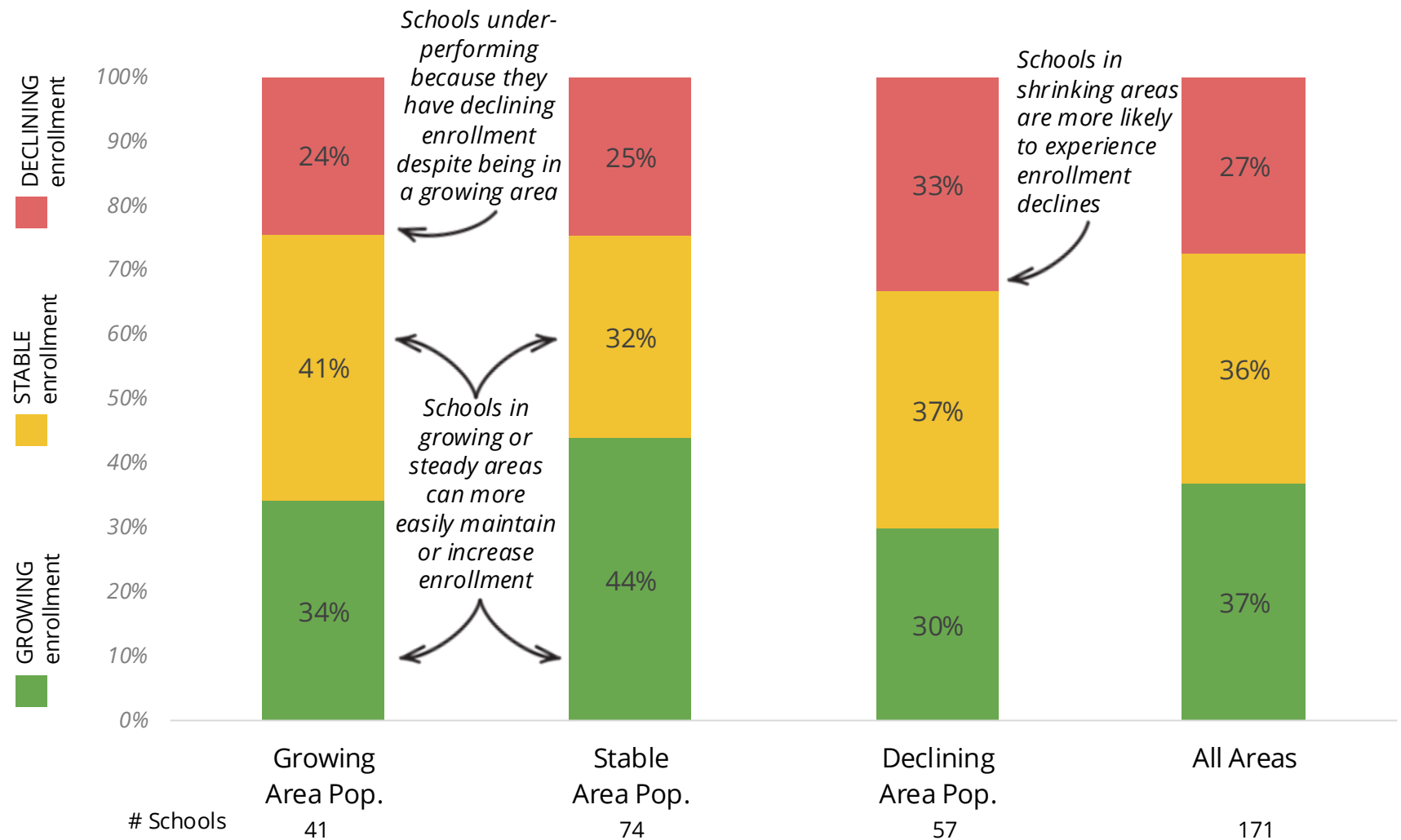
Focusing on steady state charter schools, 70% are steady or growing since 2019 despite fewer nearby students

2019 to 2025 change in enrollment



>5% increase = Growing; >5% decrease = Declining
 Source: CDE Pupil Membership for K-12; Excludes new schools or schools phasing in grades

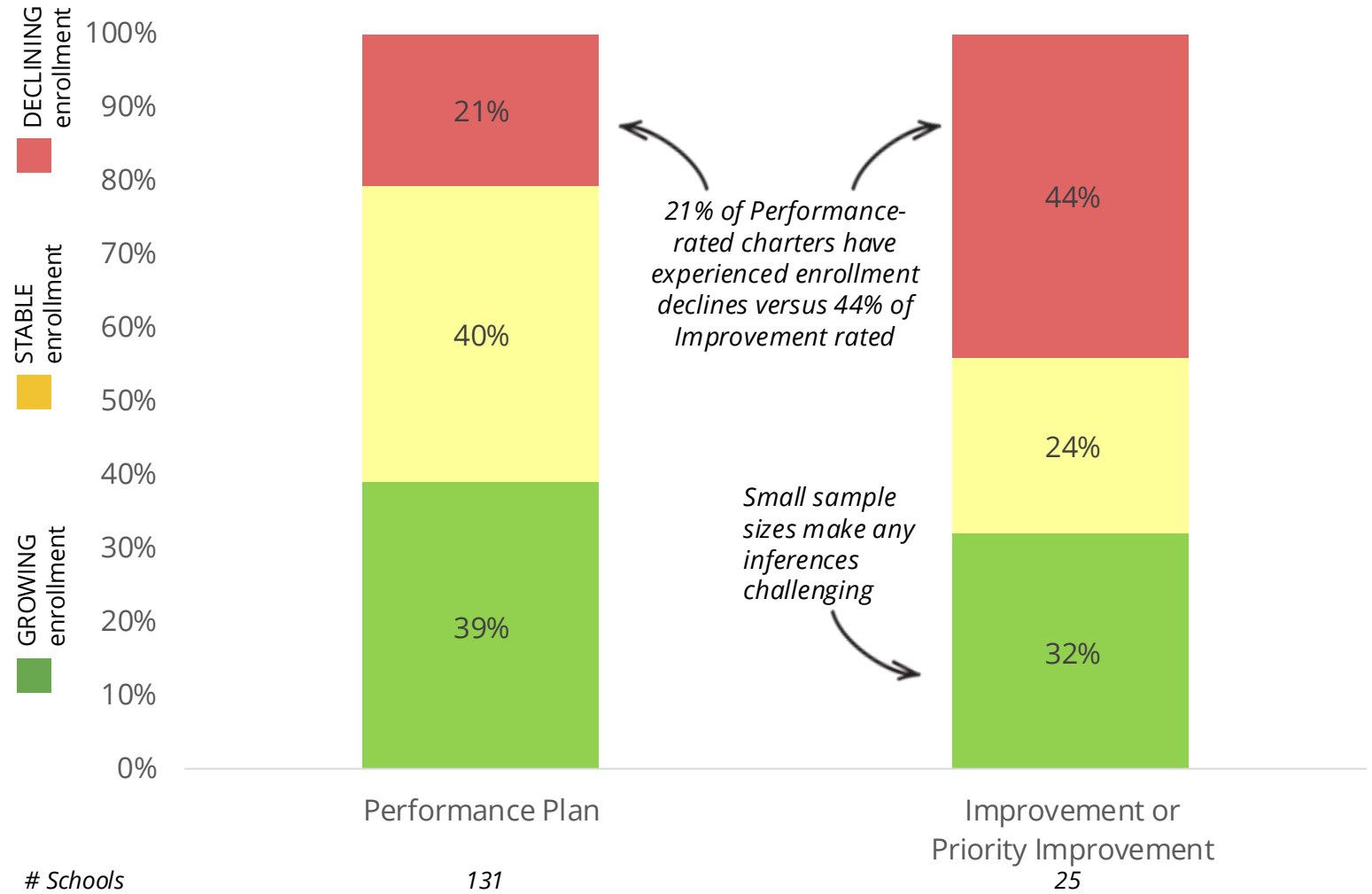
Steady state charter schools in declining population areas are more likely to have declining enrollment than schools located in growing areas



Connecting the dots between external population trends and a school's enrollment identifies schools "bucking the trend" by growing or maintaining enrollment in a declining area but also school under-performing because they are declining despite population growth.

>5% increase = Growing; >5% decrease = Declining
 Source: CDE October Count Pupil Membership for K-12
 Excludes new, phasing in, and phasing out schools

Quality matters: Steady state charter schools with higher quality ratings have steadier enrollment than those with lower ratings

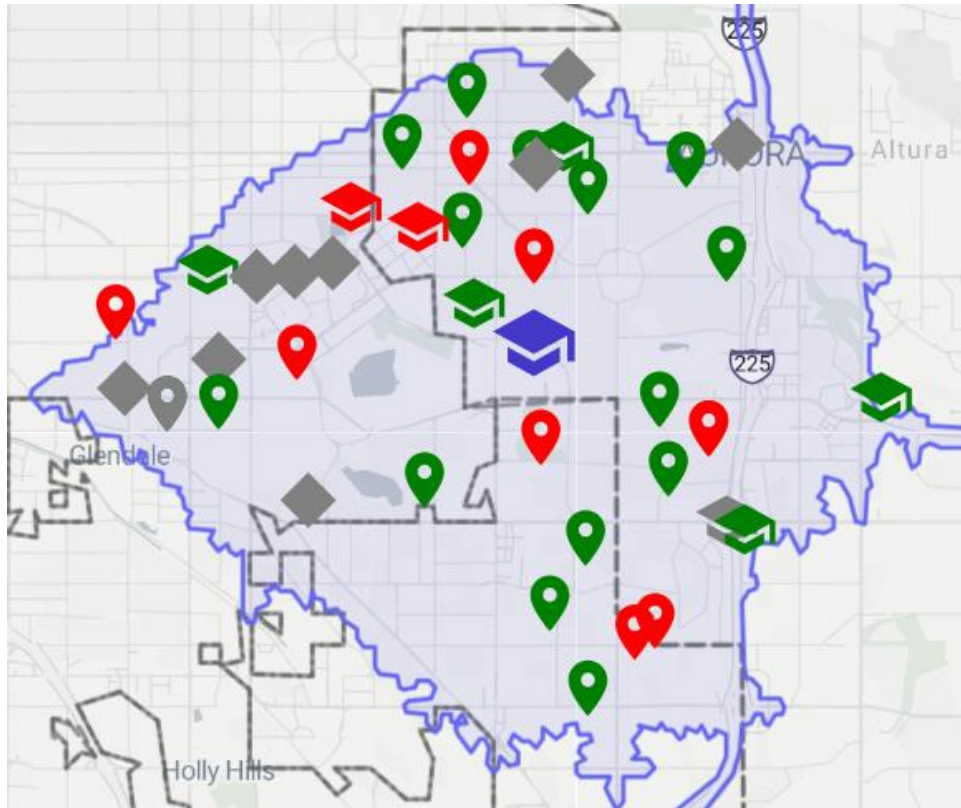


79% of Performance-rated schools have steady or growing enrollment versus 56% of Improvement-rated schools. This is a sign that quality leads to stronger enrollment.

>5% increase = Growing; >5% decrease = Declining
 Source: CDE Pupil Membership: 2019 to 2024; 2025 SPF
 Excludes new, phasing in, and phasing out schools

Market Share & School Competitiveness

There is wide variation in the size of competition, often related to the relative population density.

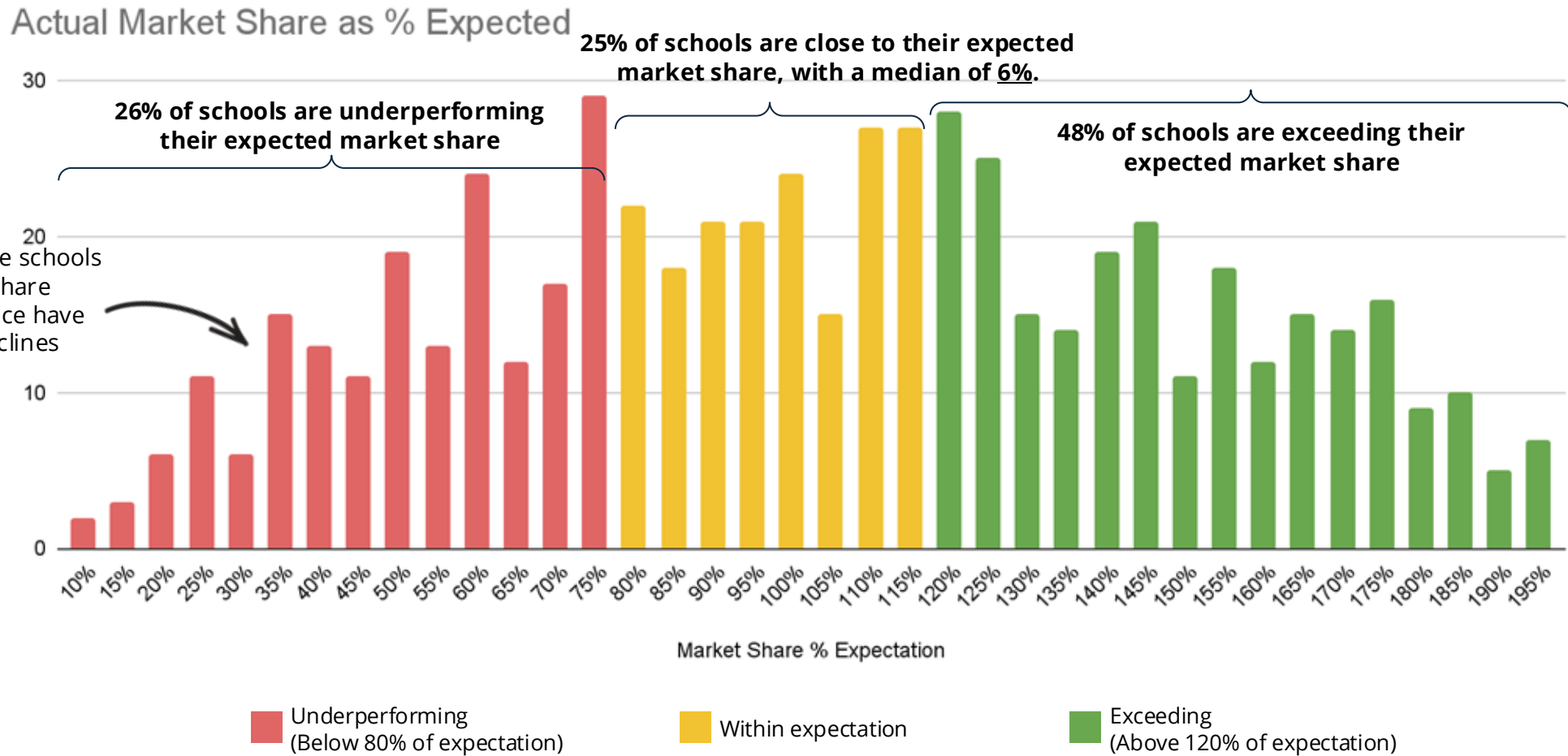


Dense areas may have dozens of competitors. This school on the Denver-Aurora border has 43 nearby schools serving similar grades within 10 minutes. Enrolling 2-3% share is more likely given the number of other options.



Rural areas often have fewer nearby schools. This school has only 1 nearby, meaning that market share should be much higher based on charter capacity or program targets.

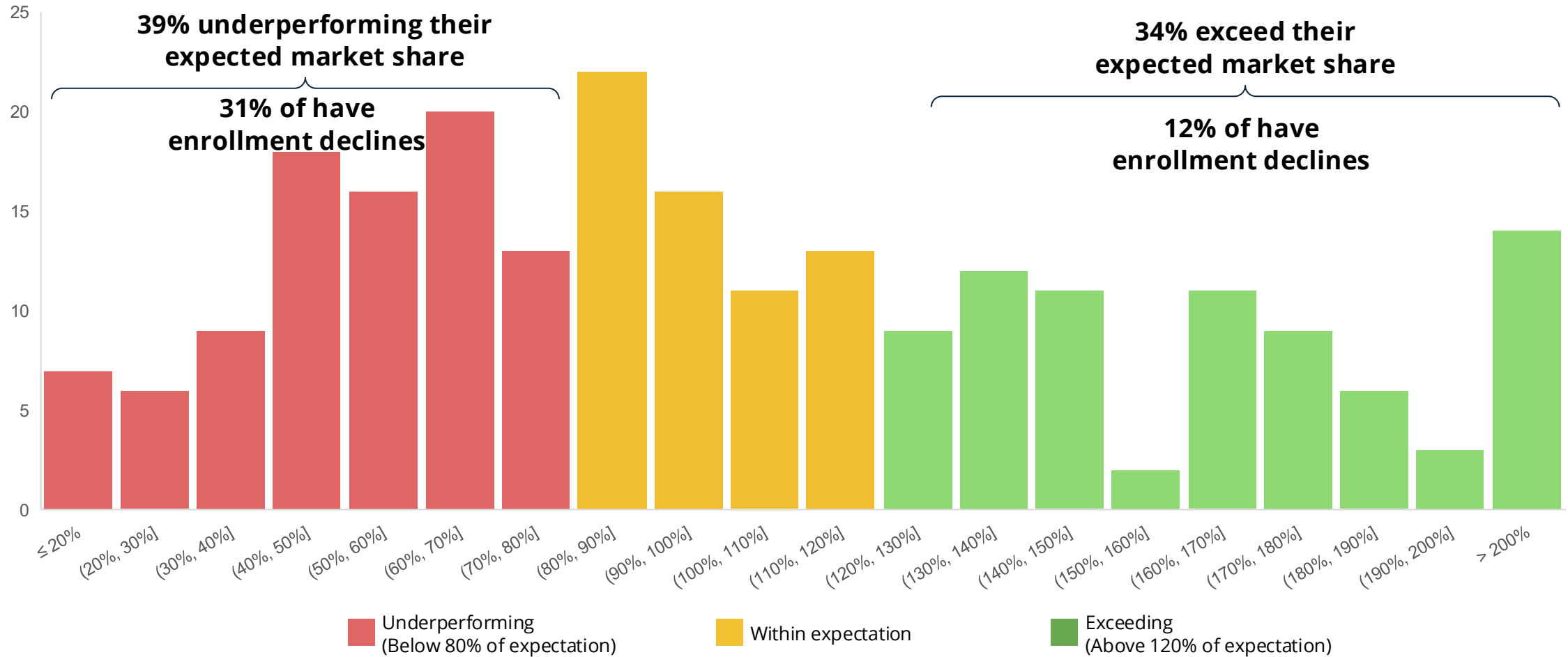
National context: comparing actual vs. expected market share highlights significant differences in schools' ability to compete within their areas, which may contribute to enrollment declines.



Expected Market Share = 1 / Number Area Schools

Source: Esri population, NCES 23-24 enrollment; Excludes new, phasing in, phasing out schools

Colorado findings: 2/3 of steady state charters are meeting or exceeding their expected market share, which is key to maintaining enrollment levels



Expected Market Share = 1 / Number Area Schools

Source: Esri population, CDE 2019 to 2025 enrollment; Excludes new, phasing in, phasing out schools, alternative schools and schools with zero nearby competitors

Of steady state charter schools with declining enrollment, most are explained by fewer nearby children, low academic performance, or not meeting expected market shares



Closing Observations and Implications

Forward- Looking Pressure

The enrollment landscape is increasingly challenging with **student populations projected to continue declining** in many areas along with **higher levels of competition** given the range of choice options.

Ability to Buck the Trend

State-wide, **67% of charter schools have maintained or increased enrollment** despite there being fewer children **versus only 40% of district-run schools**, revealing the impact of school choice.

Intentional Planning and Execution

Existing schools will need to continue **executing on student recruiting and enrollment strategies** to build awareness, interest, and reenrollment of students

New schools will need to **carefully evaluate population and competition** for prospective sites given the challenges of new entrants into mature markets.

Welcome to School Explorer

February 2026



Long-Term Planning Complexity

Beyond the evolving landscape, organizations frequently experience additional challenges in support of their long-term strategic planning

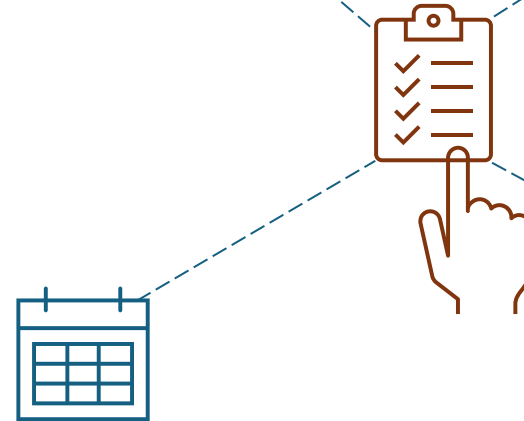
Inability to gather information specific to my campus related to area child populations and nearby competition

Localized Data



Inconsistent enrollment projections methodologies that have been inaccurate in the past and lack stakeholder buy-in

Data-Driven



Outdated

Available information is historical and less relevant given how quickly population and competitive dynamics are changing in our area

Siloed

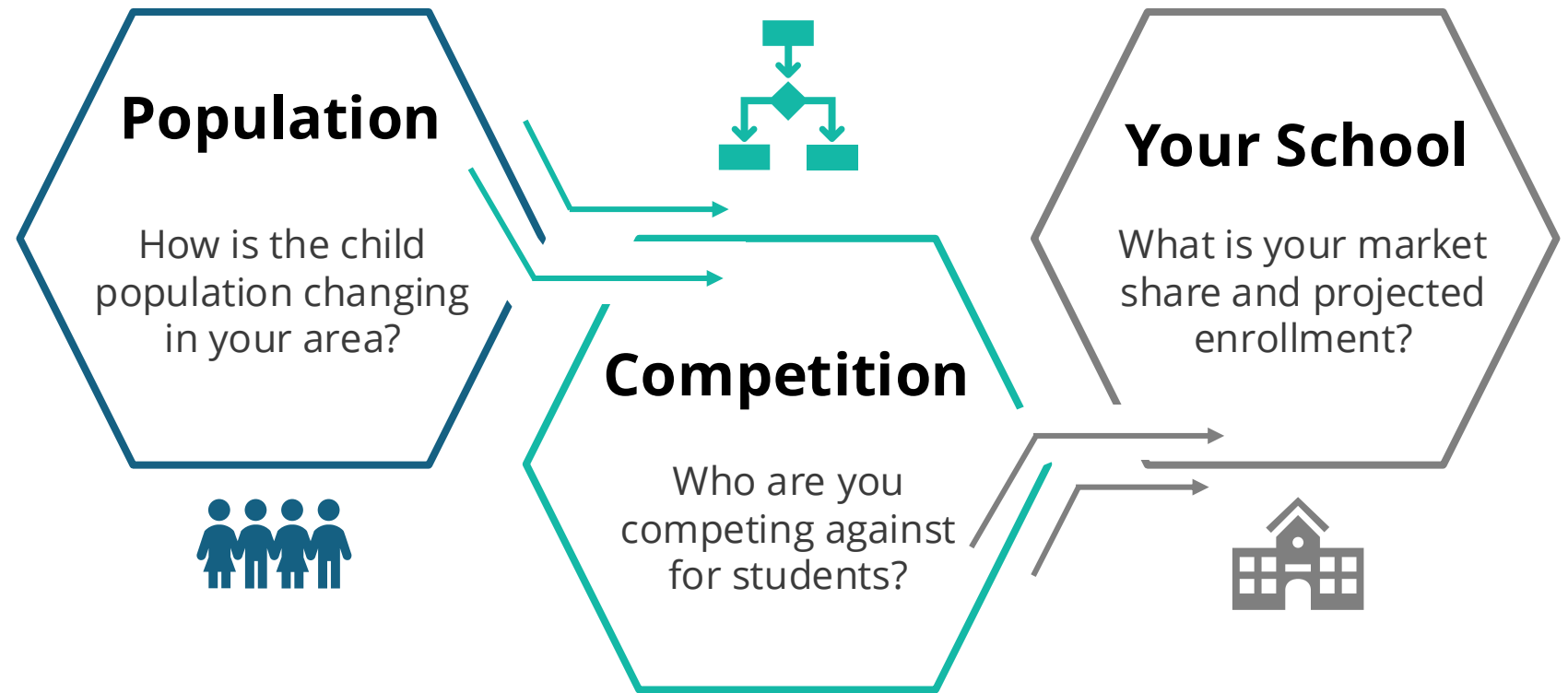
Lack of collaboration between functions involves numerous disconnected spreadsheets, inefficiencies, and missed key department-level information





Education Data Collective's Approach

Connecting insights related to the child population, competition, and your specific school create a comprehensive understanding in support of your long-term enrollment planning



**“
Your
feedback
helps us all
move forward
together**



**Colorado League of
Charter Schools**



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