



San Diego
Workforce
Partnership

San Diego's Youth Landscape

POPULATION BIFOLD



NOVEMBER 2025



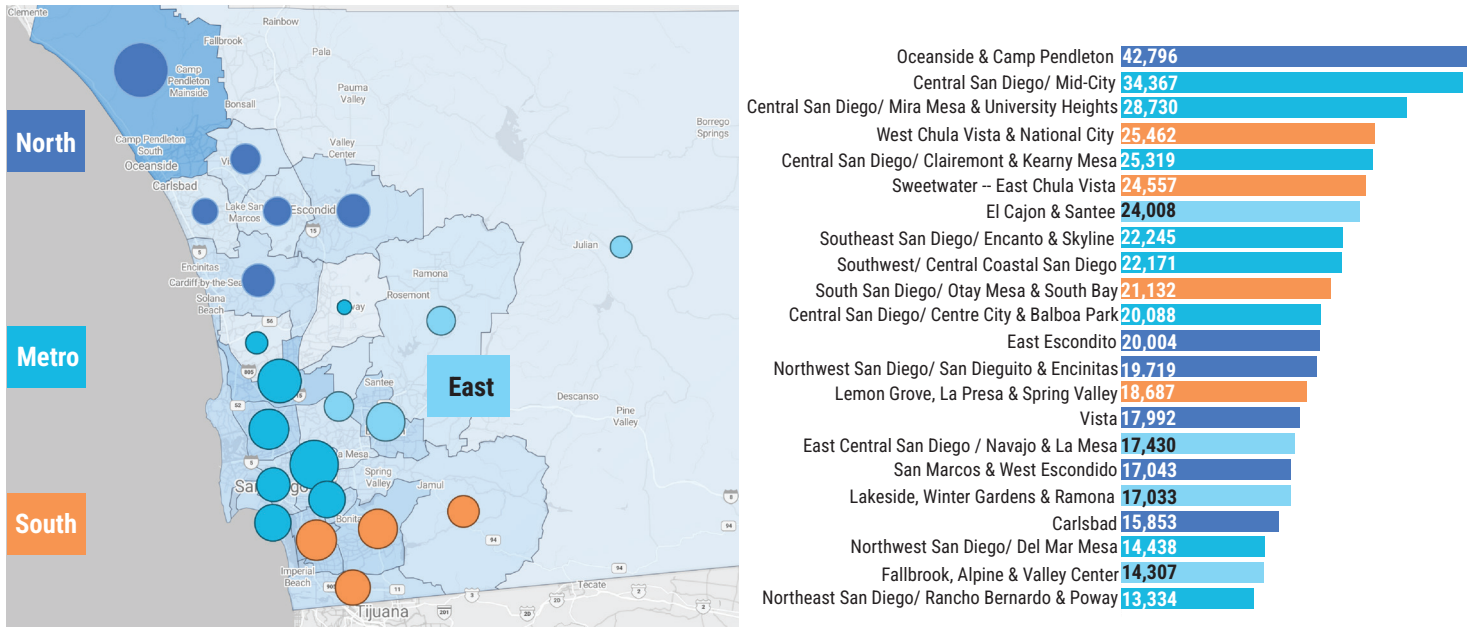
SAN DIEGO'S YOUTH LANDSCAPE

San Diego is home to nearly 477,000 youth aged 14–24, with most concentrated in the Metro region (38%) and North County (28%). Education and employment outcomes vary widely. Countywide, 85% graduate high school and 7.8% drop out, but rates fall sharply in East (81%) and South (82%). Postsecondary enrollment totals about 181,000, with Metro accounting for nearly half, though credential attainment remains low across all regions.

Where are San Diego's youth located?

Figure 1 shows where youth are concentrated across the county. Larger circles mean larger youth populations.

Figure 1: San Diego's Youth Population at-a-Glance (ages 14-24)

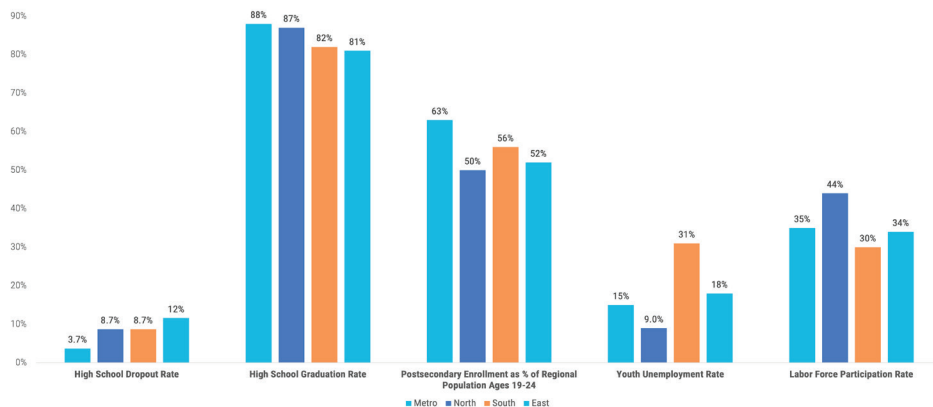


Source: Working Current. (2025). San Diego Youth-Serving Organizations Dataset (October 2025).

How do the regions compare?

San Diego's youth workforce shows both promise and uneven outcomes. About 85% of students graduate, yet only one in three young adults is participating in the labor force, and 16% are unemployed. (See Figure 2.)

Figure 2: Education and Employment Outcomes Across San Diego's Four Regions*



Metro: Metro has the largest youth population overall, with relatively higher concentrations of low-income youth, youth not enrolled in school, youth with disabilities, newcomers, and LGBTQ+ youth. These trends signal high demand for affordable pathways into work, paid work-based learning, mental-health and case-management support, transportation and housing stabilization, and programs that are culturally affirming and inclusive. High school graduation rates are generally strong but vary widely, from a low of 73–75% in Clairemont/Kearny Mesa and Centre City/Balboa Park to highs of 94–97% in the Northeast/Rancho Bernardo/Poway and Southwest/Central Coastal areas. Labor force participation remains modest (25–47%), suggesting continued disconnection from work.

Figure 3: High School Graduation vs. Labor Force Participation (Youth Ages 18–24) - Metro*

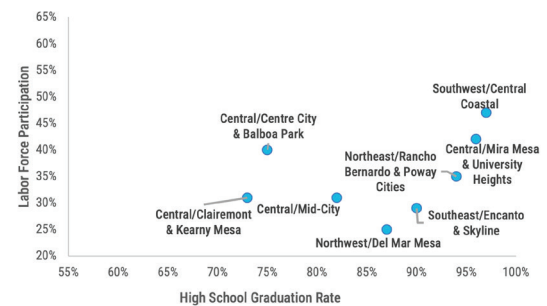
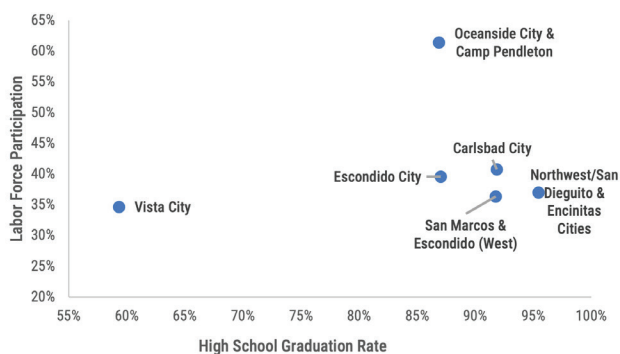


Figure 4: High School Graduation vs. Labor Force Participation (Youth Ages 18–24) - North*



North: North County shows relatively high rates of employment rates of youth 18-24 not enrolled in school are likely influenced by the region's military base. However, localized pockets in Vista (15%), San Marcos/West Escondido (15%), and Northwest San Diego/San Dieguito & Encinitas (14%) experience elevated unemployment. Vista also has the county's highest dropout rate (33%), warranting targeted prevention and recovery supports. Across the region, youth from low-income households, English learners, youth with disabilities, and Black opportunity youth may need navigation and affirming services. Despite strong graduation rates (92–95%), low labor force participation (36–41%) signals barriers to workforce entry even among credentialed youth. Vista stands out with the lowest graduation rate in the county (59%) and the lowest participation in the region (35%), indicating compounded risk and a need for coordinated education-to-employment pathways, outreach, and paid work-based learning opportunities.

South: South San Diego's largest youth needs are driven by high unemployment: four of the county's top five areas (20-36%) are located here. The region also faces large numbers of youth not enrolled in school (25,481) and the highest concentration of English learners (49,100), low-income youth, refugee youth, and youth with disabilities. These trends signal a need for re-engagement support, financial assistance, language tutoring, housing/benefits stabilization, and identity-affirming programming.

High school graduation outcomes vary from 69% in West Chula Vista and National City to 95% in Sweetwater and East Chula Vista, labor force participation remains extremely low, signaling systemic barriers to employment access.

Figure 5: High School Graduation vs. Labor Force Participation (Youth Ages 18–24) - South*

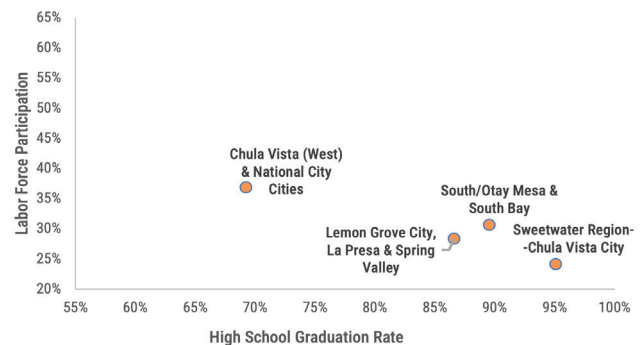
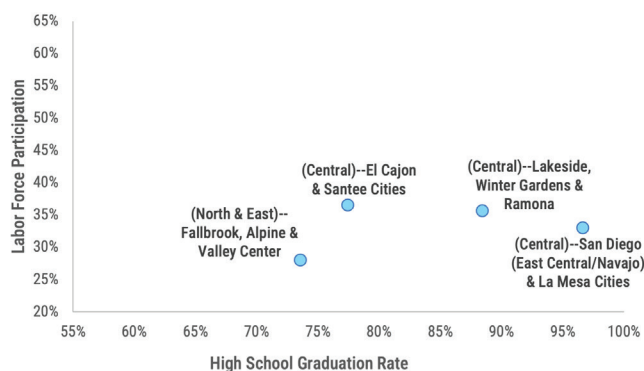


Figure 6: High School Graduation vs. Labor Force Participation (Youth Ages 18–24) - East*



East: The most pressing youth needs in East San Diego are driven by the region's high proportions of refugee youth, youth experiencing homelessness, youth with disabilities, low-income youth, and those at risk of not completing school. Outcomes indicate concentrated barriers to credential attainment and labor market entry, particularly in El Cajon & Santee and Fallbrook/Alpine/Valley Center, where youth benefit from alternative education pathways, financial assistance, and rapid job placement. Newcomer youth require language tutoring, transportation, accommodations, and trauma-informed supports.

Fallbrook/Alpine/Valley Center stands out with both the region's lowest high school graduation rate (74%) and labor force participation (28%), indicating compounded need.

Figure 7: Youth Population Characteristics Across San Diego's Four Regions

METRO	NORTH
Students: 125,358	Students: 96,541
Not in School: 52,661	Not in School: 50,738
Black Opportunity Youth: 2,851	Black Opportunity Youth: 1,361
English Learners: 65,356	English Learners: 41,621
Youth in Low-Income Households: 29,743	Youth in Low-Income Households: 9,875
Refugees: 1,118	Refugees: 173
Youth Experiencing Homelessness: 2,352	Youth Experiencing Homelessness: 468
Foster Youth Enrolled in School: 359	Foster Youth Enrolled in School: 181
Largest youth population, with the most youth not in school, experiencing homelessness, and from low-income households.	Lower concentrations of refugee youth and targeted pockets needing onramps to work.
SOUTH	EAST
Students: 66,448	Students: 53,244
Not in School: 25,481	Not in School: 20,457
Black Opportunity Youth: 2,013	Black Opportunity Youth: 1,346
English Learners: 49,363	English Learners: 19,454
Youth in Low-Income Households: 9,432	Youth in Low-Income Households: 10,318
Refugees: 912	Refugees: 2,527
Youth Experiencing Homelessness: 134	Youth Experiencing Homelessness: 1,056
Foster Youth Enrolled in School: 97	Foster Youth Enrolled in School: 216
Highest concentration of English learners and the sharpest labor-market distress.	Smaller base with concentrated refugee and disability needs.

*Sources. U.S. Census Bureau. 2023. American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Public Use Microdata Sample (2019–2023, “2023 5-Year”) and ACS 1-Year Estimates (2024); and California Department of Education (CDE). 2024. DataQuest Portal, School Year 2023–24 (unless otherwise noted).

INTERACTIVE DATA DASHBOARD

Interactive Data Dashboard: All data presented in this report is fully viewable and explorable in an interactive data dashboard, built in PowerBI. The dashboard allows users to navigate youth population data and outcomes—education and employment— as well as services across county, regional, and PUMA levels. A gap analysis section shows side-by-side comparisons of service sites against unemployment data, high school dropout rate, and concentration of low income households. Viewers can filter services by youth segments served and explore the locations and types of services available at each site.

Scan the QR code or [visit the dashboard online](#) to explore the data firsthand and generate your own insights

